



2026 Call for Proposals
Last Updated February 11, 2026

This document includes all Calls for Proposals for Program Units and Seminars, for both the 2026 Online June and In-person November Annual Meeting. To find more information on the Unit/Seminar, such as statements of purpose and chair/steering committee contacts, please visit our [UNITS page on PAPERS](#).

As a reminder, you do not need to be an AAR member to submit a proposal to the annual meeting; however, you do have to become a member to present at the annual meeting.

AI policy

At the time of submission, authors must fully indicate in the proposal their use of all content (whether text, images, data, or other) created by an AI tool.

AI tools used for editing do not need to be cited.

Authors are responsible for ensuring their work is their own, is accurate, and does not use the work of others without permission when needed and without attribution in all cases. Acceptance or rejection of proposals that use AI tools for content creation is at the discretion of individual program units. This policy also applies to full papers and annual meeting presentations for the Online June and In-person November Annual Meetings.

[Link to instructions to submit:](#) Please read the full instructional guide before submitting your proposal.

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

[African Diaspora Religions Unit](#)

Call for Proposals

1) Troublings: AI for 21 Century Religious and Spiritual Life in the African Diaspora

How should spiritual and religious traditions with legacies of cloaked and publicly blind practices and rituals of the night encounter AI? What is captured and/or released, lost and/or emptied, laid bare and/or destroyed when rituals of the night and rituals of secret and silence become visually knowable beyond sacralized consecrated spaces? African Diaspora religions (ADR) practitioners and their communities have begun engaging AI, augmenting and/or transforming their practices through its use. These practitioners are themselves transforming AI. On the frontier of the making of new worlds, practitioners are harnessing the power of AI to connect, stay connected, and fulfill required rituals. Across the globe ADR practitioners are engaged in uncharted spiritual realms near and far. They are at once captivated and captured by the future of AI in religious/spiritual potential. Contemplating questions such as, but not limited to: In what way is AI being used and/or called on to intervene in, entangle with, and/or lead spiritual and religious encounters? How are notions of AI reshaping and is being reshaped by the religious imagination of ADR practitioners? With attention to and agitating tensions between and among concepts of Artificial Intelligence (AI), ('Artificial' Intelligence (AI), Ruha Benjamin's Ancestral Intelligence and Augmented Intelligence, this session invites papers from scholars, artists, practitioners from across the African Diaspora (and from across diverse understandings and negotiations of AI) to explore, examine, redefine, and/or interrogate present and future crafting and application of AI in ADR religious and spiritual life.

2) Black Ecologies—Degradation of Black Environments

Whether AI in health care (Benjamin, R. 2024, Nelson, A. 2016), education (Tanksley, T. 2024), and /or daily life, the data has been consistent, from its earliest encounter with Black Life, AI has mirrored and deepened historical and ongoing systems of oppression (Nelson, A. 2016, Eglash, R and Bennett, AG 2026), exacerbating inequities through the targeted pillaging and displacement of Black people globally. Scholars, scientists and activists, among others, have been calling attention to, calling out, and/or disrupting (through intentional and improvisational re/mapping and re/training of AI) the normalized and new normalizing scripts of oppression. With Nathan Hare's concept of Black Ecology (1970), which points to the burden put on Black people and Black communities to service the growth and comfort of Whites), Ruha Benjamin's concept of Abundant Imagination (AI), identified as collective imagination for the collective good of society, and Tiera Tankley's critical race algorithmic literacies, designed to encourage Black people to dream up abolitionist technologies, and imagine and design

emancipatory lives, this session invites papers from scholars, artists, and activists engaged in imagining Black futures.

Beliso-De Jesús, Aisha Mahina. *Electric Santería: Racial and Sexual Assemblages of Transnational Religion*. Columbia University Press, 2015. EBSCOhost.

Benjamin, Ruha. *Imagination: A Manifesto / Ruha Benjamin*. First edition. W.W. Norton & Company, 2024. EBSCOhost.

Eglash, Ron and Audrey G. Bennett. "African Interlace as Dynamic Grids: New Heritage Algorithms for Diaspora Design Ecologies." *Design and Culture*. DOI: 10.1080/17547075.2025.2591967.

Hare, Nathan. "Black Ecology." *Black Scholar*. (April 1970): Vol. 1, No. 6, Black Cities: Colonies or City States?: 2-8.

Nelson, Alondra, *The Social Life of DNA: Race, Reparations, and Reconciliation After The Genome*. Beacon Press, 2016.

Tanksley Tiera C. "'We're changing the system with this one': Black students using critical race algorithmic literacies to subvert and survive AI-mediated racism in school." *English Teaching: Practice & Critique* (2024): Vol. 23 No. 1: 36–56.

3) Carework: Re/Claiming Our Future/s

AI has entered the African Diaspora Religions space. Known for embodied cosmologies and epistemologies in which knowledge, communication, and communion are deeply mapped into and evoke from the body - where feet, hand, head, back, and chest placement and hip, shoulders, and buttock movements speak to, about, and from divinities, and touch and sound elevate encounters, some African Diaspora Religions (ADR) practitioners have begun augmenting and/or transforming their practices through the use of AI as spiritual medium. Simultaneously, these practitioners are themselves transforming AI. At once captivated and captured by the future of the religious and spiritual life, on the frontier of new worlds, these practitioners are harnessing AI in powerful ways outside AI to stay in intimate connection with adherents across the globe - crossing uncharted territories of spiritual/religious realms near and far. Pastoral care is being re/articulated, knowledge redefined and recentered, and disembodiment repositioned. Calling on Aisha Beliseo De Jesus's 2015 book, "Electric Santería: Racial and Sexual Assemblages of Transnational Religion," and her concept of 'copresence' as a touchstone, this session invites papers that explore, examine, and/or interrogate shifting

concepts of Power, agency, embodiment, context, circulation/distribution, stasis (“continual balancing of multiple forces in equilibrium, a temporal modality of diasporic motion held in suspension, hovering between stillness and movement” (Tina M. Campt, 2017) and futurity (“a future state or condition; a future event, possibility, or prospect”).

Beliso-De Jesús, Aisha Mahina. *Electric Santería: Racial and Sexual Assemblages of Transnational Religion*. Columbia University Press, 2015. EBSCOhost.

Moulton, Alex A., and Inge Salo. “Black Geographies and Black Ecologies as Insurgent Ecocriticism.” *Environment and Society* 13 (January 2022): 156–74. EBSCOhost.

Campt, Tina M. *Striking Poses in a Tense Grammar: Stasis and the Frequency of Black Refusal*. Duke University Press, 2017.

Statement of Purpose

The African Diaspora Religions Unit aims to engage a wide range of disciplines and a variety of scholars who work on different aspects of African Diaspora religions. It considers the linguistic and cultural complexities of the African Diaspora, the importance of African traditional religions, Afro-Christianity, Afro-Islam, Afro-Asia, and Afro-Judaism, in the way they have and continue to inform an understanding of Africa, and also the way they have and continue to shape the religious landscape of the Americas, Europe, Asia and South Asia.

Our unit explores broad geographies, histories, and cultures of people of African descent and the way they shape the religious landscape, in the Caribbean and the Americas, Europe, and Asia. We define “Diaspora” as the spread and dispersal of people of African descent — both forced and voluntary — through the slave trade, imperial and colonial displacements, and postcolonial migrations. This Unit emphasizes the importance of interdisciplinary approaches and confluent/convergent [spiritual] belief systems which is central to its vision.

Chairs

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African Diaspora Religions Unit

Call for Proposals

Title: AI in Africa & African Diaspora religious and spiritual life: Ogun in the 21 Century

From Brooklyn to Dakar; New Orleans to Accra; Los Angeles to Abuja; Paris to Martinique; East London to Juba; Ghent to Daloa; as well as from Berlin to Kigali and between and beyond, African and African Diaspora traditional religion practitioners and their communities have been transforming their practices through the use of AI; and are themselves transforming AI. Contemplating questions such as, but not limited to: In what way is AI being used and/or called on to intervene in, entangle with, and/or lead spiritual and religious encounters? How are notions of AI reshaping and is being reshaped by the religious imagination of African and African Diaspora traditional religions practitioners and practice? Paying attention to and agitating tensions between and among concepts of Artificial Intelligence (AI), ('*Artificial*' Intelligence (AI)), Ruha Benjamin's Ancestral Intelligence (AI), Augmented Intelligence (AI)), this session invites papers from scholars, artists, practitioners from across Africa and the African Diaspora, and from across diverse understandings and negotiations of AI, that explore, examine, redefine, and/or interrogate present and future crafting and application of AI in religious and spiritual life.

Statement of Purpose

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In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

African Religions Unit

Call for Proposals

Our Unit encourages critical inquiry about religions originating and/or practiced in Africa. Proposals should go beyond description; they should critically engage the conceptual tools and methods employed in analysis. The steering committee will evaluate the merit of each proposal based on the clarity of its thesis, the strength of the evidence referenced, and the quality of the conclusions drawn from it in terms of both style and substance. For the 2026 Annual Meeting, we particularly invite papers as well as panel proposals that respond to the following themes relevant to any region of the African continent and its diverse religious cultures:

Back to the Future? Conceptions of Time in African Religions and Societies

In 1969, John Mbiti published his foundational text, *African Religions and Philosophy*, in which he articulated an African conception of time, most notably his controversial assertion that traditional African societies had no concept analogous to the distant "future". In the over 50 years since Mbiti put forward this argument, he and his work have generated spirited debate and critique, particularly about African notions of time and, specifically, his conceptions of "the future". We invite papers that interrogate African notions of time, broadly conceived, particularly as they might relate to notions of

“the future,” but equally to notions of “the past” or “present,” as well as completely different ways of understanding and categorizing time. While responses to Mbiti and previous scholarship critiquing his position are very welcome, papers need not limit themselves to this debate, and papers on notions and conceptions of time in Islam and Christianity in Africa, as well as traditional religions, are very welcome. Potential topics could include, but are certainly not limited to, linear and cyclical notions of time, prophecy, divination and ritual, philology and African linguistic expressions of time, presence or absence of apocalyptic thought and millenarian movements in Africa, changes in notions of time in African societies, comparisons of notions of time across different African societies, and the relationship between time and space. In your submission, indicate whether you would like to present during the June (exclusively online) session or the November in-person conference in Denver, Colorado.

Sacred Arts, Sound, and AI: Knowledge Transmission, Ancestral Memory, and the Future of African Religions

Religious traditions are sustained through multiple forms of knowledge transmission, including sacred arts, ritual performance, and sound. These sensory modes—visual, material, and sonic—have long served as repositories for ancestral memory and religious authority, especially in African and diasporic religious contexts. This panel invites papers that investigate how sacred arts and religious soundscapes function as systems of knowledge transfer and how these systems are being transformed in the contemporary moment by digital technologies and artificial intelligence. We seek contributions that explore how music, chant, preaching, oral traditions, visual iconography, performance, and ritual objects transmit religious knowledge across generations. How are religious soundscapes and sacred arts implicated in preserving, mediating, or contesting ancestral knowledge? In what ways do sensory practices encode theological, ethical, and cosmological understandings beyond written texts?

The panel also foregrounds the growing impact of AI on religious knowledge production and circulation. How does the advent of AI alter longstanding modes of learning, authority, and memory within religious communities? What happens when ancestral knowledge—once transmitted orally, ritually, or artistically—is digitized, archived, or reinterpreted through algorithmic systems? Papers may address AI-assisted storytelling, music, visual arts, ritual instruction, or religious pedagogy, as well as the ethical and epistemological stakes of such transformations.

Methodologically and theoretically diverse approaches are welcome, including religious studies, anthropology, sound studies, media studies, digital humanities, and African

studies. By bringing sensory traditions into conversation with emerging technologies, this panel aims to rethink how knowledge, ancestry, and the sacred are understood, preserved, and reimagined for the future. In your submission, indicate whether you would like to present during the June (exclusively online) session or the November in-person conference in Denver, Colorado.

The Future is African?: Youths, Religion, Politics and Mobility

Demographic projections suggest that by the close of the 21st century, the sub-Saharan African region will be home to almost half of the world's young population and, globally, one in three people will be African. These projections emerge as religious consciousness in Africa continues to blossom amid significant quotidian life challenges. Within this matrix, African youths in recent decades have constructed realities replete with increased mobility and political engagement. Phenomena like *Japa* and *Japada* have emerged side by side with increased youth-led protests across African states such as Kenya, Madagascar, Nigeria, and Morocco, with transcontinental reverberations. This panel invites research at the intersection of religion, politics, mobility, and African youths that interrogate how religious vitality and political mobilization among Africa's young population, both on the continent and in the diaspora, could be driving a global future that is African. How are African youths driving religious, political, and social change within Africa and around the world and how is this transforming the local and global experience of African religions, worldviews, and epistemologies? We seek papers that provide rich conceptual, methodological, and theoretical nuances relating, but not limited to the politics of mobility/immobility and temporal geographies; religious agency, collaboration, and generative power; gendered, racial, and generational politics; social media, online activism, and digital transnationalism; immigration policies and Euro-American bureaucracies vs spiritual warfare and religious specialists; material religion, 'sacred remittances' and moral economy; violence, religious, and political extremism; hybridity, lived religion, and material culture. In your submission, indicate whether you would like to present during the June (exclusively online) session or the November in-person conference in Denver, Colorado.

Indigenous Epistemologies of the Future: Authority, Initiation, and the Living Dead

African and African diaspora indigenous traditions rely heavily on ancestral knowledge to find meaning in existence. Yet, as these traditions navigate a changing world, the mechanisms of transmission are under pressure. How is the "future" of religious

authority being constructed? In traditions often governed by secrecy, initiation, and oral transmission, how is knowledge sustained when practitioners face new tangible realities such as migration and displacement?

This panel moves beyond the content of tradition to examine how religious knowledge is authorized and preserved for the future. We invite submissions that explore themes at the intersection of knowledge, survival, and transfer. How are indigenous systems of knowledge transfer adapting to modern constraints and opportunities? What is the future of initiation? To whom does the task of safeguarding tradition fall in the face of migration and displacement? This panel will be co-sponsored by the African Religions Unit, Global Critical Philosophy of Religion Unit, and African Diaspora Religions Unit.

African and South Asian Religions

African and South Asian religions have been engaged in dialogue and exchange for centuries—yet their historical and present interconnectedness remains a lacuna in Euro-American academic scholarship. This panel attempts to rectify this omission by bringing together the work of scholars of African and South Asian religions. Studying African and South Asian traditions in tandem promises not only to bring new insight into each area of focus, but also to offer an occasion for reconsidering the foundational question of what defines a tradition as ‘African,’ ‘South Asian,’ or both. We welcome submissions on the history of Hindu and South Asian Muslim communities in Africa; the history of African Muslim communities in South Asia (such as the *siddi* community); contemporary interactions between African and South Asian religious communities; and the question of where the boundary lies between African and South Asian traditions in those contexts where the two coexist. This panel will be co-sponsored by the African Religions Unit and South Asian Religions Unit.

Statement of Purpose

The central aim of the African Religions Unit is to address and fulfill the Mission Statement of the American Academy of Religion with particular reference to the African continent as a vital part of our globalized, post-colonial world. The African Religions Unit aims to provide a forum within the American Academy of Religion for the discussion of research on the multiplicity of religious traditions in Africa, methodological issues in the study of the religions of Africa, and African religious responses to ethical and social issues affecting the continent. The Unit encourages the participation of African and non-African scholars in the leadership of the Unit and in participation in its programs. It further actively seeks collaboration with other Units in the AAR, as well as with the

African Association for the Study of Religions, in order to promote the study and understanding of religions in Africa in the wider academy. The members of the African Religions Unit come to the subject from a variety of schools of thought and methodological approaches, including but not limited to anthropology, history, history of religions, literary studies, sociology, and theology. The three major religious traditions under investigation are indigenous religions, Christianity and Islam, and the Group's leadership strives to create some balance in the attention paid to these three major traditions.

Chairs

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Online June Annual Meeting 2026

African Religions Unit

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Chairs

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- David Ngong
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In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Afro-American Religious History Unit

Call for Proposals

The Afro-American Religious History Unit invites proposals that explore the religiosity of African-descended people within the geographical and geo-cultural boundaries of the United States. For our 2026 Annual Meeting in Denver, we are especially interested in proposals that engage one or more of the following topics:

SPECIAL CALL FOR GRADUATE STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

The Afro-American Religious History Unit strongly encourages submissions from graduate students at all stages. We welcome paper proposals that showcase original research based on term papers, dissertation chapters, or other works-in-progress.

In addition, this year we invite proposals for five-to-seven-minute graduate student presentations to comprise a "fireside chat" style conversation that would include faculty commentary. These mini-presentations should each identify a primary source that is illuminative of an historiographical and/or methodological contribution of the student's work.

SPECIAL NOTE ON THE JUNE ONLINE MEETING

The committee encourages proposals that are willing to be considered for both the June and November meetings. The virtual format and low cost (flat \$50 registration) makes it an accessible space to showcase original work and host conversations relevant both to the work of our Unit and to the field of religious studies writ large.

BLACK RELIGIOUS HISTORY AND ITS FUTURE/S

Building on our celebration of the 50th anniversary of our Unit in 2025, we gather in 2026 under the AAR presidential theme "FUTURE/S" to consider how African American religious history illuminates pathways toward imagining futures beyond despair or superficial hope. Scholars of African American religious life and history have long engaged questions of futurity—from eschatological visions in spirituals and sermonic traditions, to the prophetic imagination of Black freedom dreams, to contemporary Afro-futurist aesthetics that remix past, present, and future. We invite proposals exploring how African American religious communities have imagined and enacted futures in contexts of constraint; the roles of archives, memory, and historiography in shaping visions of Black religious futures; and how Afro-futurist frameworks engage with or reimagine Black religious histories.

AFFECTIVE EXPERIENCE OF RESEARCH IN AFRICAN AMERICAN RELIGIOUS HISTORY

Building on conversations sparked by Ahmad Greene-Hayes's *Underworld Work* at our 2025 meeting, we invite proposals that reflect on the spiritual, affective, and ethical dimensions of historical research. Who and what brings us into the archives? What forms of presence, absence, and haunting do we encounter there? What modes of training or learning are available to us? We welcome proposals addressing the spirituality and ethics of archival research, the role of intuition and spiritual discernment in historical research, relationships between researchers and ancestors/subjects, and archival silences.

THE PROGRESSIVE NATIONAL BAPTIST CONVENTION AT 65 AND THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF BLACK BAPTIST LEADERSHIP

2026 marks the 65th anniversary of the Progressive National Baptist Convention's 1961 split from the National Baptist Convention, USA—a rupture shaped by debates over civil rights activism, denominational governance, and prophetic leadership. It also marks the 20th anniversary of Wallace D. Best's influential scholarship on J.H. Jackson and Martin Luther King Jr. , which reframed our understanding of this pivotal moment. We are interested in proposals that might engage this denominational history and address the theological and institutional dimensions of the split, leadership models and generational tensions, the role of women in these debates, and the legacy of these conflicts for contemporary Black church life.

BLACK RELIGION, MUSIC, SEXUALITY, AND AFRO-FUTURISM: FROM COLTRANE TO PRINCE

2026 marks the 100th birthday of John Coltrane (1926), the 10th anniversary of Prince's death (2016), and a decade since Beyoncé's *Lemonade* (2016). Black musical innovation has long been entangled with religious formation, sexual expression, and visions of Black futures. Artists like Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Little Richard, John Coltrane, Prince, Michael Jackson, and Beyoncé have navigated the tensions and possibilities at the nexus of Black religiosity, musical genius, and sexual/gender identity.

We invite proposals examining the religious dimensions of Black musical performance; gospel music and the negotiation of sexuality and gender; queer aesthetics and Black sacred music; Coltrane's engagement with transnational religious traditions (including the Saint John Coltrane African Orthodox Church); the intersection of Afro-futurism and spiritual jazz; and music as site of both religious constraint and liberatory possibility.

"FORMATION" AND DAUGHTERS OF THE DUST: BLACK WOMEN'S VISUAL STORYTELLING AND RELIGIOUS IMAGINATION

2026 marks the 35th anniversary of Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust* (1991) and the 10th anniversary of Beyoncé's *Lemonade* (2016). Both works center Black women's spiritual lives, ancestral connections, and the religious dimensions of memory, healing, and futurity. We invite proposals exploring the religious and spiritual dimensions of Black women's visual culture, filmmaking as theological practice, representations of African-derived spiritual practices, intergenerational transmission of Black women's religious knowledge, and Afro-futurist aesthetics in Black women's cultural production.

BLACK RELIGION, EDUCATION, AND THE MAKING OF HISTORIANS: HBCUs AND THE HISTORIOGRAPHICAL SCOPE OF THE FIELD

2026 marks the 170th anniversary of the founding of Wilberforce University by the Cincinnati Conference of the AME Church. It is the oldest privately owned and operated HBCU. In the spirit of this commemoration, we invite papers and/or panel proposals that consider the relationship between Historically Black Colleges and Universities and the development of African American religious historiography. HBCUs have been central sites for the formation of Black religious intellectuals, archive preservation, and scholarly communities. We invite proposals exploring the role of missionaries and Black denominations in the formation of HBCUs; the influence of HBCU education on approaches to Black religious history; graduate education and pedagogy at HBCUs; and the future of Black religious historical scholarship. We especially welcome proposals from graduate students and recent PhD recipients trained at HBCUs.

BLACK RELIGION AND CHILDHOOD

This panel examines the understudied terrain of Black childhood and religious experience. How have Black children been religious subjects and agents? How have these designations changed over time? How have Black religious communities theorized and shaped childhood? We invite proposals addressing children's religious experience and agency, pedagogical practices and religious formation, the role of children in worship and community life, intergenerational religious transmission, and the impacts of racism and trauma on Black children's religious lives.

OVER OUR HEADS AND SITTIN' ON HIGH: WOMANIST SPIRITUAL TECHNOLOGIES, AFROFUTURISM, AND THE SOUND OF SACRED IMAGINATION (co-sponsored with the Womanist Approaches to Religion and Society)

Lisa Allen, *Over My Head: The Power of Ancestral Music to Future the Black Church*, and Melanie Hill, *Colored Women Sittin' on High: Womanist Sermonic Practice in Literature and Music*.

We invite papers reflecting on Allen's and /or Hill's texts to discuss the Womanist-Afrofuturist spiritual technologies of imagination, improvisation, and adaptability function through spiritual practices of liturgy, ritual, preaching, story, myth, Conjure, and time exploration to help communities envision themselves into generative, hope-filled futures. (**Open Papers / Authors will be respondents**)

GENERAL NOTE

The Unit is always excited to receive paper, roundtable and panel proposals addressing the following themes in African American Religious History:

- African American Religious History and slavery/freedom
- Retheorizations of the geographical and cultural boundaries of African-American Religion
- Redressing the historiographical dearth of LGBTQI+ African American religious histories
- Black Catholic history
- Studies of Black religio-racial movements (Nation of Islam, Moorish Science Temple, Commandment Keepers, etc.)
- African American Religion and climate catastrophe
- Complex Afro-Protestant institutions (HBCUs, Prince Hall Freemasons/Order of the Eastern Star, Greek organizations)
- Black Religions, property, land, and the environment

****Guidelines for successful/strong proposal submissions****

Successful proposals should:

- 1) respond directly to the call's themes;

- 2) engage historical and interdisciplinary archival methods and name sources used or examined;
- 3) situate the intervention(s) in historiographical context by engaging relevant authors and key texts, but only as necessary; and
- 4) indicate the time period and relevance to the field of African-American religious history.

We also invite creative proposals that are attentive to alternative methods of presenting, including but not limited to multimedia presentations, interviews, flash/micro talks, fireside chats, and facilitated discussions.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this Unit is to recover the sources and histories related to the religious experiences of African-descended people in the United States; challenge, nuance, and expand theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of African-American religions; and create forums for critical, creative, and collaborative engagement with new scholarship in the field. The Unit is committed to the historical investigation of the diversity of U.S. African-Americans' religious experiences across chronological periods.

Chairs

- Matthew Cressler
mjcressler@gmail.com
- Ahmad Greene-Hayes, Harvard University
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In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

American Academy of Religion

Statement of Purpose

Our mission is to foster excellence in the academic study of religion and enhance the public understanding of religion. We're committed to promoting academic excellence, professional responsibility, free inquiry, critical examination, diversity, inclusion, respect, and transparency within the academic study of religion and in our own work.

Chairs

- Amy Defibaugh, American Academy of Religion
adefibaugh@aarweb.org
 - Claudia Schippert, American Academy of Religion
cschippert@aarweb.org
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Anglican Studies Seminar

Call for Proposals

The Anglican Studies Seminar is a five-year research initiative focused on the “operative ecclesiologies” of Anglicans in various contexts worldwide.

The focus for Year 5 (November 2026) is to revisit the work of the seminar over the last five years with papers focused on “operative ecclesiologies” across the Anglican world today. How is the mission of churches in the Anglican world interpreted by the contextual elements that inform the shape of Anglican identities in each place? How are local pastoral practices shaped by languages, cultures, and local contexts? These ways of “living ecclesiology” contribute to a better understanding of the realities we are talking about when considering the form of Christianity we call “Anglican.” Papers that address “operative ecclesiologies” from the perspective of particular contexts are invited for Year 5. Papers that emphasize decolonial and postcolonial dynamics at work in forming and maintaining “operative ecclesiologies,” particularly in understudied regions of the Anglican Communion, and the Anglican majority world, are especially welcome. Public scholarship that addresses Anglican ecclesiologies from the perspective of ministerial and pastoral practice is also welcome.

Please note that those whose proposals are accepted must commit to submitting their paper for pre-circulation through the AAR mobile app. Seminar members and others wishing to attend will have access to these papers, which will be briefly summarized at the meeting but will not be presented in their entirety by the authors. Instead, they will be discussed among the panelists, seminar members, and session attendees. Please note that, due to AAR/SBL policies pertaining to participation, those whose proposals are accepted must commit to attending the 2026 Annual Meeting in Denver.

Statement of Purpose

The Anglican Studies Seminar holds that Anglican Studies requires a sustained study of the intersections of post- and de-colonialism, imperial legacies, and globalization with the ongoing evolution of Anglican identities in specific locations marked by their particular economic, social, cultural, and historical conditions. The Seminar pays detailed attention to context; its work disrupts extant assumptions about the Anglican tradition being a monolithic, monocultural entity. Accordingly, the Seminar focuses on the “operative ecclesiologies” of Anglicans at the local, national or provincial level. That is, we are interested in how the contextual realities of Anglicans in concrete locales shape the ways in which church is practiced by Anglicans, whether they answer to standard ecclesial and theological conceptualizations or not.

Seminar members are committed to a globalized study of Anglicanism, conceived broadly, and to investigating various operative ecclesiologies, locally and contextually. We foster interdisciplinary conversations that enable scholars to speak to multiple aspects of Anglicanism. The seminar’s findings will be of interest to scholars working in a range of disciplines. Moreover, close examination of the processes of decolonization that inform lived Anglicanisms will supply the wider field of religious studies with a set of thickly described case studies of post-colonial decolonization. It is the intention of the Steering Committee to publish research resulting from the Seminar and make it accessible to an interdisciplinary audience.

Chairs

- Joy McDougall
jamcdou@emory.edu
- Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook, Claremont School of Theology
skujawa-holbrook@cst.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Animals and Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

In addition to this open call for papers, the Animals and Religion Unit is interested in organizing sessions around the following topics, with an eye toward the 2026 Annual Meeting's presidential theme: Future/s - what is the importance of future thinking (futuring, as some would have it) in the work of religious scholarship in this time?

- Pedagogy: How can we use teaching about religion and animals to rethink ways that the future can be, especially at a time when the future looks pretty bleak? How are we teaching Animals and Religion in the classroom and beyond? How can teaching animals and religion help students critically reflect on the intersectional nature of injustices?
- Posthumanism or transhumanism: What can the study of religion and animals contribute to the increasing conversation around cross-species fertilization? In what situations is it important to preserve the species line? How does science fiction help us imagine post-human and trans-human animal futures?
- Artificial Intelligence and its impact on animals: How is the rapid deployment of AI impacting animals and their ecosystems?
- Animals, Gaza, and Genocide: How is the language of "animality" being used to justify war and genocide? How has the war in Gaza impacted species beyond humans, and how have animal activist communities responded? How might the study of religion and animals be used to rethink interspecies futures in war-torn communities?
- Competing Futures Around Human and Animal Health: What role and influence has the Make America Health Again (MAHA) discourse played in trying to reshape attitudes towards vegetarianism and veganism? How does the future that proponents of the MAHA agenda envision intersect with animals and religion? What impact does the MAHA delegitimization of the health sciences have on human/animal relationships?

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this Unit is to advance scholarship by providing a forum for scholars whose work addresses the study of animals and religion, and to engage religious studies

scholars with the emergent field of animal studies. The Unit emphasizes the theoretical implications of attention to animals for the study of religion and a diversity of approaches, including, but not limited to:

- Cultural and comparative history of religions
- Critical theory
- Ethnography and anthropology of religion
- Descriptions of the role(s) religious/theological traditions have played in mediating representations of nonhuman animals
- Assessments of relationships between religious constructions of animals and those animals

Chairs

- Christopher Carter
ccarter@mtso.edu
 - Katharine Mershon, Western Carolina University
kmershon@wcu.edu
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Anthropology of Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

We invite proposals using anthropological theories and methods to explore diverse traditions, regions, topics, periods, and standpoints from across the discipline. The steering committee has identified the following areas to be of particular interest for individual and panel submissions in 2026:

- **Critical Ethnographies of Time and Temporalities:** With this year's presidential theme being "Future/s", we invite papers that seek to theorize, problematize, and otherwise critically examine how different religions conceive of time and its movement(-s). This might include ethnographic examinations of how time and time scales are imagined, such as "deep histories" and "deep futures"; the religious affects (hope, sorrow, etc.) that shape how people reckon with and

relate to time; and/or the distinct techniques and practices that religious actors use to engage with times other than the present (e.g., memorialization, divination, prophecy, etc.)

- **(Un-)Orthodoxies:** This panel invites papers exploring persistence and perhaps increasing appeal of religious groups that label themselves as “orthodox.” This panel invites papers examining the seemingly contradictory appeal of Orthodox movements and theologies across Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and other traditions. How do self-described orthodox religions define themselves in relation to or against other forms of fundamentalist, conservative, or illiberal theologies? What do ethnographic approaches reveal about what makes orthodoxy an appealing epistemic stance in the contemporary world? How might a comparative approach to studying orthodoxy(-ies) help us better understand religion in the contemporary world?
- **Global Philosophies of Religion beyond the Text:** In collaboration with the [Global-Critical Philosophy of Religion Unit](#) and the [Indian and Chinese Religions in Dialogue Unit](#), we seek to sponsor a panel engaging with non-textual and non-Western sources for the philosophy of religion. Papers should consider forms of lived religious reasoning, argumentation, or enactment from sources other than texts, such as oral traditions, rituals, performances, arts, etc. We imagine papers that explore “philosophies from below,” including non-hegemonic and marginalized systems of knowledge, indigenous ways of knowing, conspiracy and other forms of stigmatized knowledge, peripheral epistemologies, etc., and which treat those forms of knowledge as valuable resources for cross-cultural inquiries in the philosophy of religion.
- **Pre-Organized Panels.** In keeping with our mission to present the strongest and most innovative work in the anthropology of religion, we also welcome proposals for fully formed panels on topics other than those outlined above. Ideally, such panels will focus on a topic of special interest to anthropologists, and be composed of scholars whose perspectives and levels of expertise complement (rather than replicate) each others’. Further, we encourage proposals that use creative and alternative formats that elevate critical dialogue.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit draws together scholars who utilize the methodological tools and theoretical perspectives of anthropology in the study of religion as a social and cultural phenomenon. Given the increasing importance of anthropology and ethnography for

the academic study of religion, we serve the academy as an important forum for sustained discussion and critique of anthropological approaches that can connect scholars working on diverse traditions, regions, and eras who otherwise might not have the opportunity to learn from each other. Interested members are encouraged to join our (low volume) list-serv: <https://aarlists.org/>

Chairs

- Brendan Jamal Thornton
brendan_thornton@unc.edu
 - Eric Hoenes Del Pinal
ehoenes@uncc.edu
-

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Anthropology of Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

We invite proposals from the full range of anthropological theories and methods. In keeping with the format of the June sessions, the steering committee is especially interested in a panel on the following topic:

- **Digital Ethnography/Virtual Ethnographic Practices:** This panel invites papers that explore emerging intersections of digital religion and ethnographic practice by examining how religious life is increasingly configured across virtual and physical settings. We are especially interested in proposals that highlight methodological innovations in digital ethnography and new theoretical approaches for understanding how religious actors navigate, blend, and/or differentiate between virtual and offline worlds.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit draws together scholars who utilize the methodological tools and theoretical perspectives of anthropology in the study of religion as a social and cultural

phenomenon. Given the increasing importance of anthropology and ethnography for the academic study of religion, we serve the academy as an important forum for sustained discussion and critique of anthropological approaches that can connect scholars working on diverse traditions, regions, and eras who otherwise might not have the opportunity to learn from each other. Interested members are encouraged to join our (low volume) list-serv: <https://aarlists.org/>

Chairs

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- Eric Hoenes Del Pinal
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In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Artificial Intelligence and Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

AI Sentience, Consciousness, and Personhood

The possibility of AI sentience, consciousness, and personhood continues to be an open question. While many have argued that these categories are impossible for AI ([Schneider 2021](#)), or at least AI as currently implemented through large language models, a series of papers published in the fall of 2025 cast doubt on this seemingly established position (Berg, et. al 2025, Kim 2025, Lindsey 2025). While none of these papers suggest that AI has achieved full human-level consciousness, they do indicate that the matter is far from closed. We seek papers that address the question of AI sentience, consciousness, and personhood, engaging religious studies and/or theology. Could AI have or possibly acquire one or more of these categories? What are the social, ethical, or theological implications of AI having (or not having) sentience, consciousness, and personhood? How might other related disciplines, such as animal studies, give us insights into the idea of sharing the planet with an emergent intelligent algorithm/species/being? How might religion, which has often postulated the idea that

there are other intelligent entities (gods, spirits, angels, etc.), bring to bear resources to help us think about this topic?

[Co-Sponsored Session with Art, Literature and Religion:](#) Artificial intelligence has changed the way people encounter art and shape religious imagination. This panel explores how AI is reshaping religious imagination, interpretation, and artistic expression. We invite papers examining AI's role in practices such as divination, textual interpretation, pastoral care, and the creation and reception of religious art. How does AI-generated imagery challenge concepts like the sublime, the imago Dei, or human creativity? What ethical, legal, or theological questions arise as religious communities adopt or respond to AI-produced art? Papers can draw on historical, theoretical, or contemporary case studies to offer nuanced theoretical insights or experimental explorations that provide new perspectives into how AI is transforming practices once rooted in human understanding, creativity, and relationality in a rapidly evolving landscape.

[Co-Sponsored Session with Ritual Studies:](#) "Artificial Intelligence in/as/for Ritual"—We invite papers that explore how artificial intelligence and ritual studies together illuminate questions of future(s). The convergence of these fields opens unique pathways for considering how futures are imagined, enacted, and materialized through both ancient practices and emergent technologies. Some papers may be related to particular practices (e.g., the [AI Jesus taking confession in a church in Switzerland](#), algorithmic divination, virtual tarot, simulated rituals), or more theoretically at the intersection of ritual studies and artificial intelligence.

[Co-Sponsored Session with the Class, Labor, and Religion Unit:](#) The AI and Religion and the Class, Labor, and Religion Units invite papers that consider the implications and impacts of artificial intelligence on workers, labor, and/or class from the perspective of religion/theology/ethics. For example, religious/theological/ethical analyses of how AI has transformed labor processes or displaced workers; of class inequalities related to AI; of workers' responses to AI; or of AI itself as a worker.

[Co-Sponsored Session with the Korean Religions Unit:](#) "Korean Religions in the Age of AI"

According to the IMF, South Korea has one of the highest AI adoption rates in the world. About a third of the population uses ChatGPT every month. The newly elected government led by Lee Jae Myung is putting AI at the forefront of its economic policy. In Korea's highly pluralistic society, religious communities are already experimenting with AI in strikingly diverse ways. This panel invites papers focusing on any topic related to the present and future relationship between Korean religions and AI, including:

approaches to the use of AI related to Korean religious values, applications of AI in religious communities or scholarship, and/or ethical and philosophical debates about AI. Why should scholars interested in religion and AI pay attention to Korea?

Statement of Purpose

The study of religion and its interactions with culture has long been a crucial aspect of the humanities. As our world continues to evolve and change, it is more important than ever to understand the ways in which religion shapes and is shaped by the societies and cultures it exists within.

One area of our society that is currently undergoing rapid development is artificial intelligence (AI). As AI technology advances, it is increasingly likely that it will have a significant impact on religion, theologies, and religious studies. For this reason, it is important for religious studies scholars/theologians to carefully consider the ways in which AI might affect and be affected by religious practices, beliefs, and communities.

This Unit provides a forum for scholars to engage in critical and interdisciplinary discussions of the ways in which AI is impacting religion and religious studies, as well as the ways in which religious language and concepts are used in discussions of artificial intelligence. By bringing together experts from a wide range of disciplines, this unit provides valuable insights into the complex and rapidly-evolving relationship between AI and religion.

Chairs

- Tracy J. Trothen
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- Randall Reed
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In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Arts, Literature, and Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

The Arts, Literature and Religion Unit welcomes paper and panel proposals for the following themes. Please indicate to which of these themes you are responding. We also welcome closed-panel proposals.

1. Futuristic Representations in Religious Arts and Literature

The AAR Presidential theme for 2026 is "The future," a contested and generative category across religious, literary, artistic, and theoretical discourses. Questions concerning to whom the future is imagined to belong, and for whom it is believed to function, have been examined across a wide range of scholarly disciplines as well as cinematic and narrative traditions. At the same time, anticipations of possible futures constitute preoccupations within many religious communities and practices. This panel invites paper proposals that investigate artistic or literary engagements with themes of the future from any historical period, geographical region, or religious context.

Contact: George Pati, george.pati@valpo.edu

2. An Excursion and Discussion at the Clyfford Stills Museum.

Clyfford Still had a unique artistic vision and was unwilling to compromise it for money or recognition. As he evolved as an artist, Still's works transitioned from recognizable images or landscapes to more abstract shapes, colors, and lines to express ideas or feelings on huge canvases. Still insisted that all of his work be kept together in one museum, which led to the creation of the Clyfford Still museum in downtown Denver, Colorado. We will be meeting at the museum for a tour together, followed by a conversation to explore how Stills might inspire theologians and biblical scholars to express our ideas in new ways, creating new futures in Theology and Biblical Studies.

Organized by Dr. Angela Hummel

Creating documentary poetry to engage sacred texts in new ways.

Documentary poetry is an artistic practice that seeks to extend, interrogate, and dialogue with a text in new ways. Exemplars in this art making are Claudia Rankine and Layli Long Soldier. This call for papers invites people of all religious and spiritual backgrounds to create documentary poetry with their sacred texts, helping artists and readers live into new futures by holding what helps us and transforming those passages that may have caused harm to us or others in the past.

Contact: Angela Hummel, angela.lynn.hummel@gmail.com

3. The Art of Divination, Prophecy, and Apocalypse: The Religious Aesthetics of the Future

The idea of something being an art suggests a specific practice, particularly a certain style of that practice. The art of divination, prophecy, and apocalypse explores how artistic practice and style align with religious figurations of the future. Asking questions about the artistic style of divination, prophecy, and apocalypse pushes us to consider aesthetic aspects beyond ocular-centric discourses (think terms like “visions of,” “second sight,” “clairvoyance,” and “foresight”) and instead encourages a broader understanding of the various religious “senses” of the future. While some papers might examine visual and sight-based artistic expressions related to divination, prophecy, and apocalypse, others might focus on different senses, such as the embodied practices of *Ifa* divination. Still, other works could explore auto-writing as both a literary and a spiritual practice, investigate the language of “catching the spirit” in Gospel performances, or turn to Rasa theory to examine potential interrelationships among emotion, experience, and knowledge in South Asian religious thought.

Contact: Anderson Moss-Weaver, amoss@bates.edu

4. Cia Sautter- *Art, Religion, and Healing*

Religions have long used the arts to assist with physical and spiritual healing. This has included the use of dance and performance, music, visual arts, and story. With current neuroscience, somatic, and medical research confirming the importance of these practices, this panel explores the traditions while also looking to their future. Papers on the performing arts are especially appreciated, but all explorations of the arts and healing are welcome.

Contact: Cia Sautter, cialuna13@gmail.com

5. AI and the Search for the Sacred: Arts, Texts, and Social Practices (Cosponsorship with the Artificial Intelligence and Religion unit)

Artificial intelligence has changed the way people encounter art and shape religious imagination. This panel explores how AI is reshaping religious imagination, interpretation, and artistic expression. We invite papers examining AI’s role in practices such as divination, textual interpretation, pastoral care, and the creation and reception of religious art. How does AI-generated imagery challenge concepts like the sublime, the imago Dei, human creativity, or ritual? What ethical, legal, or theological questions

arise as religious communities adopt or respond to AI-produced art? Papers can draw on historical, theoretical, or contemporary case studies to offer nuanced theoretical insights or experimental explorations that provide new perspectives into how AI is transforming practices once rooted in human understanding, creativity, and relationality in a rapidly evolving landscape.

Contact: Ossama Abdelgawwad, ossama.abdelgawwad@valpo.edu; Randall Reed, reedrw@appstate.edu

6. **Maps: Fantastical, Acquisitive and Religious (Possible cosponsorship with the Comparative Studies in Religion Unit)**

Maps have long been an inventive way for religious thought-leaders, institutions, and artists to represent specific teachings, targets, and aspirations in visual terms. This panel invites papers on the religious meanings embedded in maps and charts. Some maps imagine utopian 'places' or depict fantastic 'other worlds'; some re-order the known cosmos to represent a religious perception of this world or reality (allegorical maps, for instance); while others are used acquisitively to claim territory or populations in the interest of an expanding religion. Other interpretations are also invited. This panel seeks scholars who will enjoy sharing investigations into instructive examples of maps in religious systems for a visually vibrant and intellectually intriguing session.

Contact: Christopher Parr, parrch@webster.edu

7. **What Can Narratives Do? (Possible co-sponsorship with Buddhism Unit)**

This panel invites presentations exploring how, in Buddhist contexts—especially from China to Japan—narratives serve as a space to reconsider, rethink, and sometimes subvert ritual protocols, gender norms, conceptions of the afterlife, and non-human ontology.

Contact: Marta Sanvido — marta.sanvido@yale.edu

Statement of Purpose

This Unit seeks to engage the critical issues at the intersection of religion, literature, and the arts. We are concerned with both the aesthetic dimensions of religion and the religious dimensions of literature and the arts, including the visual, performative, written, and verbal arts. Approaches to these two avenues of concern are interdisciplinary and varied, including both traditional methodologies — theological, hermeneutical, and comparative approaches associated with the history of religions — and emerging

methodologies, those that emerge from poststructuralism, studies in material culture, and cultural studies.

Chairs

- Adam Newman
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 - George Pati
george.pati@valpo.edu
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Asian North American Religion, Culture, and Society Unit

Call for Proposals

The ANARCS Unit welcomes all types of proposals, including but not limited to individual papers, prearranged papers panels, and roundtable discussions for the 2026 AAR Meeting in Denver, CO. All proposals related to Asian North American religions will be considered. In addition, we especially welcome proposals on the following topics:

1. Reconfiguring AAPI Religious Futures

In light of the 2026 AAR Presidential Theme ("FUTURE/S"), we invite proposals related to the future of Asian American religions and the study thereof. How do AAPI religious traditions consider the concepts of eschatology, teleology, the ultimate, and/or apocalypse? How does Southwest Asian and North Africa (SWANA) inspire us to rethink the boundaries of Asian American religions? What do past/current studies of genealogical and generational trends tell us about the next generations of Asian American religious communities and identities? Are there new or emerging generational trends that raise questions about the future of Asian American religions? Especially in this time of political and economic uncertainty, what is the state and future of the

academic study of AAPI religions? We also encourage proposals on the role and responsibility of AAPI religious scholarship beyond the academy.

2. War, Conflict, and AAPI Political Coalitional Identity

This past year has been marked with the initiation, persistence, and escalation of wars and political conflicts in the US and around the world. As such, we invite proposals related to the political identity and category of “Asian American” from religious perspectives. What are Asian American religious perspectives and/or activism in response to wars and political conflicts, domestic or international? In what ways do international wars/conflicts inform Asian American religio-political perspectives, whether it be the ongoing war in Palestine or the enduring US settler-colonialism and militarization of the Asia-Pacific? How do Asian American political leaders shape not only local but also international political movements? We encourage proposals that focus on local mayor leaders like Zohran Mamdani and Michelle Wu to federal leaders like Young Kim and Tulsi Gabbard. What is the role of Asian American communities in either contributing to or combatting militant political ideologies, like Christian Nationalism and Islamophobia?

3. Asian American Religions and Science Fiction

We invite proposals that address the intersection of Asian American religions and science fiction of all media types, including and not exclusive of video games, films, novels, board/card games, comic books, etc. What are the religious themes and undertones of Asian American literary and cinematic science fiction? We especially encourage papers pertaining to Asian American futurism. In what ways is techno-orientalism shaping cultural and religious imaginations? How do popular extraterrestrial (aliens) and multiversal theories influence religious cosmologies? We are especially interested in proposals that explore the intersection of extraterrestrial aliens and political foreign-born “aliens,” conceptualizing “aliens” as cosmological and/or sociological categories.

4. Asian American Religions, Science, and Technological Innovations

We are currently experiencing strikingly rapid developments in technology and science, reshaping global interconnectedness and cultures. How has the digital world and advancements in technology influenced Asian American religious sensibilities, especially as a function of digital diasporas? In what ways do Asian American religious traditions and communities reject or embrace evolving technologies, like artificial intelligence? How do Asian American religions wrestle with the boundary between scientific fact and fiction? How do Asian American religious communities engage scientific misinformation and medical conspiracy theories? We encourage proposals that address the role of Asian American professionals in STEM fields and their influence on Asian American religion, science, and technological innovation.

5. Progressive Pedagogies in a Regressive Era

Due to prevalent political, cultural, and legal attacks on universities and professors, higher education is experiencing an existential crisis. Therefore, we invite proposals that address the ways that scholars and teachers of Asian American religions can address current societal dynamics. What are the risks and responsibilities of complying with or resisting institutional, state, and federal educational policies? What are strategies to preserve the integrity of AAPI scholarship and pedagogy, especially in institutions and states targeting open discussions of race? What are our pedagogical objectives for our students, i.e., what do we want them to learn in this political moment? How do we advocate for our students and colleagues, including in K-12 education, whose educational desires/goals are impeded by anti-intellectual and xenophobic movements?

Statement of Purpose

This Unit (hereafter referred to as ANARCS) is one of the primary vehicles for the advancement of the study of the religions and practices of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the United States and Canada. As an integral player in the development of the emerging field of Asian American religious studies, ANARCS has cultivated the work of junior and senior scholars from an impressive array of disciplines, including the history of religion, sociology, theology, philosophy, ethics, anthropology, psychology, education, and American and ethnic studies. ANARCS encourages new perspectives on Asian North American religious practices and faith communities, as well as innovative theoretical work that extends the concepts of empires, diaspora, transnationalism, globalization, im/migration, orientalism, adaptation, acculturation, race, ethnicity, marginalization, oppression, and resistance. In addition to this list of concepts, ANARCS

will explore theoretical, philosophical, and theological concepts, such as aesthetics, beauty, and love. ANARCS seeks to foster and mentor scholars (junior, senior, and nontraditional) through preconference sessions, gathering for meals, and maintaining a robust listserv.

Chairs

- Rupa Pillai
rupillai@sas.upenn.edu
 - Helen Kim
helenkim@emory.edu
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Augustine and Augustinianisms Unit

Call for Proposals

Augustine and the Future

Augustine's reflections on memory, time, and eschatology remain rich sources for thinking about how humans relate to the past, present, and future – even as he also troubles standard ways of thinking about temporality. His legacy in political thought in particular has also generated ongoing debate about the degree to which “political Augustinianism” may fund hope for change in the direction of justice and love – or, conversely, enjoins “realist” perseverance. We invite papers that reflect on Augustine's thought on “the future” broadly construed, including Augustine's thought on time and temporality, eschatology, hope, and social or political “progress.” Papers on other topics in Augustine's thought will also be considered.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit provides a forum for the historical and constructive study of issues relating to the life and thought of Augustine of Hippo, including how it was received in various eras and how it might be a resource for religious thought today. We work collaboratively

with other units and constituencies of AAR to promote scholarly conversations across fields and methodologies. We are committed to providing an inclusive scholarly environment where new voices are heard and critical analyses advanced. Calls for papers, new publications, and other updates in the field of Augustinian Studies can be found on our "AAR Augustine & Augustinianisms Unit" [Facebook](#) page.

Chairs

- Sarah Stewart-Kroeker, Princeton Theological Seminary
sarah.stewartkroeker@gmail.com
 - Sean Hannan
hannans@macewan.ca
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Bahá'í Studies Unit

Call for Proposals

The Bahá'í Studies Unit invites submissions that engage with the history, texts, and practices of the Bahá'í community. The unit is also interested in papers that explore how the Bahá'í Faith intersects with methodologies in the study of religion. We seek to understand the unique ways in which Bahá'ís approach the study of their own faith and of other religions. Proposals may address how Bahá'ís incorporate theological perspectives into their scholarly work or examine Bahá'í beliefs and practices through the lens of theories and approaches in the study of religion.

Thanks to generous support from the Corinne True Center for Bahá'í History, the unit provides individual grants of up to \$500 to help cover travel and participation costs at the AAR annual meeting for presenters whose proposals are accepted.

Statement of Purpose

The Bahá'í Studies Unit explores a wide range of topics within Bahá'í studies including, but not limited to, Bahá'í theology, philosophy, mysticism, history, law, institutions,

identity, spiritual psychology, devotional practices, and community life. We also focus on the application of Bahá'í social teachings to contemporary issues such as racial justice, gender equality, the intersection of science and religion, socio-economic inequality, nonviolent social change, and global interconnectedness. Our unit aims to foster a diverse scholarly environment that brings together various perspectives and traditions.

Chairs

- Christopher Glen White
chwhite@vassar.edu
 - Omid Ghaemmaghami, Corinne True Center for Baha'i History
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-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Bioethics and Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

The Bioethics and Religion Unit invites proposals for the 2026 Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Denver. We welcome submissions that explore the intersection of bioethics, religion, and society through diverse methodological and disciplinary approaches. Proposals related to the 2026 Presidential Theme of "The Future" are particularly welcome and relevant to our Unit. Proposals addressing the following themes are particularly encouraged. We also welcome proposals that address innovative or emerging topics related to religion and bioethics not explicitly listed below:

1. AI and Bioethics:

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in healthcare and other domains raises complex ethical and religious questions. How does AI challenge traditional conceptions of autonomy, dignity, and the patient-provider relationship? What theological or ethical insights might guide the use of AI in decision-making, predictive medicine, or healthcare resource allocation? We seek papers that address these issues, as well as broader

concerns such as bias in AI algorithms, the ethical implications of AI replacing human roles, and the role of religion in shaping AI ethics.

2. The Future of Religion and Bioethics:

As healthcare continues to evolve, so do the relationships with religious and spiritual patients, providers, and caregivers. We welcome interdisciplinary, empirical, and other thoughtful proposals on the future of religion and bioethics, moving beyond traditional arguments and positions and into new approaches and questions.

3. Religion, Bioethics, and Sources of Health Knowledge:

Changes in the political structures of healthcare and health knowledge in the United States are reshaping the frameworks used to think about health and bioethical questions related to values and knowledge of what is true about health, including safety and efficacy of treatments. With the shifts in whose knowledge claims are authoritative, such as changes in leadership and philosophy in relation to scientific evidence within the Department of Health & Human Services, medical and scientific groups are adjusting their focus to providing scientific sources of health recommendations that contrast with those coming from the federal government, where there had previously been consensus. Religious and spiritual communities are responding to these changes in different ways, and we welcome proposals that address the religious and spiritual aspects of these shifts.

4. Future Healthcare Technologies and Religion:

Continuing with the theme of the future, we welcome proposals that address emerging healthcare technologies in relation to religious and spiritual communities, traditions, and practices. What bioethical questions will need answers in the coming generation, and how can we begin to approach them now?

Statement of Purpose

This Unit offers a unique venue within the AAR for addressing the intersections of religion, bioethics, and health/healthcare related matters. It encourages creative and scholarly examinations of these intersections, drawing on such disciplines as religious and philosophical ethical theory, theology, ethnography, clinical ethics, history, and law. It seeks to undertake this scholarly work by drawing on a variety of perspectives (e.g., Feminist/Womanist/Mujerista, cross-cultural, and interreligious) and to demonstrate the contributions that religious and ethical scholarship can offer to the critical exploration of contemporary bioethical issues.

Chairs

- Amy Michelle DeBaets
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 - Mark Lambert
mark.lambert@dmu.edu
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Black Theology Unit

Call for Proposals

The Black Theology Unit invites papers that critically engage concepts of time (e.g., in time, on time, out of time, with time, for time, by time, beyond time, past, present, and future time, timelessness, marking time, passing time, loosing time, wasting time, racing against time, exceeding time, surpassing time, making time, negating time, embracing time, through time, celebrating time, timeliness, a matter of time, biding time, timed, this time, such a time as this, good time, bad time, etc.). Time can be a constraint and/or an opportunity in fugitivities, quests for liberation, and constructive developments of institutional infrastructure.

- In Black Theology, time is an important biblical theme in the Exodus and for Hagar. Papers may address the biblical concept of time taking up a comparative analysis of time in Black Theology and womanist theology, for Moses and Hagar and liberation journeys.
- Time plays a fundamental conceptual, theological, and philosophical role in Black films and literature — especially those engaging Afrofuturist concepts. Papers addressing the ways Black Theological “time” resonates in, challenges, transforms, and/or informs these artistic and literary forms are welcome. Time as it relates to sin, sinners, and (the film) *Sinners*, is an interest here.
- One of the central attractions of artificial intelligences is the way these intelligences fundamentally change our relationship with time (and how we spend our time). Thinking about the worth of time (especially as it relates to labor), we welcome papers that offer critical Black Theological approaches to

artificial time, the artificiality of time, and what Artificial Intelligence does with/to time.

- Papers addressing comparative analytical approaches between transtime, queer time, indigenous, and Black (Theological) time are encouraged.
- We invite papers that address “demonic” (i.e., sorting and/or spiritual) and organizational institutional, governing, and social time, especially in the wake of the 60th anniversary year of the National Committee of Negro Churchmen’s “Black Power” Statement and the 250th anniversary year of United States “Independence Day.” We also welcome papers that engage Black Theology to *plan* and strategize for (better) future times (and places).
- The times of historic and contemporary Islams — especially at the intersections of women and Black theology are interest.
- Papers on time as it relates to social media (including viral trends and themes) and Black Theology are welcomed.
- What is the “time” we seek? (i.e., “I am living/working/being/looking for a time when. . . .”)

Statement of Purpose

The Black Theology Unit seeks to further develop Black theology as an academic enterprise. This is accomplished, in part, by providing opportunities for intellectual exchange related to the fundamentals of Black theology’s content and form. In addition, the Unit seeks to broaden conversation by bringing Black theology into dialogue with other disciplines and perspectives on various aspects of African diasporic religious thought and life.

Chairs

- Jennifer S. Leath
jennifer.s.leath@gmail.com

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Body and Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

The Body and Religion Unit aims to provide a forum for multi-, inter-, and transdisciplinary conversations that theorize the contribution of the body and embodiment to religions.

This year, we invite proposals as follows:

- Roundtables: We invite roundtable proposals on diverse methodologies and understandings of the body within various religious contexts. For roundtable proposals, we would like to see a focus on discussion rather than presentation of prepared papers (e.g. each panelist is given five-seven minutes at the beginning to discuss their work and then the rest of the time is devoted to discussion).
- Papers: We invite paper panels and individual papers. When reviewing your paper proposals, we particularly appreciate proposals that do not simply discuss bodily activities but also explicitly reflect on the difference this focus makes to the academic study of religions. This year we are interested in proposals on body/bodies and religion in relation to the following themes: pilgrimage, movement, imperiled bodies, future bodies, and purity culture.

*Please note that we are issuing an open call for roundtables but not an open call for papers. Papers must focus on the themes outlined above.

If your proposal gets accepted and you agree to be on the program, we expect you to show up to participate in the annual meeting, barring unforeseeable exceptional circumstances. Please note that it is the policy of the Body and Religion Unit to refuse no-shows at the Annual Meeting from the program for up to the following two years.

Statement of Purpose

Statement of Purpose

This Unit aims to draw together scholars working with different methodologies who address body and embodiment as a fundamental category of analysis in the study of religion. The Unit provides a forum for sustained discussion and critique of diverse

approaches to body and religion by scholars working on a wide range of traditions, regions, and eras.

Journal

The Body and Religion Unit launched the peer-reviewed journal, *Body and Religion*, through *Equinox*, in 2017. We invite papers for submission on a rolling basis, including papers presented on panels hosted by, but not limited to, the Body and Religion Unit. Journal Homepage: <https://journal.equinoxpub.com/BAR>

Steering Committee Membership

Those who take on the responsibilities of being steering committee members will participate in decision-making processes for the annual call for papers, respond to unit communication, and read, rank, and comment on submitted proposals in March. If a steering committee member finds that they are not able to fulfill these tasks in a given year, they should communicate with the co-chairs. If a steering committee member cannot participate in this work, the co-chairs may replace them.

Chairs

- Iva Patel, Augsburg University
pateli@augsborg.edu
- Gwendolyn Gillson, Illinois College
gwendolyn.gillson@ic.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Bonhoeffer: Theology and Social Analysis Unit

Call for Proposals

The Bonhoeffer: Theology and Social Analysis Unit invites paper proposals on themes related to Dietrich Bonhoeffer's life, theology, and legacy.

This year, we especially welcome proposals that offer constructive explorations of Bonhoeffer's theological, practical, and ethical legacy as it pertains to AAR President Laurel Schneider's 2026 annual meeting theme: "FUTURE/S." Possibilities might include

engagements with Bonhoeffer's emphasis on responsibility and future generations; or reflection on the future of theological education or the future of ecclesial and ministerial forms, structures, and institutions that draw on Bonhoeffer's insights and experience.

Other constructive engagements might take up Bonhoeffer's central questions (or future-oriented variations thereof): "Who is Christ for us today (or, tomorrow)?" "Have there ever been people in history who in their time, like us, had so little ground under their feet, people to whom every possible alternative open to them at the time appeared equally unbearable, senseless, and contrary to life?" "Are we still of any use?" "The ultimately responsible question is not how I extricate myself heroically from the situation but how a coming generation is to go on living."

Bonhoeffer's poetry and fiction also provide abundant opportunities to explore this theme.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit seeks to explore the historical and contemporary interface between theology and public life within the context of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's legacy in theology. Together with professional societies affiliated in the study of Bonhoeffer's life and thought, the Unit has explored a variety of topics from medical ethics to political life in a global context.

Chairs

- Matthew Puffer, Villanova University
matthew.puffer@villanova.edu
- Karen V. Guth
kguth@holycross.edu

Buddhism and Caste Seminar

Call for Proposals

With the recent rise of the interdisciplinary field of critical caste studies, scholars of South Asian religion have come together to examine how caste hierarchies are created and maintained in India and how these structures are resisted by caste-oppressed and anti-caste actors. In recognition that, like South Asian studies, mainstream Buddhist Studies has lacked a sustained engagement with the construction of caste and counter-hegemonic anti-caste worldviews, this seminar seeks to bring together scholars of premodern and modern Buddhism who approach the field from the areas of history, anthropology, philosophy, literary, and decolonial studies.

In the second year of the Buddhism and Caste seminar, we are especially interested in discussions of caste beyond the Indian subcontinent. Buddhist Studies tends to think of caste as being an Indic Buddhist phenomenon, resulting in disciplinary silos. This poses a barrier to the interdisciplinary discussion required to connect Buddhism in South Asia to the wider Buddhist world. However, caste not isolated to South Asia but moves with the diaspora, where it intersects with gender, racial, and religious discourses in other countries. Taking our cue from recent scholarship on caste in the diaspora, in the second year of the seminar we will consider the relevance of caste categories for other areas of the Buddhist world, including not only the broader South Asian cultural sphere, but also the ways that caste has travelled to Central, Southeast, and East Asia; and the role of caste in global and transoceanic Buddhist modernist discourse.

We seek diverse perspectives and welcome applicants working in various regions, religious traditions, disciplines, and time periods. We also encourage innovative proposals that allow specialists of different fields to present on shared or connected themes. We are especially interested in proposals from underrepresented groups, including graduate students, contingent faculty, scholars from caste-oppressed backgrounds, scholars of color, scholars of LGBTQ communities, and scholars with disabilities.

Statement of Purpose

The current historical moment poses unique challenges and opportunities for scholars of South Asia and the South Asian diaspora. In recent years, scholars and activists have been sounding alarms over threats and calls for violence made by increasingly powerful ultra-nationalist Hindu forces (Hindutva) against marginalized communities, including

Muslims, Dalits, Ādivāsi, LGBTQIA communities, and groups seeking equality and justice for women. Calls for violence are supported by a public discourse of historical distortion that presents Brahmins (the highest caste) as the primary agents of historical transformation and position subaltern communities as peripheral at best and at worst enemies of Indian civilization. This ultra-nationalist model presumes the inevitable triumph of Brahmanical imperial hegemony over the diverse regional cultures of premodern South Asia. As Dalit civil rights organizations like Equality Labs illustrate, caste is not isolated to South Asia but moves with the diaspora, where it intersects with gender, racial, and religious discourses in other countries.

With the recent rise of the interdisciplinary field of critical caste studies, scholars of South Asian religion have come together to examine how caste hierarchies are created and maintained in India and how these structures are resisted by caste-oppressed and anti-caste actors. In recognition that, like South Asian studies, mainstream Buddhist Studies has lacked a sustained engagement with the construction of caste and counter-hegemonic anti-caste worldviews, this seminar seeks to bring together scholars of premodern and modern Buddhism who approach the field from the areas of history, anthropology, philosophy, literary, and decolonial studies. Our goal is to provide a collaborative environment to investigate how caste has structured the history of Buddhism and Buddhist Studies, as well as the tools that Buddhism has offered for anti-caste, anti-racist, and postcolonial movements.

We aim to generate scholarship around five interconnected themes across the five years of the seminar. We wish to gain a better understanding of (1) caste-centered focuses of Buddhist history; (2) the role of caste in Buddhist communities outside of India; (3) the enduring legacy of B.R. Ambedkar and Ambedkarite Buddhism; (4) the intersection of caste with other forms of inequality, including gender, sexuality, and race; (5) methodological reflections on how a focus on caste changes Buddhist Studies scholarship and pedagogy.

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Chairs

- Nicholas Witkowski

nwitkows@alumni.stanford.edu

- Adeana McNicholl

adeana.mcnicholl@vanderbilt.edu

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Buddhism and Caste Seminar

Call for Proposals

In the second year of the Buddhism and Caste seminar, we are especially interested in discussions of caste beyond the Indian subcontinent. Buddhist Studies tends to think of caste as being an Indic Buddhist phenomenon, resulting in disciplinary silos. This poses a barrier to the interdisciplinary discussion required to connect Buddhism in South Asia to the wider Buddhist world. However, caste not isolated to South Asia but moves with the diaspora, where it intersects with gender, racial, and religious discourses in other countries. Taking our cue from recent scholarship on caste in the diaspora, in the second year of the seminar we will consider the relevance of caste categories for other areas of the Buddhist world, including not only the broader South Asian cultural sphere, but also the ways that caste has travelled to Central, Southeast, and East Asia; and the role of caste in global and transoceanic Buddhist modernist discourse.

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ultra-nationalist Hindu forces (Hindutva) against marginalized communities, including Muslims, Dalits, Ādivāsi, LGBTQIA communities, and groups seeking equality and justice for women. Calls for violence are supported by a public discourse of historical distortion that presents Brahmins (the highest caste) as the primary agents of historical transformation and position subaltern communities as peripheral at best and at worst enemies of Indian civilization. This ultra-nationalist model presumes the inevitable triumph of Brahmanical imperial hegemony over the diverse regional cultures of premodern South Asia. As Dalit civil rights organizations like Equality Labs illustrate, caste is not isolated to South Asia but moves with the diaspora, where it intersects with gender, racial, and religious discourses in other countries.

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We seek diverse perspectives and welcome applicants working in various regions, religious traditions, disciplines, and time periods. We also encourage innovative proposals that allow specialists of different fields to present on shared or connected themes. We are especially interested in proposals from underrepresented groups, including graduate students, contingent faculty, scholars from caste-oppressed backgrounds, scholars of color, scholars of LGBTQ communities, and scholars with disabilities.

Chairs

- Nicholas Witkowski
nwitkows@alumni.stanford.edu
 - Adeana McNicholl
adeana.mcnicholl@vanderbilt.edu
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In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Buddhism in the West Unit

Call for Proposals

The Buddhism in the West Unit is seeking to fill two 90-minute sessions and strongly encourages proposals for fully developed panels, roundtable discussions, or other formats focused on a single theme, question, or recent publications. The Unit is happy to support co-sponsorships with other Units including, but not limited to: the Buddhism Unit; the Buddhist Critical-Constructive Reflection Unit; the Asian North American Religion, Culture, and Society Unit; the Space, Place, and Religion Unit; and the Class, Religion, and Theology Unit.

In addition to panels and papers related to the AAR's presidential theme, "Future/s," the Unit is also particularly interested this year in the following:

- Buddhist dystopias and end times (contact Laura Harrington, lharring@bu.edu)
- Ambivalence in the Production of Self and Other in Buddhism in the West (contact Blaine Patrick Werner, Jr., bw2yb@virginia.edu)
- Alternative Temporalities in Buddhism in the West
- Prophecies and Dreams About the Future (Contact Ben van Overmeire, ben.van.overmeire@dukekunshan.edu.cn)
- Queer Buddhist Futures (contact Upayadhi Luraschi, upayadhi@uchicago.edu)

AAR membership is not required to submit a proposal. Please contact the unit co-chairs with questions.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit seeks to:

- Provide a venue for new studies on Buddhism in non-Asian locales
- Facilitate communication and exchange between scholars working on Buddhism outside of Asia
- Offer a forum within which to collectively clarify the intellectual and methodological underpinnings of research on Buddhism in the West, and consider new possibilities in methods and approaches

Chairs

- Caroline Starkey
c.starkey@leeds.ac.uk
 - Adeana McNicholl
adeana.mcnicholl@vanderbilt.edu
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Buddhism Unit

Call for Proposals

The Buddhism Unit welcomes proposals for Papers Sessions, Roundtables, and Individual Papers in all areas of the study of Buddhism. To encourage greater exchange among the various subfields within Buddhist Studies, we are particularly interested in sessions that confront enduring problems in the study of Buddhism, raise important theoretical or methodological issues, and/or bring fresh materials or perspectives to bear on themes of broad interest, especially those that address multiple regions and/or time periods. All proposals should demonstrate their coherence and significance in language accessible to the Steering Committee, which includes individuals working on diverse aspects of Buddhism. We are also committed to diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, rank, institutional affiliation, etc. WISAR (<http://libblogs.luc.edu/wisar/>) is an excellent resource for ensuring gender balance (if you are not listed in WISAR and would like to be, please consider uploading your information).

Although everyone is welcome to submit a proposal for Individual Papers, we are prioritizing contributions by graduate students and/or postdocs. Roughly four Individual Papers will be chosen for an omnibus session entitled "New Work in Buddhist Studies." Please do not submit a paper as both an Individual Paper Proposal and as part of a Papers Session Proposal.

All AAR sessions are now 90 minutes or 2 hours in length. If you wish, you may indicate which time-length you have in mind for a session, but we cannot guarantee it. Our Unit will be able to sponsor three 2-hour sessions and two 90-minute sessions and we gain an additional 2-hour session with co-sponsorship.

We welcome proposals on this year's Presidential Theme, "Future/s" or proposals that relate in some way to the location of the Annual Meeting (Denver).

Below are some of the other themes that our members have proposed for the meeting, but please also feel free to submit a proposal on topics not represented on this list. If you are interested in contributing to a proposal on one of these topics, please contact the organizer directly.

- ***The Lotus Sūtra and Women*** (Contact: Mariko Namba Walter, mnwalter@acansrsilkroad.org or mnbwalter@gmail.com)

The Lotus Sūtra is one of the major Mahāyāna texts explicitly mentioning women's enlightenment and there are many aspects of the sūtra, which refer to women's Buddhist practices and attainments. This proposed panel invites paper proposals on gender-related topics based on historical and textual studies, as well as those examining the gender issues relating to *the Lotus Sūtra* as cross-cultural social movements.

- ***Buddhism as Cinematic Experience and Practice*** [co-sponsorship with Religion, Film, and Visual Culture Unit] (Contact: Dhondup T. Rekjong, rekjong@gmail.com, and Jue Liang, storylj@gmail.com)

Instead of focusing on the content of films as relevant to Buddhism, this panel queries the embodied aspects of Buddhism as both cinematic experience and practice. Potential topics include: Film viewing as a Buddhist practice (individual viewing, collective, conversational; locations, settings, multisensational experiences); Filmmaking or film viewing as a new mode of studying Buddhism;

Filmmaking as both a depiction of Buddhism on screen and a practice of Buddhism itself; Filmmaking as a cinematic way of practicing Buddhism that moves beyond its textual, oral, and institutional authorities; Presenting Buddhism within the frame of a film is like experiencing it in a particular space and time. We welcome participation from filmmakers, artists, and other practitioners in filmmaking.

- **Buddhism and/as Utopia: From Steven Collins to Radical Buddhist Futures** (Contact: James Mark Shields, james.shields@bucknell.edu)

This panel explores utopian thinking in Buddhist traditions, taking Steven Collins's essay "Monasticism, Utopias, and Comparative Social Theory" in *Self and Society* as a starting point for examining how Buddhists have imagined ideal societies and futures. We seek papers that address utopian dimensions of Buddhist thought and practice across historical periods and regions, with particular interest in radical Buddhist reformers like Seno'o Girō who sought to transform society through Buddhist principles. How have Buddhist communities envisioned and worked toward alternative futures, and what might these visions offer for thinking about Buddhism's future/s today?

- **Humanistic Buddhism and the Future/s of Inter-religious Dialogue** (Contact: Jizhang Yi, jizhang.yi@utoronto.ca)

Humanistic Buddhism has become a significant force in shaping contemporary Buddhist practice, social engagement, and global ethical discourse. This panel examines how Humanistic Buddhist thought can contribute to reimagining the future/s of interreligious dialogue in a world marked by polarization, ethical uncertainty, and geopolitical conflict. We welcome participants from diverse perspectives—historical, philosophical, theological, or practical—who can speak to the ways Humanistic Buddhism might deepen, complicate, or transform models of dialogue across religious traditions.

- **The Modern Transformation of the Buddhist Canon** (Contact: Jiang Wu, jiangwu@arizona.edu)

Over the past two centuries, the Buddhist canon—whether in Pāli, Chinese, Tibetan, Mongolian, Japanese, or modern vernaculars—has undergone profound transformations. These changes were shaped by new print technologies, state-sponsored modernization, missionary encounters, global circulations of knowledge, and the emergence of academic disciplines that reclassified Buddhist scripture according to modern epistemologies. This panel invites proposals that examine how Buddhist canons were produced, transmitted, re-edited, translated, standardized, digitized, contested, or reinterpreted in modernity. The goal is to foster conversation across Buddhist traditions and methodological boundaries, bringing together scholars of textual history, material culture, book history, and the history of religion.

- **Growing, Giving, Refusing: Food Practices in Buddhist Communities**

(Contact: Paulina Kolata, pkolata@fas.harvard.edu)

From monastic regulations and almsgiving economies to temple cafés, mindful eating movements, and digital kitchen initiatives, food has long mediated Buddhist ethics, hierarchy, and belonging. This panel invites papers that examine how Buddhist communities across history materialize Buddhism through food practices: what is grown, donated, sold, or refused, and how these practices shape authority, intimacy, and care. This panel/roundtable welcomes contributions from diverse methodological approaches, geographies, and temporalities to explore how food shapes the embodied futures of Buddhism.

- **[What Can Narratives Do?](#)** [[co-sponsorship with Arts, Literature, and Religion Unit](#)] (Contact: Marta Sanvido, marta.sanvido@yale.edu)

This panel invites presentations exploring how, in Buddhist contexts—especially from China to Japan—narratives serve as a space to reconsider, rethink, and sometimes subvert ritual protocols, gender norms, conceptions of the afterlife, and non-human ontology.

- **Practices of Buddhist Prognostication** (Contact: Claire Elliot, celliot@sas.upenn.edu, or Yixiu Jiang, jiangy11@stanford.edu)

Prophecies, signs, portents, and other nimittas seem to infuse Buddhist texts and practice with a preoccupation with knowing the future. This panel invites papers from a diverse range of historical, ethnographic, textual, and/or regional perspectives to interrogate these future-telling practices and the beliefs that ground them. We seek to explore how futures are accessed, interpreted, and circulated, and what motivates the enduring Buddhist interest in foresight and prognostication.

- **The Creative Frontiers** (Contact: Lu Huang, luhuang@berkeley.edu)

Recent scholarship across Buddhist and Hindu history has demonstrated that so-called peripheral or marginal regions are often sites of cultural creativity. New research shows that frontiers have long generated innovative religious forms that later reshaped the wider world. This panel views frontiers not as passive receivers of tradition but as dynamic laboratories where new doctrines, iconographies, rituals, and narratives emerge. We invite papers that explore how frontier spaces become engines of religious futurity: places where new social possibilities, doctrinal developments, and mythic visions take shape. Submissions from all Buddhist traditions and methodological approaches, including textual, historical, anthropological, and ethnographic studies, are welcome.

- **Buddhist Postcolonial Futurities: Reaction, Reform, Revolution** (Contact: Tony Scott, scott@ioc.u-tokyo.ac.jp)

Decades of inter-imperial warfare almost wrecked the planet by the mid-twentieth century, but also opened radical opportunities for anti-imperial worldmaking. This panel aims to explore the role of Buddhist-inflected postcolonial futurities in such worldmaking, manifest as struggles for a new international order or complicity in silencing these same efforts.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit is the largest and most diverse forum for Buddhist studies in North America. We embrace the full historical range of the Buddhist tradition from its inception some two-and-a-half millennia ago to the present and span its entire geographical sweep — the Indian subcontinent, Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia, Central Asia, Tibet, Mongolia, China, Korea, Japan, and the West. In addition to being historically and geographically

inclusive, we have made efforts to encourage methodological plurality. Papers presented in recent years reflect, in addition to the philological and textual approaches of classic Buddhism, the methods of intellectual history, institutional history, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, gender and cultural studies, art history, literary theory, and postcolonial studies. We will continue to encourage cross-disciplinary exchange. This Unit is the forum of choice for many established scholars. For some years now, we have also striven to provide a forum for younger scholars to aid them in establishing their careers. Under normal circumstances, at least one session at the Annual Meeting is devoted to four or five individual papers; often many or all of these are from graduate students or younger scholars making their first academic presentation at a national conference. In recent years, a growing number of foreign scholars have come to recognize this Unit as a valuable forum to submit proposals, including scholars whose primary language is not English. We wish to continue to promote communication with scholars abroad and to provide opportunities for younger scholars. Finally, in recent years, the Buddhism Unit has hosted several broader critical conversations about changing methodological approaches in the field of Buddhist Studies. Because it draws diverse scholars from across the field, the Buddhism Unit at the AAR plays a special role in being a forum for conversations about disciplinary formation.

Chairs

- Amy P. Langenberg
langenap@eckerd.edu
- Megan Bryson, University of Tennessee
mbryson4@utk.edu

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Buddhism Unit

Call for Proposals

The Buddhism Unit welcomes proposals for the June Online Meeting. We plan to sponsor at least one session and possibly more with co-sponsorship.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit is the largest and most diverse forum for Buddhist studies in North America. We embrace the full historical range of the Buddhist tradition from its inception some two-and-a-half millennia ago to the present and span its entire geographical sweep — the Indian subcontinent, Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia, Central Asia, Tibet, Mongolia, China, Korea, Japan, and the West. In addition to being historically and geographically inclusive, we have made efforts to encourage methodological plurality. Papers presented in recent years reflect, in addition to the philological and textual approaches of classic Buddhology, the methods of intellectual history, institutional history, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, gender and cultural studies, art history, literary theory, and postcolonial studies. We will continue to encourage cross-disciplinary exchange. This Unit is the forum of choice for many established scholars. For some years now, we have also striven to provide a forum for younger scholars to aid them in establishing their careers. Under normal circumstances, at least one session at the Annual Meeting is devoted to four or five individual papers; often many or all of these are from graduate students or younger scholars making their first academic presentation at a national conference. In recent years, a growing number of foreign scholars have come to recognize this Unit as a valuable forum to submit proposals, including scholars whose primary language is not English. We wish to continue to promote communication with scholars abroad and to provide opportunities for younger scholars. Finally, in recent years, the Buddhism Unit has hosted several broader critical conversations about changing methodological approaches in the field of Buddhist Studies. Because it draws diverse scholars from across the field, the Buddhism Unit at the AAR plays a special role in being a forum for conversations about disciplinary formation.

Chairs

- Amy P. Langenberg
langenap@eckerd.edu
- Megan Bryson, University of Tennessee
mbryson4@utk.edu

Buddhist Critical-Constructive Reflection Unit

Call for Proposals

The Buddhist Critical-Constructive Reflection Unit explores how Buddhist thought and practice can address contemporary issues and, more broadly, how Buddhist modes of understanding can inform or be informed by academic study (in Religious Studies, Philosophy, Ethics, Theology, Sociology, Economics, etc.). With this dialogical approach in mind, we seek to support conversations that bring diverse perspectives to bear on the work of critical and constructive reflection.

This year, we welcome paper and panel proposals on any topic pertaining to the unit's areas of focus. We particularly invite proposals that engage with the theme for the 2026 meeting, *Future/s*. The steering committee wishes to specifically encourage new and emerging scholars to submit individual paper proposals, paper session proposals, and roundtable proposals around this theme as it relates to Buddhist temporalities, whether practically, ritually, materially, politically, philosophically, or otherwise, as we look to find opportunities to support the work of scholars not already well-connected in the field of Buddhist Studies.

We likewise invite individual paper proposals that might contribute to scholarly conversation around themes that our members have suggested, as indicated below. Where an organizer's contact email is provided, those interested in contributing to a proposal on that theme are encouraged to contact the organizer directly regarding a possible proposal.

Innovating Tradition

Taking up the question of the future of tradition, this session seeks scholars and scholar-practitioners exploring how forms of thought and practice rooted in Buddhist tradition are being recast for the twenty-first century by Buddhist institutions and persons connected to Buddhist institutions. Working against a notion of innovation as coming from those thinkers without Buddhist commitments, it explores responses to the current moment from within Buddhist institutions and examines applications of tradition toward the future.

Contact: Rachel Pang, rhfang@davidson.edu

Buddhism, Systems Theory, and the Legacies of Joanna Macy

2026 will mark the one-year anniversary of the passing of Joanna Macy and the fifty-year anniversary of the publication of Macy's first essay on Buddhism and systems theory. This session seeks papers exploring any aspect of Macy's work on mutual causality, identity, social and biological networks, or social action. The session is being proposed for potential co-sponsorship with the Buddhist Philosophy Unit.

Contact: Jessica Zu, xzu@usc.edu

Buddhism and Play

Following on the thoughtful and generative work done as part of a 2025 panel on Buddhism and labor, this session seeks to explore play across Buddhist worlds. Topics might include but are not limited to play and Buddhist pedagogy; games, didactic or otherwise; joking and joke work; cultures of leisure and recreation; and Buddhist theories of the ludic. Organizers are interested especially in proposals that include playful praxis as a component of the presentation.

Contact: Melissa Anne-Marie Curley, curley.32@osu.edu

Statement of Purpose

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Chairs

- Barbra R. Clayton
bclayton@mta.ca
- Melissa Anne-Marie Curley
curley.32@osu.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Buddhist Philosophy Unit

Call for Proposals

Members are encouraged to submit papers on any topic that fits under the purview of the unit. Due to the number of high quality proposals we receive, it is generally best to gather several presenters and submit a proposal for a panel on a topic. Individual paper proposals are rarely accepted. Panels can be organized in a variety of formats — with shorter or longer presentations, one or several or no respondents. Please feel free to reach out to the co-chairs Connie Kassor (constance.kassor@tri-c.edu) or Cat Prueitt (catherine.prueitt@ubc.ca) with any questions about organizing a paper or submitting a panel. So far, this year the following panel topics have been suggested. If you are interested in one of these topics please contact the point person listed:

- Omiscience - Davey Tomlinson - david.tomlinson@villanova.edu
- Intention - Anil Mundra - amundra@ucsb.edu
- Buddhist Social and Political Philosophy - Eliot Davenport - edavenport@andover.edu
- Philosophy of Meditation - James Macnee - jm2bm@virginia.edu
- Formal Systems of Logic in Buddhism - Jed Forman - jed.forman@simpson.edu
- The Unconditioned/Unconditionality - Allan Ding - allanyding@gmail.com
- Buddhist Philosophy and Generative AI/LLMs - Ralph Craig - ralph.h.craig@gmail.com
- Alternative Career Paths in Buddhist Philosophy/Buddhist Studies - Connie Kassor constance.kassor@tri-c.edu
- Thinking Through Black Buddhist Philosophy - Jessica Zu - xzu@usc.edu
- New Voices in Buddhist Philosophy (papers by graduate students and early career scholars) - Connie Kassor - constance.kassor@tri-c.edu

If you would like help in organizing a proposal for a panel not listed above, please email Connie and Cat as soon as possible.

We especially welcome panels that represent diverse voices. In assembling your panels, please consider the demographic and professional diversity of potential participants. In an effort to encourage more graduate students and early-career faculty to participate in our unit, please forward this call for proposals widely.

Review Process: Once papers and panels are submitted to the Buddhist Philosophy Unit, steering committee members perform a blind review based on the intellectual merits of the proposals, their fit with the BPU's statement of purpose, complementarity to other proposed topics, area diversity, and novelty of the topic for the BPU or field. Committee members cannot see any identifying information about the proposers. Based on the committee's ratings and comments, the chairs recommend several possible slates of panels to the steering committee, including co-sponsorships with other units. At this time, the chairs (who can see identifying information) may also share demographic information about the proposers in order to promote greater diversity of representation (including, if known, gender, race, career status or stage, and people who have not presented in the BPU before). Through discussion via Zoom or email, the committee forms a consensus about which panels to accept. To ensure the integrity of this process, please do not include identifying information about the proposers in the wording of the proposals."

Statement of Purpose

This Unit provides a forum for the scholarly study of Buddhist philosophical thought in its various forms across all regions and traditions of the Buddhist world. We seek to develop tightly organized sessions that deal not only with intra-Buddhist philosophical issues — such as those involving major philosophical traditions and major thinkers and texts — but also with topics involving the relationship between Buddhist philosophy and other traditions of philosophical thought, both ancient and modern. The Unit likewise provides a venue to examine the relationship between Buddhist thought and Buddhist practice. We encourage work on the full range of Buddhist philosophy, including but not limited to metaphysics, epistemology, soteriology, ethics, social philosophy, political philosophy, philosophy of language, process philosophy, philosophy of mind, and cross-cultural philosophy, etc. The Buddhist Philosophy Unit is committed to promoting greater diversity and inclusion within the Unit and in the field at large.

Chairs

- Catherine Prueitt
catherine.prueitt@ubc.ca
- Constance Kassor, Cuyahoga Community College
constance.kassor@tri-c.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Catholic Studies Unit

Call for Proposals

The Catholic Studies Unit invites submissions on diverse subjects in the study of Catholics and Catholicism across time and place. We are interested in proposals that are attentive to the ways in which history and theory relate to one another within the field of Catholic Studies. Co-chairs are happy to consult with those who are developing individual papers, paper sessions, roundtable proposals, or other creative formats.

The Unit encourages proposals on the following topics for the 2026 meeting in Denver, CO.

Environmentalism and Catholicism in the Mountain West

In a nod to the mountain West setting of the Denver conference, we ask for papers that consider Catholic Studies and environmentalism, very broadly speaking, including not only entanglements with the natural world, but interactions among the natural, the supernatural, and the human need for shelter and sanctuary.

Finding Catholicism in Archives

Prompted by the wider digitization of the Vatican holdings, we ask for papers that consider the work of finding Catholicism in various archives, whether those held in Vatican City or in archdiocese around the globe, but also state-run or private archives that house materials useful to understand Catholic lives and practices.

Catholicism in Asia

The Catholic Studies Unit seeks proposals that will continue its recent series of sessions on Catholicism in Asia. We invite full session proposals in addition to individual papers. Creative proposals—experiments with method, topic, comparison, etc.--are welcome, as are papers that consider Asia and Catholic Feminisms in a global or transregional context (see call below).

Catholicism in Africa

The Catholic Studies Unit seeks proposals to expand conversation on Catholicism in Africa. We invite full session proposals in addition to individual papers. Creative proposals—experiments with method, topic, comparison, etc.--are welcome as are papers that consider Africa and Catholic Feminisms in a global or transregional context (see call below).

Catholic Feminisms in a Global Context

The Catholic Studies Unit seeks proposals that will continue conversations begun in a recent panel on feminism and reproductive politics in the Americas. We are especially interested in transregional and global studies pertaining to the variety of Catholic Feminisms. We invite full session proposals in addition to individual papers. Creative proposals—experiments with method, topic, comparison, etc.--are welcome.

The Global Politics of the New “Counter-Cultural” Catholicism

Catholic Studies seeks proposals exploring the rising Catholic political counter-cultural class in various locales around the world. Recent decades have witnessed the rise, in many countries around the world, of a Catholic political class presenting themselves as “counter-cultural.” Drawing on examples of Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI as well as an interpretation of Catholic Social Teaching advanced by figures like Patrick J. Deneen, these leaders have built successful coalitions by aligning themselves with ideals formerly labeled “conservative,” such as “family,” “community,” and “tradition.” At the same time, they position themselves as a haven, a safe harbor for those alienated by a wider culture of wokeness, open borders, sexual libertinism, abortion on demand, and gender fluidity.

Catholicism and Horror

The Catholic Studies unit seeks proposals that utilize the lens of horror to critically engage with religious narratives that reveal sinister moments in the history of the Catholic Church.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit provides a scholarly forum to study the global Catholic community. We welcome critical studies, cultural, ethical, historical, and theological perspectives. We seek to mirror the subject community’s diversity in pursuing equally diverse methods to study that community.

Chairs

- Katherine Dugan, Springfield College
kdugan@springfieldcollege.edu
 - J. Michelle Molina, Northwestern University
molina@northwestern.edu
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Childhood Studies and Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

The Childhood Studies and Religion Unit welcomes proposals for individual papers, sessions, and roundtables that engage the intersection of religion and childhood or children, broadly construed. We are especially interested in proposals from non-European and non-Christian perspectives, and we welcome a range of methodologies from across the humanities and the social sciences.

This year, we hope to organize sessions around one or more of the following topics:

The Future: Moving Past Paternalist Child Protection Approaches

This call invites a dialogue on critiquing neoliberal and paternalistic approaches to child protection, which often view children from an individualist perspective that overlooks social and political contexts. This call aims to envision a future beyond paternalist child development models, urging religious educators, scholars, and faith communities to critically reflect on contemporary issues facing children—such as immigration, poverty, child abuse, and gender and sexual discrimination—moving beyond paternalism to build a future where all children experience safe belonging.

The conversation for the call focuses on, but is not limited to

- The colonial concept of child protection and its relationship with religion and impact on faith communities' initiatives and programs.

- The child protection views and the level of awareness in religion and religious studies programs and departments.
- The role of faith communities in creating child protection policies in public and political spaces and their impact on the lives of children locally and globally.
- Case studies of faith-based initiatives and child protection strategies.
- Practical approaches for integrating child protection into religious education and community programs.

We encourage scholars, educators, faith practitioners, children's ministry programs, policymakers, and community members to share their views, papers, and practices to help shape a future in which children are loved and recognized. For more information, please contact Dr. Rode Molla at rmolla@vts.edu.

Childhood and Resilience

Historically, and even today, childhood is generally regarded as a period of learning and receiving, with little emphasis on children's spiritual agency. Yet, the future requires societies to learn from children's resilience. Children raised in diverse cultures, religions, political systems, and communities face many daily challenges, shaping childhoods that demonstrate resilience through both survival and thriving. This call aims to spark a dialogue to shape a future rooted in children and their childhoods, to resist 21st-century polarization, and to harness embodied resilience, with a primary focus on children and their childhood experiences.

Suggested paper topics include, but are not limited to:

- Psychological and religious concepts, theories, and methods for studying children's resilience and the role of religion in supporting or hindering it.
- The role of faith communities in nurturing or silencing children's resilience.
- What is the future of religion and religious studies in framing religious education, not only to teach children but also to serve as a means for communities to learn from children's resilience in a rapidly changing, data-driven world?
- Ultimately, what kind of future can be shaped through children's resilience?

We welcome interdisciplinary approaches from scholars in religion, psychology, child advocacy, education, and social studies. For more information, please contact Dr. Rode Molla at rmolla@vts.edu.

Safeguarding our Children: Critical Dialogue on Childhood Protection Policies & Initiatives

In recent years, faith communities, religious organizations, and non-profits have wrestled with the notion of childhood rights along with proactive policies, procedures, and initiatives for protecting children in society such as the “Zero Abuse Project,” the *Aleinu’s* campaign (“Safeguarding our Children”), the Lutheran “Child Protection” initiatives, among many others. In most of these cases, the aim of these protections is often to protect or shape our future. This call invites critical discussion, reflections, and perspectives on such policies and initiatives and asks: how/why do childhood protections matter for our future?

Together, we might also explore:

- What is meant by “childhood protections” and who gets “protected”?
- What are the responsibilities of faith and spiritual communities when it comes to protecting or safeguarding children? How do we hold spiritual and faith communities accountable for protecting children?
- Who is responsible for safeguarding our children?
- How do we assess childhood protection policies and initiatives in religious and theological studies?
- What methodological approaches in religious and theological studies are necessary for grappling with the nuances of childhood protections?

For more information, please contact Dr. Kishundra King at kking@uts.columbia.edu.

“Do we have a theological future?” Lessons to be learnt from Children & Adolescents Co-Sponsored Session with the Practical Theology Unit

The 2026 Presidential theme; “Future/s,” reminds us of Nelson Mandela’s often quoted remark, “The future belongs to our youth.” Children and youth ministry have been largely positioned within the discipline of practical theology internationally and in many local contexts of theological education. Ironically, there is still much theological reflection required through the lived realities and experiences of these youth. Perhaps the call for more interdisciplinary engagement among and with practical theologians is overdue? The 2026 Presidential theme calls for a re-visioning and imagining the future of practical theologies that take the place and voice of children and young people seriously.

This call invites participants to consider: Are we able to critically assess and help build futures for which we hope? What do these futures look like when we prophetically listen to children and young people? How are children and young people themselves envisioning their futures; might they be asking simply, “Do we have a future?” How do practical theologians and practitioners envision and live into the futures that they might

imagine for younger generations, including childhood, (as active participants or protagonists of the present moment)? How are sub-disciplines of practical theology (religious education, spirituality, pastoral care/ministry, homiletics, empirical theology, congregational studies, et al.) and faith practices engaging these questions? What do we know about children and young people and their beliefs in the future? This has numerous implications for theology, political engagement, mental health, activism, and more. We invite proposals from both scholars and practitioners.

The Practical Theology Unit regards practical theology – a discipline committed to bridging theological reflection and lived reality – uniquely positioned to offer critical insights and transformative practices to these important questions, and the Childhood Studies & Religion Unit aims to investigate the complex and multifaceted relation between religion and childhood functions as a forum for focused interdisciplinary and interreligious dialogue about the diverse relations of children and religion. As a co-sponsored session, we invite proposals for brief presentations that integrate these topics.

Session Format

The session will be designed to allow for interaction and shared reflection. We welcome formats that are not purely linear presentations — for example, short inputs combined with discussion, practice-based elements, or small experimental components. We will consider empirical work with and among children and young people. We also invite research that engages positive frameworks of children and young people and not merely deficit approaches to these. Submissions from a range of practical-theological and interdisciplinary contexts are encouraged.

Open Call - Panel or Roundtable Proposals

If you are interested in proposing a session that is not listed above, we welcome panel and roundtable proposals. We are especially interested in sessions that are centered around the following:

- Newly published book projects involving children or childhood (author-meets critics).
- A roundtable of emerging scholars that explore the future of childhood studies & religion.
- Reflections from grant recipients who received the Lilly Endowment Inc's "Nurturing Children Through Worship and Prayer Initiatives" grant or the "Christian Parenting and Caregiving Initiatives" grant.

In your submission, please indicate the type of session you are proposing (panel or roundtable) along with the confirmed participants. Innovative and interactive sessions are especially welcome, and our co-chairs are happy to discuss what category might best fit any given proposal. In keeping with our commitment to presenting diverse perspectives and voices in each of our sessions, we also urge you to indicate what types of diversity your proposal or participants might represent. For more information, please contact Dr. Kishundra King at kking@uts.columbia.edu.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit's overall aim is to investigate the complex and multifaceted relation between religion and childhood. The specific goals of the Unit are as follows: • Provide a forum for focused interdisciplinary and interreligious dialogue about the diverse relations of children and religion • Heighten academic interest in this topic in all fields represented in the AAR • Prepare scholars in religious studies to contribute to wider academic discussions about children and childhoods • Lend the voice of the academy to current questions of public policy and child advocacy The focus of the Unit is both timely and significant given the present concern for children across the globe and the rising interdisciplinary academic interest in childhood studies. The Unit functions as a forum at the AAR for advancing childhood studies as a line of scholarly inquiry; we also welcome collaborations with other AAR program units for which childhood studies represents a "new" intervention.

Chairs

- Kishundra King, Union Theological Seminary
kking@uts.columbia.edu
- Rode Molla, Virginia Theological Seminary
rmolla@vts.edu

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Childhood Studies and Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

The Childhood Studies and Religion Unit welcomes proposals for individual papers, sessions, and roundtables that engage the intersection of religion and childhood or children, broadly construed. We are especially interested in proposals from non-Euro-American and non-Christian perspectives, and we welcome a range of methodologies from across the humanities and the social sciences.

In June 2026, we hope to organize sessions around one or more of the following topics:

- Childhood & Media
- Roundtable Discussion Reflecting on the Relaunch of the Journal of Childhood Studies & Religion
- Newly published book projects involving children or childhood (author-meets critics)

If you are interested in proposing a session that is not listed above, we welcome panel and roundtable proposals. In your submission, please indicate the type of session you are proposing (panel or roundtable) along with the confirmed participants. Innovative and interactive sessions are especially welcome, and our co-chairs are happy to discuss what category might best fit any given proposal. In keeping with our commitment to presenting diverse perspectives and voices in each of our sessions, we also urge you to indicate what types of diversity your proposal or participants might represent. For more information, please contact Dr. Kishundra King at kking@uts.columbia.edu.

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Chairs

- Kishundra King, Union Theological Seminary

kking@uts.columbia.edu

- Rode Molla, Virginia Theological Seminary
rmolla@vts.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Chinese Christianities Unit

Call for Proposals

The Chinese Christianities Unit is an intellectual community committed to understanding Chinese Christianities not as any singular pre-bounded identity of geography, ethnicity, politics, language, or denomination, but rather as a lens for appreciating the dynamisms and contestations of such experiences, commitments, and concerns as generative in religious aspirations and social life.

1. Chinese Transnationalism and Public/Political Theology: Apocalyptic Imaginations of the Past and the Future

We invite reflection on the eschatological and/or apocalyptic imaginations which Chinese Christian communities have generated or are generating, as well as their implications for public and/or political life locally and/or around the world.

2. Theological Education and Chinese Missions in the 21st Century: Seminaries and Bible Colleges Around the World

Though under-studied in the academy, Chinese-language seminaries and Bible colleges – both in East Asia and in myriad countries around the world – deeply shape the theological tenor, evangelical aims, and social aspirations of Christianity. We invite papers that attend to these dynamics of formation and missioning in Chinese Christianities globally today.

3. Gendered Experience: Present Realities and Future Trajectories

Since the field of Chinese Christianities remains dominated by histories and endeavors of heterosexual men, we invite attention to contestations and retrenchments around

gender (e.g. women, LGBTQ+) in Chinese Christian communities around the world in different cultural and legal contexts.

4. 50 Years After the Chinese Cultural Revolution: Fractured Memories, Tentative Hopes

On the half-centennial anniversary of the start of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), we invite papers that reflect upon the importance of that time for Chinese Christian identities around the world, wrought in narration of past, present, and future.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit provides a collaborative forum for scholars of different disciplines to engage in an academic discourse about the field of Chinese Christianities. Christianity is the fastest growing religion in mainland China today, and arguably the religion of choice for a growing number of diasporic Chinese. "Chinese" is an expansive term, including mainland China proper as well as a large, linguistically, and culturally diverse diaspora, encompassing more than a fifth of the world's population; the Han Chinese people are sometimes described as the world's largest ethnic group. Hence, with the increasing critical mass of Chinese Christians, there has likewise been a growing academic interest in various instantiations of Chinese Christianities, as understood across geographies (e.g., mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Southeast Asia, North America, etc.) and groupings (e.g., house and state-sanctioned churches, Catholic, Pentecostal, etc.). Chinese Christianities both transcend and hinder a number of regional, social, religious, etc. boundaries. Over the course of these five years, this unit will offer a unique opportunity for scholars to engage and to debate the implications of the multiplicity of Chinese Christianities with regards to the boundaries they engage.

Chairs

- Easten Law, Princeton Theological Seminary
egl31@georgetown.edu
- Stephanie Wong, Villanova University
stephanie.wong@villanova.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Chinese Religions Unit

Call for Proposals

All proposals for panels, roundtables, and individual papers are very welcome and will be given careful consideration. We encourage panel organizers to take various forms of diversity into account, including race, gender, rank, kind of institution, region, etc., especially for presenters and respondents. For gender diversity, you can look for participants in the database Women in the Study of Asian Religions (<http://libblogs.luc.edu/wisar/>). For our 2026 Annual Meeting of the AAR, the presidential theme is "future/s" (<https://aarweb.org/news/presidential-theme-for-the-2026-annual-meeting/>), and proposals related to this topic are very welcome.

Please feel free to direct any general questions about panel and paper submissions to the co-chairs.

If you wish to contribute to the following topics, please get in touch with the contact person listed:

- Human disasters, natural calamities, Hsiao-Lan Hu hhu@udmercy.edu
- Youth, Courtney Bruntz courtney.bruntz@gmail.com and Natasha Heller nheller@virginia.edu
- Experiential Learning, Susie Andrews sandrews@mta.ca and Natasha Heller nheller@virginia.edu
- The Art of Living: Healing, Longevity, and End-of-Life Care, Dixuan Chen chenyuji@grinnell.edu
- Rethinking Shamanism through Ethnography in Contemporary Chinese and Chinese Diaspora Religious Context, Emily Wu, emily.wu@dominican.edu

Statement of Purpose

This Unit is dedicated to the academic, comparative study of Chinese religions in all forms, both historical and contemporary. The Unit makes every effort to recognize Chinese voices in religious practice as well as scholarship, and applies rigorous standards of linguistic, cultural, historical, and social-scientific understanding to the study of religion in China.

Chairs

- Susan Andrews
sandrews@mta.ca
 - Rongdao Lai
rongdao.lai@mcgill.ca
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Christian Spirituality Unit

Call for Proposals

1. Evil Today (Lethal, Structural, Banal ...)

Christian spirituality implies confrontation with a broadly imagined, wide-ranging, and persistent category of evil. A strand within the Catholic tradition, informed by Thomism, understands evil as a no-thing, as a privation. Yet this is not the only way to understand evil theologically. Many individuals seek out spiritual direction or engage in traditions of “spiritual exercises” that raise awareness of the reality of evil as a deceptive spiritual *and* real force. Theologies of liberation amplify the reality of evil by naming the ways that evil is culturally and structurally produced, such that one must acknowledge sinful social structures as sources that produce or reinforce social evils (racism, sexism, heterosexism, etc.). Authoritarian regimes and their aftermath raise serious questions about “the banality of evil.” What is the “future” of evil given the aforementioned dynamics? What resources can Christian spiritual traditions marshal to contend with the overt and covert or banal presence of evil? How might Christian spirituality wrestle with the risks involved in naming evil wrongly—i.e., demonization, over-exaggeration, and the (mis)naming of evil?

2. A New, or Newly Imagined, Christian Asceticism

While by now, Christian theology and spirituality have rightfully critiqued the misuse and abuse of Christian asceticism (especially the meaning and application of sacrifice), the interlocking realities of ecological exploitation/devastation and unfettered capitalism may suggest that there is need to revisit asceticism as a discipline. In the aftermath, too, of a very well-received panel on commodifying spirituality, Christian spirituality scholars and practitioners should consider ways that asceticism is a site both for agency and for exploitation. Among the questions we invite proposals for are: How does a sense of the present and of the future reframe the place of asceticism and notions of sacrifice? What historical models and theories of asceticism have a future? Given the dynamics of commodification of religion and spirituality, to what extent does asceticism have a future?

3. Eschatology and Foresight

In conjunction with AAR's announced theme of "FUTURE/S," in what ways does the Christian spiritual tradition negotiate questions of what lies before us? Specifically, how does Christian spirituality enable us to imagine and live into "end times" and whatever may succeed them — that is, whatever may come *after* the "end"? The range of prospective topics here is virtually limitless, but the committee discussed such prospective themes as ecotheology (particularly Black ecotheology and other convergences of environment, race, and class), the specter of mythic utopias—the future fulfillment of pasts that never actually existed—as projections of present-day nationalist fervor, the ongoing evolution of artificial intelligence, and "Stage 4" conditions of crisis (whether personal or collective, "Stage 4" naming both a diagnosis of serious illness and, per theories of economic progress, a phase of advanced capitalism).

4. Crises of Leadership

Leadership is a longstanding feature of many American churches, much as it is across society. But leadership is widely perceived to be in crisis because of its practical caricature in public life, its co-optation by business cultures (and by business schools at universities), and its failures at the levels of church communities. What kind of leadership do we need now? On what resources might we draw from the long history of Christian spirituality?

5. Difficult Conversations (co-sponsored with Ecclesiological Investigations Unit and Vatican II Studies Unit)

Difficult conversations occur less today between religious believers and non-believers or between one religion and another than within religious communities, particularly in

Christian churches. As Christian Nationalism gathers momentum alongside polarisations, cancel culture, and toxic masculinity, in addition to ongoing crises such as environmental degradation and anti-immigration policies and practices, questions of how to coexist within Christian communities come to the fore, especially considering newer experiments in co-responsibility for difficult conversations in church life, such as synodality.

- How do we talk about difficult topics such as women's ecclesial leadership? Synodality was meant to carve a path forward for the Catholic church and yet, the latest Vatican commission on women deacons insists on a conclusion that not only ignores scholarship but also global calls for ordained women. Meanwhile, in the Anglican church, the elevation of the first female to the role of Archbishop of Canterbury meant for some, the church had reached a milestone, for others it was heretical and reason to disassociate. Do we concede that synodality is a failed exercise when it comes to women's ecclesial leadership? What can Christian Spiritual traditions and histories contribute in these otherwise seemingly failed synodal exercises on women in the church?
- When people engage in ecclesial dialogues, do they consider being trauma-informed? What is the current practice at both local and international levels such as the World Council of Churches? Is it within the ecclesial imagination to ensure we do not further traumatize and marginalize peoples as we invite them into these conversations? How can we take responsibility for understanding power dynamics and ensuring we do not make more vulnerable those who are already vulnerable? Take for example, the way in which communities still tread carefully around welcoming the LGBTQ+ community. Is the welcome simply a beautiful ideal or can we have real, even if difficult, conversations that enable both sides to be heard while keeping all participants safe? Again, Christian spiritual traditions and histories might reveal existing alignments with trauma-informed approaches to dialogue. It can also reveal the complications.
- Last, how do we begin or continue to engage in the difficult conversations about being colonial Christians or Christians on colonised lands? That we often worship on unceded territories and on lands that have no treaties? That indigenous spiritualities are still seen with suspicion as evidenced by the reaction to the presence of the Pacha Mama statue during the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon region in 2019? Can we talk about how as Christian communities, we are not there yet in terms of unlearning internalised racism as white and brown/black skinned persons alike, and dismantling Western-Anglo-European structures in our churches? How might Christian spiritualities enable us to face and dialogue on these difficult truths about ourselves and our communities?

Statement of Purpose

This Unit serves as a forum for scholars working in the interdisciplinary field of Christian spirituality. It is committed to the following: • Developing, refining, and demonstrating appropriate methodologies for the academic study of spirituality. • Exploring models for describing and facilitating interdisciplinary conversation on the nature of spirituality among religion scholars of all perspectives and religions. • Initiating discussion in the field of global spirituality, both religious and secular. • Articulating the connections between scholarship and spiritual practice.

Chairs

- Matthew Wickman, Brigham Young University
matthew_wickman@byu.edu
- Jamie Myrose
jamiemyrose@gmail.com

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Christian Spirituality Unit

Call for Proposals

Like last year, we hope to gather all proposals, put together four strong panels, and ask presenters in one of them whether they are willing to present at the June online conference.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit serves as a forum for scholars working in the interdisciplinary field of Christian spirituality. It is committed to the following: • Developing, refining, and demonstrating appropriate methodologies for the academic study of spirituality. • Exploring models for describing and facilitating interdisciplinary conversation on the nature of spirituality among religion scholars of all perspectives and religions. • Initiating discussion in the

field of global spirituality, both religious and secular. • Articulating the connections between scholarship and spiritual practice.

Chairs

- Matthew Wickman, Brigham Young University
matthew_wickman@byu.edu
 - Jamie Myrose
jamiemyrose@gmail.com
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Christian Systematic Theology Unit

Call for Proposals

The Christian Systematic Theology Unit invites proposals for individual papers or complete panels on diverse themes in the broader field of systematic theology. While we welcome proposals that ground arguments in pre-existing texts from various traditions and discussions, papers should be constructive rather than merely historical.

This year, we especially invite proposals related to the AAR presidential theme of future/s, including but not limited to:

- Eschatology, in conversation with:
 - Futurism, pessimism, afrofuturism, afropessimism, utopianism, dystopianism
 - Possibility and the possible
 - Hope and hopelessness
 - Redemption, salvaging, memory
 - Nature, grace, and human/divine agencies
 - Newness, transformation, continuity

- Creativity and theological aesthetics
- Time/s, including:
 - Theological approaches to time, history, patience
 - Linear progress, cyclical returns, quantum openings
 - Ground-up emergence vs. inbreaking
 - Finitude, limits, boundedness
 - Contingency
- Human future/s, exploring:
 - Love, community, thriving, survival
 - Promise/promising
 - Theological approaches to trauma and loneliness
 - Theologies of justice
- The future of systematic theology, considering:
 - How to do (what) theology?
 - Non-theological sources for theology
 - Theological analysis of critical theory sites
 - Science-fiction and systematic theology
 - Exotheology
 - Death of theology

[Co-sponsorship: Christian Systematic Theology & Open and Relational Theologies
Units-Imagining Liberative Futures](#)

Statement of Purpose

This Unit promotes constructive work in Christian systematic theology that is in dialogue with the historical Christian theological traditions on the one hand and with all aspects of the contemporary context on the other — intellectual movements, methodologies, multiple theological and religious perspectives, and ethical/social/political contexts.

Chairs

- Kevin Hector
khector@uchicago.edu
- Natalia Marandiuc
nmarandiuc@uls.edu

Class, Labor, and Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

Proposals in response to the calls below should clearly indicate how the paper foregrounds issues of class, labor, or workers (while recognizing their intersections with other dimensions of inequality) and/or how consideration of class inequalities and dynamics shapes the paper's analysis or conclusions.

General Call: We invite paper or panel proposals that explore the role of class, labor, or worker issues in religious communities and traditions or the significance of class, labor, or worker issues in the study of religion and theology or address major questions in the study of class, labor, or workers. While open to any proposals relevant to these, the following are some broad themes that are especially generative for our conversations:

- Reproductive labor(s) and/or the relationships between economic production and reproductive labor;
- Relationships between exploitation of labor and ecological destruction;
- Forces (e.g., racism, neocolonialism) that obstruct or undermine solidarity among diverse workers or solidarity between working-class and middle-class people;
- Capitalism as a religion;
- Cooperative economy or cooperative movements (both religiously and non-religiously affiliated).

Special Emphasis: Religion and Labor in South Asia

We invite paper proposals that examine religion and labor in South Asia, which may (but do not have to) be in conversation with Shankar Ramaswami's *Souls in the Kalyug: The Politics and Cosmologies of Migrant Workers in Contemporary India* (Penn Press, 2025).

Co-Sponsored Session with the AI and Religion Unit: For a possible co-sponsored session with the AI and Religion Unit, we invite papers that consider the implications and impacts of artificial intelligence on workers, labor, and/or class from the perspective of religion/theology/ethics. For example, religious/ theological/ ethical analyses of how AI has transformed labor processes or displaced workers; of class inequalities related to AI; of workers' responses to AI; or of AI itself as a worker.

Co-Sponsored Session with the Teaching Religion Unit and Religion, Media, and Culture Unit — The FUTURE of Teaching and Learning: Artificial Intelligence in the Classroom

With the Teaching Religion Unit and the Religion, Media, and Culture Unit, we invite proposals for a possible co-sponsored session. We hope to facilitate discussions that:

- Analyze and/or demonstrate innovative teaching methods/styles using various A.I.-answer engines – per past experience or future teaching plans.
- Evaluate any obstacles that arise when A.I. enters the religious studies classroom. Potential concerns include plagiarism convenience, threats to academic integrity, “hallucination,” inaccuracy, and bias deficiencies, “homogenized” thought, and compromises to student attention and effort.
- Address the future of academic labor as related to AI: how our work as educators is being affected by both changes to the university and AI. How does the growing movement towards teaching, grading, and writing using AI tools affect our work? How might it further implicate us and our students in unjust labor and environmental impact?

Statement of Purpose

This unit fosters engagement in the study of religion with issues of class, labor, and workers. We embrace diverse methods of religious and/or theological studies to demonstrate how consideration of class, labor, and workers leads to more complex understandings of religious communities and traditions and vice-versa. We understand labor as both economic production and the labor of reproducing society, daily and intergenerationally, upon which economic production depends, and we understand class fundamentally in terms of unequal power within structures and processes of labor, which compels many to work just to survive. Moreover, labor and class are shaped by their intersections with racism, patriarchy, colonialism, nationalism, hetero- and cis-normativity, ableism, and other inequalities of power. Thus, we aim to examine classes in relationship to each other through such inequalities of power and not reduce class to income or consumption inequality by itself.

Chairs

- Kerry Danner, Georgetown University
kerry.danner@georgetown.edu

Class, Labor, and Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

Proposals in response to this call should clearly indicate how the paper foregrounds issues of class, labor, or workers (while recognizing their intersections with other dimensions of inequality) and/or how consideration of class inequalities and dynamics shapes the paper's analysis or conclusions.

We invite paper or panel proposals that explore the role of class, labor, or worker issues in religious communities and traditions or the significance of class, labor, or worker issues in the study of religion and theology or address major questions in the study of class, labor, or workers. While open to any proposals relevant to these, the following are some broad themes that are especially generative for our conversations:

- Reproductive labor(s) and/or the relationships between economic production and reproductive labor;
- Relationships between exploitation of labor and ecological destruction;
- Forces (e.g., racism, neocolonialism) that obstruct or undermine solidarity among diverse workers or solidarity between working-class and middle-class people;
- Capitalism as a religion;
- Cooperative economy or cooperative movements (both religiously and non-religiously affiliated).

Statement of Purpose

This unit fosters engagement in the study of religion with issues of class, labor, and workers. We embrace diverse methods of religious and/or theological studies to demonstrate how consideration of class, labor, and workers leads to more complex understandings of religious communities and traditions and vice-versa. We understand labor as both economic production and the labor of reproducing society, daily and intergenerationally, upon which economic production depends, and we understand class fundamentally in terms of unequal power within structures and processes of labor, which compels many to work just to survive. Moreover, labor and class are shaped by their intersections with racism, patriarchy, colonialism, nationalism, hetero- and cis-normativity, ableism, and other inequalities of power. Thus, we aim to examine classes in

relationship to each other through such inequalities of power and not reduce class to income or consumption inequality by itself.

Chairs

- Kerry Danner, Georgetown University
kerry.danner@georgetown.edu
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Cognitive Science of Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

Current Theories and Applications of the Cognitive Science of Religion

This call is intentionally broad in scope. We invite scholars who are using current cognitive theories and/or applied research in the study of religion, religions, or religious- related phenomena to submit a proposal for a paper or panel session for inclusion in the 2025 AAR-CSR Unit's sessions.

4E Cognitive Approaches to Religious Phenomena

Over past two years, the CSR unit hosted several successful panes on 4E cognition and CSR. Back by popular demand, we are requesting further scholarship in this area. 4E describes cognition as embodied, embedded, enacted, and extended, complicating clear divisions between mind and world. This call seeks papers exploring 4E approaches to religion. This might include instances of applied theory, methodological critics as they relate to religion, or even affinities between religious worldviews and those entailed by 4E.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit is dedicated to advancing cognitive scientific approaches to the study of religion in a critically informed, historically responsible manner. "Cognitive science" designates a broadly interdisciplinary approach to the study of the mind that integrates research from the neurosciences, psychology (including developmental, cognitive, evolutionary, and social psychology), anthropology, and philosophy. The main goal of this Unit is to bring together cognitive scientists, historians of religion, ethnographers, empirically-oriented theologians, and philosophers of religion to explore applications of cognitive science to religious phenomena, as well as religious insights into the study of the human mind. We wish to consider ways in which historical and ethnographic data can be used to test theories and discuss theoretical and methodological concerns that are directly relevant to study design and data interpretation.

Chairs

- Jed Forman, UCSB
jed.forman@gmail.com
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Collective Karma and Karmic Collectives: Conversations without Borders Seminar

Call for Proposals

We invite panels and papers that inquire into how historical actors or activists employ karma cluster concepts to argue for and bring forth free, equitable, and plural futures. We particularly encourage presentations that showcase how these karma-informed eco-socio imaginations, from the ground up, enrich, nuance, and/or potentially change the terms of debate in existing conversations about relational non-domination, non-coercive co-existence, and non-violent co-creating of shared futures.

More specifically, the following are themes proposed during our business meeting at AAR 2025 and our email exchanges. Please email the chairs for the theme(s) you are interested in:

- **Karmic psychopolitics and the Future of Friendliness**
- **More-than-human shared futures**
- **AI and our Karmic Futures?**
- **Or SUGGEST A THEME!**

Please email the co-chairs:

Jessica Zu (xzu@usc.edu), and
 Susanne Kerekes (susanne.kerekes@trincoll.edu)

Statement of Purpose

Mission Statement

This Seminar investigates karma as shared or communal. Past scholarship has uncritically privileged an individualist approach to karma and has overlooked the centrality of sociokarma in non-canonical sources and lived experiences. Thus, we invite scholars to work together to uncover these marginalized voices “without borders” (across religious traditions, regions, disciplines, and methods). So, how do we bridge conversations without borders? Through a perspective that we call “karma-cluster concepts,” i.e., karma and its related terms in diverse socio-historical contexts.

We invite scholars who can contribute to a fuller picture of the following questions: (1) when, how, and why the debates about individual and collective karma arose in canonical sources and in scholarship; (2) how karma is interpreted in noncanonical texts such as minor commentaries, code of conducts, poetry, theatre, plays, and other forms of storytelling; (3) how collective karma is employed as tools of social engagement (e.g., eco-karma, racial karma, national karma); (4) how karma animates the spiritual practices of marginalized groups such as low-rank ascetic women, working-class lay followers including elderly women, gender and sexual minorities, and people with disabilities; (5) how karma weaves together a world of *relations*, where spirits, ancestors, animals, trees, rocks, rivers ... are agentive; (6) when, how, and why karma drops out of the moral repertoire of a group or a culture; and (7) assessing contemporary philosophical and tradition-based advancements of collective karma as responses to urgent issues.

Chairs

- Jessica Zu
pureoneness@gmail.com
- Susanne Kerekes, Trinity College

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Collective Karma and Karmic Collectives: Conversations without Borders Seminar

Call for Proposals

We invite panels and papers that inquire into how historical actors or activists employ karma cluster concepts to argue for and bring forth free, equitable, and plural futures. We particularly encourage presentations that showcase how these karma-informed eco-socio imaginations, from the ground up, enrich, nuance, and/or potentially change the terms of debate in existing conversations about relational non-domination, non-coercive co-existence, and non-violent co-creating of shared futures.

More specifically, the following are themes proposed during our business meeting at AAR 2025 and our email exchanges. Please email the chairs for the theme(s) you are interested in:

- **AI and our Karmic Futures?**
- **Karma and Processual Worldviews**
- **Or SUGGEST A THEME!**

Please email the co-chairs:

Jessica Zu (xzu@usc.edu), and
Susanne Kerekes (susanne.kerekes@trincoll.edu)

Statement of Purpose

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Chairs

- Jessica Zu
pureoneness@gmail.com
- Susanne Kerekes, Trinity College
skerekes@trincoll.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Colloquium on Violence and Religion

Call for Proposals

The Colloquium on Violence & Religion welcomes both individual paper proposals and panel proposals addressed to the following topics:

- Proposals that explore how mimetic theory interacts with climate change

- proposals that explore how violence is communicated in various contexts. Papers may address theoretical frameworks, case studies, or propose new methods for understanding and communicating about violence.
- Proposals that address the experiences, challenges, and innovative approaches in teaching Mimetic Theory. We seek papers that discuss pedagogical strategies, curriculum development, and student engagement.
- Proposals that bring Mimetic Theory into dialogue with other disciplines. Papers might explore intersections with psychology, sociology, literature, or other fields.
- Proposals that engage with the concept of epistemic violence within post-colonial discourse, examining its relationship with Mimetic Theory. Contributions may focus on theoretical analysis or specific case studies.

Statement of Purpose

The Colloquium on Violence and Religion is an international association of scholars founded in 1990. It is dedicated to the exploration, criticism, and development of René Girard's mimetic model of the relationship between violence and religion in the genesis and maintenance of culture. In promoting research in mimetic theory, COVandR welcomes scholars and others from diverse fields and theoretical orientations who are interested in the foundational role of imitation in individual human lives and cultures. In addition to gathering at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, the Colloquium meets each summer, alternating between North American and European venues. COVandR's publications include a website(<http://violenceandreligion.com>), a book series, Studies in Violence, Mimesis, and Culture, published by Michigan State University Press, the journal Contagion and a biannual newsletter, Bulletin of the Colloquium on Violence and Religion.

Chairs

- Chelsea King
kingc2@sacredheart.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Comparative Approaches to Religion and Violence Unit

Call for Proposals

CARV Call 1: Future/s and Overcoming Violence: Minor Religion, Postidentity, and Becoming (co-sponsored by the Women's Caucus (WC), International Section)

In response to the 2026 presidential theme FUTURE/S, this session explores how comparative approaches to religion and violence can move beyond identity-centered frameworks that increasingly shape both scholarly and public discourse. Religion is often addressed through regimes of recognition, inclusion, and minority rights that treat religious difference as a stable identity. While such frameworks seek to mitigate violence, they frequently reproduce epistemic, gendered, racialized, and colonial forms of harm by fixing difference and reinforcing hierarchical modes of governance.

This session proposes a shift from minority to the minor as a critical and comparative analytic. Rather than a demographic category, the minor names a practice of disidentification, deterritorialization, and becoming that opens new ways to analyze how violence is produced, justified, resisted, and transformed through religious and secular formations. Bringing CARV's attention to structural, symbolic, and epistemic violence into dialogue with feminist, queer, and postcolonial theory, the session asks how "minor religion" can enable future-oriented scholarship that resists both dystopic foreclosure and superficial hope. It invites reflection on what forms of futurity religious studies can imagine when violence itself becomes a site of critical reconfiguration rather than identity management.

CARV Call 2: Religion and Violence on the 20th anniversary of 9/11

2026 marks the 25th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. The impacts and implications of those events continue to animate scholarly attempts to understand the nuanced relationships between religion and violence across a range of traditions. CARV encourages submissions from scholars working in various disciplines and using varied methodologies, that:

- consider 9/11 in relation to other examples of spectacular violence or conflict, religious or otherwise
- reflect on and interrogate the intersections of religion and violence on September 11 itself

- place 9/11 into broader contexts by exploring the prehistory and/or legacies of the attacks, be they in the religious politics of South Asia, the Middle East, the United States, or elsewhere
- connect 9/11 to the enduring consequences of the American "War on Terror"; or
- examine the impact of 9/11 on the field of religious studies itself.

CARV Call 3: Coffee as Religious Technology (co-sponsored by the Drugs and Religion Unit)

This proposed roundtable explores the contributions that coffee's pleasures, perils and ambivalences can bring to studies of religious community. If coffee has long been instrumental to worship, so too have its psychoactive properties, its role in fueling Euro-Asiatic colonial extraction and slavery, and its development as a global commodity made its legacies contested. As an evolving and surprising accessible religious technology, how does coffee mediate religious ties and differences? How does "coffee" – a wild and/or domesticated plant, a beverage, a commodity, a status-symbol, a metaphor, a ritual – facilitate encounters across religious, racial, and sexual boundaries? What cross-disciplinary studies and questions are helpful for identifying and exploring the stakes of these caffeinated encounters?

Statement of Purpose

Since the end of the Cold War, acts of religiously motivated violence have all too often become part of our quotidian existence. Scholars from various disciplines have attempted to account for these incidents, noting such issues as a resurgence of anti-colonialism, poverty and economic injustice, the failures of secular nationalism, uprooted-ness, and the loss of a homeland, and the pervasive features of globalization in its economic, political, social, and cultural forms. What are the religious narratives that help animate these violent actors? This Unit contends that the theories, methodologies, and frameworks for studying the expanding field of religion and violence remain under-explored and require interdisciplinary work and collaboration to provide greater insights into the complex issues involved. The sociology, anthropology, psychology, philosophy, evolutionary psychology, cognitive science, economics, and political science of religion all have provided great insights into the nature of religion and violence over the last few decades and all are arguably interdisciplinary by nature. This Unit provides a venue

devoted specifically to interdisciplinary discussions of the subject. We hope to channel and enhance contributions from the historically delineated (albeit constructed) humanities, social sciences, and physical sciences. In that vein, we hope to hear papers presenting cross-disciplinary dialogue and research on the topic of religion and violence.

Chairs

- Ulrike Ernst-Auga, Humboldt University of Berlin
ulrike.auga@staff.hu-berlin.de
 - Flagg Miller
fmiller@ucdavis.edu
-

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Comparative Approaches to Religion and Violence Unit

Call for Proposals

Future/s and Religious Nationalism: Creating Collective Sacred Identities

In keeping with the 2026 presidential theme FUTURE/S, CARV invites submissions for a session exploring the global rise of religious nationalist movements. Recent news headlines attest to the growing influence of religion on national policies and electoral campaigns in various countries, something confirmed by surveys from the PEW Research Center and other bodies. Clearly, “religious nationalism” (the view that a country’s historically dominant religion should be central to its identity and policymaking) is a driving force in our world, encouraging civil unrest as well as armed conflict with neighboring nations. Such developments presage a future few of us could have imagined at the beginning of the 21st century.

CARV encourages submissions that explore the phenomenon of religious nationalism from various perspectives. Submissions may examine specific examples of “religious nationalism,” compare populist movements led by charismatic figures, or highlight effects of climate change, mass immigration, etc. on such movements. Other possible themes include the place of violence in group formation, the role of narratives of grievance, the function of “race” in such narratives, and the technological mediation of religious nationalisms along with new social imaginaries.

Statement of Purpose

Since the end of the Cold War, acts of religiously motivated violence have all too often become part of our quotidian existence. Scholars from various disciplines have attempted to account for these incidents, noting such issues as a resurgence of anti-colonialism, poverty and economic injustice, the failures of secular nationalism, uprooted-ness, and the loss of a homeland, and the pervasive features of globalization in its economic, political, social, and cultural forms. What are the religious narratives that help animate these violent actors? This Unit contends that the theories, methodologies, and frameworks for studying the expanding field of religion and violence remain under-explored and require interdisciplinary work and collaboration to provide greater insights into the complex issues involved. The sociology, anthropology, psychology, philosophy, evolutionary psychology, cognitive science, economics, and political science of religion all have provided great insights into the nature of religion and violence over the last few decades and all are arguably interdisciplinary by nature. This Unit provides a venue devoted specifically to interdisciplinary discussions of the subject. We hope to channel and enhance contributions from the historically delineated (albeit constructed) humanities, social sciences, and physical sciences. In that vein, we hope to hear papers presenting cross-disciplinary dialogue and research on the topic of religion and violence.

Chairs

- Ulrike Ernst-Auga, Humboldt University of Berlin
ulrike.auga@staff.hu-berlin.de
- Flagg Miller
fmiller@ucdavis.edu

Comparative Religious Ethics Unit

Call for Proposals

The Comparative Religious Ethics Unit seeks proposals from scholars representing a wide range of disciplines and subfields of religion to address questions relating to ethics in a comparative context. We interpret “comparison” broadly to include any inquiry that brings together diverse examples, cases, concepts, traditions, etc., for analysis; we also invite both descriptive and constructive studies.

We welcome proposals on any topic related to comparative religious ethics. In keeping with the 2026 presidential theme of “future(s),” topics and themes on which we especially encourage proposals include:

- the future of religious pluralism in America as an ethical project, as we mark 250 years as a nation
- the future of our subfield, with particular focus on the relationship between comparative religious ethics and anthropology as areas of study with sometimes competing (and sometimes similar) goals and methods; and
- how ideas of apocalypticism and/or messianism shape ethical discourses across religious traditions and communities, putting a concept of the future in question.

Statement of Purpose

While comparative assessment of the ethics of different religious groups is an ancient and widespread pursuit, the modern field of comparative religious ethics arguably dates from the founding of the Journal of Religious Ethics in 1973. (For the purposes of this statement, “ethics” as a subject will refer to reflection about how best to live as human beings; an “ethic” is one more or less determinate position on the best mode(s) of life.) While there have been a variety of motivations for the attempt to study “religious ethics” rather than or in addition to “Christian ethics,” one animating idea has been the growing recognition that people from numerous religions propound sophisticated and powerful moral visions, which possess intriguing similarities and differences and are not easily reducible to a common denominator. In addition, the variety and particular characteristics of such visions are historically and politically significant in the modern era of increasingly pervasive globalization. Indeed, comparative ethics may be desperately needed in our contemporary context of global interdependence, misunderstanding, and

mutual mistrust. There are thus ample grounds, both social and purely intellectual, to suggest that this ethical variety needs to be engaged directly via rigorous comparison. Comparative ethics makes such diversity central to its analysis, which includes three main aspects:

- Describes and interprets particular ethics on the basis of historical, anthropological, or other data
- Compares such ethics and requires searching reflection on the methods and tools of inquiry
- Engages in normative argument on the basis of such studies, and may thereby speak to contemporary concerns about overlapping identities, cultural complexity and plurality, universalism and relativism, and political problems regarding the coexistence of divergent social groups, as well as particular moral controversies

Ideally, each of these aspects enriches the others; for example, comparison across traditions helps generate more insightful interpretations of particular figures and themes. This self-conscious sophistication about differing ethical vocabularies and the analytical practices necessary to grapple with them is what makes comparative ethics distinctive within broader conversations in religious and philosophical ethics.

Comparative ethics as envisioned here induces conversation across typical area studies boundaries by involving scholars of different religions; all sessions in this Unit are constructed with this goal in mind, so that data from multiple traditions will be brought to bear on any comparative theme.

Chairs

- Rosemary Kellison, Florida State University
rmb07@fsu.edu
- Shannon Dunn
dunns@gonzaga.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Comparative Studies in Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

We invite papers on the topics below. Submissions for panels or roundtables not listed here are also welcome.

***Serpents and Eagles*, Ivette Vargas-O'Bryan, IVargas@austincollege.edu**

In keeping with the 2026 AAR conference theme, this panel aims to explore how freedom is symbolized in different cultures and religions through the images of serpents and eagles. Particular topics may include the conflict between spirit and matter, good and evil, or power, freedom, and the divine.

***Astroculture and Science Fiction*, Ben Overmeire, ben.van.overmeire@dukekunshan.edu.cn**

Astroculture is the cultural study of humanity's relationship with outer space. This panel will explore how astroculture has been understood in different religious traditions as they relate to works of science fiction. Potential topics include space as a site of exploration, the construction of ideas regarding embodiment, and the evolution of human identity.

***Maps: Fantastical, Acquisitive, and Religious*, Chris Parr, parrch@webster.edu**

Maps have long been an inventive way for religious thought-leaders, institutions, and artists to represent specific teachings, targets, and aspirations in visual terms. This panel invites papers on the religious meanings embedded in maps and charts. Some maps imagine utopian 'places' or depict fantastic 'other worlds'; some re-order the known cosmos to represent a religious perception of this world or reality (allegorical maps, for instance); while others are used acquisitively to claim territory or populations in the interest of an expanding religion. Other interpretations are also invited. This panel seeks scholars who will enjoy sharing investigations into instructive examples of maps in religious systems for a visually vibrant and intellectually intriguing session.

***Comparison in AI*, David Schones, dschones@austincollege.edu**

Artificial intelligence has a growing presence in many cultural contexts, including the field of Religious Studies. This panel will explore how AI impacts the study of religious texts, traditions, and the comparisons made between different religious communities. By exploring how scholars analyze different traditions using AI, understand or conceptualize AI within these traditions, or even incorporate AI in classroom learning, this panel hopes to explore how comparative study of religion can deepen our understanding of the complexities surrounding AI, both as a focus of scholarly analysis and as a pedagogical tool.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit provides the opportunity for significant cross-traditional and cross-cultural inquiry. We traditionally solicit paper sessions that provide occasions for comparative inquiry seriously engaging two or more religious traditions around a common topic and we ensure that critical reflection is given to the conceptual tools therein employed. We welcome co-sponsorship opportunities with other AAR units. This Unit has a listserv (CompRel), which is used primarily for announcements, calls for papers, and discussions about panel proposals. If you wish to subscribe, please send a request to of@austin.utexas.edu.

Chairs

- Yudit K. Greenberg, Rollins College
ygreenberg@rollins.edu
- David Schones
dschones@austincollege.edu

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Comparative Studies in Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

***Sacred Cultures and Global Politics*, Roberta Sabbath, roberta.sabbath@unlv.edu**

This virtual roundtable brings together *Sacred Cultures in Global Politics* (forthcoming DeGruyterBrill 2026) co-editors, Roberta Sabbath—USA and Daniel Nii Aryeh Aboagye—Ghana and many collection contributors to describe examples of the profound and often hidden-in-plain-sight religious and mythic rhetoric in the polemics of individual politicians, organized movements, and, in general, political activism. Political operatives use familiar tropes springing from often ancient communal belief systems to transform the primeval into the contemporary, the distant into the immediate, and the detached into the normative to organize, motivate, and unite target populations. The rhetoric can unify or divide, be inclusive or exclusive, elevate or destroy. This collection seeks to make transparent both the rhetorical systems and their use in local, national, regional, and global political arenas. Panelists from this collection that includes scholarly articles from ten countries representing six continents covering contemporary controversial and powerful dynamics will share their observations.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit provides the opportunity for significant cross-traditional and cross-cultural inquiry. We traditionally solicit paper sessions that provide occasions for comparative inquiry seriously engaging two or more religious traditions around a common topic and we ensure that critical reflection is given to the conceptual tools therein employed. We welcome co-sponsorship opportunities with other AAR units. This Unit has a listserv (CompRel), which is used primarily for announcements, calls for papers, and discussions about panel proposals. If you wish to subscribe, please send a request to of@austin.utexas.edu.

Chairs

- Yudit K. Greenberg, Rollins College
ygreenberg@rollins.edu
- David Schones
dschones@austincollege.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Comparative Theology Unit

Call for Proposals

The Comparative Theology Unit of the AAR seeks proposals on the following topics for its session at the 2026 Annual Meetings.

We encourage panel or paper proposals on the bulleted themes listed below. We suggest that interested scholars reach out to the contact person connected to each theme. They may be able to connect you with others who are interested or otherwise answer any questions. However, you need not feel compelled to reach out.

The CT Unit runs a listserv (Google Group) that may also be used to connect with others in constructing a panel. To be added to the group, please contact Axel Takacs (takacsax@shu.edu).

Themes

- **Comparative Theologies of Belonging and Community:** Ecclesiology remains a rich category of comparison in ecumenical Christian theology. However, in comparative theology, this category remains Christian-centric. How might comparative theology employ this category constructively and (self-)critically? How do various theologies of belonging and community in religious traditions mutually challenge how theologians understand the construction of group identity? What are the concepts in other religious traditions that are analogous to “ecclesiology” and how might they be constructive and critical sites of theological comparison?
- **Theologizing from Sacred Spaces** – Sacred spaces reflect materially the theology of the communities who practice in them. Globally, *shared* sacred spaces are relatively common, such as South Asian Hindu-Christian-Muslim shrines. In the European and North American context, Christian churches and houses of worship sometimes share their space with other religious communities. Historically, incoming religious communities—often by conquering or colonialism—appropriate sacred spaces of the previous religion. How can comparative theology proceed through the experience or analysis of the sacred space of another community? What can comparative theology learn from experiences of *shared* sacred spaces and/or how might we perform comparative theology from these experiences? (Contact: James Farwell, jfarwell@vts.edu)

- **Aesthetics, Poetics, Imagination, and Futures:** Theological aesthetics, comparative theologies of the imagination, and the poetics (creativity) involved not just in imagining but embodying futures remain a rich site of comparison. This includes the genre of futurisms, such as Afrofuturism, indigenous futures, and so forth, including science fiction. (Contact: Axel Takacs, takacsax@shu.edu).
- **Deification/Divinization/Theosis and Transhumanism in Comparative Theology:** Arguably, nearly all religious traditions provide technologies of the self intended to render the human more-than-human: superhuman, transhuman, and so forth. Transhumanism more popularly refers to a philosophical movement advocating for the enhancement of the human condition through advanced technology (AI, "downloading consciousness," etc.) to overcome biological limitations and extend human capabilities. This proposal seeks to bring the classical understanding in conversation with the modern. (Contact: Thomas Cattoi, tcattoi@pust.it)
- **Comparative Eco-Theologies and Futures:** What can we learn from eco-theologies regarding theological, political, and ethical futures in comparison? (Contact: Katie Mahowski Mylroi, mahowskm@bc.edu)
- **Jewish Comparative Theology / Comparative Theology and Jewish Traditions:** It has been a few years since the CT unit has had a panel on comparative theology and/or with the Jewish traditions. This year, we are seeking in particular Jewish scholars/theologians who engage in comparative theology to propose papers from their own religious tradition: Jewish-Christian, Jewish-Hindu, Jewish-Muslim, Jewish-Buddhist, Jewish-Indigenous, etc. (Contact: Domenik Ackermann, ackermannnd@moravian.edu)
- **Comparative Dystopias and Comparative Apocalyptic Imaginations:** There is no dearth of contemporary short stories, graphic narratives, novels, film, and TV that fall within the genre of dystopia. Yet, the apocalyptic imaginations of religious traditions were arguably the first to invent and popularize the genre. Proposals relevant to this theme are welcome. (Contact: Jason Welle, wellej@bc.edu).
- **Comparative Theology in the Gen Z Classroom:** It has been 10 years since Mara Brecht and Reid Locklin published their co-edited volume, *Comparative Theology in the Millennial Classroom*. What has changed? What remains the same? What new opportunities and challenges exist in the Gen Z classroom?

What is the future of comparative theology, especially in the undergraduate classroom today, *now* and in the *future*?

These are proposed themes, but one need not feel restricted by them, so long as the proposal concerns comparative theology.

Proposal descriptions must be written in such a way as to allow for anonymity during the selection process. However, panel proposals **must include** a diversity statement that explains in what ways the panel is diverse or the rationale for a lack of diversity. Diversity here may include, but is not limited to, religion, gender, race, disability, nationality, and/or academic status (graduate student, senior scholar, etc.).

The CT Unit seeks to provide opportunities for constructive/confessional or meta-confessional theological proposals from various traditions. If appropriate, proposals should be forthright about the author's religious tradition, i.e., whether they are writing as a Buddhist, or as a Muslim, or as a Hindu, et cetera (or some other hybrid identity).

Statement of Purpose

Comparative (interreligious) theology tries to be seriously theological, interreligious, and consciously comparative — all at the same time. It is, like other forms of theology as familiarly understood, primarily a matter of “faith seeking understanding” (or, more broadly, perhaps “the practice of reflective meditative perception” or “insight”) and reflection on this faith as it has been enacted in doctrine, argument, meditation, ritual, and ethical behavior. Like other forms of theology, it is an academic discipline, but may also be about and for the sake of knowledge of God or, more broadly, the ultimate mystery toward which life points. In comparative theology, faith and practice are explored and transformed by attention to parallel theological dimensions of one or more religious or theological traditions, examined historically or in the contemporary context. As a discipline within the academy, this communal and intercommunal faith and practice are open to the analyses, comments, and questions of insiders to the involved traditions, and to scholars not necessarily defined by any such commitments who are nonetheless able and willing to explore the full range of dynamics of faith seeking understanding in a comparative perspective. Please contact any Steering Committee Member for further information on the Unit, including the most recent self-study and statement of purpose, or to be added to the Unit.

The Comparative Theology Unit runs a listserv (Google Group) that may also be used to connect with others in constructing a panel. To be added to the group, please contact Axel Takacs (takacsax@shu.edu)

Chairs

- Martha L. Moore-Keish
keishm@ctsnet.edu
 - Katie Mahowski Mylroie
mahowskm@bc.edu
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Confucian Traditions Unit

Call for Proposals

We welcome full panel proposals, as well as individual paper submissions, on any theme related to the Confucian traditions. Our panels run from 90-120 minutes; and the most successful panels have no more than four participants.

The steering committee has identified the following themes as possible topics for 2026:

- Ritual and pattern (*wen* 文). Contact: Alia Goehr (University of Minnesota) agoehr@umn.edu.
- Self-cultivation and the discourse of well-being. Contact: Matthew Duperon (Susquehanna University) duperson@susqu.edu.
- Reconstructions of ritual based on recently unearthed manuscripts. Filippo Marsili (Saint Louis University) filippo.marsili@slu.edu.
- Teaching Confucianism in the modern world. Shumo Wang (Duke University) Shumo.wang@duke.edu.
- Ideas related to the 2026 presidential theme of "the future" at AAR.

Other topics are also welcome, as are co-sponsored sessions with other Units.

To submit a proposal, membership in the American Academy of Religion is not required. However, once a proposal is accepted, presenters must register for the AAR Annual Meeting, which will be held in Denver from November 21-24, 2026.

All accepted papers and panels will be invited to submit their work to the *Journal of Confucian Philosophy and Culture* for consideration as part of a special issue, as individual articles, or as conference proceedings.

Statement of Purpose

The Unit is the only global scholarly organization in the English-speaking world dedicated exclusively to Confucianism. It studies the diverse traditions linked to Confucius, his precursors, and followers, collectively referred to as "Ru." This includes exploring intersections between Confucian thought and practices with other traditions. Embracing a variety of approaches — philosophical, historical, literary, sociological and comparative — the Unit operates beyond the confines of any single country or academic discipline.

Chairs

- Bin Song
bsong2@washcoll.edu
 - Michael Ing
ming@iu.edu
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Contemplative Studies Unit

Call for Proposals

This year, the Contemplative Studies Unit especially invites proposals addressing the role of different epistemologies relative to Contemplative Studies, comparative or otherwise. Particularly we are looking for papers on:

- Reflecting on the Future of the Field – A roundtable on the future of contemplative studies; methodologies, as they pertain to the future; Alliances

with other fields such as Christian spirituality; cognitive science of religion; music and religion; the body and religion.

- Aesthetics of Sound in Contemplation
 - Animacies; Sentience and Non-Sentience in Contemplation and More-Than-Human Awareness: Ecological Contemplation and the Boundaries of Sentience (Devin Zuckerman dcz3fj@virginia.edu)
 - Digital Contemplation, Leveraging Technology for Contemplative Practice (Michael Sheehy: sheehy@virginia.edu, John Dunne contact persons)
 - Art as Contemplative Technology: Making, Sensing, and Creating Worlds: How artistic creation operates as contemplative practice
 - Lineages of the Unruly: Contemplative Transmission Across Official and Underground Worlds: contemplative practice through countercultural, diasporic, queer, and marginalized channels.
 - [a possible co-sponsored panel with Cognitive Science of Religion Unit](#) focusing on the intersections of cognitive science and contemplative research (contact: Loriliai.biernacki@colorado.edu).
 - a co-sponsored panel specifically addressing Indigenous traditions
 - Future Rituals: Immersive Arts, XR Technologies, and the Evolution of Contemplative Experience
- Interrogating how virtual architectures and emerging sensory technologies are reshaping presence, participation, and pedagogical horizons in contemplative studies.

Feel free to suggest other panels or papers by contacting the co-chairs of the unit.

Contact Loriliai Biernacki, loriliai.biernacki@colorado.edu or Michael Sheehy, ms4qm@virginia.edu

Statement of Purpose

This program unit aims to strengthen and develop contemplative studies as an academic field of inquiry, especially in the context of religious studies and the AAR. Our Unit provides a forum for:

- The investigation of contemplative practice and experience, considered inclusively and comprehensively
- Critical discussions on the field itself, including theoretical and interpretive issues
- The application of contemplative practice to academic life and university culture, including the possible contribution of “contemplative pedagogy” to teaching and learning

The Unit thus aims to gather together currently diffused groups as well as dislocated, marginalized, and underrepresented individuals in the academy. To this end, we encourage research that is topical, tradition-specific, comparative, and cross-cultural. We also invite scholars to

investigate contemplative practice and experience in ways that traverse and transcend the boundaries of traditions, disciplines, and research methodologies.

Chairs

- Loriliai Biernacki
loriliai.biernacki@colorado.edu
 - Michael Sheehy, University of Virginia
ms4qm@virginia.edu
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Contemporary Islam Unit

Call for Proposals

We invite proposals for papers, panels, roundtables, and alternative-format sessions for the upcoming Annual Meeting, both online and in-person related to the study of Islam in the contemporary period. This year's presidential theme, **Futures / Future(s)**, asks scholars, teacher-scholars, and scholar-practitioners, to confront the rapidly shifting landscapes of religious studies, within and beyond the academy, and to imagine where our field is headed.

At a time when higher education faces precarity, especially for contingent faculty, graduate students, and scholars working outside traditional academic structures and those working across the Humanistic disciplines, this theme calls for collective action, collaborative scholarship, and expansive thinking. As AAR President, Laurel Schneider, puts it: "Scholars of religion are uniquely positioned to reflect critically on the modes and capacities of religious and spiritual stories and practices, ancient and new, local and global, to imagine futures beyond despair on the one hand, or superficial hope on the other."

We especially welcome proposals addressing one or more of the following sub-themes:

- **Refugee Camps and Futurity:** Analyses of spaces imagined as temporary but that are actually functionally permanent; studies of belonging, temporality, infrastructure, and survival in contexts of displacement.
- **Muslim Afrofuturism or Histories of Muslim Sci-Fi and Futurism:** Explorations of Black Muslim futurities, aesthetics, and political thought; engagements with speculative fiction, art, and performance.
- **Liberatory Futures and Eschatology:** How religious visions of the afterlife unsettle, critique, or inspire alternative social and political futures.
- **Disability Studies and Assistive Technologies:** Intersections of religious studies, disability studies, and technological mediation; spiritual, ethical, and communal dimensions of assistive technologies.
- **Knowledge Production Beyond Traditional Centers:** Rethinking hierarchies of religious knowledge, from seminaries and divinity schools to Global South institutions.
- **The Future of Muslim and Islamic Politics:** Reassessing political categories, representation, and the “Islamic-ness” of political movements; imagining new frameworks for analyzing Muslim political life.
- **Muslim Mayors and Urban Futures:** We encourage individual papers or a pre-arranged panel examining Muslim mayoral leadership in the U.S. and beyond, thinking about how cities function as distinctive religious, political, and imaginative spaces.
- We welcome submissions from religious studies scholars working in any geographical region, methodological approach, historical period, or institutional setting, including independent scholars, artists, activists, and practitioners. Scholars working outside of the professional academy are encouraged to indicate their interest in being a part of the June 2026 online program to take advantage of free and reduced rate registration and more flexibility in our programming allotments.

Online Program

The call for papers for the online program (June 22-25) is the same as above, with an additional encouragement to consider future/s of pedagogy and writing about Islam, as well as conceptualizations of borders and limitations of movement in regards to scholarly exchange and output.

For all submissions:

To offer the committee maximal flexibility in arranging our program, please indicate your willingness to have your proposal(s) considered for the online *and* in-person conferences (the online program has a low flat rate registration fee this year).

Pre-arranged panels should reflect gender and racial/ethnic diversity as well as diversity of field, method, and scholarly rank as appropriate. We also encourage pre-arranged panels to take a broad and inclusive approach to what counts as "Islam," recognizing the theological diversity within Islam and among Muslims; this includes but is not limited to Shi'a, Ibadiyya, Ahmadiyya, and the Nation of Islam.

Final papers or proposal submissions generated by ChatGPT or similar AI tools are not permitted. All work must be original, and any use of AI for editorial support should be minimal.

If your proposal is accepted and you agree to be on the program, we expect you to show up to participate in the Annual Meeting or online program, barring unforeseeable exceptional circumstances. Please note that it is the policy of all Islamic Studies program units to ban no-shows at the Annual Meeting from participating in the program for the following two years.

For questions about the theme or proposal fit, please contact:

Candace Mixon (candacem@reed.edu) and Kimberly Wortmann (wortmakt@wfu.edu),
Co-Chairs, Contemporary Islam Unit

Statement of Purpose

The mission of this unit is to provide a venue for discussing emerging issues and developments within contemporary Muslim societies and Islamic Studies.

Chairs

- Candace Mixon, Reed College
candacem@reed.edu
- Kimberly Wortmann
wortmakt@wfu.edu

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Contemporary Islam Unit

Call for Proposals

We invite proposals for papers, panels, roundtables, and alternative-format sessions for the upcoming Annual Meeting, both online and in-person related to the study of Islam in the contemporary period. This year's presidential theme, **Futures / Future(s)**, asks scholars, teacher-scholars, and scholar-practitioners, to confront the rapidly shifting landscapes of religious studies, within and beyond the academy, and to imagine where our field is headed.

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We especially welcome proposals addressing one or more of the following sub-themes:

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For all submissions:

To offer the committee maximal flexibility in arranging our program, please indicate your willingness to have your proposal(s) considered for the online *and* in-person conferences (the online program has a low flat rate registration fee this year).

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For questions about the theme or proposal fit, please contact:
Candace Mixon (candacem@reed.edu) and Kimberly Wortmann (wortmakt@wfu.edu),
Co-Chairs, Contemporary Islam Unit

Statement of Purpose

The mission of this unit is to provide a venue for discussing emerging issues and developments within contemporary Muslim societies and Islamic Studies.

Chairs

- Candace Mixon, Reed College
candacem@reed.edu
 - Kimberly Wortmann
wortmakt@wfu.edu
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Contemporary Pagan Studies Unit

Call for Proposals

Contemporary Pagan Studies is an interdisciplinary Unit, and we welcome submissions of theoretically and analytically engaged papers and panels relating to modern Paganism, Witchcraft, Magic, and Polytheism, employing scholarly analysis to discuss the topics presented from any relevant methodology or theoretical orientation.

The Steering Committee is particularly interested in two sets of proposals :

1. Proposals that engage the AAR Presidential theme on Future(s), especially in relationship to magic and/or religious technologies such as divination or associated material culture.
2. Proposals that engage Paganism, Politics and Popular Culture whether in an American or global context. The current religious/political media milieu in both

the US and the UK finds "paganism" again erupting as a categorical way to represent various forms of governmental and anti-governmental ideology. Tropes of civilizational decline and danger predominate in these discourses that engage contemporary concepts of church and state against ideas of 'primitivism' or ancient pre-democratic rule or even current global political strategies. Pagan religious individuals are engaging and seeking to shape and challenge such narratives, as others have historically done with such labeling.

Statement of Purpose

The Contemporary Pagan Studies Unit provides a place for scholars interested in pursuing research in this newly developing and interdisciplinary field and puts them in direct communication with one another in the context of a professional meeting. New scholars are welcomed and supported, while existing scholars are challenged to improve their work and deepen the level of conversation. By liaising with other AAR Program Units, the Unit creates opportunities to examine the place of Pagan religions and discourses/practices labeled "Pagan/pagan" both historically and within contemporary societies. The CPS unit seeks to examine how other religions may intersect with these dynamic and mutable religious communities and discourses.

Chairs

- Christopher Chase, Iowa State University
cwc@iastate.edu
- Giovanna Parmigiani
giovanna.parmigiani@gmail.com

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Contemporary Pagan Studies Unit

Call for Proposals

Contemporary Pagan Studies is an interdisciplinary Unit, and we welcome submissions of theoretically and analytically engaged papers and panels relating to modern Paganism, Witchcraft, Magic, and Polytheism, employing scholarly analysis to discuss the topics presented from any relevant methodology or theoretical orientation. For the June online meeting, the Steering Committee is especially interested in proposals from global geographic presenters. This especially includes presenters economically challenged or physically restricted/discouraged from traveling to the November meeting under the current U.S. political climate.

Statement of Purpose

The Contemporary Pagan Studies Unit provides a place for scholars interested in pursuing research in this newly developing and interdisciplinary field and puts them in direct communication with one another in the context of a professional meeting. New scholars are welcomed and supported, while existing scholars are challenged to improve their work and deepen the level of conversation. By liaising with other AAR Program Units, the Unit creates opportunities to examine the place of Pagan religions and discourses/practices labeled "Pagan/pagan" both historically and within contemporary societies. The CPS unit seeks to examine how other religions may intersect with these dynamic and mutable religious communities and discourses.

Chairs

- Christopher Chase, Iowa State University
cwc@iastate.edu
 - Giovanna Parmigiani
giovanna.parmigiani@gmail.com
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Critical Approaches to Hip-Hop and Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

The 2026 Presidential Theme for the American Academy of Religion (AAR) is **“Future/s.”** As hopeful and forward-looking as this theme may sound, it carries a markedly different resonance within hip-hop culture and the Black and Brown communities that give it life.

For many within these communities, envisioning a future is neither abstract nor assured. It is a fragile, contingent, and often interrupted exercise. The following statistics—offered illustratively rather than exhaustively—underscore this reality:

- Black males ages 15–19 are approximately **28 times more likely** to die by firearm homicide than their White peers (roughly **92 per 100,000** compared to **3.25 per 100,000**).
- Black women are **2.5–3.5 times more likely** to die from pregnancy- or childbirth-related causes than White women, a disparity that persists across socioeconomic classes.
- Hispanic/Latino firearm homicide rates are approximately **twice as high** as those of non-Hispanic White Americans.
- One study reports Hispanic gun homicide rates increasing from approximately **3.8 to 5.5 per 100,000** between 2019 and 2021, compared to lower rates among White Americans.
- The Violence Policy Center identifies homicide as a **leading cause of death** for Latino men ages 15–24, with Latinos experiencing higher homicide victimization rates than Whites.

To imagine a future when the present itself is not guaranteed generates a distinct theological, conceptual, experiential, and existential space. In hip-hop culture, visions of the future may be provisional, fragmented, resistant, deferred, or radically reimagined—and they may not presume longevity at all.

The **Critical Approaches to Hip-Hop and Religion Unit** invites papers that engage these tensions and possibilities. Topics may include (but are not limited to):

- **Afrofuturism, Afropessimism, and their intersections** within the hip-hop cypher and broader hip-hop kulture (including engagements with *OutKast's ATLiens* [1996], which marks its **30th anniversary** in 2026).
- **Theological and religious imagination** when the future is uncertain, foreclosed, or unevenly distributed within hip-hop communities.
- **Embodiment through dance, graffiti, and visual art** as practices of trauma processing, resistance, and future-making.
- **Violence and futurity**, including violence as a claimed right of oppressed communities and as a force that simultaneously constrains, secures, or negates possible futures.

Anniversaries in 2026

2026 marks several significant anniversaries in hip-hop history. Papers engaging these works—critically, theologically, historically, or culturally—are especially encouraged. This list is **selective, not exhaustive**.

40th Anniversaries (1986): Run-D.M.C., *Raising Hell*; Beastie Boys, *Licensed to Ill*; Boogie Down Productions, *Criminal Minded*; Eric B. & Rakim, *Paid in Full*; Ultramagnetic MCs, *Critical Beatdown*

30th Anniversaries (1996): 2Pac, *All Eyez on Me*; Fugees, *The Score*; Geto Boys, *The Resurrection*; JAY-Z, *Reasonable Doubt*; OutKast, *ATLiens*; A Tribe Called Quest, *Beats, Rhymes and Life*; De La Soul, *Stakes Is High*; Ghostface Killah, *Ironman*; **Murder of Tupac Shakur (September 7, 1996) - Potential pannel/roundtable**

20th Anniversaries (2006): JAY-Z, *Kingdom Come*; Lupe Fiasco, *Food & Liquor*; Clipse, *Hell Hath No Fury*; The Roots, *Game Theory*; Ghostface Killah, *Fishscale*; T.I., *King*; Rick Ross, *Port of Miami*; E-40, *My Ghetto Report Card*; UGK, *Ridin' Dirty*

10th Anniversaries (2016): Kanye West, *The Life of Pablo*; Chance the Rapper, *Coloring Book*; Kendrick Lamar, *untitled unmastered.*; A Tribe Called Quest, *We Got It from Here...*

Thank You 4 Your Service; Drake, Views; YG, Still Brazy

The Critical Approaches to Hip-Hop and Religion Unit **welcomes submissions from emerging scholars and graduate students** and seeks to reserve space for early-career academics to present their work in an open, collegial, and hospitable setting.

The Unit also **welcomes co-sponsorships** with other AAR units and invites proposals for joint sessions.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit's purpose is to provide a space for interdisciplinary, sustained, scholarly reflection and intellectual advancements at the intersections of religion and hip-hop culture. We believe the Unit will assist religious and theological studies to take more seriously hip-hop culture, while expanding the conversation of hip-hop culture beyond a thin analysis of rap music. To these ends, this Unit is marked by an effort to offer critical reflection on the multiplicity of the cultural practices of hip-hop culture. We also see something of value in advancing the field of religious studies through attention to how hip-hop might inform these various disciplines and methods. Understood in this way, scholarly attention to hip-hop will not transform it into a passive object of the scholar's gaze; rather, through our attention to hip-hop, it also speaks back to the work of the AAR, offering tools by which to advance theory and method in the field.

Chairs

- Justin Smith, Azusa Pacific University
jmsmith@apu.edu
- Daniel White Hodge
dan@whitehodge.com

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Critical Theory and Discourses on Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

With the presidential theme (Future/s) in mind, the Critical Theory and Discourses on Religion Unit is seeking proposals for individual papers, panels, or roundtables on the following topics:

- **Genealogies of the Future**

In light of this year's presidential theme, we call for papers that consider the range of ways in which the future has been theorized or critically interrogated within the study of religion and related fields. From Walter Benjamin's and Jacques Derrida's musings on the messianic to Jean-Luc Nancy's on the "coming community," the future has sometimes been configured as a site of utopian hope. More recently, our imaginaries of the future have arguably been overtaken by a sense of anxiety, as affective tone. The future is also often approached via a notion of risk informed by the increasing financialization of all sectors of society (e.g., through futures markets) and consequent rendering of the future as a zone for statistical prediction. To what extent does the precarity of our current discipline place us all in the mindset of stock speculators and financialized subjects? Are there other, and older, imaginaries of the future that hold moral and political power in our contemporary moment? **Contact: J. Barton Scott (barton.scott@utoronto.ca) and Dana Logan (dwlogan@uncg.edu)**

- **Critical theories of religion and AI/machine intelligence**

Many AI fever dreams of future intelligence end up in a place that seems similar to discourses in apophatic or negative theology, or scholastic theology, or Whitehead and process theology. We cannot possibly know how God or the future AGI thinks; how do we, as scholars of Religion, engage critically at this moment? We would welcome proposals drawing connections between apophatic theology and AI dreams of future minds and perhaps Adorno or Horkheimer developing a secular negative theology, for example. **Contact: Suzanne van Geuns (vangeuns@wisc.edu)**

- **Anti-future/s**

We invite proposals exploring Afro-pessimism and other intellectual traditions that explicitly position themselves against progress narratives/reachable utopias in religion. **Contact: Suzanne van Geuns (vangeuns@wisc.edu)**

Co-Sponsored Panels:

- [Hartmut Rosa and the Study of Religion \(Co-sponsored with Sociology of Religion Unit\)](#)

German sociologist Hartmut Rosa's theories of resonance and social acceleration in modernity have begun to influence the study of religion, and his recent writings that "democracy needs religion" offer a timely moment to consider his work for the sociology of religion. Rosa has written primarily in German, but his work has begun to be translated into English more recently, including key works like *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity* (2013) and *Resonance: A Sociology of Our Relationship to the World* (2021). This possible co-sponsored session invites proposals that examine Rosa's theories for the study of religion or employ his theories for original research. **Contact: Dusty Hoesly (hoesly@ucsb.edu)**

- **Religious Thinkers as Co-Theorists: The Future of Critical Theory on Religion**

Working off the 2026 AAR theme of "Future/s," this panel asks us to imagine a future of critical theory where religious intellectuals outside the academy are not simply subjects to be studied, but colleagues to think alongside. This panel aims to challenge the disciplinary norms that treat the academy as the primary creator of and authority on "theory" about religion. What new terms arise, which ideas fall out of favor, and what networks of relationships appear when we treat religious intellectuals as theorists of religion in their own right? This panel does not aim to valorize religious knowledge as somehow more authentic or true, but rather to extend to it the same interest, scrutiny, and care scholars provide to canonical theorists. What does the future of the field look like if we acknowledge that some of the most sophisticated theorists of religion have been studied, categorized, and provincialized as its objects? Papers could address questions such as: Based on your theorists' contributions, what new concepts are useful for the study of religion? What academic ideas may they critique or have affinity with? What can this approach contribute to the decolonization of academic knowledge? **Contact: Matthew Drew (matthewdrew2028@u.northwestern.edu) or Dominique Townshend (dt80@columbia.edu)**

Statement of Purpose

The Critical Theory and Discourses on Religion (CTDR) Unit offers an interdisciplinary and international forum for analytical scholars of religion to engage the intersection of critical theory and methodology with a focus on concrete ethnographic and historical case studies. Critical theory draws on methods employed in the fields of sociology,

anthropology, history, literary criticism, and political theory in order to bring into scrutiny all kinds of discourses on religion, spanning from academic to nonacademic and from religious to nonreligious. This Unit seeks to provide a forum in which scholars of religion from a wide range of disciplines can examine and question their disciplinary presuppositions. The work of this Unit can be placed under three main rubrics:

- Critical investigation of the categories generated and employed by the discourses on religion, such as experience, the sacred, ritual, and the various 'isms' that can be found in classic and contemporary studies of religion
- Analysis of new and neglected theorists and works central to the critical study of religion, including those produced in cognate fields such as anthropology, political science, or literary theory
- Theoretically-informed examination of elided and often neglected themes in religious studies, including class, race, gender, violence, legitimation, and the material basis of religion

Chairs

- Katja Rakow, Utrecht University
k.rakow@uu.nl
- Dana Logan, UNC Greensboro
dwlogan@uncg.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Cultural History of the Study of Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

The Cultural History of the Study of Religion Unit seeks papers that examine the formation and transformation of religion and related categories in social, cultural, and political practice in different geographic and historical contexts and in relation to the academic study of religion as that study has evolved over time.

We aim to facilitate theoretically and methodologically rigorous sessions that are attuned to dynamics of power and that feature scholars from multiple subfields, methodology, type of institution, and professional rank.

This group regularly uses its sessions to develop new models for conference conversation. Toward that end, we ask that participants be prepared to write shorter papers for possible pre-circulation or short position papers for roundtable format. We also welcome suggestions for new models.

For the **2026 Annual Meeting**, we particularly welcome proposals on the following topics:

Fascism and Anti-Fascism and the Study of Religion. Given the interest + momentum generated by our double-session at the 2025 Annual Meeting, we seek to build the conversation about the legacies, repetitions, and affinities of fascist and anti-fascist hermeneutics in the academic study of religion. We invite proposals engaged with these themes, whether as framing concerns for stand-alone sessions/papers or as contextualized to the other sub-points of our 2026 CFP.

CRISIS! CRISIS! CRISIS! For as long as the academic study of religion has been institutionalized in universities, there has been consistent, if differentially articulated, concern that the field is “in crisis.” What work does invocation of “crisis” do for our field? What connections and elisions does rhetoric of crisis enact between material and discursive formations of religious studies? What methods and genres have arisen to contain crisis? What methods and genres has crisis inhibited or foreclosed? We especially welcome proposals that think through these + related questions through genealogical and historical-materialist analysis.

Legacies of Tomoko Masuzawa’s *The Invention of World Religions*. Two decades after the publication of Tomoko Masuzawa’s seminal account of the formation of the world religions paradigm, we invite reflection on the multiple effects of this work. These may address any of the following: (1) the reception history of *Invention*; (2) its intellectual legacy, including continuities and discontinuities across various subfields; (3) its pedagogical impact; (4) the institutional effects or noneffects of the critique of world religions and/or pluralist paradigms.

***Genealogies of Science and Religion (for a possible cosponsored session between the Science, Technology, and Religion and Cultural History of the Study of Religion units):** Where does science and religion—as a subfield—come from? What types of science have been privileged in this conjunction? What are their origin points, lineages, inflections, institutional politics, and material conditions of knowledge production that have led to the current field? Proposals may consider the Pitts Digital Collection

repository of "American Academy of Religion Program Books" and/or explore the history of the STR unit (founded as "Theology and Science" in 1987) and related subdivisions of AAR/SBL. We welcome proposals from all scholarly ranks including graduate, contingent, and early-career scholars.

***Post-Secular Attachments (for a possible cosponsored session between Secularism and Secularity and Cultural History of the Study of Religion)**: We invite proposals that take stock of the "post-secular" as a methodology, conceptual investment, and/or posture of critique in the interdisciplinary humanities. What difference(s) does the "post-secular" name? What historical, intellectual, and political attachments are at play in its deployment? We welcome proposals from all scholarly ranks including graduate, contingent, and early-career scholars.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit is devoted to historical inquiry into the social and cultural contexts of the study of religion and into the constructions of religion as an object of scholarly inquiry.

Chairs

- Marko Geslani, University of South Carolina
geslani@mailbox.sc.edu
- Lucia Hulsether
lhulseth@skidmore.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Daoist Studies Unit

Call for Proposals

The Daoist Studies Unit invites proposals for the AAR Annual Meeting in Denver, Colorado (November 21–24, 2026). We welcome proposals for individual papers, paper sessions, and roundtables concerning any aspects of Daoism regardless of the time period, geographical area, or methodological and theoretical approach. The proposals

could be individual papers, 90-minute paper sessions (ideally consisting of 3 papers, a presider, and a respondent), or roundtables (consisting of a presider and 4–6 panelists). All topics for presentations are welcome. Below are the ideas proposed at the business meeting for 2026.

1. Women and Daoism
2. Medicine and Daoism
3. Body and Daoism
4. Buddho-Daoism/Daoist-Buddhism
5. Self-Cultivation
6. What is Daoism?

Please contact us if you wish to participate in formulating or joining any of these panels. Proposals on topics not listed here are also more than welcome. We'll gladly help you transform your ideas into a panel.

We look forward to receiving proposals that are multi-disciplinary and border-crossing. As we continue to reach out to other program units and promote dialogue between different fields, we strongly encourage applicants to submit their proposals to Daoist Studies and one additional program unit. A complete list of AAR program Units can be found at (<https://papers.aarweb.org/program-units>).

The Daoist Studies Unit steadfastly supports diversity and inclusivity. We require all pre-arranged panels to incorporate a diversity of gender, ethnicity, seniority, sub-field, and/or methodology. We hope that you can reach out to others by utilizing resources, such as the Women in the Study of Asian Religions database (<http://libblogs.luc.edu/wisar/>).

Please feel free to contact the co-chairs for additional information.

Statement of Purpose

The Daoist Studies Unit organizes the most consistent venue in North America for sharing research on the Daoist religion. We are guided by a vision with three main goals: to reach into the vast recesses of the largely understudied Daoist tradition; to reach out in conversation with the broader American Academy of Religion, and to promote the Annual Meeting of the AAR as an international venue for sharing and vetting research by all levels of Daoism scholars. Since early 2021, the Daoist Studies Unit has also been hosting regular online presentations and workshops throughout the year under the rubric of the Global Daoist Studies Forum.

Chairs

- Tobias Zürn, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
hmtzuern@ust.hk
 - Jingyu Liu, Rollins College
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-

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Daoist Studies Unit

Call for Proposals

The Daoist Studies Unit invites proposals for the AAR Online Conference in June 2026. We welcome proposals for individual papers, paper sessions, and roundtables concerning any aspects of Daoism regardless of the time period, geographical area, or methodological and theoretical approach. The proposals could be either individual papers, 90-minute paper sessions (consisting of 3 papers, a presider, and a respondent), or roundtables (which consist of a presider and 4–6 panelists). All topics for presentations are welcome. Below are the ideas proposed at the business meeting for 2026.

1. Religious Readings of the *Zhuangzi* (contact person: Tobias Benedikt Zürn (Hong Kong University of Science and Technology))

Please contact the point person if you wish to participate in formulating these panels. Proposals on topics not listed here are more than welcome. We look forward to receiving proposals that are multi-disciplinary and border-crossing. As we continue to reach out to other program units and promote dialogue between different fields, we strongly encourage applicants to submit their proposals to Daoist Studies and one additional program unit. A complete list of AAR program Units can be found at (<https://papers.aarweb.org/program-units>).

The Daoist Studies Unit steadfastly supports diversity and inclusivity. We require all pre-arranged panels to incorporate a diversity of gender, ethnicity, seniority, sub-field, and/or methodology. We hope that you can reach out to others by utilizing resources,

such as the Women in the Study of Asian Religions database (<http://libblogs.luc.edu/wisar/>).

Please feel free to contact the co-chairs for additional information.

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- Jingyu Liu, Rollins College
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In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Death, Dying, and Beyond Unit

Call for Proposals

1. The Death, Dying, and Beyond Unit invites proposals on **“The Future of Death: Mortality, Memorialization, and Meaning-Making”**. Engaging this year’s presidential theme of “The Future,” we encourage submissions that interrogate how death, dying, and the afterlife function as sites for “futuring”—critical spaces where we assess and build the horizons for what is yet to be. In a moment where dystopic imaginations often loom large, we ask: How do the dead shape our visions of the possible? Topics may

include but are not limited to: the evolution of memorialization in digital and ecological landscapes; "hauntologies" and the role of counter-memory in challenging dominant narratives; the aesthetics of mourning; tensions between eschatology and technoscientific futurisms (e.g., transhumanism, cryonics, and AI afterlives); the precarity of the academy and the "death" of the humanities; and the capacity of ancient and new traditions to imagine futures beyond despair. Submissions that incorporate diverse disciplinary approaches, methodological perspectives, and global or comparative contexts are especially welcome. We also welcome non-traditional presentations, full panel submissions, artistic work, roundtables, and book discussions.

2. The Death, Dying, and Beyond Unit invites proposals on the theme **"What We Can't Write: Writing About Death and Material Culture in Academia."** We encourage proposals that consider how scholars who study memory objects of the dead navigate the expectations of academic writing and disciplinary boundaries that treat these objects as dead, secular objects and/or non-supernatural signifiers of the past. Topics may include but are not limited to: writing about memory objects of the dead in disciplines that treat the objects themselves as dead objects; scholarly methods and/or editorial processes that privilege secular methods for studying and writing about memory objects of the dead; narratives about memory objects of the dead from scholars' own lives that reveal challenges in writing about death and material culture; tensions between writing about death and material culture and dedicating books in memory of the dead. Submissions that incorporate diverse disciplinary approaches, methodological perspectives, and global contexts are especially welcome. We envision this panel as a lightening panel comprised of 5-6 short papers on the theme followed by ample discussion among participants and attendees. We welcome full panel submissions and individual submissions.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit was formed to address all manner of scholarly discussion relating to death. While death is the single certainty in every life, a myriad number of ways exist to study and approach it. Our aim is to provide an outlet for the scholarly discussion of all issues relating to death, dying, grieving, the dead, and the afterlife. We are open to all methodologies, religious traditions, and topics of inquiry.

Chairs

- Alyssa Maldonado-Estrada
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 - Jamie Brummitt
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-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Drugs and Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

The Drugs and Religion Unit invites proposals for papers, panels, or roundtables on any topics that explore psychoactive substances and religious life. Our interests range from the most mystical flights of drug-induced rapture, to the religious use of alcohol, pharmaceuticals, and caffeine, as well as the numerous dimensions of addiction and recovery. A few potential topics that emerged during our last business meeting focused on:

- coffee and religious cultures
- occult figures and their use of drugs
- "tripping" and the intersections of drugs and sacred travel
- possible futures for the study of drugs and religion
- we will also entertain proposals on other topics as well

We also invite papers, panels, and roundtables for co-sponsored sessions.

Statement of Purpose

This unit was created as a means of understanding, expanding, and evaluating the ways in which scholars approach the interconnections of drugs and religion. The connections between drugs and religion have deep historical roots in human history, and can be found across a wide spectrum of human cultures. The most famous connection is perhaps the Indo-Aryan hymns to "soma" of the Rg Veda (c.1500–700 BCE), which has fascinated and confounded scholars for more than a century. Antiquity is rich in psychedelic ceremonialism, from the ritual use of the San Pedro cactus within the Chavín

civilization (900–200 BCE) in the Peruvian highlands, to the theurgical practices of Roman Egypt and the spiked viticulture of Greco-Roman society. This imbrication continues to the present day, as represented by the Native American Church's sacramental uses of peyote, and the use of cannabis in Rastafarianism, for example. While the religious use of drugs is widespread and complicated, it is definitely not simply a thing of the past, nor are they only found in non-Western cultural settings.

This proposed program unit will unpack the overdetermined category of "drugs" by surveying the global entanglement of substances and religion. Informed by an interdisciplinary approach, our conversation will address the obvious, and not so obvious religious values and purposes invested into caffeine and chocolate, birth-control pills and vitamin supplements, wine and tobacco, among psychedelic drugs. Moreover, looking beyond the use of drugs, this program unit will consider religious prohibitions against drug-use, and religious responses to addiction from a global perspective. The unit aims to expand the study of religion by including theoretical and conceptual perspectives, as well as other disciplines, that open new paths for the value-neutral research into drugs and religion.

Chairs

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In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Eastern Orthodox Studies Unit

Call for Proposals

For November 2026 we welcome paper proposals on the following topics:

John Zizioulas' *Remembering the Future*

In keeping with the AAR 2026 presidential theme of Future/s, this session will explore the potential legacy of the final work of one of the greatest modern Orthodox theologians, John Zizioulas' (1931-2023) *Remembering the Future: Toward an Eschatological Ontology* (published posthumously in 2023). *Remembering the Future* presents eschatology as "a mode of existence," and explores the significance of the Resurrection and the Eschaton for the most fundamental level of our being. We welcome a broad range of submissions for this session, including those that address this text specifically and/or the broader questions it raises with respect to the contemporary, and future, possibilities in Orthodox Christian theology in areas such as time, ontology, eschatology, theological anthropology, theology of creation, and ecclesiology.

[Theology Bridging East and West During the "Long Nineteenth Century" \(co-sponsored with the Nineteenth Century Theology Unit\)](#)

This panel explores the interaction between nineteenth-century Western philosophy and theology within nineteenth- and twentieth-century Eastern Orthodox thought. To foster interdisciplinary dialogue in theology, philosophy, religious studies, history, literature, and cultural studies, this session will explore the complex and often understudied interactions between nineteenth-century Western philosophy and religious thought and their reception within Eastern Orthodox theology in the "long nineteenth century" (1789- 1918). Panelists will explore interactions in both their historical reception histories and in their theological relevance for contemporary discussions. Session papers might include, but are not limited to, the following topics: reception histories of German Idealism and Romanticism in Eastern Orthodox theology, interactions between Orthodox thought and Western schools of thought (ressourcement, French Catholic mysticism, etc.), earlier nineteenth-century Orthodox engagements with Western modernity, personalist philosophy; aesthetics, literature, symbolism, and religious imagination after Immanuel Kant; and ecumenical dialogue.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit focuses on the critical study of the theology, culture, history, and practices of the many different Eastern Christian churches, including but not limited to Orthodox, Oriental, and Eastern Rite Catholic (numbering some 260-300 million worldwide), including their mutual interaction and engagement with Western Christian and non-Christian groups.

Chairs

- Philip Dorroll, Wofford College
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 - Sarah Riccardi-Swartz, Northeastern University
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-

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Eastern Orthodox Studies Unit

Call for Proposals

[Ethnography and Ecclesiology in the Orthodox Christian World \(co-sponsored with the Ecclesiological Investigation Unit\)](#)

The Eastern Orthodox Studies Unit and the Ecclesiological Investigations Unit invite proposals for a session that considers the impact of ethnographic methods on the study of Orthodox ecclesiology. Anthropologists and other social scientists are now engaging with theological ideas, texts, and lived practices, fertilizing a shift in how they understand what constitutes the Orthodox Church. Theologians too are taking up social scientific methods in their work, in order to grasp the forms of theological understanding that actually animate particular communities' lives. Together, these developments can lead to uncharted territory in Orthodox ecclesiology. What are the parameters of the conversation that is taking shape around empirical, descriptive, interpretive, or inductive approaches to ecclesiology? What are the benefits and risks of these developments? How might developments in ethnographic theology or the study of ecclesial practices *outside* Orthodox Christianity need to be adapted for Orthodox Christian contexts? We encourage submissions from a variety of disciplinary perspectives and geographical foci as we seek to cultivate a generative dialogue on this emerging conversation.

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-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Ecclesial Practices Unit

Call for Proposals

Imagining the Future Church

The Ecclesial Practices Unit invites papers that use empirical research to spark fresh imagination for the future/s of the church—or to interrogate assumed future/s that have outlived their usefulness, pointing instead toward more generative possibilities. Empirical work, with its attention to lived stories and embodied practices—old and new, rooted and far-flung—can reveal the very capacities communities need to imagine futures that refuse both despair and shallow optimism. We invite scholars to share research that offers sensory richness and vivid texture, that tells stories to enliven and embolden our shared ecclesial imagination.

The Ecclesial Practices Unit invites papers that use ethnographic methods, broadly defined, and focus on the potential for qualitative theological methods to access the embodied, emotional, and affective dimensions of imagination. We express particular interest in submissions that employ creative qualitative methods and engage a broad range of Christian practices within church contexts—encompassing both traditional ecclesial communities and emerging interpretations of what it might mean to be ‘church’.

Potential themes include, but are not limited to:

- What will belonging look like in the future church? What paradigms of belonging are emerging as the shape of church shifts? What mistakes and failures in futuring can cause alienation? What might be the role of technology in the practice of creating church communities of belonging?
- Can embodied experiences serve as loci for imagination of the future/s? How do the present and immediate future challenge or make possible imagining the future? How can looking back to look forward fire the imagination? What are methods for archival listening alongside ethnographic listening?
- Where will future ecclesial practices unfold? What can rural congregations teach us about adaptive possibilities, given that urban contexts are often the focus of imagination about the future? Could explorations of the closing of congregations shed light on how congregations are finding new ways of adapting for the future? What is the role of physical spaces, of digital spaces, of gathering and connecting in the future? What parachurch work and partnerships anticipate the future?

Statement of Purpose

Ecclesial Practices provides a collaborative space at the intersection of ethnographic and other qualitative approaches and theological approaches to the study of ecclesial practices. This might include churches, other (new, emerging, para-church, and virtual) communities, and lived faith in daily life. International in scope, the unit encourages research contributing to a deeper understanding of “church in practice” in a global context, including decolonization and postcolonial theologies. The unit encourages ongoing research in the following areas: • Empirical and theological approaches to the study of ecclesial communities (churches, congregations, and emerging communities), especially as interdisciplinary efforts to understand lived faith and practice extending from them • Studies of specific ecclesial activities, e.g. music, liturgy, arts, social justice, youth work, preaching, pastoral care, rites of passage, community organizing • Studies of global contexts of lived faith in relation to ecclesial communities, for example, decolonizing and postcolonial theory and theology • Discussions of congregational growth and decline, new church movements, and ecclesial experiments connected to shared practices in a worldly church • Explorations of Christian doctrine in relation to the potential implications of empirical and qualitative research on ecclesial communities and lived faith for discerning, defining, and challenging standard theological genres such as systematics and doctrine, as well as inviting new ways to understand normative logics • Discussions of methodological issues with regard to qualitative research on theological topics, especially related to ecclesial communities and lived faith • Discussions (both

substantive and methodological) of the implications of new technologies and digital cultures for ecclesial communities and lived faith

Chairs

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 - Rebecca Spurrier, Columbia Theological Seminary
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In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Ecclesiological Investigations Unit

Call for Proposals

Prophetic Imaginations and Ecclesial Futures

In his landmark text, *The Prophetic Imagination*, Walter Bruggemann writes, "The prophet engages in futuring fantasy. The prophet does not ask if the vision can be implemented... the *imagination* must come before the *implementation*. Our culture is competent to implement almost anything and to imagine almost nothing." (40) This session aims to envision what church in a future may be or look like. What does it mean for the church to be prophetic or to have a prophetic imagination? What does this prophetic - or propheticist (Ignacio Ellacuría) - imagination look like in the future? How might church be like or look like in the future? What does it mean to "future fantasy" in the context of church? And what resources can a prophetic imagination bring to support or critique such a church?

Scholars are invited to engage this topic and these questions creatively and are not restricted to the questions covered in this CFP. Possible ideas that might be broached include theological questions such as how to think ecclesologically about having a prophetic imagination, or what it means to be prophetic, or the relationship between imagination and implementation. Other questions can be raised on church and social issues such as how the prophetic imagination interfaces on artificial intelligence,

transhumanism, technology-backed nationalism, ecojustice, migration, and other subjects. Further questions can also include intra-church or ecumenical matters such as how the church can prophetically re-envision, engage, or concretize synodality, *diakonia*, or church institutions and programs such as the [New International Financial and Economic Architecture \(NIFEA\)](#) initiative, and where they fit into the church in the future.

New Generations and the Future of the Church

The Ecclesiological Investigations Unit invites papers for a session that explores ecclesial and theological responses to generational shifts in society. To what extent do the spiritual needs of younger generations shape the structure of the church, notions of Christian identity, and the explicit and implicit ecclesiologies shaping both common life and public witness in the church? What are possible visions of youth ministries in a future where young people are navigating increasingly complex matters? Possible paper topics might include, but are not limited to:

1. The intersection of masculinity studies with religious conversion and deconversion, particularly in view of the recent phenomenon of interest in Orthodox and Roman Catholic traditions among young men
2. Eco-ecclesiology and other responses to climate disaster and apocalypticism
3. Churches' engagement with content creators and online spiritual communities
4. Loci for theological research and education that are found beyond the limits of traditional settings such as seminaries and universities
5. Churches' reception of post-denominational Christianity and/or multiple religious belongings
6. Unity and conflict in intergenerational and intercultural spaces
7. Diverse manifestations of fear of a future with no church, or a church that is unrecognizable to the person(s) experiencing fear (whether young or old)

Difficult Conversations in and as church (tri-sponsored session with Christian Spirituality Unit and Vatican II Studies Unit)

Difficult conversations occur less frequently today between religious believers and non-believers or between one religion and another, and rather, are more likely to occur within religious communities, particularly in Christian churches. As Christian Nationalism gathers momentum alongside polarisations, cancel culture, and toxic masculinity, in addition to ongoing crises such as environmental degradation and anti-immigration policies and practices, questions of how to coexist within Christian communities come to the fore.

- Considering newer experiments in co-responsibility for difficult conversations in church life, such as synodality, how do we talk about difficult topics such as women's ecclesial leadership? Synodality was meant to carve a path forward for the Catholic church and yet, the latest Vatican commission on women deacons insists on a conclusion that not only ignores scholarship but also global calls for ordained women. Meanwhile, in the Anglican church, the elevation of the first female to the role of Archbishop of Canterbury meant for some, the church had reached a milestone, for others it was heretical and reason to disassociate. Do we concede that synodality is a failed exercise when it comes to women's ecclesial leadership? What can Christian Spiritual traditions and histories contribute in these otherwise seemingly failed synodal exercises on women in the church?
- When people engage in ecclesial dialogues, do they consider being trauma-informed? What is the current practice at both local and international levels such as the World Council of Churches? Is it within the ecclesial imagination to ensure we do not further traumatize and marginalize peoples as we invite them into these conversations? How can we take responsibility for understanding power dynamics and ensuring we do not make more vulnerable those who are already vulnerable? Take for example, the way in which communities still tread carefully around welcoming the LGBTQ+ community. Is the welcome simply a beautiful ideal or can we have real, even if difficult, conversations that enable both sides to be heard while keeping all participants safe? Again, Christian spiritual traditions and histories might reveal existing alignments with trauma-informed approaches to dialogue. It can also reveal the complications.
- Last, how do we begin or continue to engage in the difficult conversations about being colonial Christians or Christians on colonised lands? That we often worship on unceded territories and on lands that have no treaties? That indigenous spiritualities are still seen with suspicion as evidenced by the reaction to the presence of the Pacha Mama statue during the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon region in 2019? Can we talk about how as Christian communities, we are not there yet in terms of unlearning internalised racism as white and brown/black skinned persons alike, and dismantling Western-Anglo-European structures in our churches? How might Christian spiritualities enable us to face and dialogue on these difficult truths about ourselves and our communities?

Statement of Purpose

Ecclesiological Investigations Unit Mission Statement

The Ecclesiological Investigations Unit seeks to serve as a hub for national and international collaboration in ecclesiology, acting as a facilitator to support

conversations, research, and education in this field. Our Unit strives to appeal to a wide range of AAR members through its inter-disciplinary nature and the way in which it crosses many academic boundaries in theology and religious studies. The Unit's fundamental aims are as follows:

- Organizing and sharing in ecumenical, interreligious, and interdisciplinary research and discussion, bringing ecclesiology into dialogue with other sub-disciplines in theology and religious studies as well as the sciences, social sciences, and the humanities.
- Equally encouraging established professionals, doctoral students and early scholars to have a platform for their research and eventual publication.
- Providing a space and a platform for emerging and marginalized voices in our field.
- Fostering diversity and inclusion in all dimensions of our work.
- Publishing the best fruits of our collaborations in journals such as *Ecclesiology* (Brill), the *Journal of World Christianity* (Penn State), and *Ecumenical Trends* (Graymoor Ecumenical and Interreligious Institute) or in edited volumes such the *Pathways for Dialogue* series (Springer/Palgrave Macmillan).

Chairs

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Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Ecclesiological Investigations Unit

Call for Proposals

Ethnography and Ecclesiology in the Orthodox Christian World *(co-sponsored session with Eastern Orthodox Studies Unit)*

The Eastern Orthodox Studies Unit and the Ecclesiological Investigations Unit invite proposals for a session that considers the impact of ethnographic methods on the study of Orthodox ecclesiology. Anthropologists and other social scientists are now engaging with theological ideas, texts, and lived practices, fertilizing a shift in how they understand what constitutes the Orthodox Church. Theologians too are taking up social scientific methods in their work, in order to grasp the forms of theological understanding that actually animate particular communities' lives. Together, these developments can lead to uncharted territory in Orthodox ecclesiology. What are the parameters of the conversation that is taking shape around empirical, descriptive, interpretive, or inductive approaches to ecclesiology? What are the benefits and risks of these developments? How might developments in ethnographic theology or the study of ecclesial practices *outside* Orthodox Christianity need to be adapted for Orthodox Christian contexts? We encourage submissions from a variety of disciplinary perspectives and geographical foci as we seek to cultivate a generative dialogue on this emerging conversation.

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 - Cristina Lledo Gomez, BBI-The Australian Institute of Theological Education
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-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Energy, Extraction, and Religion Seminar

Call for Proposals

In the fifth and final year of the Energy, Extraction, and Religion Seminar, we invite proposals on futures of (and beyond) extractivism.

We envision one session as a summative and reflective conversation about the Energy, Extraction, and Religion Seminar. In particular, we invite proposals concentrated on futures beyond extractivism. In so doing, we will take the risk of posing the utopian (or heterotopian) question: what would it mean to think and live beyond extractivism? What would this look like in the study of religion? As Lauren Berlant emphasizes, “to see like a heterotopian is to attend to and elaborate a loose assemblage of emergent lifeworlds” (2020, 14). Where are such emergent lifeworlds materializing? How might they be cultivated? What role might religious practices, cosmologies, lifeways, ceremonies, or theologies play in cultivating such futures?

Our second session will also emphasize counter-extractivist futures, but with a focus on pedagogy, curricula, and higher education. We invite proposals describing the implications of a turn toward critical engagement with religion, energy and extraction in

classrooms and university settings more broadly. How should the insights and theories from this seminar and this transdisciplinary array of fields be incorporated into religious studies and theology courses? How should a refusal of extractivism change our methods of teaching and mentoring? Reflecting beyond our role(s) as individual scholars, how does attention to the nexus of energy, extraction, and religion facilitate broader efforts to rethink and reimagine higher education?

Statement of Purpose

This seminar provides an intellectual space to foreground relations, dynamics, and critiques among religion, energy, and extraction. For scholars in a variety of humanistic and social scientific disciplines, extractivism provides a conceptual rubric through which to re-conjoin analyses of racialization and exploitation with concerns about ecology and sustainability. This is particularly the case in the environmental and energy humanities. In light of multidisciplinary scholarly discourses on extractivism, this seminar aims to conscientiously link social and ecological justice questions as a matter of theoretical and methodological rigor; to explicitly and directly attend to racial capitalism and coloniality as constitutive of environmental crises; to facilitate and improve dialogue between religion scholars and the environmental humanities, focusing attention on the religious dimensions of energy intensive and extractive cultures; and engage in reflexive analyses of the study and constructions of religion in, with, and through cultures of energy and extractivism.

Chairs

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- Evan Berry
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In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Esotericism Unit

Call for Proposals

DIVINATION: QUERYING TIME ACCROSS SPACE

Divination is among the most ancient and widespread religious practices, but within many major religious traditions, divinatory practice is either prohibited outright or tightly controlled. This marginalization and prohibition of divination systems makes them an excellent subject for the methods of the study of esotericism. In keeping with the Presidential Theme for 2026, FUTURE/S, the Esotericism Unit invites papers exploring novel approaches to the study of divination in any tradition or context. The unit welcomes papers on any divination practice, and we especially welcome papers exploring the divination traditions from global context that are not often studied under the rubric of esotericism: global Indigenous traditions, like the Xoooy tradition of the Serer people, divination systems from east Asia and south Asia, like the Jyotisha system of Vedic astrology, or African systems like Ifá. We encourage papers that explore both the cultural status (be they secret, public, regulated, prestigious, criminal, popular, countercultural, gendered, racialized, classed, etc.) and the materiality of the knowledge of the future/s that these systems offer.

1776 AND BEYOND: ESOTERICISM, REVOLUTION, NATIONALISM

In the Philadelphia novelist George Lippard's 1848 esoteric novel *Paul Ardenheim*, the birth of George Washington and the founding of the United States were fictionalized as the result of a millennium-long conspiracy to usher in a new era of global peace by an esoteric order calling itself "the Congress of Brotherhood." While Lippard's novel was fiction, it has fueled widespread belief in the origin of the United States as the project of an esoteric secret society. The Esotericism Unit invites papers that explore esoteric knowledge and practice as a component of revolutionary and nationalist projects throughout history and today. This can include but is not limited to: papers examining esoteric ideas as sources of founding myths or national identity in political movements; esotericism itself as a countercultural or revolutionary modality (for example, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī's use of Freemasonry as a base for anticolonial political activism, or Illuminism in the European Enlightenment and French Revolution); esoteric understandings of a nation's (or a people's) spiritual relationship with land or specific territory, and the role of esotericism in the emergent global right.

ESOTERICISM AND DRUGS: Co-Sponsored Session with the Religion and Drugs Unit

While drug use has been an important part of religious practice throughout human history, both religious and legal prohibitions have relegated many forms of religious drug use to the margins of religious culture. The Esotericism Unit and the Religion and

Drugs Unit welcome papers on the relationship between esotericism and drugs, with both categories open to capacious interpretation.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this unit is to promote, expand, and constructively critique the academic study of esotericism. "Esotericism" is now conventionally seen as an umbrella term covering a range of historical currents associated with notions of "hidden knowledge" that have been conceived of – by historical actors or by later scholars – as "alternative" to or "rejected" by established religious institutions in Europe and beyond. In this sense it typically includes a wide range of currents such as Gnosticism, Hermetism, and theurgy, occult sciences and ritual magical traditions, Paracelsism and Rosicrucianism, Mesmerism, spiritualism, and Theosophy, and various forms of "alternative" spirituality. The unit continues to support new work on all aspects of such currents, from antiquity to the present day. However, it specifically encourages work that 1) challenges the cultural and geographic demarcations of the field by looking at esotericism in e.g. Islamic and Jewish contexts, colonial and post-colonial societies (e.g. India, South America, Africa, the Pacific); 2) seeks new ways to engage in cross-cultural comparisons of esoteric practices and discourses; and 3) explores innovative theoretical and methodological approaches to esotericism and interrogates key terms in the field (e.g. esotericism, gnosis, secrecy, initiation, marginality and rejectedness). By encouraging such work, the unit is committed to refining "esotericism" as a critical concept in the study of religion, and opening up and expanding the field through an engagement with other disciplines and theoretical perspectives.

Chairs

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- Justine Bakker, Radboud University
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In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Ethics Unit

Call for Proposals

This year the Ethics Unit welcomes proposals on the following themes:

Ethics and Constant Crisis

Ethical reflection is often concerned with responsible action—identifying problems, imagining alternatives, and promoting steps to achieve a brighter future. But we are in a moment that is characterized by unpredictability, a bombardment of moral demands, and pervasive harms. Trauma and crisis fatigue make it difficult for many people to imagine anything beyond survival. How does the field of religious ethics help us understand and respond to this felt lack of agency? Do the experiences of the traumatized, demoralized, and compassion-fatigued complicate existing moral paradigms? What does responsibility look like when one's capacity to respond has been overwhelmed? Do we need to be able to envision a better world to withstand the crises around us?

[\[co-sponsored with Political Theology Unit\]](#)

Aligned with What? AI, Power, and Technology Governance

A key buzzword for AI ethics is "alignment," especially in the wake of Brian Christian's 2020 book *The Alignment Problem*. The idea is that any artificial intelligence should be aligned to human values. That's an admirable (if vague) goal, but as OpenAI admits, "Aligning AI systems with human values also poses a range of other significant sociotechnical challenges, such as deciding to whom these systems should be aligned." AI cannot be aligned to *human values*, but always *particular humans' values*, and presumably the values held by a powerful minority. We invite proposals in political theology or religious ethics (both broadly understood) on the question of technology governance and the ways developments in AI research and usage interact with existing power dynamics and differing values. Possible directions could include the following: What theological resources might help us grasp the operation of power and mode of governance anticipated by the widespread use of AI and LLMs? Alternatively, how can humanism (in its classical or contemporary human-rights forms) or posthumanism (particularly in its eco- or materialist forms) clarify the ethics of technology governance? How might our fields help us to articulate the human over and against these models, both in response to the question of "alignment" and to the

question of the *kind* of "human" guidance or oversight that AI/LLMs continue to require?

The Family of the Future

Stephanie Coontz writes that the so-called "traditional family" is "an ahistorical amalgam of structures, values, and behaviors that never coexisted in the same place." This doesn't mean, however, that our traditions can't help us understand kinship and obligation in a constructive way. Religious ethics can play a role in helping us imagine and recover forms of intergenerational care that address social ills. In keeping with this year's presidential theme and Colorado's legacies—as both the home of Focus on the Family and pioneering LGBTQ+ activism—we invite proposals on the topics of the family, moral responsibilities to future generations, and belonging. Which "family values" are worth embracing? Should the nuclear family be detonated? Do we believe the children are our future? Proposals that engage with ancient, medieval, or early modern sources are especially welcome.

Immigration and Religious Ethics

Project 2025 called for prioritizing border security and immigration enforcement, including increasing practices of detention and deportation. The second Trump administration has made a furious effort to carry out mass deportations, including the arrests, detention, and deportation of immigrants with legally recognized documents as well as U.S. citizens. For its part, the Supreme Court of the United States overturned a federal judge's order that had prohibited agents in Los Angeles from stopping people to question them about their immigration status based solely on factors such as their ethnicity.

Religion has figured prominently in public responses to the new ICE regime. While defenders of these practices in the Trump administration have appropriated Christian theology to defend their positions, religious communities are also responsible for some of the most vociferous opposition to these practices.

In recognition of the 30th anniversary of the Hispanic Theological Initiative, the Ethics Unit seeks proposals examining the religious and ethical responses to the Trump administration's current immigration practices. Proposals could explore the role of religion in either justification of or resistance to current practices.

Statement of Purpose

The Ethics Unit seeks to serve the AAR by providing a forum for scholarly engagement with the ethical dimensions and implications of religious traditions.

Chairs

- Nichole Flores, University of Virginia
nichole.flores@virginia.edu
 - Russell Johnson
rpjohnson@uchicago.edu
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Evangelical Studies Unit

Call for Proposals

The Evangelical Studies Unit invites proposals for individual papers or complete panels related to the presidential theme: Future/s, as it relates to either (1) the future of evangelicalism or (2) how evangelicals approach or think about the future. We welcome papers exploring how this theme manifests within evangelical theology, history, culture, politics, practice, education, and/or social vision, and are particularly interested in projects that offer constructive and synthetic approaches to suggest new directions for the study of evangelicalism.

We are especially interested in imagining evangelical future/s through a variety of interpretive and analytical categories. Examples of sub-themes include:

- Utopian visions of the future
- Disenchantment about the future
- Educational institutions and movements

- Nationalism and alternative political visions of the future
- Hope and hopelessness about the future
- Imagination and the pursuit of the common good (including, but not limited to art, fiction, music, film, etc.)
- The relationship between spiritual and political visions of the future (the kingdom of God, heaven, utopian society, etc.)
- Global evangelical futures
- Technology, media, and digital futures
- Ecological futures
- Embodiment and community

Statement of Purpose

The Evangelical Studies Unit promotes critical analysis and innovative thinking around the study of Evangelicalism through multifaceted approaches by fostering dialogue across disciplines and diverse social locations. Unlike many groups aimed at the study of Evangelicalism, there is no confessional expectation or requirement for membership or participation within this Unit.

Chairs

- Peter Choi
pchoi@gtu.edu
- Jessica Wong
jessicawong@apu.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Feminist Theory and Religious Reflection Unit

Call for Proposals

For a potential co-sponsored panel between Lesbian-Feminisms and Religion Unit, Feminist Theory and Religious Reflection Unit, and Theology and Religious Reflection Unit: a panel engaging Wendy Mallette's *Lesbian Feminist Killjoys: Sin, Queer Negativity, and Inherited Guilt* (NYU Press, 2026). This is a largely pre-arranged author-meets-respondents session, but we are interested in including additional scholars interested in historical and/or theological approaches to queer, lesbian, feminist, and trans studies, Christian discourse on sin, and American religious cultures. Please email Siobhan Kelly (smk@ku.edu) if you would like to be considered as a panelist.

For a papers session or roundtable, we invite proposals that address the following: What is the future of feminism in religious studies and theology? How does feminism inform, or how might it show up in, our future versions of religious belief and practice, the academy, and the complex bio-cultural milieus in which we live? Proposals could address topics that include but are not limited to: Pragmatism; eschatology; apocalypticism; utopias/utopianism; science fiction, survival, resilience, hope, despair, emotion, affect, care, public health; incremental and/or (inter/trans)generational change; power and structures of power; extractivism; temporality/decolonization of time; crip time and disability theory; decolonial perspectives; absences, silencing, marginalizations, and historical recovery; prison abolition and carcerality; Chicana futurisms, Afro-futurisms, Astro-futurisms; trans studies/transfuturism; thickening fat studies; critical posthumanisms; environmental studies; anthropocene discourses; generative/agentive AI; geoengineering; extinction/rebellion; or any other ideas that explore the future(s) of feminism and feminist theory.

For a round table addressing the legacies and future visions of nuclear technologies, we invite proposals addressing the ethical implications of, and feminist responses to, nuclear technologies and their public and environmental health impacts. We will be inviting local community members and activists to participate in this roundtable with scholars. Home to the former nuclear weapons production facility, Rocky Flats, Denver, Colorado, has become an important case study for assessing ongoing environmental contamination and legacy impacts or radiation, and for critical analysis of the histories of nuclear technologies, sacrificed populations (human and non), and the deep time impacts of irradiated landscapes. We seek proposals from individuals whose work engages critical feminist perspectives and/or approaches to the ways that we understand the histories and futures of nuclear technologies and anti-nuclear activism. Topics could include, but are not limited to: nuclear guardianship; despair and empowerment; grief(work); trauma/horror; memory/remembering; healing; post-apocalyptic and religious future visions; religious based resistance; liberation theology;

resilience; regeneration; healing; nuclear afterlives; deep time; nuclear (de)colonization; collaborative and synergistic alliances; public health; disproportionate impact; social and environmental justice; impacted communities/populations; environmental contamination; community engaged scholarship; revisionist history and (her)story; survivor studies; transnational approaches; and climate discourses.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit has consistently provided programmatic space for a wide variety of feminist theories, including feminist theology, queer theory, continental feminist theory, feminist political theory, etc., as these intersect with a broad understanding of “religious reflection”, including institutional religious settings, or intersections of religion and culture, religion and aesthetics, religion and the body, and religion and nature. FTRR will continue to invigorate feminist analyses of religious discourse within a global setting. Urgent concerns include forms of religious violence and climate crises, among others.

Chairs

- Amanda Nichols, Independent Scholar
nichols.amanda08@gmail.com
- Annie Blazer
annie.blazer@gmail.com

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Films

Call for Proposals

Every year the AAR screens films at the Annual Meeting, ranging from documentaries made by members as part of their research to blockbuster Hollywood films which impact the public understanding of religion. If you wish to screen a film at the Annual Meeting, please submit your proposal as a Roundtable Session and include a short description of the film, runtime, name of the director, and year it was released. Please include yourself as the presider of the session and as a panelist (as the system requires

both for a roundtable session). If you wish to have a panel discussion after the film, submit the names of those panelists as well.

Preference will be given to films that tie into AAR Program Unit sessions, relate to the Presidential theme, or the Annual Meeting locale.

For any questions, please contact annualmeeting@aarweb.org.

Chairs

- Ann Gleig
ann.gleig@ucf.edu
 - Amy Defibaugh, American Academy of Religion
adefibaugh@aarweb.org
 - Claudia Schippert, American Academy of Religion
cschippert@aarweb.org
-

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Films

Call for Proposals

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Chairs

- Ann Gleig
ann.gleig@ucf.edu
 - Amy Defibaugh, American Academy of Religion
adefibaugh@aarweb.org
 - Claudia Schippert, American Academy of Religion
cschippert@aarweb.org
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Foucault and the Study of Religion Seminar

Call for Proposals

The Foucault and the Study of Religion Seminar is dedicated to collaborative research in a public setting, gathering scholars of religion whose research engages theoretical and historical approaches to the work of Michel Foucault. Foucault's work has been transformative for scholarship in the humanities and social sciences over the last fifty years. We aim to continue Foucault's tradition of public intellectual discourse in a way that illuminates the importance of the study of religion for understanding and critiquing his work on questions of gender, race, sexuality, and class. We hope to convene scholars of various religious practices and traditions to expand Foucault's critical approach and enliven the contributions of this research for the public domain.

We understand this work to be ongoing, developing the complex questions that emerge from Foucault's analytics of power, knowledge, and subjectivity central to many disciplines. The 2018 posthumous publication of his History of Sexuality volume on early Christian sexual ethics (Confessions of the Flesh) foregrounds the need for such critical and constructive engagement by scholars with expertise across religious traditions and methodologies. We hope to bring together scholars within the AAR and SBL—particularly those in philosophy of religion, queer theory, black studies, feminist theory, religion and literature, diasporic studies, affect studies, African American religion, religion and ecology, and the histories of differing religious traditions (ancient and early modern)—in order to pursue work that is historically and theoretically rigorous,

reflecting Foucault's own interdisciplinarity and the relevance his work has had across fields.

For our 2026 meetings, we seek papers that engage the work of Foucault and religious studies in ways that take up both historical and philosophical themes, while speaking to the range of contemporary challenges that we collectively face. As this year celebrates the 100th anniversary of Foucault's birth, papers that engage the century of Foucault are also very welcome. All proposals will be carefully considered, but we are especially interested in work that touches on the following themes:

- Foucault's intellectual prehistory and foundations, including but not limited to the role of traditions of the history and philosophy of science in France, historical epistemology, psychoanalysis, and traditions with a more mixed or absent role in traditional stories of Foucault's intellectual, political, and indeed spiritual formation.
- Conversion: themes of conversion, especially the concept of political conversion, are of particular interest to the seminar. Papers that build on Foucault's work to analyze conversion in political, religious, and spiritual forms are very much welcome, as well as papers engaging Foucault's reading and use of texts on conversion from Christian and other religious sources, to the influence of Pierre Hadot's crucial work in this area.
- Archeology as a method unique from genealogy, especially papers that pose methodological questions around archeology in its own terms and within its own methodological concerns.
- The body: analyses of and from Foucault related to the role of the body, especially in providing a foundation for political, philosophical, and spiritual analyses, are welcome
- Friendship: we are especially interested in papers that take up the question of friendship, including the politics of friendship in challenging times, on its own terms, but also in conversation with questions of solidarity, difference, the care of self and other, and political-spiritual exercises and transformation.
- Dreams: the recent translation and publication of Foucault's early work on Binswager raise numerous questions on both dreams in general and Foucault's early engagement with psychological theory
- Foucault and affect theory/emotions
- Foucault and ecology, animals, and the relationship with nonhuman animals, including everything from relations of power to friendship and solidarity.
- Critical terms and theories in Foucault and critical theory more broadly

Statement of Purpose

The Foucault and the Study of Religion Seminar is dedicated to collaborative research in a public setting, gathering scholars of religion whose research engages theoretical and historical approaches to the work of Michel Foucault. Foucault's work has been transformative for scholarship in the humanities and social sciences over the last fifty years. We aim to continue Foucault's tradition of public intellectual discourse in a way that illuminates the importance of the study of religion for understanding and critiquing his work on questions of gender, race, sexuality, and class. We hope to convene scholars of various religious practices and traditions to expand Foucault's critical approach and enliven the contributions of this research for the public domain.

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Chairs

- Daniel Wyche
daniel.wyche@gmail.com
- Niki Clements, Rice University
niki.clements@rice.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Gay Men and Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

Based on very fruitful presentations and conversations at the November '25 General Meeting, the Gay Men and Religion Program Unit welcomes paper and panel proposals on:

- Gayness and Indigenous sexualities
- Religious reception of, adaptation of, and resistance to dominant gay paradigms of North America and Western Europe from outside those geographical regions (and from minoritized perspectives within those regions)
- Gay elders, gay youth (e.g., community in the wake of the AIDS epidemic, gay religious practice across generations, intergenerational sex between men)
- Gay/queer saints—processes of commemoration, veneration, etc.
- Gay privilege and gay complicity in an age of anti-trans terror (and possibilities for gay-trans solidarity)
- Religion and sex in the age of PrEP

Papers may explore the historical and/or contextual possibilities of the above topics and ways in which age, race, ethnicity, gender, national origin, and other factors influence, form, and/or challenge understandings of gay experiences in the past, present, and future.

Statement of Purpose

The Gay Men and Religion Unit: Provides scholarly reflection and writing on the intersections of gay male experience, including sexual experiences, with religious traditions and spiritual practices. Fosters ongoing contributions by (or about) gay men—or men who have sex with men—to religious scholarship in all its forms; we are especially interested in gay men's experiences across a range of religious traditions and in a wide variety of geographical contexts. Critically challenges homophobic scholarship and religious teaching, on the one hand, and aspects of the LGBTQI equality movement that promote assimilation and normalization of hegemonic patriarchy and heterosexism,

on the other. Engages a variety of theoretical and political discourses, which fosters vigorous dialogue between essentialist and constructionist notions of gay male identity; this includes recognizing the insights and limitations of any theoretical and methodological approach to the study of religion and sexuality.

Chairs

- Michael Pettinger
mfpettinger@gmail.com
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In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Global-Critical Philosophy of Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

[Annual meeting, co-sponsor, SACP & GCPR \(Global-Critical Philosophy of Religion Unit\)](#)

Womb Cosmologies: A Cross-Cultural Conversation

The metaphor and notion of womb have been the focus of inquiry and theorization in many cosmological and philosophical systems. The Chinese classic Daodejing frequently alludes to the metaphor of the womb/vagina as the generative force of the cosmos (mother of all things), e.g., the spirit of the valley and the gate of the obscure she-best. The Arabic term for compassion/mercy *raḥma* comes from the root *raḥm* (womb). The Buddhist term for universal Buddha-nature, *tathāgatagarbha*, is literally the womb (*garbha*) of the thus-gone/come-one. This co-sponsored panel invites scholars and philosophers to join a cross-cultural conversation about different womb cosmologies, their relations to love ethics, as well as their promises in bringing forth a friendlier future.

[Annual meeting, co-sponsor ANT of REL & GCPR](#)

Global Philosophies of Religion beyond the Text

In collaboration with the Global-Critical Philosophy of Religion Unit, we seek to sponsor a panel engaging with non-textual and non-Western sources for the philosophy of religion. Papers should consider forms of lived religious reasoning, argumentation, or enactment from sources other than texts, such as oral traditions, rituals, performances, arts, etc. We imagine papers that explore “philosophies from below,” including non-hegemonic and marginalized systems of knowledge, indigenous ways of knowing, conspiracy and other forms of stigmatized knowledge, peripheral epistemologies, etc., and that treat those forms of knowledge as valuable resources for a cross-cultural inquiries in the philosophy of religion.

[Annual meeting, GCPR session \(potential co-sponsor African Religions, TBD after submissions\)](#)

African and Afro-diasporic philosophy of religion

The field of African philosophy of religion, including scholarship on African traditional religions, Christianity and Islam in the African continent, or on syncretic expressions like Candomblé and Umbanda in South America, or like Haitian Vodou, Cuban Santería and Trinidadian Orisha in the Caribbeans, to quote but a few, is a rapidly expanding one.

The past decade has notably seen overviews that classify the concept of God in African traditional religions as resulting in modified monotheisms with either theistic or non-theistic conceptions of a limited-God, up to panentheism (Aga Adaga, Emmanuel Ofuasia); as well as scholarship on the implications that the concept of God or of that of ancestor bear on the meaning of life (Thaddeus Metz); or the burgeoning of studies that examine how ritual-centric practices, embodied epistemologies and syncretic dynamics can enrich philosophical debates on metaphysics and epistemology (José Eduardo Porcher).

This panel is an invitation to consider how selected issues and debates within this rich scholarship in the field of African and Afro-diasporic philosophy of religion can question the categories and expand the scope and methods of traditional philosophy of religion.

Statement of Purpose

The Global-Critical Philosophy of Religion (GCPR) Unit seeks to globalize and otherwise diversify the contents, categories, and methods of philosophy of religion, by critically reflecting on current practices of the field, by developing conceptual frameworks for cross-cultural philosophizing, and by exploring innovative methods for cross-pollination between religio-philosophical traditions.

GCPR is “global” and “critical” in distinctive ways—global, in facilitating panels and sessions that are always populated by scholars representing different religious-philosophical traditions; critical, in interrogating the vocabularies and methodologies used to carry out such cross-cultural, inter-religious philosophizing. Our two key goals follow from this mission: first, to offer and reflect on new categories of inquiry for cross-cultural, inter-religious philosophy of religion; second, to explore and implement new methods for philosophizing about religion cross-culturally and inter-religiously. This, in turn, involves experimenting with session formats that are designed to foster conversations that go beyond “description” or “presentation” to interactive philosophizing about religion, including the pre-circulation of papers, designing sessions that cultivate engagement between panelists, and empowering moderators to lead conversations into “deeper” hermeneutic, phenomenological, comparative, and evaluative topics and issues.

Chairs

- Nathan R. B. Loewen
nrloewen@ua.edu
- Agnieszka Rostalska
arostalska@gmail.com

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Global-Critical Philosophy of Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

"Happiness" as a category for philosophy of religion

We invite paper proposals for a session on “Happiness and Global-Critical Philosophy of Religion.” We want to explore how critical philosophical agents engage with and/or against diverse religious-cultural formations to understand happiness (in theory, practice, affect, etc.). We welcome papers that interrogate the intersections of religion, culture, and happiness, especially from non-Western, decolonial, feminist, or otherwise critical standpoints. Possible questions include: How do different religious traditions

conceptualize happiness, and what might be the implications for a global ethics? In what ways do colonial histories shape religious understandings of happiness? How do gender, race, and class intersect with religious teachings on happiness? Can global-critical philosophies of religion offer alternative frameworks for understanding happiness; therapeutic cures to a quest for happiness; a constructive philosophy of happiness?

Statement of Purpose

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Chairs

- Nathan R. B. Loewen
nrloewen@ua.edu
- Agnieszka Rostalska
arostalska@gmail.com

Hindu Philosophy Unit

Call for Proposals

The Hindu Philosophy Unit of the American Academy of Religion is pleased to invite proposals for the following sessions to be held at the 2026 annual meeting in Denver:

1. Philosophical Roundtable. This format brings together several participants to discuss a single argument or closely related set of arguments. This year's roundtable will focus on questions of agency (*kartṛtva*) and moral responsibility. What does it mean to be an "agent" or "doer"? To what extent are human beings (and other living beings) in control of their actions? How does agency relate to selfhood or personal identity? As a starting-point, we will consider an argument from the 8th-century Jain thinker Akalaṅka. In his *Tattvārthavārtika* (or *Rājavārtika*) he criticizes the Sāṃkhya view that the self is an experiencer (*bhoktr*) but not an agent (*kartṛ*), while also steering away from the Buddhist doctrine of no-self. For Akalaṅka, agency requires consciousness (*caitanya*), and the one who performs an action must also be the one who experiences its "karmic" result:

"Only the self (*ātman*) can be the agent of an action (*karma*), and only the self can be the experiencer of its result. . . . Others think: 'The three *guṇas* are the agent, [and] the supreme self (*paramātman*) is the experiencer.' This is not reasonable, because that which is not conscious (*acetana*), like a pot, cannot be an agent in the domain of merit and demerit. Moreover, if one could experience the result of an action performed by another (*parakṛtaphalabhoga*), there would be the unwanted consequence of non-liberation and the loss of [the results of one's own] actions. Therefore, it is reasonable that only the one who is the agent is the experiencer." (*Tattvārthavārtika* 2.10.1: *ātmaiva karmaṇaḥ kartā, tatphalasya ca ātmaiva bhoktā . . . anye tu "traiguṇyaṃ kartr, paramātmā bhoktā" iti manyate; tad ayuktam; acetanasya puṇyapāpaviṣayakartṛtānupapatter ghaṭādivat. parakṛtaphalabhoge cānirmokṣaprasaṅgaḥ syāt kṛtapraṇāśāś ceti. tasmād yaḥ kartā sa eva bhokteti yuktam;* trans. adapted from A. Bajželj, "Selfhood, Persistence, and Immortality in Jaina Philosophy," *Religious Studies* 60 [2024]: S28)

Participants are welcome to consider responses (or possible responses) from any philosophical school (Jain, Sāṃkhya, Nyāya, Vedānta, Buddhist, etc.) and to take a variety of approaches (focusing on philosophy of action, ethics, metaphysics, etc.). The goal of the format is to create a space for lively and rigorous discussion, rather than full paper presentations. In lieu of paper proposals, therefore, we instead invite prospective

panelists to offer a brief assessment of Akalaṅka's position and to describe the approach they would bring to a roundtable discussion of agency and moral responsibility.

2. Traditional Papers Session. For this session we are looking for individual paper proposals rather than full panel proposals. We are open to a wide range of topics, periods, and approaches. Possible topics include but are by no means limited to: scriptural authority, the ontological status of dreams and reflections, early Vaiśeṣika, assumptions shared across philosophical schools, Hindu-Jain debates, developments in modern Indian philosophy, subjectivity and selfhood, epistemology, philosophy of mind, philosophy of materiality, philosophy and literature, and philosophy in vernacular texts.

3. Possible Co-sponsored Session. We are also interested in possibly co-sponsoring a session with the Yoga in Theory and Practice Unit, either on the topic of yogic perception (contact person: Alberta Ferraro, albertaferraro@gmail.com) or on the topic "Engaging Sāṃkhya: Historical Perspectives and Future Directions" (contact person: Geoff Ashton, gashton@usfca.edu), with a focus on the ways in which other philosophical schools responded to Sāṃkhya.

Statement of Purpose

This unit aims to bring together scholars working on Hindu philosophy broadly construed, including not only the classical schools of Nyāya, Mīmāṃsā, Vedānta, etc., but a wide range of intellectual traditions from the Vedic period to the present day. These traditions are vast and varied, engaging with questions of epistemology, metaphysics, philosophy of language, aesthetics, theodicy, ritual theory, ethics, and political philosophy, not to mention areas that have, arguably, no direct parallel in Western thought. Our goals are (1) to advance research in Hindu philosophical traditions, encouraging new approaches and new topics within the field; (2) to explore interactions and influences between Hindu philosophy and other traditions of South Asian philosophy (Buddhist, Jain, Sikh, Islamic, etc.); and (3) to contribute to the study of cross-cultural philosophy at the AAR.

Chairs

- Aleksandar Uskokov
aleksandar.uskokov@yale.edu
- Michael Allen

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Hinduism Unit

Call for Proposals

New Books in Hindu Studies

Contact: Sohini Pillai (sohini.pillai@kzoo.edu)

Description: This panel features 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. Given the range of new books in Hindu studies, preference will be given to first monographs. To nominate a book for consideration (either your own or someone else's), please email Sohini Pillai.

Revisiting Spirit Possession in Hinduism

Contact: Gaurika Mehta (gmehta@scu.edu) and Shiva Sai Ram Urella (shivasairam.urella@yale.edu)

Description: Ritual, power, body, space, caste, gender—spirit possession foregrounds major themes in the study of Hinduism. For this panel, we invite scholars to revisit spirit possession and its relationship with Hinduism. Topics might include (but are not limited to): 1) the role of the body in spirit possession rituals, 2) the relationship between caste and community in spirit possession rituals, 3) issues of agency, embodiment, and identity, 4) migration and spirit possession rituals in South Asian diasporas, 5) questions of terminology (spirit possession, manifestation, vibration, performance, play), and 6) place-making, performance, and healing.

Interrogating Hinduism

Contact: Shiva Sai Ram Urella (shivasairam.urella@yale.edu)

Description: This panel invites scholars to look beyond historical and textual explorations of the term Hinduism to examine how communities in South Asia and elsewhere actively negotiate, contest, and reject the term. This panel will explore the tensions of being—or refusing to be—Hindu, in quotidian and transnational contexts, highlight experiences of inclusion/exclusion based on caste identities, alternative theories/models of religion and religious belonging, vernacular registers of ritual knowledge and devotion, politics of adoption and rejection of the label Hinduism, the strategic deployment of sect and tradition (dharma, sampradaya), and articulations of derivative political terminologies (Hinduphobia, Hindutva).

New Hinduisms, New Religious Movements

Contact: Shreya Maini (shreya.maini@duke.edu) and Claire Robinson (crobison@bowdoin.edu)

Art and Aesthetics of (alternatively “in” Or “and” ?) Hinduism

Contact: Avni Chag (a.c.chag@vu.nl) and Ujaan Ghosh (ghosh.301@osu.edu)

Description: This panel critically rethinks Hindu art and aesthetics by treating visual and material forms as sites of religious knowledge production rather than as illustrative objects. It invites papers that challenge inherited art historical and theological frameworks, examining how aesthetic practices actively shape power, authority, and religious imagination within Hindu traditions. In this vein, the panel is equally interested in questions of built space and the architecture of Hinduism. With the contemporary proliferation of Hindu temples across India and the diaspora, it is critical to read these monumental projects not merely as aesthetic expressions, but as sites that anchor archives of displacement, migratory labor, and uneven regimes of capital.

Religious Histories of Hinduism: Memory, Narrative, and Archives

Contact; Avni Chag (a.c.chag@vu.nl)

This panel examines how histories of Hinduism are shaped through practices of memory, narration, and archival preservation. It foregrounds the ways religious pasts are produced and authorised across textual, material, and digital contexts, attending to both institutional frameworks and vernacular forms of remembrance. By focusing on archives and memory as active sites of interpretation rather than neutral repositories, the panel invites critical reflection on how Hindu religious histories are continually made and remade.

Hinduism and the Colonial Encounter

Contact: Ujaan Ghosh (ghosh.301@osu.edu)

This panel invites critical contributions on the ways in which Hinduism was shaped and reshaped through the British colonial encounter. It seeks to revisit earlier historiographical debates on the colonial “construction” (or otherwise) of Hinduism, while also engaging newer scholarship that examines how colonial encounters reconfigured textual traditions, and lived practices of Hinduism. The questions that the panel seeks to interrogate, but are not limited to: The panel interrogates—though is not limited to—questions such as: In what ways did colonial capitalism, its trading networks, its intellectual projects, and its institutions shape or reshape our understanding of Hinduism? What forms of power underwrote these processes, and how do their afterlives continue to structure contemporary religious identities, institutions, and claims to authenticity? Finally, how did colonial engagements with Hinduism furnish the conceptual and institutional groundwork for modern majoritarian religious projects, including Hindutva, its ideologies, and its ideologues?

Situating Hinduism: The Village as an Ethnographic Field Site

Contact: Gaurika Mehta (gmehta@scu.edu) and Shiva Sai Ram Urella (shivasairam.urella@yale.edu)

Description: Local goddesses and ancestral deities dwell in the village. The village is shaped by dynamics of migration, labor, and caste hierarchies. During festivals and processions, the village becomes a site of memory and transformation. For this roundtable, we invite scholars to situate Hinduism in the “village” and think about the village as an ethnographic field site. Topics might include but are not limited to: 1) the village as a site of vernacular Hinduism, 2) the relationship between ritual, land, and social hierarchies, 3) connections between local, regional, and diasporic networks of devotion, 4) the village as site of memory and transformation: festivals, processions, and public space, 5) thinking with or beyond the ideas of “folk tradition,” and 6) ethnographic methods and practices.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit was established in 1997 with the mission of providing a forum within the AAR for the academic study of Hinduism. The Unit seeks to foster research on all periods, geographies, and registers of Hindu texts and practices through the presentation of critical analysis and interpretative strategies based on textual, sociohistorical, ethnographic, philosophical, theological, and theoretical frameworks. We are particularly

interested in forging connections between Hindu studies and other areas of religious studies, and we welcome proposals from scholars in the field that can provide such connections.

Chairs

- Sohini Pillai
sohini.pillai@kzoo.edu
 - Shana Sippy
shana@sippys.net
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

History of Christianity Unit

Call for Proposals

In keeping with the 2026 Presidential theme, "FUTURE/S," the History of Christianity Unit invites papers that offer explorations of Christian history in light of the question "what is the importance of future thinking (futuring, as some would have it) in the work of religious scholarship in this time?" We especially welcome chronological diversity with a special call to pre-modern issues. We are open to full panel proposals on new approaches (e.g., material culture) and locations for pre-modern Christianities. While we are open to other panel proposals and roundtable sessions, we are especially interested in proposals on the following topics:

- Papers or panels addressing pedagogical issues, challenges, and opportunities for the future of teaching the history of Christianity at the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.
- Proposals taking up the "History of the present, the futures of the past." Ways of knowing about the past, historiographical issues, uncertainties of/in the past, history of the present for the future study of Christianity.
- Proposals taking up the role of digital humanities and AI in the future of the history of Christianity. This may include questions of sources, big data, data mining, and the ethics of historical research.

- 100th anniversary of first public TV demonstration: the future of Christianity and mass communication with attention to media production in the spread of Christianity (ancient and modern).
- Proposals on the 800th anniversary death of St. Francis. In particular, questions of ecology and Christianity.
- Reflections on two years since the death of Pope Francis.
- (Re)envisioning histories (past-present-future) of Global Christianity. Particular focus on Christianity in Africa and Asia (past-present-future).

Statement of Purpose

The mission of this Unit is to deepen and broaden the study of the Christian past by presenting innovative and engaging research on the history, culture, and development of Christianity from its origins to the present, while at the same time promoting interdisciplinary dialogue among the fields of history, religious studies, ritual studies, art history, anthropology, and historical theology. We have a strong commitment to providing a showcase for the work of both junior and established scholars in the field.

Chairs

- Roy Fisher
roy.fisher@lmu.edu
- Minji Lee, Montclair State University
minjiha2@gmail.com

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Human Enhancement and Transhumanism Unit

Call for Proposals

This Unit welcomes papers on any aspect of the relationship between religion and human enhancement through technology or on transhumanism. We seek perspectives

from a variety of religious traditions and encourage relational, feminist, queer, postmodern, and postcolonial analyses. Original research is a priority. Papers may identify and critically evaluate any implicit religious beliefs, practices, and values that might underlie the development and use of human enhancement technologies or the key claims, goals, values, and assumptions of transhumanism. For example, papers might explore the relationship between enhancement and core doctrines or practices of religious traditions, asking how religion might challenge a culture of enhancement or how the growing use of enhancement technology might challenge or reshape the religions of the future. Papers may provide critical and constructive assessments of an envisioned future that places confidence in nanotechnology, cognitive science, moral bio-enhancements, genetics, robotics, and information technology to achieve enhanced human capacities or extend the human lifespan.

Statement of Purpose

"Transhumanism" refers to intellectual and cultural movements that advocate the use of a variety of emerging technologies to enhance human persons. The convergence of these technologies may make it possible to take control of human evolution, providing for "desirable" physical, moral, affective, and cognitive enhancements and the amelioration of aspects of the human condition regarded as undesirable. These enhancements include the radical extension of healthy human life, uploading consciousness / brain patterns, advanced prosthetics, and genetic modifications. If these enhancements become widely available, they would arguably have a more radical impact than any other development in human history — one need only reflect briefly on the economic, political, and social implications of some of the extreme enhancement possibilities. The implications for religion and the religious dimensions of human enhancement technologies are enormous and are addressed in our Unit. We are interested in encouraging and providing a forum for a broad array of diverse scholarly input.

Chairs

- Seth Villegas
sethv27@alumni.stanford.edu
- Tom Berendt, Arcadia University
tom.berendt@temple.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Indian and Chinese Religions in Dialogue Unit

Call for Proposals

We welcome contributions that are in accord with the below panel themes, as well as papers that relate to the AAR 2026 theme of '**Freedom**' from the perspective of India, or China, or both.

Ontologies of Silence in Ancient and Chinese and Indian Thought

In the ancient world, silence was never merely the absence of sound; it was a presence charged with meaning. Both Chinese and Indian traditions treat silence as an ontological reality rather than a void. In the Upaniṣads and Bhartṛhari's writings, silence appears as the unmanifest ground of language; Buddhists sometimes argue that silence signals the ineffability of ultimate truth; Daoist texts frame silence as attunement to the Way or the cosmic spontaneity. This panel examines how these traditions conceptualize silence as a distinct mode of being and explores its philosophical or socio-political implications.

Contact Yi (Allan) Ding: allan.ding@depaul.edu

Festivals and Celebrations in Indian and Chinese Religions

This panel invites papers examining festivals, ritual celebrations, and communal observances in pre-modern Indian and Chinese religious traditions. Topics may include ritual performance, seasonal or temple festivals, image processions, commemorations, and the social or artistic dimensions of celebration. Comparative or transregional approaches—especially those engaging material or visual culture—are particularly welcome.

Contact: Dessi Vendova, d.vendova@columbia.edu

Dialogue on the Way: Indian Perspectives on a Chinese Classic

The Zhuangzi is one of the most beloved works of philosophy and literature in China. In this roundtable, we invite scholars of Indian thought to select a passage from the Zhuangzi and engage it from within their own tradition. We also invite experts on the Zhuangzi to respond and open a cross-cultural conversation.

Contact: Eyal Aviv or Dan Lusthaus: aviv@gwu.edu, yogacara@gmail.com

Translation Beyond Words: Speaking of the Ineffable

How does one speak of that which cannot be spoken? In the dialogue between Indian and Chinese traditions, the ineffability of ultimate reality is not merely a philosophical dead-end, but a generative starting point for rigorous theory, practice, and aesthetics. We invite proposals for a panel exploring the diverse strategies employed to navigate, manipulate, and transcend the boundaries of conceptual thought in the Indic and Sinitic worlds. Beyond doctrinal analysis, we seek to investigate the broader literary and practical modalities through which the 'unspeakable' is articulated and realized. We welcome contributions that explore how the ineffable inspires literary and artistic production; how somatic and ritual practices bypass language; and how thinkers have translated these paradoxes across cultural and linguistic borders.

Keywords: Philosophical & doctrinal strategies; Poetics and literary aesthetics; Praxis and embodiment; Translation beyond words

Contact: Merijn ter Haar, merijn.terhaar@yale.edu

Memory of Past Lives

Memories of past lives is a common trope in Indian multi-life stories, in pre-Buddhist, Buddhist, and Jain narratives. This trope is embedded with the notional complex of karma and transmigration. However, as this complex was absent from ancient Chinese notion of death and afterlife, how were ideas of memories past lives understood and adapted in Chinese narratives, both Buddhist and Daoist?

Contact: Gil Raz, Gil.Raz@dartmouth.edu

Statement of Purpose

This Unit draws together scholars who study the religions of India and China in discrete or comparative frames. Given the increasing global importance of China and India in the

contemporary world, this unit serves as an important forum for sustained discussion of their religio-cultural relationship in historical and modern contexts. Our panels can connect scholars working on diverse traditions, regions, and eras who otherwise might not have the opportunity to learn from each other. Interested members are encouraged to join our (low volume) email list by contacting the co-chairs.

Chairs

- Zoe Slatoff, Loyola Marymount University
zoe.slatoff@lmu.edu
 - Eyal Aviv
aviv@gwu.edu
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Indigenous Religious Traditions Unit

Call for Proposals

The Indigenous Religious Traditions Unit (IRTU) strives to create a collegial environment that upholds the values of the AAR (academic excellence, professional responsibility, free inquiry, critical examination, diversity, inclusion, respect, and transparency) within the academic study of religion and in the work of the Academy. In line with these values, the IRTU is committed to diversity and inclusivity, as reflected in pre-arranged panels that reflect gender and racial/ethnic diversity, as well as diversity of field, method, and scholarly rank, as appropriate.

The IRTU invites roundtable, paper, and panel proposals regardless of fitting a specific call, highlighting any concerns about Indigenous rights, the preservation of Indigenous languages and traditions, food sovereignty, repatriation, White supremacist blood and soil ideologies, and any other topics around the restoration of ownership to traditional Indigenous communities, Indigenous futurism and settler futures in terms of reparations, etc. We especially encourage proposals that explore the movement's broad perspective on restitution, decoloniality, and the protection of traditions, lands, ecosystems, and relations.

For the AAR 2026 in Denver, CO, the IRTU particularly welcomes Indigenous roundtable, paper, and panel proposals relating to the AAR's 2026 presidential theme "Futures" within any of the topics above and the following in specific:

- Academic and institutional futures: threats in terms of programs for faculty, research, and collaboration on topics related to Indigenous Religious Traditions or with Indigenous collaborators.
- Presents and futures of Indigenous religious and spiritual practices during the current state of immigration violence, safety, and sanctuary.
- Societal change and protection of the vulnerable in human and more-than-human populations.
- Indigenous futurisms.
- Indigenous religious traditions in the digital age.
- Indigenous media.
- Indigenous Peoples and AI.
- Present and future safety in the Academy: Reckoning with faculty precarity and institutional responsibility, working ethically with Indigenous faculty, staff, and students.
- The meaning, methods, politics, and economics of the extraction of Indigenous heritage in the study of religion.
- The futures of the Indigenous movement in the face of environmental change amid climate emergencies.
- The "Author Meets Critic Series" invites books published in the last three years that are relevant to the study of Indigenous Religious Traditions.

Co-sponsorships

We aim to collaborate with other Units to broaden our reach and strengthen bonds of inquiry and practice. We invite the establishment of additional co-sponsoring relationships.

- Religion and Ecology Unit
- African Religions Unit
- African Diaspora Religions Unit
- Contemplative Studies Unit
- Animals and Religion Unit
- Religion and Human Rights Unit

We at the Indigenous Religious Traditions Unit (IRTU) are pleased to encourage submissions that deliberately and explicitly embody Indigenous methods, practice them, and present them. We emphasize and favor Indigenous ways of knowing and their

methodologies in research, such as specialized uses of language and speaking, rhetoric, and oratory, including presenting, persuading, and theorizing. The IRTU honors Indigenous sovereignty and the right of Indigenous scholars to define their methods, forms, genres, and evaluative standards for knowledge production and presentation by being accountable to the communities from which they arise. We seek to create a space where Indigenous scholars feel free to engage their professional colleagues on the basis of their own cultures, broadening professional conduct to include Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

We at the IRTU are looking forward to reading your proposals!

Statement of Purpose

The Indigenous Religious Traditions Unit (IRTU) strives to create a collegial environment that upholds the values of the AAR (academic excellence, professional responsibility, free inquiry, critical examination, diversity, inclusion, respect, and transparency) within the academic study of religion and in the work of the Academy. In line with these values, the IRTU is committed to diversity and inclusivity, as reflected in pre-arranged panels that reflect gender and racial/ethnic diversity, as well as diversity of field, method, and scholarly rank, as appropriate.

The IRTU welcomes theoretical, methodological, and conceptual proposals on the study of Indigenous religious traditions worldwide. We are concerned with the interface of Indigenous religious traditions and modernity, colonial and postcolonial conditions, and local and global forces that shape the practice of Indigenous traditions and their categorizations. Though particularly interested in interdisciplinary approaches to the study of Indigenous religions, we are primarily grounded in the “history of religions” approach in our analysis of Indigenous traditions.

At the IRTU, we emphasize Indigenous methodologies among other humanities and social sciences approaches. We strive for increasingly global perspectives with representation of Indigenous Peoples and traditions from all continents. Similarly, we aspire to include other, more innovative and less conventional modes of scholarship, enhancing our inclusion of creative, embodied, virtual, digital, and public-facing work.

Purpose of the Indigenous Religious Traditions Unit:

The Indigenous Religious Traditions Unit sponsors conversations about the field at thematic, theoretical, definitional, experimental, or historiographical levels to inquire into the past, present, and futures of Indigenous religious and spiritual traditions. Such

conversations embrace the diversity of scholars, disciplines, methods, and traditions that make up the field.

Composition and Routine functions:

The leadership of the IRTU comprises nine members: two co-chairs and seven steering committee members. The co-chairs compose the Call for Proposals for sessions for the AAR Annual Meeting, review and report on sessions, and communicate with the IRTU constituency. The full Steering Committee reviews, shapes, and accepts proposals for those sessions.

The current SC members elect incoming Steering Committee members. Each term is three years, renewable for a second three years if everyone is amenable. The terms are staggered to ensure continuity and change on the committee. A member elected to serve as co-chair must have at least one full year of experience on the Steering Committee. The co-chair elections are staggered as well, so that each new co-chair serves with an experienced co-chair.

Responsibilities:

The co-chairs handle IRTU's business and moderate the Steering Committee's communication. All members of the Steering Committee make decisions on substantive matters. All SC members must attend the Annual Meeting and reserve time to meet in person for socializing, envisioning, and the Unit's business. All SC members must attend the Business Meeting.

Succession:

The following procedure governs the replacement of members of the Steering Committee. After the Annual Meeting, when a vacancy occurs, the co-chairs ask the IRTU constituency (via email) for nominations. From among the nominees, the Steering Committee votes to elect a new member.

The co-chairs maintain this IRTU Purpose, Practices & Procedures document, which is available to the Steering Committee and can be revised as needed.

Chairs

- Lawrence W. Gross, University of Redlands
larrygross110830@yahoo.com
- Yuria Celidwen, University of California, Berkeley
celidwen@berkeley.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Innovations in Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care Unit

Call for Proposals

The Innovations in Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care Unit gathers scholars, educators, researchers, and spiritual care providers to explore chaplaincy in both traditional and emerging settings. We invite individual paper proposals or roundtable proposals that explore a variety of perspectives and locations. In reviewing proposals, we will prioritize some papers which offer practical solutions, tools, and models that attendees could bring home with them and implement in their contexts. In 2026 we are particularly interested in the Presidential theme "Future(s)" and/or the following topics:

- Economic Justice and Job Security for Chaplains: Spiritual care has proven value, and employers should value chaplains by stopping the practice of firing them when budgets get tight. How can chaplains successfully advocate for job security and a living wage, particularly in light of insurance, policy, and political factors driving institutional decision making? If past advocacy and justification for hiring have highlighted chaplain roles in relation to DEI rights and representation within institutions, what happens in a political climate that denies the value of DEI? In a downsizing, how can chaplains avoid being seen as redundant with psychology and social work staffing and therefore expendable? How do we work to care for those embedded in institutions that do not value care? Is there data that is emergent or needed that could better inform this fight? Share what has worked in your settings and the strategies, research, or practices that speak to the C-Suite in terms that matter, or that pilot new economic models for chaplaincy in any setting.
- Seminar for Applied Practice of Chaplaincy/Spiritual Care: Participants in this roundtable will submit a short chaplaincy/spiritual care verbatim or case study in advance of the conference, and then discuss each other's encounters during the conference session, engaging in witnessed

theological reflection, illumination of distinctive assessment and intervention practices, consultation, and expansion of our scope and skills together. This roundtable at once models for students, early career chaplains, researchers, and graduate school faculty how clinical cases are mined for insights and fruitfully and respectfully discussed, while providing experienced professionals opportunity to present an interesting case for support and diversified insights into their praxis from outside their own clinical or community contexts, contributing to professional development.

To join this session, which will be formed into a roundtable by the unit co-chairs and reviewed by the steering committee, submit a proposal that includes:

- a brief synopsis (1-2 paragraphs) of the encounter you would submit in a longer format (for AAR panelist and attendee access) if accepted
- a brief statement of why you would be a good respondent to others' verbatim/cases
- a brief statement of what you hope to learn from others' responses to your case, and
- a commitment to email your verbatim or case study in early October to roundtable participants and a commitment to read the cases of the other panelists before coming to AAR.
- Climate, Ecological, Animal, and Interspecies Chaplaincy: Chaplains are forging roles for spiritual care amid the climate emergency, in caring for the more than human world, in chaplaincy for animals and pets, in veterinary chaplaincy, and interspecies chaplaincy. We invite such chaplains to share the needs they are meeting, the interventions or practices in their toolkits, the spiritual worldviews in which they are rooted, and how one might train for and create a livelihood in this form of chaplaincy.
- Graduate and Clinical Education pedagogy generally, with potential specific focus on: identifying and overcoming barriers to entry and successful completion of degree and clinical programs; what chaplaincy training rooted in specific religious traditions uniquely contribute to the spiritual formation of future chaplains and/or to models of caregiving; pedagogy foundations; etc.
- An invited panel on Josh Morris' forthcoming *A Practical Theology of Pediatric Chaplaincy: Critical Contexts for Care* (Orbis 2026)
- Pagan chaplaincy
- [In a co-sponsored session with the SBL Unit *Biblical Studies and Spiritual Care: Intersections of Pastoral Praxis and Biblical Hermeneutics*](#) we welcome papers offering practice-based insights to biblical texts from chaplains who have served in the military or who work with service members or veterans.

We welcome papers on topics related to chaplaincy and spiritual care including but not limited to: training and educational pathways for work in these fields, the interfaith aspects of chaplaincy and spiritual care, models for interfaith spiritual care that emerge out of a specific religious, theological, or historical tradition, research on chaplaincy and spiritual care in a variety of settings including prisons, hospitals, the military, universities, and businesses, and expanding to political movements and other growing sectors for chaplaincy, navigating difference in spiritual care along lines of race, sexuality, gender identity, class, religious tradition, and experience. The above topics are simply a glimpse at the wide breadth of possible topics. Our unit is interested in cutting-edge research and critical reflection on the fields of chaplaincy and spiritual care from both scholars and practitioners. We remain open to other papers or roundtable proposals on chaplaincy in all its forms and settings. We encourage diverse and active attendance in our conference sessions and business meeting; if you wish to be involved further, please contact the co-chairs.

Statement of Purpose

Chaplaincy is becoming more and more central to the religious/spiritual experiences of individuals and communities in the world. Shifts in religious leadership, religious/spiritual affiliation, and theological education are all occurring at a rapid pace; this unit helps shape AAR as the primary academic home of these discussions. This unit is not only academic in nature; its work is consonant with the AAR's commitment to the public application of scholarship taking place within the Academy. This unit gathers researchers, educators, and broad-minded practitioners to break down the barriers between these siloed communities and draws them into a common conversation on how best to meet individuals' and communities' spiritual needs today. Doing so requires: • translating the research needed to support the work of accompanying individuals through growth, change, and struggle; • investigating how chaplaincy provision is shaped by the people it is offered to and the institutions within which it is provided; • asking how chaplains can be more effectively present in settings currently lacking spiritual care providers for those in need and how those chaplains can respond most effectively to the increasingly diverse religious landscape. The mission of Innovations in Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care is to improve how chaplains are trained, how they work with diverse individuals (including those with no religious or spiritual backgrounds), and how chaplaincy and spiritual care coheres as a professional field.

Chairs

- Aaron Klink
aaron.klink@duke.edu

- Leigh Miller
program@maitripa.org
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Interreligious and Interfaith Studies Unit

Call for Proposals

Future/s of Interreligious Studies: Growing Edges, Intra-faith Dynamics, and New Models

Interreligious and Interfaith Studies is a multidisciplinary field shaped by shifting global religious demographics, the rise of nonreligion, intensifying political polarization, and growing civic instability. Scholars and practitioners also navigate new digital and AI-mediated encounters, pressures within higher education and para-academic settings, and intrareligious tensions that reverberate across religiously diverse landscapes. In keeping with the 2026 AAR Presidential Theme, this session invites proposals that critically and imaginatively explore how such dynamics are reshaping the future/s of the field.

- **New Models:** What emerging frameworks, methods, or conceptual approaches have appeared in the past decade? We welcome theoretical, pedagogical, or practice-based models that respond to changing conditions of interreligious encounter.
- **Current Challenges:** How are current social, political, intra-religious, or institutional pressures revealing limitations of inherited assumptions about dialogue, diversity, and pluralism? How do these challenges prompt methodological or conceptual innovation.
- **Applied Interreligious Studies:** How do concrete cases (e.g., from higher education, professional industries, civic life, religious institutions) clarify possible futures for the field? We welcome analyses of programs, pedagogies, partnerships, or institutional configurations that illuminate emerging trajectories.

Papers may address one area or explore the intersections among them.

Interactive Workshop

Based on the success of our previous workshops, we invite brief presentations (10 minutes) designed to stimulate substantive conversation on critical issues in Interreligious and Interfaith Studies and engagement. Please submit it as a paper proposal and indicate in your text that you intend it for the interactive workshop. Presentations will unfold as intimate, small-group conversations simultaneously at separate tables, with attendees selecting the conversations in which they would like to participate. Note: These are more seminar or roundtable-style presentations rather than a paper presentation that is read aloud (as is typical in many AAR/SBL sessions) to the entire audience

The session will address several of the following topics:

- Future/s of Interreligious Studies: Emerging Modes, Models, and Possibilities
- Interreligious Studies, Artificial Intelligence, and/or Generative AI: Ethical Issues or Programmatic Strategies
- Recent Publications in the Field: Discuss your own work or review significant new contributions
- Interreligious Studies and Activism
- Pedagogy Beyond the World Religions Paradigm
- Syllabus Design and Exchange: Share your own syllabus and/or those of others teaching in the field to examine various approaches.
- Secularisms and Religious Diversity
- Nones, Nothing-in-Particulars, Unaffiliated and Indifferent in religiously diverse societies
- Intra-Religious Dynamics in Interreligious Contexts
- Emerging Scholarship in Interreligious Studies
- Everyday Sites of Interreligious Encounter: Civic, Professional, Public, and Institutional Contexts (do we need this one?)
- Interreligious Studies on Campus: Strategies for curricular, co-curricular, and community engagement
- Interreligious Studies after violent ongoing conflicts

[Call for Papers: Interreligious and Interfaith Engagement After Gaza](#)

(Co-sponsored session with the Religion, Holocaust, and Genocide Studies unit)

The events in Gaza have profoundly reshaped academic discourse and interreligious engagement both nationally and internationally. Communities across diverse religious,

political, racial, and generational lines have been compelled to confront questions of solidarity, moral responsibility, and public witness in unprecedented ways. While many groups have deepened their collaborative efforts in response to the humanitarian crisis, others have experienced heightened tensions, fractured partnerships, or significant reevaluations of their approaches to dialogue and shared action.

College and university campuses have been particularly affected. Differences in generational perspectives have become more pronounced, and institutions have struggled to navigate the ethical, political, and pastoral complexities raised by student activism, administrative responses, and a variety of external pressures. These dynamics have placed interfaith initiatives under extraordinary strain.

For this session, we invite papers that critically and constructively examine intra-and-interfaith and interreligious work in the wake of the annihilation of Gaza. Possible themes include, but are not limited to:

- How previously disparate communities or traditions have found common cause or forged new alliances
- Cases in which longstanding interfaith partnerships have faltered, dissolved, or required significant reframing
- The role of generational, racial, and political differences in shaping interfaith engagement around this topic
- The impact of institutional, governmental, or public pressures on interfaith programs, discourse, and leadership
- Internal tensions within interfaith spaces as participants negotiate competing commitments, narratives, and expectations

We seek contributions that draw from empirical research, theological or ethical analysis, historical perspectives, or practitioner experience. Our aim is to foster a nuanced, rigorous conversation about how interreligious engagement is being transformed by the ongoing crisis and what possibilities and challenges lie ahead for interfaith work in this shifting landscape.

Statement of Purpose

“The field of Interreligious Studies (IRS) entails critical analysis of the dynamic encounters – historical and contemporary, intentional and unintentional, embodied and imagined, congenial and conflictual – of individuals and communities who orient around religion differently. It investigates the complex of

personal, interpersonal, institutional, and societal implications” (Rachel Mikva, *Interreligious Studies: An Introduction*)

This Unit creates space for critical interdisciplinary engagement with interfaith and interreligious studies, examining the many modes of response to the reality of religious pluralism. We seek to:

- Foster rigorous analysis to establish the contours of this emerging field.
- Explore connections with diverse disciplines as they grapple with encounter of persons and traditions in our multi-faith contexts.
- Advance cutting-edge institutional and pedagogical innovation at the intersection of the academy and civic engagement.

Underrepresented scholars, practitioners, and activists are especially encouraged to submit proposals. The unit is committed to equity and inclusion; panel proposals should reflect religious, racial, and gender diversity to be considered.

Chairs

- Hans Gustafson, University of St. Thomas
hsgustafson@stthomas.edu
- Anne Hege Grung
annehg@teologi.uio.no

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Islam, Gender, Women Unit

Call for Proposals

Session 1; 120 minutes: New Books and Articles on Islam, Gender, and Women

Title: New Publications in the Study of Islam, Gender, and Women: Roundtable Discussions

This session highlights recent scholarship in the study of Islam, gender, and women through an interactive, small-group format. We invite proposals on recent books or articles (published after 2021) that are significant to the subfield and contain rich material for discussion.

Selected participants have 5 minutes to present one proposed publication through a concise handout or slide deck to the full audience, then will serve as discussion facilitators for attendees at their tables. Attendees will have access to these materials in advance in order to select the table of their choice for an in-depth conversation. The session will conclude with brief reports from each facilitator to the full audience.

IGW is committed to non-traditional formats for its sessions on scholarship related to the study of gender and women in Islam. Proposals that do not conform to these non-traditional formats, or variations to it, will not be considered.

Session Format: Multi-table facilitated discussion with pre-circulated slides or handouts

Session 2; 90 minutes: Pedagogy (co-sponsored with Religion and Popular Culture Unit and Religion, Media, and Culture Unit)

Title: Teaching Islam, Gender, and Women through Multimedia Strategies and Challenges

This pedagogy-focused session invites educators to share an effective use of multimedia (film clips, online videos, music, digital or real life art/museum exhibitions, social media posts, or other audiovisual materials) in teaching topics related to Islam, gender, and women. Each presenter will lead a breakout table in discussion on pedagogical goals, learning outcomes, and practical strategies for fostering critical engagement about their chosen multimedia resource for about 50 minutes, followed by 5-7 minutes of summation for all attendees.

Proposals should:

- Identify the selected multimedia material and explain its relevance
- Describe the themes it addresses and the classroom conversations it opens
- Offer concrete teaching strategies, activities, and/or assignments that participants can adapt for their own courses

We especially welcome presentations that model a brief segment of the proposed classroom activity, allowing attendees to experience the material as students. Proposals from graduate students are also especially welcome.

Accepted presenters will be required to submit their slide deck or electronic materials by X DATE for inclusion in the program book.

IGW is committed to non-traditional formats for its sessions on scholarship related to the study of gender and women in Islam. Proposals that do not conform to these non-traditional formats, or variations to it, will not be considered.

Session

Format: Multi-table facilitated discussion with pre-circulated slides or handouts

Statement of Purpose

The Islam, Gender, Women (IGW) Unit uses non-traditional programming to address meta-questions of the study of gender and women in relation to Islam and Muslims, to support the mentoring and development of its scholars, and to create resources and scholarly networks to advance the field. The name IGW signals that the study of gender and women is an essential subfield of the larger study of Islam and Muslims while shifting attention away from the “woman question in Islam” and toward the study of gender. Our unit examines the relational formation and subversion of genders, while still taking into account “women” as they are interpellated by complex social and symbolic systems.

IGW brings together scholars at all career stages, including those working outside the academy. It supports scholarly reflexivity in a collaborative and collegial setting, discussing methods/approaches and the professional dimensions of research and teaching in the field. It fosters collective consideration of the aims, evolution, and lacunae of the field as a way to nurture new lines of inquiry. Our non-traditional programming, such as workshops and mentoring/networking sessions, aims to strengthen rather than compete with the work of related program units, prevent the segregation of scholarship on gender and women into one unit, encourage sustained “mainstream” engagement with questions of gender and women, and expand opportunities for collaboration and conversation with and among other units.

Chairs

- Tazeen Ali
tazeen.ali@wustl.edu
 - Zahra Ayubi, Dartmouth College
zayubi@gmail.com
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Islamic Mysticism Unit

Call for Proposals

The Islamic Mysticism Group solicits paper and panel proposals for the 2026 AAR Annual Meeting. All proposals related to Islamic mysticism, as described in the Mission Statement are welcome. This Unit encourages proposals for individual papers, paper sessions, and roundtable discussions in all areas related to Islamic Mysticism on the theme of "futures" in the study of Islamic Mysticism. In light of current political and social climate and anxieties, we encourage and welcome paper topics to engage with themes of eschatology, dystopia, anxieties, especially of disentangling time (past, present, and future).

The Unit would also welcome papers on topics of Islamic Mysticism from under-studied regions such as Central Asia and the Far East (Indonesia, Malaysia, etc.). The Unit continues to welcome papers on philosophical studies of Islamic Mysticism such as Neoplatonism, Hermeticism, and other schools of occult thought.

Platonism and Abrahamic Religions in Honour of Kevin Corrigan

Co-sponsored with the AAR Platonism/NeoPlatonism Unit

This panel invites submissions exploring the intersections of Platonism and the Islamic Mysticism, in recognition of Kevin Corrigan's seminal contributions to the study of Platonism and religious thought. Platonism has profoundly shaped theological, philosophical, and mystical currents within Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, influencing conceptions of the divine, the soul, cosmology, and ethical life. From Philo and early Christian thinkers to medieval Jewish, Christian, and Islamic philosophers, and onward to modern receptions, the Platonic tradition offers a rich framework for understanding how abstract metaphysical ideas inform religious belief and practice. We welcome papers

that engage historical, philosophical, theological, or comparative approaches, including studies of metaphysical interpretation, mystical or contemplative traditions, scripture, and the reception of Platonic thought across different Abrahamic contexts. Interdisciplinary perspectives that illuminate Corrigan's influence or extend his insights into new directions are particularly encouraged.

Submissions should address how Platonism and Islamic Mysticism shapes, challenges, or illuminates Abrahamic religious thought.

Pre-arranged sessions are encouraged. Remember that pre-arranged sessions must show gender diversity on the panel. We also greatly encourage other forms of diversity, especially race, ethnicity, theoretical methods, and rank. Authors of accepted proposals are expected to attend the annual in-person meeting and will be barred from future programs if they fail to show, special and emergency circumstances aside.

Statement of Purpose

Islamic mysticism is a broad rubric, one that allows us to engage in areas such as Sufism, Shi'i esoteric thought, some aspects of Islamic philosophy, and allegorical interpretations of the Qur'an. The study of Islamic mysticism also allows our members to engage Islamic materials and cultures from many different parts of the world including, but not limited to, Persianate regions, the Arab world, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, and North America.

Chairs

- Aziza Shanazarova
as6148@columbia.edu
- Syed Zaidi, Butler University
syedzaidi.nyc@gmail.com

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Islamic Mysticism Unit

Call for Proposals

The Unit would also welcome papers on topics of Islamic Mysticism from under-studied regions such as Central Asia and the Far East (Indonesia, Malaysia, etc.). The Unit continues to welcome papers on philosophical studies of Islamic Mysticism such as Neoplatonism, Hermeticism, and other schools of occult thought.

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Chairs

- Aziza Shanazarova
as6148@columbia.edu
- Syed Zaidi, Butler University
syedzaidi.nyc@gmail.com

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Jain Studies Unit

Call for Proposals

The Jain Studies Unit welcomes submissions for the 2026 Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion. If you have additional ideas for possible panels, please send a short provisional title of your topic to one (or both) of the Jain Studies Unit co-chairs, Gregory Clines (gclines@trinity.edu) and/or Ana Bajzelj (abajzelj@ucr.edu). We

especially welcome suggestions for panels to be co-sponsored with other units and for panels that address the 2026 Annual Meeting's Presidential Theme: "Future(s)." Finally, the Jain Studies Unit encourages proposals to include voices that are diverse in terms of race, caste, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, ability, age, socioeconomic status, geographic region, professional rank, and institutional affiliation.

Please note that the Jain Studies Unit only accepts proposals for complete panels, roundtables, book discussions, etc. and does not accept individual papers. This is true for both the online summer session and the in-person annual meeting.

The following are proposed panel titles with contact information as of December 12, 2025. If interested in participating, please contact the listed person(s) directly. Additional panel proposals are welcomed. The Jain Studies Unit exclusively uses the AAR PAPERS system for all submissions.

November In-Person Meeting:

Jains and Politics (Samyak Modi, samyak.modi@ucr.edu)

Jain Pilgrimage (Bhumi Shah, bhumi.shah@email.ucr.edu)

Ethical and Moral Cultivation in Jain Thought (Alba Rodriguez,
alba.rodriguezjuan@email.ucr.edu)

Jain Goddesses (Anchit Jain, jnanchit@gmail.com)

Jains and Caste (David Silverberg, d.silverberg@columbia.edu)

Intertextuality, Interculturality, and Jainism (Christine Chojnacki, christine.chojnacki@utotonto.ca)

Statement of Purpose

This Unit began in 2009 in recognition of the burgeoning state of the field and its relative neglect in the AAR. Originating in India in the first millennium BCE, Jainism — historically as dominant a South Asian religious tradition as Buddhism and Hinduism and, in the light of current demographics, a disproportionately powerful presence in the cultural and economic life of India — is a world religion now extending far beyond South Asia to East Asia, Europe, North America, Africa, and Australia. Given the increasing focus of scholarly attention on Jainism both in India and around the globe,

this Unit provides a venue in North America for scholars of Jainism to meet regularly and exchange ideas.

Chairs

- Ana Bajzelj
abajzelj@ucr.edu
 - Gregory Clines
gclines@trinity.edu
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Japanese Religions Unit

Call for Proposals

We invite papers sessions, individual papers, and roundtables that address all aspects of Japanese religion. To facilitate maximal exchange within and beyond Japanese religions, we prefer proposals that include explicit reflection on the study of religion more broadly. This year's presidential theme is "Futures," although proposals need not be limited to this theme.

Below are topics proposed by our members this year. Please contact the person listed if you would like to collaborate on one of these topics:

- **Environmentalism in Japanese religion.** This panel explores how Japanese religious traditions—including but not limited to Shinto, Buddhism, and new religious movements—engage with contemporary environmental challenges and ecological thought. We welcome papers examining religious responses to climate change, sacred nature concepts, environmental activism, ritual ecology, and the intersections between traditional cosmologies and modern sustainability discourse. Contact person: James Mark Shields jms089@bucknell.edu.
- **Anger and rage in Japanese religion.** This panel explores how "rage" and "anger" manifest as poignant affects in Japanese religions. The panel welcomes papers analyzing how religious actors, discourses, and symbols in various historical contexts grounded themselves in rage, anger, and other related

emotions/affects such as indignation, grudge, and resentment. Contact person: Takashi Miura tmiura@arizona.edu.

- **Religion and right-wing politics in contemporary Japan.** In 2025, Japan witnessed major political realignments: the rise of its first female prime minister, the withdrawal of Komeito from its long-standing coalition with the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), and the growing influence of new right-wing parties such as Sanseito. These shifts are transforming the religious–political landscape, creating new alliances. We invite papers that examine these emerging configurations and explore new horizons of interaction between Japanese religions and contemporary politics. Contact person: Kunihiro Terasawa kunihiro.terasawa@wartburg.edu.
- **Visual culture in Japanese religion** ([for cosponsorship with Religion, Film and Visual Culture Unit](#)). We seek proposals that explore the religious context of Japanese film, television, anime, and popular culture. We would also like proposals that show how visual culture has been employed in religious contexts, such as imagery, maps, illustrations, iconography, and collectibles. How do these contexts intersect and co-construct each other? Contact person: Mark MacWilliams (mmacwilliams@stlawu.edu)

We welcome proposals on other topics as well. Creative formats are encouraged (film, organized discussion, pre-circulated papers/texts, workshop, etc.), as are co-sponsored programs with other units of the AAR or associated societies. For instance, recent co-sponsorship partners have included Asian North American Religion, Culture, and Society Unit; Sacred Space; and the Hagiography Society. We encourage proposers to think broadly about ways they can engage their work on Japanese religion with current questions in the field, and with scholars working on religion in other parts of the world.

In submitting proposals, please follow the AAR guidelines carefully. First-timers are encouraged to contact the co-chairs for additional advice.

Our Unit is committed to diversity and inclusion. We strongly encourage considering balance in terms of gender, ethnicity, nationality, and institutional affiliation, as well as balance between graduate students, junior scholars, and senior scholars. Showing little or no regard for such diversity will have an adverse effect on the likelihood that your proposal will be accepted.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit is a forum for scholars of different disciplines — including textual, historical, anthropological, sociological, ritual, artistic, and other areas of study using different

approaches — to present their research findings on various theories and forms of Japanese religious life in the past and in the contemporary setting, within Japan and other areas of the world.

Chairs

- Takashi Miura
tmiura@email.arizona.edu
 - Jessica Starling
jessie.starling@gmail.com
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Jewish Studies Unit

Call for Proposals

The Jewish Studies Unit provides a designated home for work on Jews, Judaism, and Jewish studies, broadly conceived. This Unit also supports Jewish studies scholarship being represented in a wide range of units across the AAR. We welcome proposals for individual papers, papers sessions, and roundtables that address topics of concern to the broader community of religious studies scholars, from late antiquity to the present, in multiple global settings, and employing various methodologies. Pre-arranged session or panel proposals should represent a diversity of gender, race, ethnicity, and academic rank.

We are open to any proposals related to Jewish studies, although for 2026, we are particularly interested in the following topics:

- Technologies, objects, and cultures of Jewish memory and transmission in dialogue with the presidential theme of “Future/s”
- Critical Jewish studies: past, present, and future
- Thematic and/ or transhistorical approaches to Jews and “conspiracies”
- Populist movements, authoritarianism, and Jewish populisms
- 2026 will be the 75th anniversary of Abraham Joshua Heschel’s *The Sabbath*. We welcome papers or panels engaging with the text in conversation with climate

crisis; interreligious eco-theologies; disability justice, rest, and the refusal of work; future/s of the Sabbath and the “sabbatical animal”; and pedagogy.

- [For a possible session Co-Sponsored with Religion in Premodern Europe and the Mediterranean](#), we also seek respondents to two recently published books: Marc Herman, *After Revelation: The Rabbinic Past in the Medieval Islamic World* (Penn, 2025); Noam Sienna, *Jewish Books in North Africa: Between the Early Modern and Modern Worlds* (Indiana, 2025). Potential respondents can address cultural exchange, book history, or other issues raised by either or both books.

Statement of Purpose

The goal of this Unit is to develop and expand the relationship between Jewish studies and the broader study of religion. We work to meet this goal in three primary ways: • Methodologically • Topically • By cosponsorship with other Program Units. We engage in active conversation with methodologies in religious studies by exploring the historical, social, aesthetic, political, philosophical, and cultural aspects of Judaism in its various contexts.

Chairs

- Jennifer Caplan, University of Cincinnati
caplanjr@ucmail.uc.edu
- Andrea Dara Cooper
adcooper@email.unc.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Karl Barth Society of North America

Call for Proposals

Karl Barth and Christian Nationalism

The Karl Barth Society of North America invites proposals for papers on the work of Karl Barth in relation to Christian nationalism, past and the present. Topics that might be

engaged include Barth's attitude toward nationalism in his work during and soon after World War I, *Theological Existence Today!*, Barth's response to the "German Christians" and Nazism, and Barth's approach to nationalism during the Cold War. We also welcome papers that consider Barth's work in relation to Christian nationalism as a North American and global phenomenon.

Statement of Purpose

Founded in 1972, the [Karl Barth Society of North America](#) (KBSNA) exists to encourage exploration of—and critical and constructive engagement with—the theological legacy of Karl Barth, one of the most important and influential figures in twentieth century Christian theology. The Society typically hosts two public sessions during the AAR/SBL meeting each year, with the first often scheduled on the Friday afternoon before the official start of the annual meeting. In addition, the Society works in close collaboration with the [Center for Barth Studies](#) at Princeton Theological Seminary to foster engagement with Karl Barth's life and work. Membership is open to all those interested in and supportive of the Society's aims and is secured by an inexpensive [annual subscription](#); a discounted student rate is available. Enquiries can be directed to the Society's general secretary, Philip Ziegler (University of Aberdeen, p.ziegler@abdn.ac.uk).

Chairs

- Cambria Kaltwasser, Northwestern College, Orange City
cambria.kaltwasser@nwciova.edu
- Paul Dafydd Jones
pdj5c@virginia.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Kierkegaard, Religion, and Culture Unit

Call for Proposals

Kierkegaard and Feminist, Womanist, and Queer Christologies • Kierkegaard and Biblical Hermeneutics

Following the 2026 AAR presidential theme focused on “Future/s,” The Kierkegaard, Religion, and Culture Unit invites individual paper, panel session, and roundtable discussion proposals that highlight and engage with the religious, philosophical, and aesthetic thought and lifeworld of the Danish writer Søren Kierkegaard. Knowledge about Kierkegaard has been enriched by the work of religious scholars, philosophers, historians, translators, artists, church practitioners, and others who have combined to develop a field that attracts rigorous, diverse and interdisciplinary approaches to Kierkegaard’s ideas in the context of the time in which he lived and in relation to the complex world we inhabit now.

In 2026, we call for papers that build upon and expand the extensive religious and philosophical scholarship on Kierkegaard available globally across disciplines and formations. We are particularly interested in papers for sessions that address **Kierkegaard and Feminist, Womanist, and Queer Christologies**, and **Kierkegaard and Biblical Hermeneutics**. In addition to these themed panels, we also seek papers on a diversity of topics related to Kierkegaard including Kierkegaard and Trauma and Kierkegaard and Democracy.

Kierkegaard as Resource for Feminist, Womanist, and Queer Constructive Theologies

As the lives and personhood of women, people of color, and those from the queer community of all backgrounds and identities continue to be increasingly devalued, marginalized, dehumanized, and brutalized in the current socio-cultural context of the U.S., it is incumbent upon us to plumb the depths of Kierkegaard’s writings in order to share the unexpected resources for constructing life-affirming and life-thriving feminist, womanist, and queer theologies. Although Kierkegaard was a product of his own nineteenth century cultural context of gender essentialism, he was ahead of his time in many ways and often challenges the assumptions of his culture through his celebration of women as exemplars/icons of the Christian life. He moves female identity from margin to center in his writings and highlights interdependence and certain types of community as key facets of his thought. Moreover, his writings are rife with potential for lifting up Christianity’s resources for going beyond survival toward thriving and flourishing for various marginalized identities. His assertions about the equality of all human beings in relation to God, the affirmation of becoming a particular self in finitude through one’s faith relationship to God through *the paradox* of Christ, his emphasis on the embodied life of faith lived in relation to God and neighbor, and the parameters he sets on the extent to which humans ought to suffer in emulation of Christ in acknowledgment of the singularity of Christ’s sacrifice all serve as potential resources,

among many others, in constructing life-giving theologies that are expansive, generative, and point toward social justice and communal flourishing for women, people of color, and the queer community. Therefore, this session invites papers that read Kierkegaard through these critical and constructive lenses in order to further push his thought to its full liberative potential.

Kierkegaard and Biblical Hermeneutics

[The second themed session \(co-sponsored with the Kierkegaard, Religion, and Culture unit\)](#) invites papers that explore the engagement of Søren Kierkegaard with biblical hermeneutics in his *For Self-Examination* (1851). With the destructive forces of Christian nationalism on the rise and the future of democracy in the United States at stake, it is critical for us to consider how various biblical hermeneutical frameworks reveal the motivations of human hearts more-so than they reveal about the biblical text itself. In *For Self-Examination*, Kierkegaard invites his readers to engage with the biblical text with all the interest and passion that a lover would engage with a letter from one's beloved rather than as an object of impersonal disinterested speculation. The biblical text is then construed as a mirror that one must not look *at* as though observing the mirror itself but must see oneself in the mirror. *How* we relate to the biblical text is constitutive of our desires and therefore of our lived theologies. Considering the existentially consequential nature of our various hermeneutical approaches, this co-sponsored session seeks papers that engage Søren Kierkegaard's approach to biblical hermeneutics (as found in *For Self-Examination*) in conversation with past, present, and emerging trends in biblical hermeneutics, particularly those that address the rise of Christian nationalism.

Kierkegaard and Trauma

Judith Herman, author of *Trauma and Recovery*, has said that if "trauma originates in a fundamental injustice, then full healing must require repair through some measure of justice from the larger community." In light of the existential, material, and embodied traumas impacting the human condition, Kierkegaard's published and unpublished writings, authorship, performativity, pseudonyms, existentialisms, and religiosity offer paradigms, concepts, and ideas of potentiality and meaning for addressing the histories and legacies and continued and increasing occurrence of trauma in a 21st century world marked by global crises, pandemics, social upheaval, democratic uncertainty,

stratification, and persistent violence against marginalized individuals and groups. Meditations on biopolitical traumas of the self, others, and society emerge in Kierkegaard's entire corpus—*Fear and Trembling* and *Sickness Unto Death*, for example—opening the way for religious and philosophical dialogues with psychology, trauma studies, literature, and moral injury; developing strategies for care, pastoral care, and chaplaincy; exploring the epistemic and emotional position of the fragmentary self in relation to the reconciled self, and examining positionality and the reading process from the perspective of the traumatized individual.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit seeks to explore the significance of the religious thought and ethics of Kierkegaard for contemporary culture in its various aspects — social, political, ecclesiastical, theological, philosophical, and aesthetic.

Chairs

- Nigel Hatton
nhatton@ucmerced.edu
- Deidre Green
deidrenicolegreen@gmail.com

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Kierkegaard, Religion, and Culture Unit

Call for Proposals

Kierkegaard and Feminist, Womanist, and Queer Christologies • Kierkegaard and Biblical Hermeneutics

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about Kierkegaard has been enriched by the work of religious scholars, philosophers, historians, translators, artists, church practitioners, and others who have combined to develop a field that attracts rigorous, diverse and interdisciplinary approaches to Kierkegaard's ideas in the context of the time in which he lived and in relation to the complex world we inhabit now.

In 2026, we call for papers that build upon and expand the extensive religious and philosophical scholarship on Kierkegaard available globally across disciplines and formations. We are particularly interested in papers for sessions that address **Kierkegaard and Feminist, Womanist, and Queer Christologies**, and **Kierkegaard and Biblical Hermeneutics**. In addition to these themed panels, we also seek papers on a diversity of topics related to Kierkegaard including Kierkegaard and Trauma and Kierkegaard and Democracy.

Kierkegaard and Feminist, Womanist, and Queer Christologies

For Søren Kierkegaard, there is no way to understand Christ properly without understanding him as *the* paradox. In the *Sickness Unto Death*, Kierkegaard goes so far as to name the Docetic denial of Christ's humanity and embodiment, as well as the rationalist reduction of him to being merely human with no divinity, as ultimate forms of sin and despair, not least because for him, "in this denial of Christ as the paradox lies, in turn, denial of all that is essentially Christian." In this way, Kierkegaard refuses to oversimplify the identity of Christ but insists relentlessly on holding aspects of his identity that could be construed as contradictory or mutually exclusive together in constant tension. Furthermore, Christ's capacity to act as a salvific agent on behalf of humanity depends on this irresolvable tension within Christ's personal identity. For Kierkegaard, it is absolutely crucial that Christ becomes "an individual human being" with all that embodiment and life within the finite entails. Kierkegaard's Christianity, and more specifically his Christology, invite us to see that faith is lived out not by transcending or escaping the body or the finite realm with the various complexities and tensions they entail but by coming more deeply into the body and the finite. With his emphasis on individuality, embodiment, and paradox, Kierkegaard's view of Christ offers rich possibilities for thinking through Christology from feminist, womanist, and queer perspectives.

The Kierkegaardian corpus includes many metaphorical references to both God and Christ as maternal figures. Lending special attention to a number of women from the Bible, Kierkegaard reads them and their relationships to Christ in liberating ways that challenge the Christian tradition's sexism, misogyny, and denial of women's agency. He goes so far as to claim that the woman with the alabaster jar described in the gospel of Luke as making herself "indispensable" to Christ, one of many empowering and

iconoclastic claims about women in Kierkegaard's writings. In these and other ways, Kierkegaard moves female identity from margin to center in his writings and highlights interdependence and community as key facets of his Christology. Moreover, his writings are rife with potential for lifting up Christianity's resources for going beyond survival toward thriving and flourishing for various marginalized identities. He further sets parameters on the extent to which humans ought to suffer in emulation of Christ, maintaining the singularity of the efficacy of sacrifice and suffering of Christ's cross. These aspects of Kierkegaard's thought, as well as others, make him a fruitful interlocutor with feminist, womanist, and queer theorists seeking to understand Christ and the Christian community in ways that are expansive, generative, and that point toward social justice and communal flourishing. Reading Kierkegaard through these critical and constructive lenses can further push his thought forward to its full liberative potential.

Kierkegaard and Biblical Hermeneutics

The second themed session (co-sponsored with the Sacred Texts, Theory, and Theological Constructions Unit) invites papers that consider how various frameworks of biblical hermeneutics reveal the motivations of human hearts more-so than they reveal about the biblical text itself. In *For Self-Examination* (1851), Søren Kierkegaard invites his readers to engage with the biblical text with all the interest and passion that a lover would engage with a letter from one's beloved rather than as an object of impersonal disinterested speculation. The biblical text is then construed as a mirror that one must not look *at* as though observing the mirror itself but must see oneself in the mirror. *How* we relate to the biblical text is constitutive of our desires and therefore of our lived theologies. Considering the existentially and/or politically consequential nature of our various hermeneutical approaches, this co-sponsored session seeks papers that put Søren Kierkegaard's approach to biblical hermeneutics as found in *For Self-Examination* (1851) into conversation with past, present, and emerging trends in biblical hermeneutics.

Kierkegaard and Trauma

Judith Herman, author of *Trauma and Recovery*, has said that if "trauma originates in a fundamental injustice, then full healing must require repair through some measure of justice from the larger community." In light of the existential, material, and embodied traumas impacting the human condition, Kierkegaard's published and unpublished writings, authorship, performativity, pseudonyms, existentialisms, and religiosity offer

paradigms, concepts, and ideas of potentiality and meaning for addressing the histories and legacies and continued and increasing occurrence of trauma in a 21st century world marked by global crises, pandemics, social upheaval, democratic uncertainty, stratification, and persistent violence against marginalized individuals and groups. Meditations on biopolitical traumas of the self, others, and society emerge in Kierkegaard's entire corpus—*Fear and Trembling* and *Sickness Unto Death*, for example—opening the way for religious and philosophical dialogues with psychology, trauma studies, literature, and moral injury; developing strategies for care, pastoral care, and chaplaincy; exploring the epistemic and emotional position of the fragmentary self in relation to the reconciled self, and examining positionality and the reading process from the perspective of the traumatized individual.

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Chairs

- Nigel Hatton
nhatton@ucmerced.edu
- Deidre Green
deidrenicolegreen@gmail.com

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Korean Religions Unit

Call for Proposals

The Korean Religions Unit welcomes proposals for paper sessions, roundtable sessions, and individual papers. Proposals in all areas of Korean Religions will be considered. This year, we especially invite submissions to the subtopics proposed by interested AAR members, as listed below. If you would like to contribute to one of the panel proposals

below, please contact the organizer(s) directly, and submit your proposal at least two weeks prior to the AAR submission deadline which will be on March 6, 2026, 5:00 PM Eastern Standard Time.

Korean religions in Korean literature

Organizer: Haewon Yang (email: hwy031@gmail.com)

In recent years, Korean literature has become more prominent than ever in the global society, inviting both popular and academic interest. And yet Korean religions in Korean literature remains an understudied field. Literature as an art that represents human experiences can capture religion in a way that is affective and more alive. I would like to suggest a session that explores this aspect of Korean religions in Korean literature, religion not as something separate or static but as something that is interwoven and lived in people's day to day lives. Analysis of literary works, studies on theoretical or methodological aspects, discussions on uses of literature for religious studies in the Korean context are all welcome.

Teaching Korean Buddhism: Challenges, Strategies, and New Directions

Organizer: Sujung Kim (email: sujung.kim@jhu.edu)

In response to growing interest in contemporary K-culture, this roundtable examines how Korean Buddhism can be taught more effectively in classrooms. Despite its historical depth and contemporary relevance, Korean Buddhism remains underrepresented in introductory courses such as Introduction to Religion, Buddhism, and East Asian Studies. Bringing together established and emerging scholars from diverse institutions, the panel offers a snapshot of the state of the field while sharing pedagogical strategies drawn from textual study, visual and material culture, and lived religion. The discussion highlights diverse teaching materials and methods that foster student engagement with Korean religions, as well as East Asian Buddhism.

South Korean Religious Communities and Yoon Suk-yeol: Before, During, and After the 12.3 Martial Law Decree

Organizer: Timothy S. Lee (email: t.lee@tcu.edu)

This paper panel addresses the question of how South Korean religious communities interacted with Yoon Suk-yeol before, during, and after the 12.3 martial law decree. From his campaigning days in early 2022, through his tenure as South Korea's president, to his convulsive but short-lived martial law decree of December 3, 2024, and to the turmoil that ensued, Yoon's public canvas included an unusually broad and diverse religious footprint for a South Korean president. This panel explores that footprint with respect to the communities that have most often been cited in narratives and discourses about the matter: Protestants, Catholics, Buddhists, and Shamans/New Religionists. Apart from a presider and a respondent, the panel will feature four presenters, each focusing on one of the communities.

[Co-sponsored with Religion and AI Unit](#)

Korean Religions in the Age of AI

Organizer: Jonathan C. Feuer (email: jfeuer@hku.hk)

According to the IMF, South Korea has one of the highest AI adoption rates in the world. About a third of the population uses ChatGPT every month. The newly elected government led by Lee Jae Myung is putting AI at the forefront of its economic policy. In Korea's highly pluralistic society, religious communities are already experimenting with AI in strikingly diverse ways. This panel invites papers focusing on any topic related to the present and future relationship between Korean religions and AI, including: approaches to the use of AI related to Korean religious values, applications of AI in religious communities or scholarship, and/or ethical and philosophical debates about AI. Why should scholars interested in religion and AI pay attention to Korea?

[Co-sponsored with Religion and Popular Culture Unit](#)

KPop, Demon Hunters, and Beyond: Korean Religion and Popular Culture

Organizer: John Grisafi (email: john.g.grisafi@gmail.com)

The Korean Religions Unit and the Religion and Popular Culture Unit invite papers for co-sponsored panel on the theme of Korean religion and popular culture. The widely popular 2025 film *KPop Demon Hunters* has exposed many fans to elements of Korean religion and culture which the film draws upon. This film is just one recent example of how popular culture, from or based on Korea, intersects with Korean religion. In response to this growing phenomenon, we seek papers that explore the Korean

religious content and themes of films and dramas and their presentation and popular reception as well as other linkages between religion and popular culture related to Korea, including music. Papers may address narratives of Korean religion within popular culture and their reception, how religious communities engage with and respond to such popular works and trends, papers that examine connections between religion and the Korean Wave (“Hallyu”) as well as K-pop and fandom, and other topics. We welcome submissions that approach the film and topic from various disciplines and perspectives, and which discuss broader considerations of religion and popular culture in connection with Korean content.

Any other papers that address the relationship between society, culture, and religion as broadly construed can be submitted directly through the AAR portal. Other inquiries can be directed to Sean Kim ckim@ucmo.edu, or Liora Sarfati lsarfati@tauex.tau.ac.il. In submitting proposals, please follow the AAR guidelines carefully.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit provides a forum for the scholarly exchange of ideas on the religions of Korea. It addresses all aspects of religions and religious experiences of Korea — past and present and traditional and modern. The Unit investigates Korean religions in all its diversity, including social, cultural, historical, political, and philosophical, giving full weight to the complexity of religious phenomena in Korea. The Unit encourages conversations that compare aspects of Korean religions with those of other religious traditions, as well as theoretical conversations about religion that are grounded in Korean religions. In order to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of Korean religions, the Unit welcomes scholars from both in and outside of Korean religions and fosters a dialogue among scholars from different religious traditions as well as different disciplinary approaches to religions.

Chairs

- Liora Sarfati
lsarfati@tauex.tau.ac.il
- Chong Bum (Sean) Kim
ckim@ucmo.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Language, Poiesis, and Buddhist Experiments with the Possible Seminar

Call for Proposals

Seminar description

Our seminar investigates, over the course of five years, the poiesis of language—its capacity to create, bring into existence, and shape worlds, selves, and our shared sense of reality. To better grasp this potential of language, we approach Buddhist textual engagement foremost in terms of experiments with the possibilities of language (rather than under given textual categories, genre distinctions, tropes, etc.) and examine how these have contributed to making the form and content of Buddhism itself, along with adjacent traditions. In doing so we emphasize that both content and modes of expression should be examined as inextricably involved in the process by which Buddhism has taken on its distinctive character as well as its sense of what is possible. We approach literary forms as an environment that enables Buddhists to find their voice, subject matter, style, and self-representation.

The fifth and final year of our seminar will take place at the 2026 AAR Annual Meeting. Through a roundtable format, our steering committee members and previous seminar participants will consider ways forward for integrating analysis of the poiesis of language into the study of Buddhist texts and beyond.

Statement of Purpose

The overwhelming capacity of language to shape our shared sense of reality for better or for worse has long been recognized by Buddhists, who have considered it both an obstacle and an opportunity for transformation and liberation. Such Buddhist approaches harbor the potential to help us rethink the potency of language in the interest of collective flourishing. Our seminar investigates how Buddhists have engaged with the *poiesis* of language—its ability to create anew and shape worlds and selves—and how this engagement, as a constitutive aspect of Buddhist thought and practice, has contributed to making the form and content of Buddhism itself. We explore a broad

range of Buddhist language use, taking poetics as the exemplary but not exclusive ground where language is made poetic, while accommodating overlapping and contiguous forms of language, for instance, ritual utterance, gesture, linguistic patterns, etc.

Our mode of inquiry approaches Buddhist language use in terms of *experiments with the possibilities of language*. We emphasize that Buddhist content and modes of expression alike should be examined as inextricably involved in the process by which Buddhism took on its distinctive character and formed its sense of the possible; and we approach Buddhist literary forms as an *environment* that enables Buddhists to find their voice, subject matter, style, and self-representation. Attuned to how Buddhists have formulated their views on these issues, the seminar aims therefore to develop a conceptual toolkit for the rigorous, ethical interpretation of Buddhist language as a cross-cultural and interdisciplinary endeavor.

Chairs

- Nancy Lin, Institute of Buddhist Studies
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- Roy Tzohar
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In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Latina/o Religion, Culture, and Society Unit

Call for Proposals

1. Title: "Afro-Latinidad and Accountable Futures: Leadership and Tradition in Service of *Mañana*."

Description: Serious engagement with the "future" requires more than just a seat at a table that was narrowed by design and exclusionary by habit. It demands that we remain attentive to what we ask for, what we need, and how we might broaden that table ourselves. Authentic transformation cannot stay stuck in a presumed one-way dynamic between marginalized communities and dominant power structures. We must also

confront how structures of domination are replicated within our own communities, often through unrecognized or unnamed cultural dynamics.

This session invites honest accountability in setting the conditions for more equitable futures. We seek to name the intercultural and intra-communal violence that shows up between us and within us, choosing to notice when we repeat the very harms we fight against. Building a shared future, specifically one that honors the complexities of Afro-Latinidad, requires deep listening, mutual respect, and the courage to transform together.

We invite paper proposals that explore accountability as an ethical, political, spiritual, and communal practice. We are particularly interested in the role of conflict mediation, restorative justice, and community-based peacemaking as tools for repair. Submissions may address (but are not limited to):

- Intercultural and intra-communal violence: Addressing anti-Blackness and hierarchy within Latine spaces.
- Accountability and repair within marginalized communities: Moving beyond performance toward communal transformation.
- Restorative justice: Conflict mediation practices, restorative processes, and community-led reconciliation.
- Decolonial, feminist, and abolitionist visions of the future.
- Ethics of listening, responsibility, and relationality.
- The reproduction and interruption of harm in activist, faith-based, or social movements.
- Practices of transformation, healing, and collective becoming.

2. Title: "Latine Religious Imaginaries Against the Carceral State."

Description: In a political season marked by tightening security at borders, expanding detention regimes, and increased racialized state-sponsored violence, this session invites papers that critically engage religious, spiritual, cultural, and political practices emerging from Latino/a and Latin American diasporas as sites of futuring beyond despair and superficial hope. We especially welcome work that attends to migration, forced displacement, deportation, the carceral and detention state, and ongoing realities of racial inequalities in the United States, the Americas and beyond. We invite papers that explore abolitionist thought, grassroots resistance, and economic creativity in the struggle for collective freedom.

What sensory, embodied, and communal imaginaries emerge in response to contemporary uncertainties facing democracy, human rights, ecological well-being, and

academic labor itself? This session seeks contributions that illuminate how Latino/a religious worlds critically assess inherited horizons of possibility while actively crafting futures grounded in justice, survival, and flourishing. Submissions may address (but are not limited to):

- How do communities of faith, sanctuary movements, and informal economies embody practices seeking to transform systems of scarcity and surveillance into networks of care, solidarity, and survival?
- How might liberationist thought dialogue with U.S. Latinx resistance to reimagine a world beyond detention, deportation, and dispossession?
- Abolitionist and sanctuary practices in response to ICE and detention.
- Resistance economies and communal redistribution as liberatory praxis.
- Cross-religious coalitions confronting carcerality and state testing of dissent.

3. Title: "Convergences: Chicana Futurism & Ecofeminist Futures."

Description: The intersection of Chicana Futurism and Ecofeminist Futures offers rich, yet under-explored, ground for research, creative work, and activism. By examining their overlapping themes, specifically a shared emphasis on decolonial, feminist, and ecological futures, we can identify generative entanglements between these fields. We invite proposals that pursue this synthesis, exploring how Chicana cultural production, speculative visioning, and feminist environmental justice converge to imagine decolonial, multispecies, and sustainable futures.

Recent works demonstrate overlap in themes, methodologies, and political commitments, particularly those engaging the legacy of Gloria Anzaldúa, Chicana ecofeminist poetics, Decolonial Ecofeminism, and Latinx environmentalism. We seek work that draws from these Indigenous, spiritual and decolonial epistemologies to reimagine identity, cosmology, relationality, and resistance.

In the face of rising anti-intellectualism and censorship targeting Critical Race Theory and gender/sexuality studies, we ask how these convergences offer methods for subversion and survival. We welcome proposals from scholars, artists, and advocates that address:

- How creative methods, including fiction, visual arts, and digital media, function as speculative praxis to bypass colonial constraints and shape/reclaim the future-past.
- The ways in which the hybrid identity of the scholar-artist-advocate exists outside of formalized spaces and provides models for embodied counter-narratives

- How private spaces, such as kitchens and home altars, have historically functioned as sites of ecological subversion, sacred praxis, and feminist survival.

4. Title: "Volver al Futuro: 30 Years of HTI and the Changing Face of Latine Studies."

Description: When the Hispanic Theological Initiative (HTI) was established in 1996, Latine scholars were often categorized as a statistical outlier in theological education, comprising less than 3% of PhD students and faculty. Today, while those numbers have more than doubled, the true story of HTI lies beyond the data. It is found in the "ripple effect" of a generation of scholars who have fundamentally reshaped the epistemologies, pedagogies, and the educational ecologies of the academy and the communities of practice they serve.

To mark HTI's 30th anniversary, this session moves beyond institutional history to provide a critical academic evaluation of its impact on the Study of Religion and its vital contributions to the interdisciplinary field of Latine Studies. We seek to theorize the "HTI effect"—the ways in which the intentional cultivation of Latine scholarship has disrupted traditional theological canons and forced a reimagining of religious studies. We invite proposals that reflect on how this increased presence has shifted the intellectual landscape, identify the pedagogical gaps that remain, and analyze how the evolution of HTI reflects broader shifts in Latine religious identity, institutional power, and the "changing face" of the US religious landscape. Submissions may address (but are not limited to):

- How has the professionalization and networking of Latine scholars changed the "grammar" of religious and theological discourse?
- The impact of Latine faculty on curriculum design, mentoring models, and the "decolonizing" of the classroom.
- Institutional Power and Resistance: A critical look at the "doubling" of numbers, is it representative of genuine power-sharing or a managed inclusion within the neoliberal academy?
- Identifying new scholarly frontiers that the next generation of HTI scholars are currently navigating.
- Beyond the Academy: How HTI-trained scholars have influenced public theology, grassroots movements, and community-based religious practices.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit examines, through systematic study and reflection, the social locations, religious beliefs, and practices of the rich and diverse multicultural backgrounds of

Latinas/os in the United States and Canada. The Unit recognizes that this is an interdisciplinary enterprise in view of the cultural and religious roots and sources of Latinos/as, including heritages from Europe, indigenous nations of the Americas, Africa, and Asia. The traditions emerging out of the mixture of these cultures throughout the Americas continue to undergo further development and innovation in the North American context, producing the distinct phenomena of Latino/a theologies and religions. It is this rich and deep religious/theological-cultural-social-political complex that is the focus of this Unit.

Chairs

- Hector Varela Rios, Villanova University
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 - Elaine Nogueira-Godsey, Drew Theological School
enogueiragodsey@drew.edu
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In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Law, Religion, and Culture Unit

Call for Proposals

As always, the Law, Religion, and Culture Unit welcomes proposals for individual papers, papers sessions, and roundtable panel proposals, including author-meets-critics sessions, on any aspect of the cultural, historical, critical, and comparative study of the intersections of law and religion globally. This year we're particularly interested in paper and/or panel proposals addressing the presidential theme of "Futures," spanning issues of ecological catastrophe and the future of nature to issues of the legal status of children and law's relationships with futurity.

We'd also be particularly interested in panel and paper proposals addressing issues of homeschooling and the law, including legal education and practice among homeschooling parents.

Due to the conference's location in Denver, attention to American Indian law and legal

history as well as histories and present practices in service of ecological justice and possible futures, would be welcome as well.

On the sesquicentenary of the independence of the United States, proposals either on the idea of "independence" broadly and comparatively (critiquing genealogies of freedom through law, or examining relations between notions of individual freedom and nation states globally and historically) or examination of rhetoric and spectacle around memorialization (again, either of US history specifically or with an eye toward comparative global examples) would also be of interest.

In a time of widespread governmental (and private) policing of academic speech and action, papers or panel proposals on the notion and practice of academic freedom, particularly with critical examination of specific legal case studies, would also be appealing to the steering committee.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit is interested in the cross-cultural, interdisciplinary, and comparative studies of the interrelationships of law and religion. The terms "law" and "religion" are broadly conceptualized and our interests have extended to include ancient and contemporary contexts and a wide variety of critical approaches. We hope to instigate consideration of religion and law issues at the AAR beyond issues concerning religious freedom and the United States Constitution.

Chairs

- Silas Allard, Emory University
silas.allard@emory.edu
- Dana Lloyd, Villanova University
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Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Law, Religion, and Culture Unit

Call for Proposals

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Chairs

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 - Dana Lloyd, Villanova University
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-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Lesbian-Feminisms and Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

The Lesbian-Feminisms and Religion Unit invites papers, panels, or roundtable sessions focused on trans, queer, lesbian, and/or feminist scholarship. We seek proposals on the following themes:

- We are arranging a Lightning Round Session centered on thinking queerly with keywords in right-wing rhetoric and/or the conservative playbook and political imaginary (e.g., indoctrination, gender ideology, wokeism, social contagion, Marxist ideology, anti-vax, infiltration, CRT, religious discrimination, toxic empathy, etc.). Each panelist will have 5 minutes to share how they are thinking with and against their chosen term. Anyone interested in joining this lightning round session should submit a short proposal (under 500 words) that names a right-wing buzzword and describes how they will approach it.
- [For a potential co-sponsored panel between Lesbian-Feminisms and Religion Unit, Feminist Theory and Religious Reflection Unit, and Theology and Religious Reflection:](#) a panel engaging Wendy Mallette's *Lesbian Feminist Killjoys: Sin, Queer Negativity, and Inherited Guilt* (NYU Press, 2026). This is a largely pre-arranged author-meets-respondents session, but we are interested in including additional scholars interested in historical and/or theological approaches to queer, lesbian, feminist, and trans studies, Christian discourse on sin, and

American religious cultures. Please email Siobhan Kelly (smk@ku.edu) if you would like to be considered as a panelist.

- We seek proposals engaging discourses surrounding the turn *away* from sex: sex negativity, celibacy, virginity, the longue duree of #MeToo, and the moral panics and political imaginaries that suffuse current concerns around childless cat ladies, putatively gratuitous sex in media, and younger generations seeming disinterested in sex.
- We are interested in papers thinking about lesbian iconography of the American West. Examples include, but are not limited to, films like *Desert Hearts* (1985) and *Thelma and Louise* (1991), gay cowboy culture, Georgia O'Keeffe, Joy Harjo, Paula Gunn Allen, Torrey Peters' 2025 novel *Stag Dance*, etc. We invite reflections on how lesbian iconography reproduces, challenges, and engages with settler colonial aesthetics and imaginations. What desires and religious/spiritual fantasies mark lesbian westward flights? What makes a space or geography read as lesbian, queer, and/or trans?

Statement of Purpose

For over 30 years this unit has been committed to lesbian-feminism in the study of religion. Whether pursued through religious studies, social-scientific, historical, or theological methods during the approach to the academic study of religion, lesbian-feminist scholarship challenges hegemonic discourse within gay, lesbian, and queer movements that function to privilege queer theory as capable of eclipsing theories and methodologies that are explicitly feminist in the face of entrenched patriarchy and self-consciously lesbian in the face of persistent heteronormativity. We are especially committed to scholars and scholarship that advance people of color, trans scholars, persons with disabilities, decoloniality, and economic justice. This is accomplished with diverse and timely themes, and by providing a theoretical space for probing and further developing the openings and opportunities afforded by changing sociopolitical and theoretical contexts.

Chairs

- Wendy Mallette
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- Siobhan Kelly, Boston University
smk@ku.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Liberation Theologies Unit

Call for Proposals

Temporalities of Liberation in the Age of Settler Futurity

There is a strong parallel between discourse on progress and settler colonialism. The drive to expand and occupy the land is often accompanied by the thought of a linear time in which history progresses toward a singular telos. Might the energy that fuels settler colonialism, ancient and present, be also the drive for settling the future?

This panel invites contributions that challenge notions of linear, progressive time and invite us to reflect on future thinking as an invitation to imagine alternative futures. Such perspectives challenge dominant and oppressive futures driven by extraction, settler colonialism, and capitalist accumulation. As many scholars and activists have suggested, nonhegemonic religious communities and Indigenous traditions offer alternative ways of conceiving of temporality. Here, future thinking is not necessarily an act of imagination oriented towards a time *ahead* of us, but a way of imagining and demanding a different time, a different form of relating to the past, to the ancestors, and, ultimately, a different way of inhabiting the present moment. We are after reflections that generate a more ethical and just understanding of our relation to time in all of its interlocking tenses.

We especially welcome papers that center Indigenous understandings of time, including cyclical, ancestral, and land-bound temporalities that disrupt linear narratives of progress and “development.”

Possible areas of inquiry include, but are not limited to:

- Indigenous temporalities as resistance to settler futurity.
- How might imaginations drawing from times past serve as models for liberation that can guide one’s aspirations?
- How do Indigenous and various religious traditions situate time differently, such as a circular, infinite or ethical time, and how can that help orient collective liberation and movements for justice?

- What does it mean to critique the notion of future thinking as solely about a time ahead of us?
- How could one reimagine temporalities of liberation interreligiously and interregionally?

Performances of the Future: Liberation Theologies for Different Times

Liberation theologies have always been deeply entangled with questions of time and the future: expectation and endurance, kairos and crisis, memory and imagination. Yet, the future in liberation theologies is never presented as a stable goal. It is rather a site for contestation, denunciation of injustice, and annunciation of justice. In the tradition, future-talk is not prediction, but a form of engagement with the "signs of the times." Future-talk analyzes the present moment and demands the advent of a new epoch.

Today, as fascist temporalities harden, as techno-futurist markets market artificial inevitabilities, and as institutions grapple with post-DEI retrenchment, the temporal assumptions underlying liberationist discourse demand renewed interrogation. This session invites scholars, organizers, activists, and practitioners to explore how contested visions of time shape the possibilities and limits of liberation in the present moment.

We invite proposals that examine how liberation theologians and movements have deployed the language of the future. We encourage reflection on numerous iterations of the "Kairos Documents" and the prophetic word they offer, addressing multiple forms of injustices. We furthermore invite reflections on other documents and movements that perform similar functions across various religious traditions.

This panel will also consider critiques of capitalist futurity, including analyses of realized eschatology as realized capitalism; examinations of how progress narratives entrench racial, economic, and ecological violence; and reflections on how AI-driven techno-futurism seeks to replace political imagination with algorithmic inevitability.

Possible areas of inquiry include, but are not limited to:

- Liberation theology's multiple and contested accounts of eschatology, futurity, utopia(s), and historical agency.
- Temporalities of exhaustion, breath, and embodiment; practices that sustain liberative work in prolonged crisis.
- Critiques of science-as-progress, AI-generated futures, and other techno-utopian visions.
- Solidarity across temporal divides: generations, ancestors, geographies, and trans-human frames of collaboration.

- Liberation amid calamity: ecological catastrophe and possibilities of ecological liberation.

Co-Sponsored Session: Psychology of Liberation

The Liberation Theology Unit and the Psychology, Culture, and Religion Unit invite proposals for a co-sponsored session on liberation psychology, with particular attention to the legacy and ongoing influence of Ignacio Martín-Baró. A social psychologist and Jesuit priest from Spain who lived and worked in El Salvador and the United States, Martín-Baró drew from liberation philosophy, Marxist, feminist, and decolonial thought, as well as liberation theology, to critique dominant psychological paradigms and call for socially engaged, community-centered praxis.

We welcome proposals that critically examine Martín-Baró's contributions, extend liberation psychology in diverse cultural or geopolitical contexts, or explore its implications for contemporary approaches to the psychology of religion. We are also interested in proposals that consider how liberation theology and related movements continue to inform, challenge, and reshape the study of religion, spiritual care, chaplaincy, clinical counseling, and pastoral practices in congregational, community, and non-profit settings. Papers that bridge liberation theology, the psychology of religion, and the social sciences, especially those employing interdisciplinary, intercultural, or community-based perspectives, are particularly encouraged.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit asks "What does liberation theology mean in and for the twenty-first century?" We encourage crossover dialogue — between contexts and between disciplines — and reflection on the implications of liberationist discourse for the transformation of theology as a whole, both methodologically and theologically.

Chairs

- K. Christine Pae, Denison University
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- Filipe Maia
fmaia@bu.edu

Liberation Theologies Unit

Call for Proposals

Temporalities of Liberation in the Age of Settler Futurity

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- How could one reimagine temporalities of liberation interreligiously and interregionally?

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Statement of Purpose

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Chairs

- K. Christine Pae, Denison University
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 - Filipe Maia
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-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Martin Luther and Global Lutheran Traditions Unit

Call for Proposals

Open Call: The Martin Luther and Global Lutheran Traditions Unit welcomes paper, panel, and roundtable proposals on any topic relevant to the Unit’s interests. We particularly ask that proposals pay attention to the diversity of presiders, presenters, respondents, and topics. In panel or roundtable proposals, the Unit strongly encourages organizers be attentive to diversity in global context, race, gender, and sexuality. We strongly encourage junior scholars to submit proposals.

For the November’s Annual Meeting in Denver, the Martin Luther and Global Lutheran Traditions Unit especially welcomes any proposals on the following themes:

1) Future/s Lost: To honor the 2026 Presidential Theme, “Future/s”, we ask about “Future/s Lost.” How do we wrestle with lost futures within Lutheran theology or because of it? How have Lutheran forms of settler colonialism, heteropatriarchy, ethnocentrism, racism or violence erased other possible futures? What is remembered, what is not, and why? What is required in the wake of these erasures? Alternatively, what other possible futures, counter-memories, alternatives, minor themes, or forgotten texts or practices in scholarship on Martin Luther or within or against Global Lutheranism might offer us new ways of envisioning the future? Can we learn from paths not taken? And what right do we have to do so? As AAR President Laurel Schneider writes about the theme: *“The muscle of dystopic imagination is well honed these days, and for good reason. But what about other possible futures, past and present? Where is the sensory richness that might en flesh imagination otherwise?”* Again, how might paying attention to these lost futures generate new possibilities, counter-memories, alternative ways of embodiment for Lutheran theological reflection and action?

2) Lutheran Aesthetics and Material Cultures: 2026 marks the 500th commemoration of Martin Luther’s 1526 *Deutsche Messe*, and so the MLGLT Unit calls for papers that address the theological impact of this of Luther’s works in history or the present. Whether through worship in the vernacular German, integration of congregational and pastoral theologies, catechesis, the DM helped shape Lutheran Reformational thought and practice in unique ways. This text also raises questions, however, of how one makes sense of Lutheran aesthetics or Lutheran theological interpretations of material culture. What might new materialisms have to offer scholarship on Luther or global Lutheranism? What role does language or translation have upon the matters of embodied theology? What theological sense do we make of the legacy of Luther and Lutheran liturgy, music, clothing, or material objects?

3) Themes, Questions, or Trajectories in Lutheran Eschatology. What does Lutheran Eschatology look like today and where are the growing edges of Lutheran eschatological theology?

Statement of Purpose

The Martin Luther and Global Lutheran Traditions Unit provides an avenue for comprehensive attention to Lutheran history, theology, and praxis in contemporary global contexts. We welcome themes emergent in Martin Luther’s own life and writing (e.g., recent topics including baptism, freedom, theology of the cross, and the Peasants’ War). And we welcome scholarship wrestling with the contemporary legacies of those themes.

Hosting systematic *and* constructive theological voices, historians, ethicists, and more, this Unit is able to engage rich and perspectives that go far beyond Lutheran parochial interests. As such, we produce scholarship reflecting with intersectional, theoretical, political, social, and ethical analysis. Recent topics of importance have included ecology, histories of settler colonialism, gender and sexuality justice, and interfaith and interreligious theologies.

Chairs

- Jacob Erickson
jacobjerickson@gmail.com
 - Marit Trelstad
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Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Martin Luther and Global Lutheran Traditions Unit

Call for Proposals

Open Call: The Martin Luther and Global Lutheran Traditions Unit welcomes paper, panel, and roundtable proposals on any topic relevant to the Unit's interests. We particularly ask that proposals pay attention to the diversity of presiders, presenters, respondents, and topics.

The future of scholarship on Martin Luther and Global Lutheran Traditions and Precarious Future/s: For AAR's June Online Meeting, our Unit especially welcomes work from junior scholars and doctoral students who wish to share their scholarly work in areas covered by the Martin Luther and Global Lutheran Traditions Unit. We also welcome proposals from scholars who may not find travelling to the Annual Meeting in Denver possible at this point in time.

While such proposals may cover any relevant theme included in the Unit's remit, we are particularly interested in proposals that engage the question of the precariousness of our times. What is the future of scholarship for MLGLT Unit members in the midst of the risks of our contemporary political moment? In the midst of shifting religious demographics? In the midst of changes to the landscapes of seminary and higher education? What precariousness must we pay attention to and how? How do we pay attention to vulnerability, resilience, and justice? What is needed for the future of theological education to weather the precarious future(s) that lay ahead? What is the future--lost, possible, or impossible--of 'global' Lutheran theology, lived and thought?

Statement of Purpose

The Martin Luther and Global Lutheran Traditions Unit provides an avenue for comprehensive attention to Lutheran history, theology, and praxis in contemporary global contexts. We welcome themes emergent in Martin Luther's own life and writing (e.g., recent topics including baptism, freedom, theology of the cross, and the Peasants' War). And we welcome scholarship wrestling with the contemporary legacies of those themes.

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Chairs

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In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Men, Masculinities, and Religions Unit

Call for Proposals

The Men, Masculinities, and Religion seeks panel proposals and experimental panels that use short, or creative presentation formats. We are particularly interested in roundtables, and brief remarks and provocations that open up conversation between panelists and audience members, and/or presentations that creatively use and present objects, media, art, music, sounds etc. We encourage proposals of full panels/roundtables and paper proposals on the following topics:

- **Fatherhood**

We invite presentations and panels that consider themes of fatherhood, parenting, family planning, and intergenerational relationships and how they are shaped by religious practices and identities.

- **Beyond Hegemonic Masculinity**

MMR invites papers and/or full-panel proposals that envision and propose new starting points—methodological, theoretical, geographic, reflexive etc.—for studying religious masculinities. How might we revisit, remix, and re-envision our tools and frameworks for studying men and masculinities?

- **The New Idols: Lightning Session**

Across pop culture and the political spectrum, who are contemporary “idols” of masculinity? From tech CEOs and AI magnates, to pop stars and political up-and-comers, who are the current and emerging “masculine” icons or disruptors? And what do these figures and their iconographies, ideologies, and platforms reveal about our moment and our futures? For this topic, we envision a lightning session with short papers and provocations, around 7 minutes. Because of the shorter format, we request only brief proposals/abstracts of ~200-300 words rather than full-length proposals.

- **Additional possible themes** include: death, technology, transhumanism, and apocalypticism.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit provides a forum within which scholars study the phenomenon of masculine gender – as identity, practice, discourse, and structure – building on scholarship in masculinity, gender, and queer studies, and using the range of methodologies found in the broad field of religious studies. This Unit engages in the critical study of men and the performance of masculinities in culturally and religiously specific settings and traditions.

Chairs

- Sarah Imhoff
seimhoff@indiana.edu
 - Kyle Byron
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-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Middle Eastern Christianity Unit

Call for Proposals

Itineraries of Mobility: Encounter and Difference in the Pre-Modern “Middle East”

The Middle Eastern Christianity Unit invites proposals on the theme of "Itineraries of Mobility" in the pre-modern Middle East, broadly construed. We seek to explore the circulation of individuals, communities, and their remembered and lived traditions as dynamic sites of cross-cultural encounter. We welcome submissions that analyze how these itineraries of migration, pilgrimage, and displacement facilitated the negotiation of linguistic, ethnic, and religious difference. Topics may include, but are not limited to, the movement of monastics, pilgrims, scholars, or refugees, and how their mobility shaped the construction of communal pasts and identities across the pre-modern landscape.

Nicaea at 1701: Canons, Memory, and Lived Religion

Reflecting on the recent 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea and its reception, the Middle Eastern Christianity Unit invites proposals that move beyond doctrinal orthodoxy to explore the council's social, disciplinary, and ecumenical legacies. Topics may include, but are not limited to, the legacy of Nicaea today and the often-neglected Nicene canons as windows into "lived religion"; how these regulations shaped community boundaries, clerical discipline, and social hierarchies across the Middle East; the tension between universal ecumenical aspirations and local realities; and the diverse ways Nicaea has been remembered, contested, or reimagined in Middle Eastern historiography and identity formation.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit is devoted to the study of developments within Coptic, Armenian, Chaldean/Assyrian, Syrian, Maronite, and other relevant communities living inside the Middle East or in lands of immigration. The Unit promotes scholarship on themes from the early Christian period to the present, encompassing various approaches and subjects. Its aim is to establish an interdisciplinary platform for fostering scholarly approaches to Middle Eastern Christianity, and to provide opportunities for scholars to discuss their work in relation to the overall field of the study of religion.

Chairs

- Mourad Takawi
mtakawi@gmail.com
- Candace Lukasik
c.lukasik@msstate.edu

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Middle Eastern Christianity Unit

Call for Proposals

Middle Eastern Christian Traditions Between Past and Future

This session is supported by AAR's Theological, Pedagogical and Ethical Approaches to Israel/Palestine Seminar

The Middle Eastern Christianity Unit invites proposals on the theme "Middle Eastern Christian Traditions Between Past and Future." We seek to interrogate the future trajectories of these communities by examining the temporality of their traditions. We broadly welcome contributions, ranging from historical inquiries to contemporary anthropological, sociological, or theological analyses, that investigate how Middle Eastern Christians negotiate the tension between inherited legacies and the exigencies of the present. Proposals may explore how traditions are constructed, maintained, or transformed over time, as well as how communities today are leveraging their past to navigate modernity and envision their future in the region.

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mtakawi@gmail.com
- Candace Lukasik
c.lukasik@msstate.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

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

Call for Proposals

This unit invites individual paper, paper session, and roundtable proposals that engage with the concepts of “moral injury” and recovery in light of AAR’s 2026 presidential theme of *the future*. Religious scholars, theologians, philosophers, and other humanities scholars have created a substantial body of interdisciplinary literature in the past two decades around moral injury and this unit continues to develop and explore that corpus as well as to encourage and facilitate its growth in new areas, from new perspectives, and through new approaches.

Papers and proposals that explore moral injury in contemporary conflicts, through analyses of particular theological, philosophical or clinical works, or through the lens of current or recent situations are always welcome.

For the 2026 in-person meeting in Denver, we will explore the ways in which moral injury points to our inter-connectedness, the ways in which our individual consciences condition our senses of responsibility, accountability and response, and the ways in which the concept is evidence that we might envision a hopeful future for humanity after all. We will thus welcome paper proposals on moral injury in four broad clusters.

1. **Epistemic Injustice** – Since British philosopher Miranda Fricker brought the term into modern parlance, epistemic justice has been used to describe the ways in which societies implicitly grant privileged groups credibility in describing their own experiences, while implicitly denying that same credibility to marginalised groups. Moral Injury illuminates some of the consequences of epistemic injustice, and particularly given the tendency of governments and institutions to propagate it, we invite papers that explore these aspects of moral injury in topics that may include:

- Experiences of racism and racial violence
- Xenophobia and its propagation
- The experience of moral violation or intersectional/intra-ethnic harms against marginalized groups
- Critique of MI in combatants as counter to societal/moral/political values
- The stigmatisation of morally injured veterans through pathologisation

2. **MI and the US Experience** – This year marks the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The concept of moral injury emerged from the US context, and though it is not uniquely American, this country’s nature, structure, and history as well as its ethical, religious, legal, and moral frameworks, may produce distinctive moral injuries. We therefore invite papers exploring aspects of this, including:

- The experience of war and the loss of social trust
- Oppression, Marginalisation and moral injury
- Justice in the aftermath of Presidential Pardons
- Armed Rebellions and Insurrections

3. Wrestling over the concept of Moral Injury – In 2025, there was an effort to ensure that there is a formal definition of ‘moral injury disorder’ included in the next iteration of the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). This raises renewed questions about the benefits and detriments of pathologizing the term, particularly in light of Joseph Wiinikka-Lydon’s articulation of MI as ‘inherent political critique’, and may also reinvigorate debate about how we define and contextualise moral injury itself. Thus, we invite papers that explore these tensions, which might include:

- What’s at stake in the definitions and conceptual ‘home’ for the term
- Benefits of interdisciplinary work on MI
- MI’s capacity to encompass and illuminate difficult distinctions around agency, responsibility and blame

4. Moral Injury and Imagining a Hopeful Future – With the rise of authoritarianism around the world, dystopian visions of the future are increasingly popular. However, as US Army psychiatrist Dave Grossman notes, the inherent human resistance to killing others (that often manifests after the fact as MI) is evidence that ‘there may be hope for us after all.’ How does the presence of MI in different contexts suggest that dystopian visions might not be what the human future looks like? Potential topics might include:

- Authoritarianism and resistance
- Embodied approaches, practical and theological visions of a hopeful future
- Climate and Ecological Stress
- Refusing orders on moral grounds as praxis of moral hope

Statement of Purpose

The Moral Injury and Recovery in Religion, Society, and Culture Unit engages interdisciplinary study on moral injury, an emerging concept which attempts to engage the impact of making difficult moral choices under extreme conditions, experiencing morally anguishing events or duties, witnessing immoral acts, or behaving in ways that profoundly challenge moral conscience and identity and the values that support them. In examining how understandings of recovery from moral injury might illuminate post-conflict situations in many areas of the world, this unit will interrogate how educating a

wider public about moral injury might challenge the role of religion in supporting war and the militarization of international and intra-national conflicts, the effects of war on combatants in post-conflict societies, and more effective means for social support in recovery from moral injury. Contributions are welcome engaging: • Diverse religious, cultural, and social systems and their sacred texts • Neuroscientific approaches to ritual, moral formation, and the moral emotions • Proposed methods for recovery, such as ritual, pastoral counseling, spiritual direction, arts, community life, narrative, and interreligious cooperation • The roles of gender, ethnicity, sexuality, class, race, and other forms of oppression in relation to personal agency and theories of ethics.

Chairs

- Nigel Hatton
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- Brian Powers
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Online June Annual Meeting 2026

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

Call for Proposals

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Chairs

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- Brian Powers
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-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Mormon Studies Unit

Call for Proposals

The Mormon Studies Unit welcomes papers and/or panels on a variety of themes and topics relating to the Mormon tradition, broadly defined. The proposals should analyze the material in terms of the academic study of religion. For the November 2026 conference, we propose a few themes:

- Reality TV and Mormons; Mormons and the media
- Patriotism as a performative aspect of a US Mormon identity
- Papers related to the 200th anniversary of Joseph Smith's witchcraft trial
- Biographies of marginalized figures in Mormon history
- The current state of Mormon Studies

Open Call: Other papers or panels dealing with aspects of Mormonism not mentioned in the previous call will also be considered. Papers may be selected for their relevance to themes which emerge among other submissions.

Panel proposals are welcome.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit will examine the range of topics, disciplines, and methodologies that can be brought into dialogue with Mormonism as studied in an academic environment. It is interested in exploring strategies for teaching about Mormonism, both as the main focus of a class or as a unit within a survey course. It seeks to identify the best resources available for teaching and understanding the tradition and provide encouragement for scholars to fill gaps in what is currently available. The Unit encourages significant comparative studies and interdisciplinary cross-fertilization and hopes to explore

intersections between Mormonism and ethics, theology, philosophy, ecclesiology, missiology, spirituality, arts and literature, sociology, scripture, and liberation studies.

Chairs

- Jana Riess
riess.jana@gmail.com
 - Benjamin Park
benjamin.e.park@gmail.com
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Motherhood and Religions Unit

Call for Proposals

For the 2026 Annual Meetings, the Unit welcomes proposals for individual papers as well as for pre-arranged panels or roundtables provided that they include at least four different contributions on various religious and cultural contexts. The Unit strongly encourages proposals of panels foregrounding cross-cultural comparative perspectives (e. g. a similar topic explored in different religious traditions). Ideally, drafts of the contributions or long abstracts should be circulated in written form through the AAR/SBL app before the conference. Panels and Roundtables may also include a respondent. A co-chair or steering committee member of the Motherhood and Religions Unit will be added to the session as presider.

With the 2026 call for papers, the Unit seeks proposals that critically assess how religious narratives, practices, and materialities of motherhood engage the presidential theme of FUTURE/S—whether through representations (e.g. iconography), discourses, practices (e.g. rituals), and artifacts (“material religion”).

We look forward to receiving proposals that enrich scholarly conversations on motherhood, religion, materiality, and the futures that communities create through their stories, practices, and everyday lives.

Motherhood, Religion, and Material Practices

The Motherhood and Religions Unit invites proposals that examine motherhood — embodied, imagined, contested, and enacted— through the material and lived dimensions of religions. Maternal practices and representations, including those tied to religions, are persistently grounded in objects, bodies, spaces, and sensory forms that complicate textual descriptions. These material elements often reveal how individual and communities imagine, resist, or foreclose possible futures, whether through everyday maternal labor, ritualized gestures, or iconic figures.

We welcome papers that investigate how religious narratives (not necessarily textual ones) and practices surrounding motherhood take shape materially: through figurines, ritual implements, clothing, foodways, built environments, bodily techniques, or sensory engagements. Such materialities frequently offer access to counter-memories and alternative religious imaginaries, including those of futures that are not just dystopic, ambiguous, or constrained, but also hopeful. Contributions may address past or contemporary contexts, as well as fictional ones, with links to religions; local, transnational, or diasporic communities; and diverse methodological approaches including archaeology, art history, material culture studies, ethnography, and lived religion.

Proposals might engage questions such as:

- How do objects, artifacts, and embodied practices construct, regulate, or reconfigure religious ideals of mothering?
- What sensory or artistic expressions (touch, sound, scent, taste, image, movement) shape maternal spiritual experience or devotional life?
- In what ways do material traces of mothering —such as votive offerings, domestic spaces, burial sites, clothing, or healing implements— express visions of collective flourishing, protection, or endurance?
- How do ethnographic accounts of pregnancy, birth, postpartum rituals, and infant care reveal forms of “futuring” enacted through maternal bodies and relationships?
- How might material practices challenge dominant textual narratives about motherhood, sanctity, gendered authority, or spiritual lineage?
- What alternative temporalities or speculative futures emerge from the study of maternal material religion, especially in communities facing political, economic, or ecological precarity?

We also encourage approaches that place feminist (especially matricentric feminism), womanist, queer, postcolonial, Indigenous, or ecological frameworks into conversation with material religion. Papers may explore maternal figures (historical or mythical), ritual specialists, spiritual mothers, and maternal archetypes whose material representations or embodied practices open or restrict future possibilities. Papers that address tensions between lived maternal realities (such as grief, loss, endurance, refusal and communal

care) and idealized imagery or models shaped by religious frameworks are particularly welcome.

This session seeks to illuminate how religious traditions materialize motherhood across time and space, and how the material study of maternal lives can expand scholarly conversations about FUTURE/S in the academic study of religions.

Nourishing Futures: Motherhood, Food, and Religion
(possible co-sponsored session with the Food and Religion Unit)

The Motherhood and Religions Unit and the Food and Religion Unit invite proposals for a joint session exploring how the intertwined realms of motherhood and food practices shape religious communities, identities, and imagined futures. Food is a central site through which religious meaning, ethical formation, and cultural continuity are enacted, and mothers often act as the primary religious enculturators in this regard, through feeding, withholding, preparing, cultivating, sharing food, and passing on culinary and dietary traditions to maintain the continuity and future of the community. Foodways, as implemented by those who perform mother work for individuals and communities, also serve as powerful arenas of regulation, resistance, risk, and hope.

This session seeks papers that examine how religious traditions envision futures through maternal nourishment practices, dietary rules, prohibitions, and the transmission of food-related knowledge. We are especially interested in studies that highlight the material and embodied aspects of food and motherhood, asking how these practices sustain or unsettle inherited narratives of belonging, hierarchy, purity, gender, or kinship.

Topics may include:

- Maternal teaching of religious food systems: how children learn to inhabit food rules, taboos, and ethical or ritual foodways (such as selecting licit food, doing food offerings, fasting, etc.)
- Fasting, fattening, or food-based rites of preparation for motherhood
- Pregnancy food avoidances, cravings, and taboos as religious or spiritual practices
- Breastfeeding, human or other-than-human lactation, and maternal nourishment in religious traditions
- Embodied forms of care (growing, harvesting, preparing, or distributing food) as sites of ethical formation or spiritual responsibility

- How histories of scarcity, abundance, and ecological precarity shape maternal food practices and imagined futures
- Methodological and theoretical approaches to futuring in relation to motherhood, food, and religious community-making
- Seeds and growing things; generativity
- Creation and care, in particular Indigenous creation and care

Statement of Purpose

This unit focuses on the study of mothers, motherhood, mothering, and religions, providing a central nexus for scholars interested in matricentric feminist perspectives. We aim to address a significant gap in religious studies by emphasizing the diverse experiences and perspectives of mothers (of all genders), which have often been overlooked. Our unit draws on interdisciplinary approaches to explore motherhood and mothering in religious contexts, working with a comparative scope and welcoming work on all religious traditions, past and present. We seek to foster creative research, encourage the exchange of ideas, and provide a platform for critical conversations that challenge traditional narratives and assumptions on mothers, motherwork, women, and gender more generally. By centering maternal experiences and viewpoints, we aim to enrich the academic discourse with diverse, interdisciplinary perspectives and contribute to a deeper understanding of the intersection between religion, mothers, motherhood, and mothering.

Chairs

- Florence Pasche Guignard
florence.pasche-guignard@ftsr.ulaval.ca
- Pascale Engelmajer
pengelma@carrollu.edu

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Motherhood and Religions Unit

Call for Proposals

For the 2026 Annual Meetings, the Unit welcomes proposals for individual papers as well as for pre-arranged panels or roundtables provided that they include at least four different contributions on various religious and cultural contexts. The Unit strongly encourages proposals of panels foregrounding cross-cultural comparative perspectives (e. g. a similar topic explored in different religious traditions). Ideally, drafts of the contributions or long abstracts should be circulated in written form through the AAR/SBL app before the conference. Panels and Roundtables may also include a respondent. A co-chair or steering committee member of the Motherhood and Religions Unit will be added to the session as presider.

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Proposals might engage questions such as:

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Nourishing Futures: Motherhood, Food, and Religion ***(possible co-sponsored session with the Food and Religion Unit)***

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-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Music and Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

The Music and Religion section is perpetually interested in panels that combine performance and scholarly reflection, and/or book panel discussions that help to advance the field. These ideas can be incorporated into any of the other ideas below.

- The impact of generative AI on music in religious practice
- The role of music in the religious formation of children--intergenerational religious community through music
- Presentations that relate to our 2026 presidential theme of "futurity" in religious thought and practice
- Anniversary-themed presentations related to musical works and music scenes celebrating milestones in 2026
- Presentations on musical works and music scenes connected to our host city of Denver

Statement of Purpose

The discipline of religious studies has expanded beyond linguistic rationality to include the importance of musical phenomena in the development of religious communities and religious consciousness. Meanwhile, theological aesthetics is moving beyond the textual to include music as a resource in its own right for constructive and transformative meaning-making. Music, religiously speaking, is no mere adjunct to the study of sacred space, ritual, visual art, liturgy, or philosophical aesthetics; rather, it is a distinct field in its own right — with its own particular content, methods, and norms. By placing the relationship between music and religion at the center of our endeavor, this Unit seeks to serve scholars who operate out of this ubiquitous, but ironically unrepresented, realm of academic pursuit within the guild.

Chairs

- Charrise Barron, Harvard University
cbarron@fas.harvard.edu
 - Joshua Busman, University of North Carolina At Pembroke
joshua.busman@uncp.edu
-

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

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In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Mysticism Unit

Call for Proposals

Back to the Future: Mysticism, Apocalypse, and Innovation

Co-Sponsors: Religion in Europe, and Religion in Premodern Europe and the Mediterranean

This panel invites papers that explore how mystic literature and visual culture approach the theme of apocalypse. Of particular interest are historically grounded approaches to apocalyptic mysticism that consider premodern frameworks. Additional areas of focus include comparisons across traditions and between Eurocentric and non-Eurocentric

perspectives, apocalypse and social reform, trans panic and apocalyptic futures, and apocalypse and the colonial imagination. Specific paper topics might include, but are not limited to:

- Repurposing of premodern frameworks in our contemporary moment
- Historical and contemporary theorizations of apocalypse and millenarianism
- Apocalyptic mysticism, neo-fascism, and accelerationism
- Decolonial interventions and apocalyptic narratives
- Imaginative reconfigurations of apocalyptic mysticism
- Technological visions of apocalypse (singularity, AI, and the posthuman)

Mysticism after Modernity: Contemporary Adaptations of Classical Themes

This panel considers contemporary adaptations of classical mystical themes, particularly those reemerging or re-visioned among modern – and potential future – practitioners. Relevant themes might include mystical itineraries of ascent and descent; tripartite trajectories of purgation, illumination, and union; knowing and unknowing; dissolution and reintegration; deity practices and/or guru yoga; and neo-tantric kundalini awakenings. Specific paper topics might include, but are not limited to:

- The commodification of mystical praxis among contemporary “Spiritual But Not Religious” (SBNR), with an emphasis on consumerism and “spiritual materialism.”
- Contemporary appropriations of tantric/yogic practices vis-à-vis modern yoga and/or retreat center cultures.
- The “therapizing” of classical mystical categories (e.g., “dark night of the soul”) among psychotherapeutic or psychospiritual professionals.
- Appropriations of mystical schemas in contemporary trainings, handbooks, and manuals (e.g., meditation, yoga, or psychedelic subcultures).
- Embodiment culture and appropriations of mystical practices among wellness industry “influencers,” including uses of “mysticism” among the “manosphere.”

Mysticism and Vulnerability

Co-Sponsor: Religion & Disabilities Studies Unit

This co-sponsored session invites proposals reflecting on the intersection/s of vulnerability and mysticism through lenses of disability, race, gender, sexual orientation, and other forms of social marginalization. Mystics have traditionally sought out mystical

states not for the experiences in and of themselves, but for the knowledge of reality gained from these experiences. In response, mystics embody transformation, seeking to live a life aligned with knowledge encountered in a mystical state. Popular perceptions of mystical knowledge often correlate such states with power and efficacy. But paradoxically, accounts of mystical experiences often also entail a state of openness, vulnerability, and interdependence. While unsettling, this vulnerability can transform understandings of openness and interdependence as positions of personal strength. For example, reflection on one's vulnerability may be a part of a mystical encounter, especially where one is known by a power greater than oneself. Likewise, mystical states where one has a loss of a sense of self may result in ongoing vulnerabilities after the experience.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit began as a Consultation within the AAR in 1987 and achieved formal Unit status in 1989. While its early focus was primarily Christianity and Western religions — and the study of experience and textual interpretation within those areas — the Unit has grown and changed over time, paralleling the change and growth in the AAR itself. Today, our conversations cut across boundaries that characterize many of the Program Units within the AAR — boundaries of discipline, tradition, temporality, and region. Members of our Unit use different methodologies and work across a variety of disciplines, among which are the psychology of religion, sociology of religion, history of religions, hermeneutics and textual analysis, biographical analysis, feminist studies, queer and trans studies, film studies, philosophy of religion, mysticism and science, art criticism, postmodern theory, cultural studies, and anthropology of consciousness, among others. This interdisciplinarity has importance not only to our work as scholars, but also to our work as teachers and public educators. We post our current call, past sessions, a selection of past papers, as well as links in the field of mysticism to our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/aarmysticism/>.

Chairs

- David Odorisio
dmodorisio@gmail.com
- C. Libby, Pennsylvania State University
cml83@psu.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Native Traditions in the Americas Unit

Call for Proposals

We invite individual paper and group proposals on any aspect of Native Traditions in the Americas (North, Central and South). In particular, we invite papers on the following topics:

In light of this year's theme "Future/s" we invite proposals for papers or panels that consider possible future paths for Native people's cultural and religious freedom and expression. Some areas of focus might include:

- Black, Brown, and Indigenous solidarities
- Indigenous Futurisms - dystopia, utopia, and everywhere in between
- Can AI technology be used to promote solidarity and resist religious oppression?
- Native identities into the future - issues such as federal recognition and blood quantum and how these intersect with religion.

[For a co-sponsorship with the Religion and Human Rights unit](#)

- We are interested in how Indigenous thinkers and communities in the Americas use the language of human rights to advocate for respect for religious practices, honor for the land, and more, while recognizing that discourses of "human rights" often have complicated historical relationships with colonial ideas and institutions. We invite proposals that explore how members and leaders of Indigenous communities in the Americas navigate these nuances, reshaping thinking about "rights" and the well-being of human communities embedded in kinship ties with other species and the world around us.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit sees its mission as the promotion of the study of Native American religious traditions and thereby the enrichment of the academic study of religion generally, by engaging in discourse about culturally-centered theories and encouraging multiple

dialogues at the margins of Western and non-Western cultures and scholarship. The Unit is committed to fostering dialogue involving Native and non-Native voices in the study of North, Central, and South American Native religious traditions and to engaging religious studies scholarship in robust conversation with scholarship on other facets of Native cultures and societies.

Chairs

- Felicia Lopez, University of California, Merced
flopez44@ucmerced.edu
 - Brennan Keegan
keeganbl@cofc.edu
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

New Religious Movements Unit

Call for Proposals

The New Religious Movements Program Unit invites proposals dealing with the theme of futures, including papers on millennialism, utopianism, and science fiction futures and NRMs. We also invite proposals dealing with communication technology and media, broadly conceived, and NRMs, including topics such as public scholarship on NRMs, NRMs in the news, NRMs and the arts, and NRMs and new media technologies. We also invite proposals addressing NRMs in Denver and Colorado, and papers on any aspect of the study of NRMs.

[The Sociology of Religion and New Religious Movements Program Units](#) invite proposals dealing with new religions and sociological theory and methods. We encourage proposals that examine how sociological theory and methods have shaped the study of new religions, studies of new religions informed by sociological theory and methods, and proposals for new approaches to the study of new religions informed by sociological theory and methods.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit supports and encourages research on all aspects of the study of New Religious Movements. Presenters in our sessions study new, and alternative religions, past and present, from a variety of methodological and disciplinary perspectives. Our sessions and additional meetings are intended to create opportunities for dialogue among academics who share a passion for understanding NRMs, and to make known to a broader audience the importance of such movements for understanding issues of religious difference, community building and maintenance, ritual and doctrinal innovation, and other aspects of religious life. As scholars of minority, alternative, and new religions, we are deeply aware of the challenges facing those on America's religious margins. We know the immense human toll such intolerance causes. Our scholarship also demonstrates the violence and tragedy that can result when federal and state agencies fail to recognize the humanity of marginalized religious groups. We are resolved to make space for difference both within the academy and beyond.

Chairs

- Jeremy Rapport
jrapport@wooster.edu
 - Erin Prophet, East Carolina University
erin@eprophet.info
-

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

New Religious Movements Unit

Call for Proposals

The New Religious Movements Program Unit invites proposals for papers addressing issues of conflict, tension, and new religions. We especially welcome proposals examining issues such as NRM conflict with legal systems and courts, law enforcement raids on NRM communities, and analyses of media portrayals of NRMs in the development of tension with surrounding communities.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit supports and encourages research on all aspects of the study of New Religious Movements. Presenters in our sessions study new, and alternative religions, past and present, from a variety of methodological and disciplinary perspectives. Our sessions and additional meetings are intended to create opportunities for dialogue among academics who share a passion for understanding NRMs, and to make known to a broader audience the importance of such movements for understanding issues of religious difference, community building and maintenance, ritual and doctrinal innovation, and other aspects of religious life. As scholars of minority, alternative, and new religions, we are deeply aware of the challenges facing those on America's religious margins. We know the immense human toll such intolerance causes. Our scholarship also demonstrates the violence and tragedy that can result when federal and state agencies fail to recognize the humanity of marginalized religious groups. We are resolved to make space for difference both within the academy and beyond.

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erin@eprophet.info
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Nineteenth Century Theology Unit

Call for Proposals

Religion and Nationalism

The Nineteenth-Century Theology Unit is inviting paper proposals for a session on the intersection of religion and nationalism. We are interested in exploring the role of religion(s) in nation-building, the influence of religious traditions on emerging national identities in various countries (e.g., France, Germany, and Russia), the connection between religion and revolution, the concept of *Kulturkampf*, the relationship between church and state, and the impact of religious conflicts on political culture. In light of the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, we also welcome proposals that

examine the interplay between religious freedom and nationalism during the Revolutionary era. Possible topics include imperial theologies, clergy as nationalist mobilizers, visions for the future of the new nation as well as millennial expectations and apocalyptic hopes that emerged during the Revolution. Contributions may analyze the perspectives of theologians from diverse national and religious traditions, offering new insights that foster ongoing scholarly dialogue on these themes.

[A co-sponsored session with the Eastern Orthodox Studies Unit](#)

Theology Bridging East and West During the “Long Nineteenth Century”

The objective of this session, co-sponsored with the Eastern Orthodox Studies Unit, is to foster interdisciplinary dialogue among scholars working in theology, philosophy, religious studies, history, literature, and cultural studies. The session will explore the complex and often understudied interactions between nineteenth-century Western philosophy and religious thought and Eastern Orthodox theology in the “long nineteenth century” (1789-1918), in both their historical reception histories and in their theological relevance for contemporary discussions of relevant sources.

We welcome both historically grounded studies and constructive or synthetic proposals that demonstrate the ongoing relevance of nineteenth-century philosophical theology for contemporary theological discussion. Papers appropriate for the session might include, but are not limited to, the following topics:

- Reception histories of German Idealism and Romanticism in Eastern Orthodox theology, including figures such as F. Dostoevsky, V. Solovyov, P. Florensky, S. Bulgakov, S. Frank, or N. Lossky, especially in dialogue with Western interlocutors such as J. Möhler, F. Schelling, G. Hegel, F. Schleiermacher, J. Newman, or S. Kierkegaard.
- Interactions between Orthodox thought and Western schools of thought (e.g., ressourcement, Oxford movement, Tübingen school, French Catholic mysticism, etc.)
- Earlier nineteenth-century Orthodox engagements with Western modernity, including thinkers such as St. Philaret (Drozdov) of Moscow, Alexei Khomyakov, Ivan and Pyotr Kireevsky, and the broader Slavophile tradition
- The role of personalist philosophy across Eastern and Western religious philosophy and theology
- The reception of deification in Russian theology
- Aesthetics, literature, symbolism, and religious imagination after Immanuel Kant

- Ecumenical dialogue in nineteenth-century philosophical theology, including patristic retrieval movements in both East and West and emerging visions of tradition, conciliarity, development, and doctrinal renewal

Statement of Purpose

Our Unit focuses on major themes, thinkers, and movements in nineteenth century religious thought and theology — from the French Revolution to World War I — and on the relation of religious thought to its historical, political, and cultural contexts. Each year the Unit selects two or three focused topics and predistributes papers before the AAR sessions.

Chairs

- Matthias Gockel
matthias.gockel@unibas.ch
- Annette G. Aubert
aaubert@wts.edu

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Nineteenth Century Theology Unit

Call for Proposals

Intersections of Theology and Literary Culture in the Nineteenth Century

This panel investigates the role of theology in nineteenth-century literature from an interdisciplinary and global perspective. Proposals may address fields such as cultural studies (including gender studies), aesthetics, and artistic theory, among others. As writers of the nineteenth century engaged with questions of faith, the divine, redemption, moral religion, and the nature of evil, we invite proposals that shed light on the complex and evolving relationships between literary expression and theological thought. We also welcome papers that use new or emerging approaches to the study of theology and literature. Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- Theological Themes in Works of Fiction
- Literary Theology
- Religion and National Mythology
- Religious symbols in literature
- Theology and Romantic literature

Statement of Purpose

Our Unit focuses on major themes, thinkers, and movements in nineteenth century religious thought and theology — from the French Revolution to World War I — and on the relation of religious thought to its historical, political, and cultural contexts. Each year the Unit selects two or three focused topics and predistributes papers before the AAR sessions.

Chairs

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matthias.gockel@unibas.ch
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aaubert@wts.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

North American Hinduism Unit

Call for Proposals

While we accept paper proposals, we strongly encourage paper proposals to respond to our CFP to increase chance of acceptance. We welcome and encourage full panel (paper or roundtable) proposals with a coherent theme that respond to one of the topics listed in the CFP and/or proposals which speak to the unit's priorities and the AAR presidential theme. We believe strongly in collaboration and welcome the opportunity to host

cosponsored sessions. **If you have any additional questions and/or are interested in submitting to a particular session listed below please contact Rupa Pillai (rupillai@sas.upenn.edu) or Dheepa Sundaram (dheepa.sundaram@du.edu).** Contact the Chairs advance of submitting proposals if you have any questions or need assistance.

North American Hinduism Unit 2026 CFP

The North American Hinduism Unit welcomes single paper, roundtable, or panel proposals that examine Hinduisms in North America and related diaspora contexts. We encourage interested individuals to contact the co-chairs, Rupa Pillai (rupillai@sas.upenn.edu) and Dheepa Sundaram (dheepa.sundaram@du.edu), in advance of submitting proposals with questions or tips on how to write a strong proposal.

In addition to **any** proposals for individual papers, roundtables, or panels, our unit is especially interested in the following topics in relation to the 2026 Presidential Theme "Future/s":

1. Future Directions in the Scholarship of North American Hinduism

Contact: Aarti Patel (abp6177@psu.edu) and Rupa Pillai (rupillai@sas.upenn.edu)

For decades, scholarship on North American Hinduism has captured the dynamic transformations of Hindu traditions within the United States and Canada. From rich ethnographies documenting the building of temples to studies exploring how devotional practices adapt and persist in new contexts, the scholarship in our field has utilized frameworks of diaspora and transnationalism to investigate the formations of North American Hinduism. While such scholarship is still necessary, the future of our field also lies in pursuing new questions and emerging theoretical frameworks.

To showcase future directions in North American Hinduism, we welcome individual paper or panel proposals that might engage, but are not limited to, questions such as:

- How do we study North American Hinduism as an American religion?
- How are the diverse lived experiences of North American Hinduism represented in novels, films, music, etc?

- How has Hinduism been adapted by North American legal apparatuses (i.e., immigration policies, legal definitions of religion, and the bureaucracy of non-profit)?
- How might we study North American Hinduism as an Asian American Religion?
- How are practices of Hinduism altering spatial and sonic notions of belonging within the North American context?
- What new frameworks does the study of North American Hinduisms offer to scholars of religious nationalism?
- How does the study of North American Hinduisms advance and/or complicate the study of Hinduism in and beyond the Americas?

2. **Discussing the Uncertain Futures of Teaching and Researching Hinduism in North America: A Lightning Roundtable**

Contact: Rupa Pillai (rupillai@sas.upenn.edu) and Dheepa Sundaram (dheepa.sundaram@du.edu)

As scholars of Hinduism, either teaching in the North American Academy or researching Hinduisms in North America, we are witnessing and experiencing increased uncertainty. This uncertainty ranges from the closing of Religious Studies departments and the reduced funding to area studies to the targeted harassment of scholars. To learn more about our diverse experience while developing networks of support to dream better futures, we invited proposals for lightning talks (3-5 mins) for an experimental roundtable. This roundtable will feature 5-6 lightning talks with ample time to brainstorm strategies to navigate the issues introduced by the talks. To learn more about how to propose lightning talks, Rupa Pillai (rupillai@sas.upenn.edu) and Dheepa Sundaram (dheepa.sundaram@du.edu).

3. **Rethinking "Diaspora"**

Contact: Gaurika Mehta (gmehta@scu.edu) and Tracy Pintchman (Tpintch@luc.edu)

Is North American Hinduism a "diasporic" tradition? This roundtable invites scholars of North American Hinduism to discuss how, why, and in what contexts we use (or choose not to use) the term "diaspora." The panel aims to continue conversations and debates about terminology and place that emerged during the "Author Meets Critics" panel on Tracy Pintchman's *Goddess Beyond Boundaries* at last year's annual meeting in Boston. Participants will revisit the term "diaspora" and ask: Is the term useful for the study of

Hinduism in North America? Does “diaspora” create new frontiers for thinking about Hinduism outside South Asia? What are some alternative ways of placing Hinduism in North America? Why and how might we rethink “diaspora?”

4. **Academic Freedom, Equity Practices, and the Study of Asian Religions in North America (roundtable session)**

Contact: Dheepa Sundaram (dheepa.sundaram@du.edu)

In a time when we see the academic freedom under serious threat both within and outside of the United States, especially scholarship on non-majoritarian and/or minority communities, traditions, beliefs, this panel explores the state of academic freedom of scholars of Asian religions training and/or employed in North America. We are particularly interested in how nonprofit-designated organizations and practitioner-focused groups can impact, shape, and direct how Asian religions such as Hinduism are critically engaged in academic settings as well as scholarship and teaching within public-facing venues. Some questions that shape our thinking for this session: How does the proliferation of endowed positions impact the academic freedom of the scholars who hold them and the departments that house them? How do the composition of South Asian/Asian Studies and Religion departments impact and shape graduate admissions and thereby shape the field at large? What are the possibilities of pursuing public scholarship and how should scholars of Asian religions become public scholars?

Statement of Purpose

Overview:

This Unit was established in 2006 for the purpose of drawing greater scholarly attention to Hinduisms outside of South Asia. Though it will focus on North America, the Unit also welcomes relevant research on Hinduisms and related South Asian traditions and cultures in other non-Indian contexts. The Unit has three main goals: • To study and describe Hinduisms in North America and related diaspora contexts • To develop a more sophisticated understanding of what distinguishes these Hinduisms from those in South Asia • To nurture thoughtful debate on the methodologies unique to and appropriate for their study.

Call for Proposals:

The Steering Committee composes the Call for Proposals for NAH sessions for the AAR Annual Meeting; Steering Committee chairs facilitate proposals for the emerging scholars panel, all other proposals in the CFP are overseen by a point person, Steering Committee reviews, shapes and accepts proposals for submitted sessions; reviews and reports on sessions; and communicates with the NAH constituency.

Composition:

The Steering Committee is made up of 4-7 members, two of whom are elected or determined by consensus by the steering committee to serve as co-chairs. A Steering Committee term is three years, renewable for a second three years if everyone is amenable. The terms are staggered, so that there are continuity and change on the committee. During a total of six possible years, a member might serve a co-chair term, which is three years. A member elected to serve as co-chair has at least one full year's experience on the Steering Committee. The co-chair elections are staggered as well, so that each new co-chair serves with an experienced co-chair.

Responsibilities:

The co-chairs are responsible for conducting the business meeting of NAH, completing the post-AAR Annual Meeting survey, initiating review of proposals, working with steering committee members and submitters to put together sessions, and moderate communication of the Steering Committee. All members of the Steering Committee make decisions on substantive matters. All attend the Annual Meeting. All attend the NAH Business Meeting.

Succession:

Members of the Steering Committee are replaced by the following procedure: when there is a vacancy, after the Annual Meeting the co-chairs ask the NAH constituency for nominations. From among the nominees, the Steering Committee votes to elect a new member.

Chairs

- Rupa Pillai
rupillai@sas.upenn.edu
- Dheepa Sundaram, University of Denver
dheepa.sundaram@du.edu

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

North American Hinduism Unit

Call for Proposals

For this year's AAR meeting in June 2026, the North American Hinduism Unit welcomes **book panel proposals** that seek to platform scholarly books on Hinduisms in North America, the transnational networks that shape North American Hinduisms, and related diaspora contexts, broadly construed. We encourage interested individuals to contact the co-chairs, Rupa Pillai (rupillai@sas.upenn.edu) and Dheepa Sundaram (dheepa.sundaram@du.edu), in advance of submitting book proposals with questions or tips on how to write a strong proposal, developing a book panel, and/or finding panelists

Statement of Purpose

Overview:

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Chairs

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rupillai@sas.upenn.edu
- Dheepa Sundaram, University of Denver
dheepa.sundaram@du.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

North American Paul Tillich Society

Call for Proposals

Tillich's Philosophy vis-à-vis Contemporary Technology and Its Effects on Human Experience and Society

For the 2026 Annual Meeting of the North American Paul Tillich Society, the Society seeks papers vaguely organized around this theme: *Tillich's Philosophy vis-à-vis Contemporary Technology and Its Effects on Human Experience and Society*. This theme is broader than AI and endeavors to place Tillich's work in conversation with critical theoretical approaches in philosophy and theology as they pertain to technology. The Society is particularly interested in papers, or panels, addressing topics including, but not limited to, the following:

- Tillich and digital ethics, surveillance, media theory, healthism and/or environmentalism
- Technological effects and Tillich's contributions to existentialism and political theory
- Technological effects and critical philosophical and theological approaches to Tillich dealing with socioeconomic inequality, gender, sexuality, and/or race
- Potential technological sentience and its implications for rationality, the concept of God, and creation
- Technology in relation to Tillich's treatment of questions about power and ideology.

Papers on other themes which are timely and intended to advance the contemporary development of Tillichian studies, especially beyond the realm of Christian doctrine, are also welcomed.

North American Paul Tillich Society Fellowship

Additionally, NAPTS seeks paper proposals from junior scholars (ABD or PhD completed no earlier than 2023) to participate in its Annual Meeting. Up to two selected participants will become 2026 Tillich Society Fellows. Each fellow will receive up to \$250 in travel reimbursement to attend the Annual Meeting and will have their NAPTS dues waived for the year; please explicitly state that the proposal is for the Fellowship, not the general call, in order to be considered for funding. Fellows will also be assigned a mentor from among the more senior scholars in the Society who have related interests.

Proposals should develop an aspect of Tillich's thought (i.e., a theme, trajectory, or method) or constructively employ Tillich's method within their work. We encourage papers that use specific philosophical and theological approaches or ideas from Tillich to address contemporary cultural issues. In selecting Fellows, weight will be given to original constructive contribution over demonstration of exhaustive knowledge of

Tillich's works. Abstracts of dissertation chapters, journal articles, or book chapters in progress are quite welcome.

To propose a paper for one of the topics in the general CFP, please submit an abstract of approximately 350 words and a current CV to Kirk R. MacGregor at macgregk@mcpherson.edu no later than May 1, 2026. Fellowship proposals should indicate that the proposal is for the Fellowship, not the general call, and should include a 250 word abstract of the paper and a CV; these materials also should be submitted to Kirk R. MacGregor at macgregk@mcpherson.edu by May 1, 2026. Selected proposals for the CFP and selected Fellows will be notified no later than June 1, 2026. Accepting the Fellowship includes agreement to attend the sessions of the NAPTS Annual Meeting on Friday, November 20, 2026, in Denver, CO in conjunction with the AAR and SBL. Submission of any panel proposal indicates agreement by the panelists to submit a full paper draft by November 1, 2026 for pre-circulation among the panelists. Panel presentation durations will be limited in order to privilege time for Q&A and discussion of the papers.

Statement of Purpose

The North American Paul Tillich Society is dedicated to the study of the thought of Paul Tillich (1886-1965) and the application of his works to other areas of human knowledge. The Society fosters scholarship and scholarly exchanges that analyze, criticize, and interpret the impact of Paul Tillich's ideas. It seeks to employ and adapt his thought to deal with contemporary issues in theology, religion, ethics, and the political, social, psychological, scientific, and artistic spheres of culture.

The North American Paul Tillich Society is linked to the German and French-speaking societies as well as Tillich societies in other nations. It publishes a quarterly bulletin that contains papers delivered at its annual meeting and at the "Tillich: Issues in Theology, Religion, and Culture" session at the American Academy of Religion.

President: Benjamin J. Chicka

President Elect: Greylyn R. Hydinger

Vice President: Kirk R. MacGregor

Past President: Ilona Nord

Secretary/Bulletin Editor: Verna Marina Ehret

Chairs

- Greylyn Hyding, Gannon University
grhyding@bu.edu
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

North American Religions Unit

Call for Proposals

This Unit advances the study of religions in North America, broadly conceived (Mexico, the United States, Canada, the Caribbean, etc.), as well as the study of historical, social, and structural links between North American religions and those beyond North American boundaries.

We are committed to sponsoring sessions that explore fundamental questions and concepts that have shaped the field of American religion. We welcome proposals for roundtables, debates, workshops, performances, pre-circulated papers, and other creative formats that foster rich discussion connecting new research to ongoing discussions in religious studies and the wider academy. Although we do not sponsor author-meets-critics sessions focused on a single book, we welcome proposals that offer reflection on two or more works of scholarship on American religion.

We encourage the submission of both individual contributions and complete paper panels and roundtables, though we may reconfigure proposed panels to place them on the conference program. We strongly encourage those who submit proposals for paper panels and roundtables to include participants who are diverse in gender, race and ethnicity, and professional status. We are especially eager to support and receive proposals from junior scholars, particularly graduate students and contingent scholars; our support includes an annual online collaboration sheet for those who wish to develop full-panel proposals.

We also have an active goal to improve the summer session, with more offerings and sessions that are useful for those who cannot afford attending the annual meeting.

For our 2026 meetings in June and November, we welcome proposals on the following topics:

We invite papers on the following topics, many of which relate to the conference theme of “Future/s”:

- [Rebellions and Revolutions: 250th Anniversary of the USA. Potential co-sponsorship with Moral Injury Unit](#)--papers reflecting on USA’s nature, structure, and history as well as its ethical, religious, legal, and moral frameworks, and how may produce distinctive moral injuries; may include war, loss of social trust, marginalization, aftermath of pardons, armed rebellions, and insurrections. We separately invite reflections on Declaration of Independence, Christian nationalism, indigenous revolutions, revolutions by enslaved peoples, and others.
- 25th Anniversary of 9/11 and the War on Terror. Reflections on event itself, its effect on the study of religion, political and cultural responses, as well as other experiences and reverberations—especially among marginalized religious groups, such as Muslims in the US and beyond, and the formation of hardline conservative movements and the Dept. of Homeland Security.
- Place and the Future of North American Religions. Visions of place and claims to place that project belonging into the future; potential topics include the American West, Oceania/ Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, outer space, settler colonialism, hope/pessimism, nation building, and futurism.
- Reflections on Visions and/or Apocalypticism in North America around 2026. Foundational examples from religious organizations as well as media, such as Y2K, Millerism on TikTok, Octavia Butler’s *Parable of the Sower*, and Thea von Harbou’s *Metropolis*.
- Teaching and Pedagogy on Religion in North America. Considerations of our era of politically motivated restrictions—in classroom, administratively, and atmospherically.
- Migration and North American Religion. Includes efforts by religious communities to support and to resist governmental policies and practices in the past and/or present.

Please ensure that all submissions are anonymous.

Statement of Purpose

Purpose, Practices & Procedures: Purpose of an AAR Program unit: The purpose of program units is twofold: to provide a forum for dialogue and exchange among differing approaches and projects in the field and to provide opportunities for the discussion of work that does not fall within the agendas that find other expressions in

the Annual Meeting program. Program units should provide significant time for presenting research in the major subfields of religion. Purpose of the North American Religions Program unit: The North American Religions Program unit exists to sponsor conversations about the field at thematic, theoretical, definitional, experimental or historiographical levels, in order to ask where the study of North American religions is going or should be going. Such conversations embrace the diversity of scholars, disciplines, methods and traditions that make up the field. Routine functions: The Steering Committee composes the Call for Papers for NAR sessions for the AAR Annual Meeting; reviews, shapes and accepts proposals for those sessions; reviews and reports on sessions; and communicates with the NAR constituency. Composition: The Steering Committee is made up of ten members, two of whom are elected by the members to serve as co-chairs. A Steering Committee term is three years, renewable for a second three years if everyone is amenable. The terms are staggered, so that there are continuity and change on the committee. During a total of six possible years, a member might serve a co-chair term, which is three years. A member elected to serve as co-chair has at least one full year's experience on the Steering Committee. The co-chair elections are staggered as well, so that each new co-chair serves with an experienced co-chair. Responsibilities: The co-chairs take care of the business of NAR and moderate communication of the Steering Committee. All members of the Steering Committee make decisions on substantive matters. All attend the Annual Meeting and reserve Friday dinner for Steering Committee socializing, envisioning and business. All attend the NAR Business Meeting. Succession: Members of the Steering Committee are replaced by the following procedure: when there is a vacancy, after the Annual Meeting the co-chairs ask the NAR constituency (via email) for nominations. From among the nominees, the Steering Committee votes to elect a new member. The co-chairs maintain this "NAR Purpose, Practices & Procedures" document, make it available to the Steering Committee and the NAR constituency, and revise it as needed by vote of the Steering Committee.

Chairs

- Brett Esaki, University of Arizona
issesaki@gmail.com
- Melissa Borja
mborja@umich.edu

North American Religions Unit

Call for Proposals

This Unit advances the study of religions in North America, broadly conceived (Mexico, the United States, Canada, the Caribbean, etc.), as well as the study of historical, social, and structural links between North American religions and those beyond North American boundaries.

We are committed to sponsoring sessions that explore fundamental questions and concepts that have shaped the field of American religion. We welcome proposals for roundtables, debates, workshops, performances, pre-circulated papers, and other creative formats that foster rich discussion connecting new research to ongoing discussions in religious studies and the wider academy. Although we do not sponsor author-meets-critics sessions focused on a single book, we welcome proposals that offer reflection on two or more works of scholarship on American religion.

We encourage the submission of both individual contributions and complete paper panels and roundtables, though we may reconfigure proposed panels to place them on the conference program. We strongly encourage those who submit proposals for paper panels and roundtables to include participants who are diverse in gender, race and ethnicity, and professional status. We are especially eager to support and receive proposals from junior scholars, particularly graduate students and contingent scholars; our support includes an annual online collaboration sheet for those who wish to develop full-panel proposals.

We also have an active goal to improve the summer session, with more offerings and sessions that are useful for those who cannot afford attending the annual meeting.

For our 2026 meetings in June and November, we welcome proposals on the following topics:

We invite papers on the following topics, many of which relate to the conference theme of "Future/s":

- Rebellions and Revolutions: 250th Anniversary of the USA. Potential co-sponsorship with Moral Injury Unit--papers reflecting on USA's nature, structure,

and history as well as its ethical, religious, legal, and moral frameworks, and how may produce distinctive moral injuries; may include war, loss of social trust, marginalization, aftermath of pardons, armed rebellions, and insurrections. We separately invite reflections on Declaration of Independence, Christian nationalism, indigenous revolutions, revolutions by enslaved peoples, and others.

- 25th Anniversary of 9/11 and the War on Terror. Reflections on event itself, its effect on the study of religion, political and cultural responses, as well as other experiences and reverberations—especially among marginalized religious groups, such as Muslims in the US and beyond, and the formation of hardline conservative movements and the Dept. of Homeland Security.
- Place and the Future of North American Religions. Visions of place and claims to place that project belonging into the future; potential topics include the American West, Oceania/ Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, outer space, settler colonialism, hope/pessimism, nation building, and futurism.
- Reflections on Visions and/or Apocalypticism in North America around 2026. Foundational examples from religious organizations as well as media, such as Y2K, Millerism on TikTok, Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*, and Thea von Harbou's *Metropolis*.
- Teaching and Pedagogy on Religion in North America. Considerations of our era of politically motivated restrictions—in classroom, administratively, and atmospherically.
- Migration and North American Religion. Includes efforts by religious communities to support and to resist governmental policies and practices in the past and/or present.

Please ensure that all submissions are anonymous.

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Chairs

- Brett Esaki, University of Arizona
issesaki@gmail.com
- Melissa Borja
mborja@umich.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Open and Relational Theologies Unit

Call for Proposals

Open Call

The Open and Relational Theologies Unit promotes academic research and discourse on open, relational, and process methods and perspectives (including those of open theism, process philosophy, and other relational and personalist traditions). These explorations tend to be constructive in nature, regularly involving theological and philosophical speculation about the nature of God, freedom, power, relationality, materiality, love, and more. Our Unit's inquiries also explore the implications of open-relational methods and perspectives on a wide range of social, scientific, and spiritual topics. We welcome contributions from across religious traditions.

For the 2026 Meeting, the Open & Relational Theologies Unit invites proposals on the following themes:

What is the future of God? Faith in an age of ferment

According to many analysts of religion, ours is not a time for business as usual. Religious institutions are in decline, the academic study of religion is under threat, theology is a marginalized discipline, and religious expression itself is in ferment. In response, some religious traditions assert the absolute sovereignty of God and ascribe these trends to the divine will. Open and relational theology, on the other hand, believes that God has granted humankind freedom. Historical events, therefore, may or may not accord with the divine imagination. Given this fundamental belief, how should religious leaders interpret these recent trends? Are they a promising disturbance drawing us closer to a God that traditional religion has distorted? Or do they suggest a growing insensitivity to the sacred? The Open and Relational Theologies Unit welcomes all perspectives on these pressing questions, including the future of God as related to: capitalist economics, religious pluralism, rising nationalism, messianic technologism, etc.

[Co-sponsorship: Christian Systematic Theology & Open and Relational Theologies Units-Imagining Liberative Futures](#)

Imagining Liberative Futures

Reflecting on the AAR's 2025 presidential theme of future/s we invite paper proposals that engage the concepts of imagination and/in liberative future/s, including but not limited to:

What makes liberative imagination possible, and how can we account for it theologically? What allows us to envision never-before-realized circumstances as possibilities? How can theological imagination contribute to the work of liberation?

Is a liberative future dependent on the supernatural (e.g., God injecting possibilities that would not otherwise have been present), or can it build on pre-existing natural possibilities (e.g., the seed that is sown on creaturely fertile ground)? Are these mutually exclusive?

To what extent must a liberative future be continuous with/grounded in the past? To what extent is it a rupture with/discontinuous with the past? How do we imagine divine and human liberative work in either (or another) case?

When we say a different kind of world is possible, what is the nature of that “possible”? How should we understand the difference between futures that are merely logically possible and futures that are *live* possibilities? What might one say theologically about how a liberative possible future moves from one category to the other?

What connection does a liberative future have with the tragedy and losses of the past?

Statement of Purpose

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The ORT Unit is committed to diversity and inclusion. In order to maximize the diversity of our panels, our proposal review process stipulates that proposer names be anonymous to chairs and steering committee members during review but visible to chairs prior to final acceptance or rejection. Further, a successful pre-arranged session or panel proposal must incorporate gender and racial-ethnic diversity; diversity of theoretical method and rank are also highly encouraged.

Chairs

- Jon Paul Sydnor, Emmanuel College, Boston

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- Janna Gonwa, Gannon University
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Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Open and Relational Theologies Unit

Call for Proposals

Structuring the Future: Time and Development

A Co-Sponsored Session of the Schleiermacher Unit and Open and Relational Theologies Unit

This session investigates the theological and philosophical implications of time and development by bringing the thought of F.D.E. Schleiermacher into conversation with Open and Relational Theologies. We would like to explore how structures of human self-consciousness, especially temporality, shape religious consciousness. For example, we invite papers that ask:

- How do organic and developmental processes—natural, biological, or historical—serve as analogies for understanding divine immanence and its dynamic relationship to creation?
- What is the relationship between time and eternity in Schleiermacher's thought, and how does this relationship impact development in the present?
- How does Schleiermacher's understanding of the infinity of the universe, novelty, and contingency influence, converge with, or diverge from open and relational perspectives?
- In what ways might theological understandings of God's relationship with time inform our ethical and practical engagement with pressing contemporary issues?

We are interested in a wide range of methodological approaches, including papers that: analyze key texts and concepts (e.g. doctrine of creation) in relation to temporality; critically or constructively compare Schleiermacher's thought with Open and Relational

Theologies; explore concepts of development, novelty, cosmic processes, and the interplay between structures of human self-consciousness and divine action.

Statement of Purpose

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Chairs

- Jon Paul Sydnor, Emmanuel College, Boston
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- Janna Gonwa, Gannon University
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In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Pentecostal–Charismatic Movements Unit

Call for Proposals

The Pentecostal-Charismatic Movements Unit of the American Academy of Religion is open to all papers and panels, including book panels on significant books expanding our challenging our understanding of Pentecostalism. For the 2026 meeting in Denver, this unit is especially, though not exclusively, interested in papers and panels on (1) the future of Pentecostalisms and (2) the future of the study of Pentecostalisms.

1. Pentecostalism has often been understood as the future of global Christianity; what might that future bring? Pentecostals have demonstrated an at times strained relationship to democratic norms whether that be the epistemic norms of democratic debate or the norms around the formation of democratic authority. The advent of easily accessible AI online has compounded an already troubling proclivity for conspiracy theories. As Pentecostals continue to challenge the form of the political communities in which they find themselves, what forms of authority, geopolitical arrangements, and possible democratic or non-democratic futures might the future of Pentecostalism bring? How should one expect to find Pentecostals resisting and/or maintaining authoritarian power? What do these potential relationships mean for the future of global Christianity?
2. As Pentecostalism has grown in its varied forms, the study of those various Pentecostalisms has also grown and evolved over time. At times, studies of Pentecostalism have been hosted by specific disciplines and understood through the norms of those disciplines. For instance, historians, theologians, and anthropologists have each, but not without an awareness of one another, hosted conversations over the study of Pentecostalism. In what ways have existing methodological norms shaped the study of Pentecostalism? What can the diverse methods represented in the study of Pentecostalism learn from one another? What are the disciplinary and methodological questions that will or should animate the future study of Pentecostalism?

For panels, the unit requests diverse representation in presenters, research subjects, topics, and methodologies.

Statement of Purpose

This unit provides a forum for scholarly consideration of global phenomena associated with Pentecostalism and Charismatic movements. This unit provides an arena for a wide array of scholars, disciplinary orientations, and methodological approaches bringing together those working constructively from within these traditions with scholars considering the phenomena from historical, sociological, ethnographic, theological, and other perspectives. The unit intentionally seeks to encourage a global and pluralist perspective.

Chairs

- Erica Ramirez
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 - Creighton Coleman
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-

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Pentecostal–Charismatic Movements Unit

Call for Proposals

Availability for the June meeting will not affect committee members' potential selection of your paper/panel for the November meeting. A potential June panel will be constructed based on the fit of overall submissions for such a meeting.

Statement of Purpose

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- Erica Ramirez
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 - Creighton Coleman
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-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Philosophy of Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

In order to foster rich, innovative, and challenging intellectual conversations, the Philosophy of Religion Unit is committed to inclusion. Our Unit expects pre-arranged sessions or panel proposals to incorporate diversity of gender, race, ethnicity, and rank. We also encourage submissions from all religious and philosophical traditions.

For the 2026 Annual Meeting, the Philosophy of Religion Unit steering committee invites proposals on **(but not limited to)** the following topics:

- Hope, despair, and other dispositions toward the future
- Inheritance and intergenerational relationships and obligations
- Religion & afrofuturism
- Utopia and catastrophe
- Secularism, time, and temporality
- Philosophical approaches to AI and religion, including dharmic traditions on AI and embodiment
- Relational thinking and no-self in Buddhist philosophy
- Critical engagement with the legacy of Alasdair MacIntyre

In addition to individual papers, ***we welcome proposals for prearranged sessions (i.e., an entire session with a designated group of presenters) on these and other topics*** not listed here that will be of interest to philosophers of religion. Proposals that are most likely to be accepted are those written in language that is accessible to philosophers with no expertise on the specified topics or figures addressed in the

proposed paper, and whose central theses and main lines of argument are lucid and succinct.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit analyzes the interface between philosophy and religion, including both philosophical positions and arguments within various specific religious traditions and more generalized philosophical theories about religion. We include in our purview not only traditional topics of Western philosophy of religion but also those arising from non-Western traditions and regions and from the study of religion more broadly. We are also interested in the intersection of philosophy and diverse other methodologies and modes of inquiry.

Chairs

- Molly Farneth
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 - Joseph Winters
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-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Platonism and Neoplatonism Unit

Call for Proposals

The World Soul in the Platonic Tradition

The Platonic notion of the *world soul* originates in the *Timaeus* as the cosmos's animating intelligence mediating between Forms and material embodiment. Elaborated by Plotinus and subsequent Neoplatonists, it developed into a dynamic metaphysical principle that continued to shape medieval philosophical theology, Renaissance Platonism, and Romanticism, where it functioned as a unifying, ensouling presence structuring cosmic order and ecological interrelation. In contemporary thought, this legacy re-emerges in panpsychicism and cosmopsychism with claims concerning a

fundamental cosmic consciousness, and in plant and animal studies, which foreground distributed agency and interspecies relationality of the more-than-human world. We invite submissions that examine the concept of the world soul from historical, contemporary, constructive, and comparative perspectives. Papers may address textual, philosophical, theological, ecological, or interdisciplinary dimensions of this enduring idea as it relates to the Platonic tradition.

Participation and Poetics in the Platonic Tradition

Poetics, broadly encompassing all forms of creative art, from literature and the visual arts to music, ritual, and symbolic performance, has a distinctive relationship to the metaphysics of participation. Poetics can serve as a privileged medium for exploring participatory metaphysics in non-discursive form, rendering participation experientially accessible beyond analytic argument. More broadly, creation has been framed as divine *poiēsis*, while human artistic activity may be seen as co-creation. Historically, this link is wide-ranging. Plato's *Timaeus* presents the cosmos as a crafted, intelligible image of the eternal Paradigm, while the *Phaedrus* and *Ion* describe poetic inspiration as divine mania mediating transcendence. Proclus develops a theology of symbols, hymns, and theurgic practices as participatory expression. Medieval thinkers, from Pseudo-Dionysius to Aquinas, integrate participation into accounts of beauty, creation, and artistic making. Early modern and Romantic authors reinterpret participation as a dynamic relation between mind, nature, and divine creativity. Twentieth-century figures such as Weil, Murdoch, and Jones draw on participatory metaphysics for ethical attention, artistic making, and liturgical creativity. Twentieth-century figures such as Simone Weil, Iris Murdoch, and David Jones draw explicitly on participatory metaphysics to theorize ethical attention, artistic making, and liturgical creativity. We invite submissions examining the relationship between participation and poetics across any historical period, tradition, or methodological approach.

Book Panel on *The Geometry of Christian Contemplation: Measure without Measure* (Oxford, 2025) by David Albertson

Co-sponsored with the SBL Religion and Philosophy in Antiquity Unit

This panel invites submissions engaging with David Albertson's *The Geometry of Christian Contemplation: Measure without Measure* (Oxford, 2025), a study that explores the intersection of mystical theology, mathematical imagination, and the conceptual frameworks of Christian contemplative practice. Albertson argues that Christian

contemplation can be understood through a logic of ‘measure without measure,’ in which the disciplined structures of the mind and imagination allow for encounters with the infinite, the ineffable, and the divine. Drawing on historical sources from patristic, medieval, and early modern authors, the book examines how geometric, proportional, and formal analogies mediate the relationship between human cognition and divine transcendence. We invite papers that engage concepts key to Albertson’s work, including historical investigations of geometric or numerical metaphors in Christian spirituality; philosophical or theological analyses of measure, proportion, and the infinite; comparative studies of contemplative techniques across traditions; or critical engagement with the book’s methodology and conceptual framework; or other topics.

Platonism and Abrahamic Religions in Honour of Kevin Corrigan

Co-sponsored with the AAR Islamic Mysticism Unit

This panel invites submissions exploring the intersections of Platonism and the Abrahamic religions, in recognition of Kevin Corrigan’s seminal contributions to the study of Platonism and religious thought. Platonism has profoundly shaped theological, philosophical, and mystical currents within Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, influencing conceptions of the divine, the soul, cosmology, and ethical life. From Philo and early Christian thinkers to medieval Jewish, Christian, and Islamic philosophers, and onward to modern receptions, the Platonic tradition offers a rich framework for understanding how abstract metaphysical ideas inform religious belief and practice. We welcome papers that engage historical, philosophical, theological, or comparative approaches, including studies of metaphysical interpretation, mystical or contemplative traditions, scripture, and the reception of Platonic thought across different Abrahamic contexts. Interdisciplinary perspectives that illuminate Corrigan’s influence or extend his insights into new directions are particularly encouraged.

Submissions should address how Platonism shapes, challenges, or illuminates Abrahamic religious thought.

The unit also welcomes proposals on other elements of the Platonic and Neoplatonic tradition.

Statement of Purpose

This unit is committed to the ongoing study of Platonic traditions in connection with the history and philosophy of religions, from antiquity to the present. In this context we seek to feature the research of new and established scholars working in the field. We provide an avenue for the dissemination of new historical scholarship, as well as scholarship that draws upon the tradition as a resource to engage important contemporary questions. Many panelists publish their research through the many avenues that arise out of the unit's collaborative endeavours.

Chairs

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- Alexander Hampton, University of Toronto
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In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Political Theology Unit

Call for Proposals

Is the future authoritarian?

- The Schmittian legacy of “political theology” has frequently led to an assumption that recognizing the interrelation of the political and the theological reveals the necessity of decisive authority at the core of the political. However, this view is attached to very specific conceptual and historical articulations of what both theology and politics entail. *We invite proposals that descriptively attend to actually-existing, historically-grounded theological dimensions of politics (and vice versa) – especially beyond Christianity and Europe – that present compelling, concrete alternatives to authoritarian models.*
- There has been an emerging discourse linking the rise of authoritarianism and ethno-nationalism to the consequences of 'endless critique' invited by liberal,

individuating models of discourse. In particular, so this argument goes, the critique of Western civilization has led to a crisis of trust in longstanding institutions (from universities to governing bodies to churches) that function to protect social goods, thus motivating a turn toward older hierarchical models of authority. *We invite proposals on case studies that complicate this claim. What are models for enabling stability, flourishing, and freedom of inquiry beyond either liberal individualism or authoritarianism?*

AI, Technogovernance, and the Human (for possible co-sponsorship with Ethics Unit)

A key buzzword for AI ethics is “alignment,” especially in the wake of Brian Christian’s 2020 book *The Alignment Problem*. The idea is that any artificial intelligence should be aligned to human values. That’s an admirable (if vague) goal, but as OpenAI admits, “Aligning AI systems with human values also poses a range of other significant sociotechnical challenges, such as deciding to whom these systems should be aligned.” AI cannot be aligned to human values, but always humans’ values, and presumably the values held by a powerful minority. We invite proposals in political theology or religious ethics (both broadly understood) on the question of technology governance and the ways developments in AI research and usage interact with existing power dynamics and differing values. Possible directions could include the following:

- What theological resources might help us grasp the operation of power and mode of governance anticipated by the widespread use of AI and LLMs?
- How can humanism (in its classical or contemporary human-rights forms) or posthumanism (particularly in its eco- or materialist forms) clarify the ethics of technology governance?
- How might our fields help us to articulate the human over and against these models, both in response to the question of “alignment” and to the question of the kind of “human” guidance or oversight that AI/LLMs continue to require?

The future of higher education: civilization or memory?

Education is a crucial third term operating within historical accounts of political theology insofar as pedagogical practices materially mediate both theological and political sensibilities to leaders, larger publics, societies. Scholars of religion generally recognize the troubling civilizing and violent role that higher education has played, particularly (though not exclusively) in colonial contexts. At the same time, universities have the institutional resources to preserve what is old – languages, archives, texts – making them a target for actors who want to erase or flatten the complexities of collective memory. *We invite proposals that consider the role of higher education in the current*

theo-political context, mindful both of the historical dangers of civilizing strategies alongside the value of preservation and contestation.

The Concept of the Family and the Future

Feminist and queer theorists have long shown that the family is not merely a benign or natural unit but a political form that organizes power. As feminist critique has emphasized, the family naturalizes hierarchies, privatizes care, and domesticates belonging in ways that make social violence reproducible at the most intimate scale. These dynamics often run parallel to the formation of the nation itself. Queer critique deepens this analysis by challenging the temporal and affective horizons that the family enforces. Lee Edelman's rejection of heteronormative temporality (reproductive futurism), for instance, questions the figure of the Child as an anchor of political imagination premised on redemptive, productivity-driven futures. *We invite proposals that interrogate the conceptual, political, and theological force of the family in shaping visions of the future.*

Statement of Purpose

The Political Theology Unit examines the interaction between religious and political thought: how do they influence one another, and how should we respond? Political theology emerged as an area of study through the work of scholars such as Carl Schmitt, who examined the origin of political concepts in Christian theology. The area has also drawn upon theological traditions (Christian, Jewish, and otherwise) in order to reflect constructively upon the way in which politics ought to operate. In recent years, political theology has been taken up by scholars in various disciplines, including philosophy of religion, Biblical studies, Islamic studies, African American religion, sexuality and religion, and elsewhere. This program unit draws upon these diverse approaches in order to explore the contribution of political theology to the study of religion. The Unit aims to expand the conversation about political theology to highlight minority, feminist, and queer voices and to foreground scholars from Jewish, Muslim, and other religious traditions. The goal of the unit is to provide a forum for a diverse group of scholars to explore what political theology means in their own work, how they see the conversation about political theology developing, and how political theology can enrich the study of religion.

Chairs

- Michelle Sanchez
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- An Yountae
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-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Practical Theology Unit

Call for Proposals

1 Artificial Intelligence and Digital Worlds: Reimagining the Future of Practical Theology and Ecclesial Practice

The Practical Theology Unit (PTU) invites proposals for innovative papers, experimental sessions, and multimodal contributions for the AAR 2026 Annual Meeting on the topic: *Artificial Intelligence and Digital Worlds: Reimagining the Future of Practical Theology and Ecclesial Practice*. In alignment with the 2026 AAR presidential theme “Future/s”, we seek work that goes beyond analysis of the present moment to imagine, critique, and perform futures where artificial intelligence and digital worlds reshape how religion is lived and studied.

AI and digital infrastructures increasingly inform how humans think, create, relate, and hope. They challenge established assumptions about community, authority, embodiment, and meaning-making—core concerns of practical theology and ecclesial studies. Simultaneously, they generate new possibilities for connection, accessibility, pastoral imagination, and global collaboration. These shifting conditions call practical theology not only to respond but to envision what might emerge, what might transform, and what must be resisted.

Reimagining Future/s: A Practical Theological Task

Practical theology has always occupied the threshold between the real and the possible. Its task is not only to study lived religion and theology, but also to help shape the world in which we practice our faith. We recognize that digital technologies are not neutral tools but active forces in shaping the lived experience of faith. Practical theology must therefore critically and boldly engage with the plurality of future trajectories of practical theology and ecclesial practice in an increasingly digital world. This requires:

- *Critical discernment* of ethical, social, and power-laden dynamics embedded in digital systems
- *Theological imagination* that reconsiders the *imago Dei* in the context of human-machine collaboration
- *Empirical engagement* with digitally mediated religious identities and communities
- *Praxis-oriented innovation* in ministry, pastoral care, and education
- *Justice-centered awareness* of digital inequities and potential techno-colonialisms.

The aim of this session is to create a space to *reimagine the future/s* of practical theology and religious practice in a digital world. We therefore welcome proposals that explore the future/s of practical theology and ecclesial life shaped by technological transformation and especially invite proposals that:

- Critically examine how digitality is reshaping traditional practices of worship, formation, pastoral care, and mission
- Explore theological frameworks for understanding digital embodiment, presence, and community
- Investigate the ethical dimensions of emerging technologies including artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and social media platforms
- Consider questions of access, equity, and digital divides within global ecclesial contexts
- Envision faithful and creative responses to digitality that serve human flourishing and ecclesial vitality
- Probe new methods for researching digital religion and praxis

We encourage proposals that:

- critically engage and expand scholarly formats by incorporating digital or multimodal methods
- demonstrate meaningful interdisciplinary collaboration
- integrate embodied or practice-based theological inquiry

Session Format

Session will be designed to allow for interaction and shared reflection. We welcome formats that are not purely linear presentations — for example, short inputs combined with discussion, practice-based elements, or small experimental components. At the same time, proposals should be grounded in solid scholarly work.

2 Preaching Futures: Homiletics, Ecology, and the Climate Crisis

For next year's AAR theme Futures, we invite contributions that explore how preaching is shaped by ecological change, climate crisis, and the search for responsible and hopeful ways of speaking in uncertain times. The session aims to bring homiletics and ecological questions into a constructive conversation: practical, reflective, and attentive to lived experience.

We are interested in proposals that look at (among other topics):

- how climate anxiety, grief, or resilience appear in preaching
- ecological or creation-centered theologies and their homiletic implications
- preaching as a practice shaped by place, embodiment, and the more-than-human world
- climate justice and its pastoral, liturgical, and communicative dimensions
- Indigenous, postcolonial, and decolonial insights for ecological preaching
- emerging homiletic forms in ecological contexts (e.g. outdoor liturgies, walking practices, shared or dialogical preaching)
- intergenerational perspectives and youth-driven ecological concerns

Submissions from a range of practical-theological, ecological, and interdisciplinary contexts are encouraged.

Session Format

Session will be designed to allow for interaction and shared reflection. We welcome formats that are not purely linear presentations — for example, short inputs combined with discussion, practice-based elements, or small experimental components. At the same time, proposals should be grounded in solid scholarly work.

3 “Do we have a theological future?” Lessons to be learnt from Children & Adolescents (co-sponsored session with Childhood Studies and Religion)

The 2026 Presidential theme; “Future/s,” reminds us of Nelson Mandela’s often quoted remark, “The future belongs to our youth.” Children and youth ministry have been largely positioned within the discipline of practical theology internationally and in many local contexts of theological education. Ironically, there is still much theological reflection required through the lived realities and experiences of these children and young people. Perhaps the call for more interdisciplinary engagement among and with

practical theologians is overdue? The 2026 Presidential theme calls for a re-visioning and imagining the future of practical theologies that take the place and voice of children and young people seriously.

Are we able to critically assess and help build futures for which we hope? What do these futures look like when we prophetically listen to children and young people? How are children and young people themselves envisioning their futures; might they be asking simply, "Do we have a future?" How do practical theologians and practitioners envision and live into the futures that they might imagine for younger generations, including childhood, (as active participants or protagonists of the present moment)? How are sub-disciplines of practical theology (religious education, spirituality, pastoral care/ministry, homiletics, empirical theology, congregational studies, et al.) and faith practices engaging these questions? What do we know about children and young people and their beliefs in the future? This has numerous implications for theology, political engagement, mental health, activism, and more. We invite proposals from both scholars and practitioners.

The Practical Theology Unit regards practical theology – a discipline committed to bridging theological reflection and lived reality – uniquely positioned to offer critical insights and transformative practices to these important questions, and the Childhood Studies & Religion Unit aims to investigate the complex and multifaceted relation between religion and childhood functions as a forum for focused interdisciplinary and interreligious dialogue about the diverse relations of children and religion. As a co-sponsored session, we invite proposals for brief presentations that integrate these topics.

Session Format

The session will be designed to allow for interaction and shared reflection. We welcome formats that are not purely linear presentations — for example, short inputs combined with discussion, practice-based elements, or small experimental components. We will consider empirical work with and among children and young people. We also invite research that engages positive frameworks of children and young people and not merely deficit approaches to these. Submissions from a range of practical-theological and interdisciplinary contexts are encouraged.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit engages practical theology and religious practice, reflects critically on religious traditions and practices, and explores issues in particular subdisciplines of practical theology and ministry. The Unit engages this mission in five interrelated public spheres

with the following goals: For practical theology — to provide a national and international forum for discussion, communication, publication, and development of the field and its related subdisciplines For theological and religious studies — to foster interdisciplinary critical discourse about religious practice, contextual research and teaching for ministry, and practical theological method and pedagogy For a variety of religious traditions — to enhance inquiry in religious practice and practical theology For academic pedagogy — to advance excellence in teaching and vocational development for faculty in divinity and seminary education generally and for graduate students preparing to teach in such settings specifically For the general public — to promote constructive reflection on social and cultural dynamics and explore the implications of religious confession and practice.

Chairs

- Shantelle Weber
smweber@sun.ac.za
 - Marc Lavallee
mlavallee@portsmouthabbey.org
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Pragmatism and Empiricism in American Religious Thought Unit

Call for Proposals

Roundtable on New Genealogies of Pragmatism: Materialist Influences, Institution Builders, Hands-on Work

Nearly four decades ago, in *The American Evasion of Philosophy*, Cornel West offered a novel genealogy of American pragmatism. This roundtable builds on that tradition, inviting submissions that further expand our understanding of the origins and development of pragmatist thought. We are particularly interested in contributions that are attentive to the material conditions from which pragmatist ways of thinking arose. Did CS Peirce's poverty in later life influence his writings on pragmatism (particularly

his emphasis on experiment)? How did ideals of agrarian return to the land and communion with nature shape the proto-pragmatism of Thoreau and Emerson (or how did their relative privilege affect the practical implementation of those ideals). Can such analysis help us identify underappreciated pragmatic thinkers and doers?--people like Booker T. Washington or Anna Julia Cooper, whose material realities, very much related to taken lands, spurred them to do meaningful hands-on and institution building work.

Those who submit proposals to this roundtable should prepare a shorter presentation (around 10 minutes) in order to leave ample time for open discussion with the panel and audience

Pragmatic Reflections on Meliorism, Despair, and Realism

Pragmatists and Empiricists often present what seems like an optimistic philosophical and/or theological worldview. Peirce argued that the universe would grow together (synechism) in a process of evolutionary love (agapism); his early writings suggest that the dedicated community of inquirers would converge upon truth in the infinite long run. Peirce and Neville both make the case that all things are beautiful in their own way. Dewey argued that communal inquiry, in democratic and scientific arrangements, would enable society to include the broadest array of hypotheses and habits, test them out, and adopt the thought-practices that worked best. West argues that the "anti-democratic dogmas" of racism, classism, free-market fundamentalism, and militarism undermine democracy, but also that citizens can fight against these imperial forces through a commitment to democratic principles and participation in the democratic process in the revitalization of the spirit of American democracy. On the whole, Pragmatists tend to believe that the world can be improved through human effort, even if such progress is piecemeal and imperfect.

- Is this pragmatic meliorism still relevant when many people feel locked in a repeating cycle of hopelessness?
- How do Pragmatic concepts of interest, boredom, ennui, acedia, musement, spiritual practice, and despair relate to one another? How might Peirce's or Raposa's development of these concepts provide a more holistic account of human experience than merely meliorism does?
- What lessons can we learn from people who have lived in hopeless times, difficult or impossible situations (e.g., Anna Julia Cooper), and how can we apply those lessons to our own situation?

- Can democratic principles actually overcome anti-democratic dogmas (West)? What happens when the ideas and practices that a community opts for actually undermine the stability of the inquiry (Dewey or Peirce)? What happens when the dedicated community of inquirers loses interest in or dedication to the inquiry?
- What if human society, or the cosmos, does not grow together in evolutionary love or if the arc of the universe fails to bend toward justice, as Peirce and Martin Luther King, Jr. had hoped? What if processes are stochastic? Can the values achieved in small pockets of the universe still be appreciated if things eventually grow apart or end in lifelessness?

Statement of Purpose

The mission of the Pragmatism and Empiricism in Religious Thought Unit 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.

Chairs

- Xavier Pickett, Cornell University
xavier.pickett@cornell.edu
- Mary Friedline
maryleah.friedline@gmail.com

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Pre-Conference Workshops

Call for Proposals

For any questions, please contact annualmeeting@aarweb.org.

Chairs

- Ann Gleig
ann.gleig@ucf.edu
 - Amy Defibaugh, American Academy of Religion
aderibaugh@aarweb.org
 - Claudia Schippert, American Academy of Religion
cschippert@aarweb.org
-

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Pre-Conference Workshops

Call for Proposals

For any questions, please contact annualmeeting@aarweb.org.

Chairs

- Ann Gleig
ann.gleig@ucf.edu
 - Amy Defibaugh, American Academy of Religion
aderibaugh@aarweb.org
 - Claudia Schippert, American Academy of Religion
cschippert@aarweb.org
-

Psychology, Culture, and Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

1. FUTURE/S: Psychological, Cultural, and Religious Imagination in Times of Uncertainty

In keeping with this year's Annual Meeting theme *FUTURE/S*, the Psychology, Culture, and Religion Unit invites proposals that explore how psychological, cultural, and religious frameworks shape, constrain, resist, or reimagine future possibilities. At a moment when scholars of religion face profound uncertainty—within higher education, across global sociopolitical landscapes, and in communities navigating trauma, injustice, and ecological precarity—our field is uniquely positioned to examine how people draw upon religious narratives, symbols, rituals, and spiritual experiences to make meaning of an uncertain future.

Religious traditions have long shaped how people imagine the future through apocalyptic visions, eschatological hopes, moral warnings, and practices that form psychological dispositions such as fear, resilience, or hope. Today, digital media, climate anxiety, political unrest, and racialized violence also influence how individuals and communities envision what is possible. Scholars of psychology of religion are well positioned to examine how these religious and cultural forces interact: How do spiritual practices shape future-oriented emotions? How do trauma or moral injury reshape temporal imagination? What kinds of futures are opened or foreclosed by particular religious narratives, cultural discourses, and psychological frameworks?

We welcome papers that engage these questions from diverse methodological perspectives, including psychology of religion, psychoanalysis, empirical research, pastoral theology, cultural analysis, ecological and postcolonial approaches to spiritual care and clinical or community-based practice. Proposals may address, but are not limited to:

- the psychology of eschatology, apocalypse, utopian or dystopian imagination;
- how trauma, moral stress, or resilience shape perceptions of the future;
- religious narratives that open or constrict imaginative horizons;
- intercultural or interreligious visions of hoped-for futures;

- how individuals and communities cultivate agency, resistance, or meaning-making amidst uncertainty;
- cultural trauma, collective memory, and the reimagining of communal futures;
- psychological implications of religious futurisms (Afrofuturism, Indigenous futurisms, speculative theology, etc.).

2. Transformative Psychology of Religion (Co-Sponsored with Transformative Scholarship and Pedagogy)

Once criticized as reductionistic in its study of religion, the psychology of religion has more recently pivoted toward more lively and transformative approaches to practice with lived experience, communities, and pedagogy. This co-sponsored session invites proposals that highlight how research insights in the psychology of religion translate into transformative practice, public engagement, and caregiving contexts. Of particular interest are proposals that utilize psychological theory to help strategize concrete practices and interventions for political organizing and resisting oppression. Both individual papers and organized panels are encouraged for submission.

3. Liberation Theology Meets Liberation Psychology (Co-Sponsored with Liberation Theology Unit)

The Liberation Theology Unit and the Psychology, Culture, and Religion Unit invite proposals for a co-sponsored session on liberation psychology, with particular attention to the legacy and ongoing influence of Ignacio Martín-Baró. A social psychologist and Jesuit priest from Spain who lived and worked in El Salvador and the United States, Martín-Baró drew from liberation philosophy, Marxist, feminist, and decolonial thought, as well as liberation theology, to critique dominant psychological paradigms and call for socially engaged, community-centered praxis.

We welcome proposals that critically examine Martín-Baró's contributions, extend liberation psychology in diverse cultural or geopolitical contexts, or explore its implications for contemporary approaches to the psychology of religion. We are also interested in proposals that consider how liberation theology and related movements continue to inform, challenge, and reshape the study of religion, spiritual care, chaplaincy, clinical counseling, and pastoral practices in congregational, community, and non-profit settings. Papers that bridge liberation theology, the psychology of religion, and the social sciences, especially those employing interdisciplinary, intercultural, or community-based perspectives, are particularly encouraged.

4. Psychology of Religion and Global Authoritarianism

The Psychology, Culture, and Religion Unit invites papers that critically examine the psychological dynamics through which religious beliefs, symbols, narratives, and practices are used to support, legitimize, or strengthen authoritarian forms of leadership and governance. Across diverse cultural, political, and ecclesial contexts, religion can function not only as a moral or spiritual resource but also as a powerful psychological tool that shapes identity, fosters obedience, reinforces social hierarchies, and normalizes coercive or exclusionary authority. We welcome proposals that explore how religious traditions, rituals, and mythologies cultivate psychological dispositions toward submission, loyalty, fear, redemption, or hope; how leaders mobilize religious language to gain compliance or suppress dissent; and how religious communities internalize or resist authoritarian uses of religion.

5. Celebrating and Honoring the Work of Carrie Doehring

The Psychology, Culture, and Religion Unit invites proposals for a session honoring the extraordinary contributions of Carrie Doehring, a prominent scholar in the psychology of religion, pastoral psychology, pastoral theology, and chaplaincy; a licensed psychologist; a theological educator; and a Presbyterian minister. Doehring has been a leading voice in researching, teaching, and practicing interreligious, socially just, and research-informed spiritual care, particularly in relation to trauma, moral stress, and spiritual struggle.

Her now-classic text, *The Practice of Pastoral Care: A Postmodern Approach* (Westminster John Knox, 2006; revised and expanded 2015), has shaped the curriculum of pastoral care and clinical pastoral education programs across North America and beyond. For this session, we welcome papers that (1) critically engage Doehring's scholarly and pedagogical contributions; (2) explore how her work has influenced contemporary approaches to pastoral and spiritual care; (3) extend or reinterpret her methodological, psychological, or theological frameworks; or (4) examine the ongoing significance of her thought for chaplaincy, clinical practice, congregational ministry, interreligious engagement, or trauma-responsive spiritual care.

The PCR also encourages and welcomes proposals and roundtables on topics beyond those listed in the Call for Papers above. If you have any questions, please reach out to the co-chairs.

Statement of Purpose

The PCR (Psychology, Culture, and Religion) unit is comprised of scholars and practitioners in the fields of psychology, religious and theological studies, and cultural analysis. The interests of our members range from Freudian and Jungian psychoanalysis

to the practice of pastoral care and counseling, from object relations theory to cultural studies of trauma and healing. Our primary purposes are to foster creative research, encourage the exchange of ideas among the membership, and provide a forum within the AAR for people with shared backgrounds in the interdisciplinary study of psychology, religion, and culture.

Here are ways to connect with the PCR unit:

- Please find info on the Annual PCR Call for Papers here: <https://aarweb.org/content/psychology-culture-and-religion-unit>
- Join the PCR listserv by writing to: eunilcho@bu.edu or danielle.elizabeth.tumminio.hansen@emory.edu
- You can also join the PCR Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/558617967619873/>
- Any questions? please reach out to the co-chairs.

Chairs

- Danielle Tumminio Hansen, Emory University
danielle.tumminio@aya.yale.edu
- Eunil David Cho
davidchoknows@gmail.com

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Publicly Engaged Scholarship in the Study of Religion Seminar

Call for Proposals

In line with **the 2026 AAR Presidential theme**, "Future/s," theme, the Publicly Engaged Scholarship in the Study of Religion Seminar invites proposals that consider the futures of public and community-engaged partnerships, how they are built and sustained over time, and how they are entwined with religious beliefs and practices, environmental attitudes and behaviors, and academic institutions and power structures.

Following the theme “Futures,” we invite paper, panel, and alternative format session proposals that engage/address any of the questions below:

Relationship Building: Strategies and Tactics

- How do publicly-engaged scholar-educators imagine relationships at different scales?
 - Individual relationships: Navigating personal issues of trust, values-based collaboration, access, and accountability with collaborators
 - Community relationships: Finding appropriate partnerships, establishing cooperative partnerships and strategic alliances, and maintaining rapport and reciprocity over time
 - Institutional relationships: Procuring funding and other forms of support, accountability, and establishing criteria for reporting structures (i.e., to whom do community engagement facilitators report?; Is outreach coordinated at the university level, or does it depend on the efforts of individual instructors?; Is engagement accessible to everyone?)
- What types of relationships do we strive for?
 - Identifying issues in specific communities and working backwards from there to envision solutions
 - Cultivating values-based commitments from different constituencies/groups
 - Ensuring access for, and partnership with community groups
 - Examining the landscape of advocacy, cooperation, and accountability as it relates to social, political, and economic nodes of power
- What tools can we employ to build relationships?
 - What do publicly engaged scholars and educators need beyond access, connection, cooperation, and funding?
 - What types of skills are necessary for building quality, lasting relationships?

The “Afterlife” of Funding

- All funding streams leave legacies in their communities. What are the positives, negatives, and potential outcomes of partnerships after funding runs out?
- Conversations about the structures and systems needed to make community engaged projects succeed beyond the revenue streams provided by grants.
- Investigations of the kinds of structures needed to facilitate transition (to...?).

Religion and Public Engagement in the 21st Century

- Research questions:
 - What is the future of research?
 - What role does our scholarship play in this dialogue?
- What is the role of religion?

Case Studies

- Describe a program that you are working on:
 - How are you thinking about the future of your organization, your students, community partners, and the social implications of your work?
 - What are your needs?
 - How are you building communities/coalitions? What challenges have you faced and how have you worked to address them?
 - What role does religion play in the organization or community you engage?
 - What are the roles of academics/ the academy in this work, if any? Is there value added through academic collaborations and partnerships?

Proposals are due February 1, 2026. Please consult the Co-chairs or members of the Steering Committee if you have any questions.

Steering Committee:

Lucas Johnston, Co-Chair (johnstlf@wfu.edu)

Victoria Machado, Co-Chair (VMACHADO@rollins.edu)

Amanda Nichols (dr.amanda.m.nichols@gmail.com)

Jeremy Sorgen (j.sorgen@northeastern.edu)

Joseph Witt (jwitt16@utk.edu)

Statement of Purpose

This seminar creates a multi-disciplinary space to explore the intersections between publicly engaged research, collective knowledge production, and relations of power in the study of religion. As part of broader conversations about the relationships between social change and the public humanities, the seminar is organized around diverse ideas of “the public” and interrogates the forces of racialized and colonial power that shape our fields. Whereas disciplinary training often privileges postures of political neutrality, we orient conversations around what it means to do scholarship that has political stakes, who we do that work with, and how we can strengthen that work. The seminar aims to generate a space for those with broad interests in the theoretical, methodological, and historical foundations of knowledge production in the study of religion and its political and public impacts. The seminar provides a nexus for collective consideration of processes of social change and social justice as they relate to theories of religion. The space will also interest those with practical interests in how to establish and sustain community and/or politically-engaged research and teaching programs within and beyond the academy.

Chairs

- Lucas Johnston
johnstlf@wfu.edu
- Victoria Machado, Rollins College
vmachado@rollins.edu

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Publicly Engaged Scholarship in the Study of Religion Seminar

Call for Proposals

In line with **the 2026 AAR Presidential theme**, “Future/s,” theme, the Publicly Engaged Scholarship in the Study of Religion Seminar invites proposals that consider the futures of public and community-engaged partnerships, how they are built and sustained over time, and how they are entwined with religious beliefs and practices, environmental attitudes and behaviors, and academic institutions and power structures.

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 - What are the roles of academics/ the academy in this work, if any? Is there value added through academic collaborations and partnerships?

Proposals are due February 1, 2026. Please consult the Co-chairs or members of the Steering Committee if you have any questions.

Steering Committee:

Lucas Johnston, Co-Chair (johnstlf@wfu.edu)

Victoria Machado, Co-Chair (VMACHADO@rollins.edu)

Amanda Nichols (dr.amanda.m.nichols@gmail.com)

Jeremy Sorgen (j.sorgen@northeastern.edu)

Joseph Witt (jwitt16@utk.edu)

Statement of Purpose

This seminar creates a multi-disciplinary space to explore the intersections between publicly engaged research, collective knowledge production, and relations of power in the study of religion. As part of broader conversations about the relationships between social change and the public humanities, the seminar is organized around diverse ideas of “the public” and interrogates the forces of racialized and colonial power that shape our fields. Whereas disciplinary training often privileges postures of political neutrality, we orient conversations around what it means to do scholarship that has political stakes, who we do that work with, and how we can strengthen that work. The seminar aims to generate a space for those with broad interests in the theoretical, methodological, and historical foundations of knowledge production in the study of religion and its political and public impacts. The seminar provides a nexus for collective consideration of processes of social change and social justice as they relate to theories of religion. The space will also interest those with practical interests in how to establish and sustain community and/or politically-engaged research and teaching programs within and beyond the academy.

Chairs

- Lucas Johnston
johnstlf@wfu.edu
- Victoria Machado, Rollins College
vmachado@rollins.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Quaker Studies Unit

Call for Proposals

The Quaker Studies Unit always welcomes individual papers related to Quakerism, broadly conceived. Additionally, we also welcome contributions on the following subjects:

- a June online omnibus session dedicated to the work of international scholars who are having trouble attending the annual meeting due to logistical issues (contact Andrew Taylor, ataylor9@css.edu);

- Quakers and Immigration (globally and in the U.S.), maybe partnering with another unit like Human Rights (contact Steve Angell, angelst@earlham.edu);
- "Contemplation and Action" (contact Margaret Benefiel, mbenefiel@executivesoul.com);
- A panel discussion responding to Harold Weaver's *Race, Systemic Violence, and Retrospective Justice: An African American Quaker Scholar-Activist Challenges Conventional Narratives* (contact: Tracey Elaine Hucks, thucks@hds.harvard.edu)
- Quaker responses to the conflict in Israel/Palestine (contact: Brian Blackmore, BBlackmore@afsc.org)
- the evolution of Quaker identities as abolitionists in the 20th and 21st centuries (contact: Brian Blackmore, BBlackmore@afsc.org)
- A panel related to Creation Care and Climate Justice, possibly in relation to Howard Thurman or Quaker Faith and Practice. Possible cosponsorship with the ecology unit (contact: Felicity Kelcourse, fkelcourse@cts.edu).

Statement of Purpose

The Quaker Studies Unit seeks to advance critical scholarship on Quakerism and related cultural phenomena. The unit is particularly focused on interdisciplinary analyses of Quakerism in its global contexts and in the breadth of its theological diversity. As the unit understands it, Quaker Studies includes the variety of religious traditions that directly derive from the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), as well as the spiritual and social movements and practices that have influenced--or been influenced by--Quakerism.

Chairs

- Andrew Taylor
ataylor9@css.edu
- Stephen Angell
angelst@earlham.edu

Quaker Studies Unit

Call for Proposals

The Quaker Studies Unit is interested in sponsoring a June online omnibus session dedicated to the work of international scholars who are having trouble attending the annual meeting due to logistical issues (contact Andrew Taylor, ataylor9@css.edu). Please note that the registration fees have been reduced for the online meeting, so it is more accessible than in previous years.

Statement of Purpose

The Quaker Studies Unit seeks to advance critical scholarship on Quakerism and related cultural phenomena. The unit is particularly focused on interdisciplinary analyses of Quakerism in its global contexts and in the breadth of its theological diversity. As the unit understands it, Quaker Studies includes the variety of religious traditions that directly derive from the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), as well as the spiritual and social movements and practices that have influenced--or been influenced by--Quakerism.

Chairs

- Andrew Taylor
ataylor9@css.edu
- Stephen Angell
angelst@earlham.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Queer Studies in Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

In addition to an **open-call for papers and sessions that engage broadly with themes related to queer and trans studies in religion**, as well as **papers that address the 2026 presidential theme of future/s in conversation with queer and trans studies in religion**, we particularly invite proposals on the following themes and topics:

- Queer futures in/and/of religious studies- What is the future of queer folks in religious studies? What might queer studies in religion have to offer to how we think about the challenges facing the future of religious studies? (Another option or spin- what is the future of queer studies in religion? Where is the discipline going and what should it be focused on?)
- Trans joy and trans world making - towards a different future
- Queer studies in religion and reproductive futures
- Queer temporality and religious studies today - what has changed in the now decade plus following Edelman, Munoz, and others? What does queer and trans studies in religion offer to the ongoing conversation.
- Queering childhood
- Queer afterlives
- Queer Studies in religion beyond the academy - how is this work shaping religious communities, broader publics, politics, etc? How can it? How is it shaped by those publics? (one spin- how might queer studies in religion shape broader publics re: the future- future of work, of family, etc...)

Statement of Purpose

The core goals of this Unit are as follows: • Foster the application of queer and trans theories to the study of religion • Encourage comparative study of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender issues in religion • Support the growth of bisexual studies and transgender studies in the field. We actively seek to explore the connections between queer and trans studies in religion and complementary or overlapping fields of inquiry, such as postcolonial theory, critical race theory, disability theory, feminist theory, and cultural studies, among others.

Chairs

- El/yse Ambrose, University of California, Riverside
elyse.ambrose@ucr.edu
- Kori Pacyniak, San Diego State University
kori.pacyniak@gmail.com

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Queer Studies in Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

We welcome any papers or pre-arranged panels, that engage broadly with themes related to queer and trans studies in religion, as well as papers or panels that address the 2026 presidential theme of future/s in conversation with queer and trans studies in religion. We also encourage proposals that involve a creative presentation format.

Statement of Purpose

The core goals of this Unit are as follows: • Foster the application of queer and trans theories to the study of religion • Encourage comparative study of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender issues in religion • Support the growth of bisexual studies and transgender studies in the field. We actively seek to explore the connections between queer and trans studies in religion and complementary or overlapping fields of inquiry, such as postcolonial theory, critical race theory, disability theory, feminist theory, and cultural studies, among others.

Chairs

- El/yse Ambrose, University of California, Riverside
elyse.ambrose@ucr.edu
- Kori Pacyniak, San Diego State University
kori.pacyniak@gmail.com

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Qur'an Unit

Call for Proposals

The Qur'an Unit welcomes papers on all aspects of the Qur'an, including its text; Late Antique and historical context; literary, aesthetic, and material forms; oral and written transmission; liturgical use, role in the lives of Muslims; tradition of commentary and exegesis; and its influence in the world more broadly. We welcome proposals that represent the full range of how the Qur'an can be approached in terms of academic methods, as well as the full range of ways in which the Qur'an is interpreted and interacted with in Islamic tradition by Muslims around the world.

In addition to individual paper proposals, the Qur'an Unit welcomes proposals for panels, roundtables, workshops, and other creative or engaging formats. Potential ideas proposed at our last business meeting include: the place of Qur'anic Studies in the Humanities more broadly and liberal arts education, new important books, trends in the field, practical workshops, debates on topics of interest.

We also welcome proposals that feature or address public scholarship. By public scholarship, we mean non-academic platforms for dissemination (popular magazines, websites, podcasts, museums, etc.), creative modalities (digitized archives, interactive curricula, polls/analysis, etc.) as well as community-engaged co-creation of knowledge.

We are especially interested in proposals highlighting new or developing areas of research in relation to the Qur'an, papers on understudied topics and themes, or that relate to the theme of "Future/s". Full details on the theme for 2026 appear below:

AAR Presidential Theme 2026 - FUTURE/S

"This is not a time for "business as usual." The future of religious scholarship within and without the academy is more uncertain than ever for our members – perhaps especially our contingent faculty, our graduate students, our department chairs striving to maintain a place for the study of religion, and all who are crafting para-academic careers. From an organizational perspective, our gatherings are powerful opportunities for collective re-imagining and action. From a scholarly perspective, our diverse traditions and approaches make us particularly skilled in thinking about future possibilities.

"The future" is a contested idea that looms large in human traditions and functions diversely in the collective stories of many cultures. To whom something called "the future" belongs, or for whom it functions is a matter of extensive theoretical, literary, and cinematic interest but visions of possible futures (hoped-for or feared) are also an

ancient and enduring concern of many religions. Some would say that we bring into being what we can first imagine. Are we able critically to assess and help to build futures for which we hope? The muscle of dystopic imagination is well honed these days, and for good reason. But what about other possible futures, past and present? Where is the sensory richness that might en flesh imagination otherwise?

Scholars of religion are uniquely positioned to reflect critically on the modes and capacities of religious and spiritual stories and practices, ancient and new, local and global, to imagine futures beyond despair on the one hand, or superficial hope on the other. We know how to take seriously the narratives, traditions, and practices that have opened up or delimited our horizons of possibility. We know how to illuminate their materialization over time, and to lift up counter-memory possibilities therein. Given the present intensity of uncertainty facing scholars of religion and academic pursuits in the humanities more generally – not to mention the uncertainties of democracy, peace, and the well-being of the earth and its creatures – this is a time to attend to the question: what is the importance of future thinking (futuring, as some would have it) in the work of religious scholarship in this time?"

Statement of Purpose

This Unit seeks to provide a forum for comprehensive scholarly discussion of the Qur'an, its reception and interpretation, and its role in Muslim and world societies through a variety of disciplinary and methodological perspectives. We welcome scholars from all areas of the academy, and scholars of diverse backgrounds in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, geography, age, and religion to help us achieve our goals of promoting an understanding of the Qur'an.

Chairs

- Shuaib Ally
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- Samuel Ross
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- Halla Attallah
hattallah@bates.edu

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

[Qur'an Unit](#)

Call for Proposals

The Qur'an Unit welcomes papers on all aspects of the Qur'an, including its text; Late Antique and historical context; literary, aesthetic, and material forms; oral and written transmission; liturgical use, role in the lives of Muslims; tradition of commentary and exegesis; and its influence in the world more broadly. We welcome proposals that represent the full range of how the Qur'an can be approached in terms of academic methods, as well as the full range of ways in which the Qur'an is interpreted and interacted with in Islamic tradition by Muslims around the world.

In addition to individual paper proposals, the Qur'an Unit welcomes proposals for panels, roundtables, workshops, and other creative or engaging formats. Potential ideas proposed at our last business meeting include: the place of Qur'anic Studies in the Humanities more broadly and liberal arts education, new important books, trends in the field, practical workshops, debates on topics of interest.

We also welcome proposals that feature or address public scholarship. By public scholarship, we mean non-academic platforms for dissemination (popular magazines, websites, podcasts, museums, etc.), creative modalities (digitized archives, interactive curricula, polls/analysis, etc.) as well as community-engaged co-creation of knowledge.

We are especially interested in proposals highlighting new or developing areas of research in relation to the Qur'an, papers on understudied topics and themes, or that relate to the theme of "Future/s". Full details on the theme for 2026 appear below:

AAR Presidential Theme 2026 - FUTURE/S

"This is not a time for "business as usual." The future of religious scholarship within and without the academy is more uncertain than ever for our members – perhaps especially our contingent faculty, our graduate students, our department chairs striving to maintain a place for the study of religion, and all who are crafting para-academic careers. From an organizational perspective, our gatherings are powerful opportunities for collective re-imagining and action. From a scholarly perspective, our diverse traditions and approaches make us particularly skilled in thinking about future

possibilities.

"The future" is a contested idea that looms large in human traditions and functions diversely in the collective stories of many cultures. To whom something called "the future" belongs, or for whom it functions is a matter of extensive theoretical, literary, and cinematic interest but visions of possible futures (hoped-for or feared) are also an ancient and enduring concern of many religions. Some would say that we bring into being what we can first imagine. Are we able critically to assess and help to build futures for which we hope? The muscle of dystopic imagination is well honed these days, and for good reason. But what about other possible futures, past and present? Where is the sensory richness that might en flesh imagination otherwise?

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Statement of Purpose

This Unit seeks to provide a forum for comprehensive scholarly discussion of the Qur'an, its reception and interpretation, and its role in Muslim and world societies through a variety of disciplinary and methodological perspectives. We welcome scholars from all areas of the academy, and scholars of diverse backgrounds in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, geography, age, and religion to help us achieve our goals of promoting an understanding of the Qur'an.

Chairs

- Shuaib Ally
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- Samuel Ross

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- Halla Attallah
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In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Reformed Theology and History Unit

Call for Proposals

The Reformed Theology and History Unit invites proposals exploring the multifaceted theme of “**Judgment**” within the Reformed tradition, engaging its varied historical, theological, ethical, and political dimensions. This broad theme invites consideration from diverse methodological perspectives which work to illuminate the past, enrich the present, and shape future discourse.

Theme Description

This year’s CFP aims to examine how judgment is understood, contested, and expressed as a motif in Reformed theology and history. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

Historical Perspectives:

Topics might include:

- How has the Reformed tradition considered judgment as a concept in the historic formulation of Reformed Confessions
- The treatment of ‘judgment’ or aspects of judgment in the works of key Reformed thinkers from the 16th – 20th centuries
- The relation between Reformed theological conceptions of judgment and those of other cognate fields, e.g., law or aesthetics
- Historical disputes about judgment, whether between Reformed churches and theologians, or between the Reformed and other Christian traditions
- Analysis of historical failures of judgment that were key in shaping the development of Reformed traditions

Theological Perspectives:

Topics might include:

- Theological treatment of the 'Final Judgment' as a dogmatic *locus*
- The understanding, formation, and exercise of judgment in Reformed ethics and/or the practice of ecclesiastical discipline
- Judgment as a theme in Reformed political theology
- The relation of judgment and grace, judgment and mercy, judgment and hope, and/or judgment and justice in soteriological doctrine
- The place of judgment in Reformed covenantal theology
- Judgment as a subject of Reformed exegesis and theological interpretation of Scripture
- The understanding, importance, and exercise of judgment in Reformed ecumenical relations and dialogues

Proposal Guidelines

We invite proposals for individual papers. Proposals should clearly articulate their connection to the theme and their potential contribution to the field. Innovative formats and interdisciplinary approaches are encouraged. To ensure a broad and inclusive dialogue, submissions from early-career scholars, scholars from underrepresented backgrounds, and global perspectives are strongly encouraged.

Please submit abstracts via the AAR's PAPERS system by the stated deadline. Accepted papers may also be considered for co-sponsored sessions with relevant AAR units.

Contact Information

For inquiries, please contact the Reformed Theology and History Unit Steering Committee.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit seeks to open up the traditions of Reformed Christianity for critical review and study, attending to their theological and historical patterns of belief, practice, and polity. Our aim is to present panels and paper sessions that balance theological and historical approaches, and that attend from diverse perspectives to single figures and larger cultural movements, with a particular interest in exploring emerging or forgotten elements of Reformed thought and practice. In all of these topics, we hope to

demonstrate the vitality, originality, and diversity of Reformed Christianity in its worldwide expression.

Chairs

- Arnold Huijgen
a.huijgen@gmail.com
 - Christina Larsen
larsen.cn@gmail.com
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Religion and Cities Unit

Call for Proposals

The Religion and Cities Unit welcomes paper and panel proposals for the 2026 annual meeting in Denver. In addition to the specific calls described below, we welcome submissions that explore the practice of religion in the city, including papers that cover urban design, infrastructure, and architecture; religious approaches to issues of justice, interfaith encounters, and community collaborations; and the practice of religion in public space.

We especially invite submissions that showcase examples of pedagogical interactions with religion and cities; examine case studies from Africa, Asia, and Latin America; and engage the religious landscape of Denver and surrounding communities. In response to the 2026 Presidential theme, we welcome proposals exploring cities as crucibles of religious encounter, innovation, and contestation, where communities forge visions of what is yet possible.

Religion, Urban Ecology, and Environmental Humanities. We invite papers that explore the intersection of religion, urban ecology, and environmental humanities. Proposals might explore religious responses to urban environmental issues such as climate change, pollution, urban wildlife, and reforestation. Papers might also explore local landscapes and ecosystems (especially in Denver), indigenous perspectives on

urban land and ecology, the relationship between human beings and other species, and understandings of cities as ecosystems or as in opposition to “the natural world.”

Urban Spaces of Healing. Although rhetoric about cities often focuses on instances of injustice and suffering, urban communities also host spaces of healing and flourishing. We invite papers that consider such spaces, especially as they relate to religious practice, community, and interfaith collaboration. Spaces of healing might include community gardens and parks, gatherings of belonging and mutual support, and examples of activism that strives for local justice and peace.

The Contested City. We seek proposals that examine the contestation of power and meaning within the city and how religious communities navigate or resist these dynamics. Papers might explore the financialization of urban design, the militarization and occupation of cities, and rhetoric about the city in terms of nationalism and national identity. Furthermore, we encourage submissions that engage the relationship between images of the city and religious visions of the future.

Statement of Purpose

This unit engages in critical analysis of ecological relationships between religion and cities. We are interested in exploring the cooperative and conflicting relationships between cities across the globe and their religious communities in the struggle for justice and peace. Our work is interdisciplinary and includes scholars from Religious Studies, History, Anthropology, Social Ethics & Urban Sociology, Architecture & Urban Planning, Theology, and Gender Studies.

Chairs

- Edward Dunar, Albertus Magnus College
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- Fatimah Fanusie
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Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Religion and Cities Unit

Call for Proposals

The Religion and Cities Unit welcomes paper and panel proposals for the 2026 June Online Meeting. We welcome submissions that explore the practice of religion in the city, including papers that cover urban design, infrastructure, and architecture; religious approaches to issues of justice, interfaith encounters, and community collaborations; and the practice of religion in public space.

In response to the 2026 Presidential theme, we especially welcome proposals exploring cities as crucibles of religious encounter, innovation, and contestation, where communities forge visions of what is yet possible.

Statement of Purpose

This unit engages in critical analysis of ecological relationships between religion and cities. We are interested in exploring the cooperative and conflicting relationships between cities across the globe and their religious communities in the struggle for justice and peace. Our work is interdisciplinary and includes scholars from Religious Studies, History, Anthropology, Social Ethics & Urban Sociology, Architecture & Urban Planning, Theology, and Gender Studies.

Chairs

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- Fatimah Fanusie
fanusie@icjs.org

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Religion and Disability Studies Unit

Call for Proposals

The Religion and Disability Studies Unit invites proposals that critically examine the relationship between disability and religious thought, practice, or history. We welcome papers on all topics, yet with particular interest in non-Christian perspectives and underrepresented cultural locations.

In alignment with the presidential theme of future/s, we especially welcome proposals that discuss:

- Crip ancestries and their implications for future/s, including religious and theological engagements with the work of Alice Wong and/or Leah Laksmi Piepzna-Samarasinha
- Critical engagements with religious and theological scholarship that account for processes of aging and acquired disability in looking toward the future/s
- How disabled perspectives critique, enliven, and expand religious and theological accounts of future/s marked by transhumanism and/or human relationships with non-human creatures and objects
- Critical engagement and constructive reflection that foster dialogue two significant, recent volumes from Baylor University Press's *Studies in Religion, Theology, and Disability Series*—Melody V. Escobar's *Revelations of Divine Care* and Phil Letizia's *Held in the Love of God* (both 2024). Preference will be given to proposals that examine how these texts offer a transformative vision of discipleship emerging from an ethic of love and the theology of care.

[For a possible co-sponsorship with the Mysticism Unit:](#)

This co-sponsored session invites proposals reflecting on the intersection/s of vulnerability and mysticism through lenses of disability, race, gender, sexual orientation, and other forms of social marginalization. Mystics have traditionally sought out mystical states not for the experiences in and of themselves, but for the knowledge of reality gained from these experiences. In response, mystics embody transformation, seeking to live a life aligned with knowledge encountered in a mystical state. Popular perceptions of mystical knowledge often correlate such states with power and efficacy. But paradoxically, accounts of mystical experiences often also entail a state of openness, vulnerability, and interdependence. While unsettling, this vulnerability can transform understandings of openness and interdependence as positions of personal strength. For example, reflection on one's vulnerability may be a part of a mystical encounter, especially where one is known by a power greater than oneself. Likewise, mystical states where one has a loss of a sense of self may result in ongoing vulnerabilities after the experience.

Statement of Purpose

The Religion and Disability Studies Unit is committed to maintaining the visibility, viability, and value of the experience and politics of disability as they relate to the study and practice of religion. We promote engagement between disability studies theory and the study of religion, examine the role of disability in lived religious experience and theology, and consider the historical and contemporary role of disability in diverse religious traditions, texts, and cultures. As intersectionality becomes an increasingly critical hermeneutic in the academy, we encourage robust dialogue and collaboration with other program units involved with disciplined reflection on religion.

Chairs

- Sarah Jean Barton
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 - Audrey Seah
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-

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Religion and Disability Studies Unit

Call for Proposals

In alignment with the presidential theme of future/s, we welcome proposals that discuss:

- Crip ancestries and their implications for future/s, including religious and theological engagements with the work of Alice Wong and/or Leah Laksmi Piepzn-Samarasinha
- The role of technology in furthering and/or complicating a realization of disability-inclusive future/s, including creative presentations in the virtual context that appeal to religious scholarship.

Statement of Purpose

The Religion and Disability Studies Unit is committed to maintaining the visibility, viability, and value of the experience and politics of disability as they relate to the study and practice of religion. We promote engagement between disability studies theory and the study of religion, examine the role of disability in lived religious experience and theology, and consider the historical and contemporary role of disability in diverse religious traditions, texts, and cultures. As intersectionality becomes an increasingly critical hermeneutic in the academy, we encourage robust dialogue and collaboration with other program units involved with disciplined reflection on religion.

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 - Audrey Seah
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-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Religion and Ecology Unit

Call for Proposals

The Religion and Ecology Unit seeks individual paper and complete panel proposals relating to a wide range of themes in religion and ecology, especially proposals that resonate with the 2026 thematic emphasis on “future/s.” As inspired by the Presidential theme, we consider that now is not a time for “business as usual.” From an organizational perspective, our gatherings are powerful opportunities for collective re-imagining and action, and papers that center this are most welcome.

As ecological crises intensify and communities worldwide grapple with climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental justice, religious traditions and spiritual practices are increasingly called upon to imagine, critique, and embody alternative futures. What might these alternative futures look like? What are some examples of already existing alternative futures, communities, places, and spaces. We are interested in cultivating spaces to have difficult conversations, as the reality of our environmental crisis calls us

to have courage and make hard choices that consider the complex, interwoven, and intergenerational nature of this crisis.

Potential topics for papers include, but are not limited to, critical engagements with futuristic thinking (e.g. uncovering the implicit assumptions of linear transitions of time), or critiques of dominant progress narratives, including "structural evil that masquerades as good." Frameworks, case studies, and/or literature that considers transitioning into the future (in other words, analyzing the mess we're in and imagining what it could be) are encouraged. Other topics and areas of analysis include: afrofuturistic and afropessimistic narratives; the future of farming, feeding, and food production; considerations of ways to interrupt or define religious eco-fascism; critiques of, or visions reimagining heteronormative reproductivity; religion and reproductive labor, including multispecies reproductive justice and labor. We are also interested in discourse surrounding, and case studies highlighting, sacred activism, religious communities partnering with farms, indigenous communities (especially including, but not limited to indigenous led governance, both politically and through land management practices), and environmental justice movements.

As the future remains uncertain, we welcome an all-hands-on-deck approach to address the multi-faceted ecological crisis and are open to creative engagement with these topics, issues, and frameworks.

We acknowledge the interdisciplinary nature of, and multifaceted approaches to, research on the connections between religion and ecology. We especially welcome new contributions to religion and ecology intended to develop and push the field in methodology, topics, themes, texts, authors, objectives, and/or audience. We are also interested in including the way religion and ecology intersects with other forms of identity (race, class, gender, etc.), and are particularly interested in decolonial approaches to religion and ecology. Regarding decoloniality: we are interested in unpacking the nuances and differences in approach between post-colonial, decolonial, and anti-colonial discourse, theory, research, and material exchanges.

In your abstract, please include the theorists, authors, frameworks, and research you are in dialogue with, along with citations from the field.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit critically and constructively explores how human–Earth relations are shaped by religions, cultures, and understandings of nature and the environment. We are self-consciously inter- and multi-disciplinary and include methods from a variety of social sciences such as those found in the work of theologians, philosophers, religionists,

ethicists, scientists, activist-scholars, sociologists, and anthropologists, among others. We also strive to be a radically inclusive unit and welcome papers that challenge the dominant Eurocentric environmental discourse while envisioning new conceptual frontiers.

Chairs

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 - Joseph Wiebe, University of Alberta, Augustana
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-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Religion and Economy Unit

Call for Proposals

This Unit welcomes individual papers, paper sessions, and roundtable proposals related to the group's mission. We strongly encourage the submission of pre-arranged paper and roundtable sessions, which are more likely to be accepted. Proposals for individual papers are most successful if proposed in relation to one of the themes listed below, due to the higher probability that they might complement other individual submissions.

Successful proposals not only will reflect theoretical and methodological rigor and clarity but also will engage existing scholarship around the study of religion and economy. A successful pre-arranged session also must incorporate gender and racial/ethnic diversity. Diversity of academic rank, theoretical method, and field are also highly encouraged and more likely to be successful.

Potential themes include but are not limited to the themes listed below. We welcome proposals on these themes, but we also invite proposals on any other themes that contribute to the Unit's work or push it in new directions.

Themes:

- **AAR Theme - “Futures”**
 - ***Of the Field and Higher Ed*** - How does the study of religion and economy help us understand and approach the future of our work in and around institutions of higher education? Amid increased precarity of labor, program closures, political challenges, high tuition, AI-incursions and innovations, and debt and austerity as structuring contexts for education, we invite papers and panels that take up the future(s) of our field.
 - ***Divination Markets and Speculative Practices*** - How do religious and economic forms offer resources for people to grapple with futures unknown and manage associated risks? We seek panels and papers that confront divination and speculation practices, dowsing, fortune-telling, futures-markets, venture capital, insurance, and related endeavors.
 - ***Fiction and Fabula*** - How might attention to literary and genre renderings of alternative worlds—in speculative fiction, sci-fi, cli-fi, fabula, and the like—help us think anew about religion and economy in our own world? What can scholars of religion and economy learn from and/or offer to writers, cartoonists, filmmakers, and others in the creative arts? We especially invite interdisciplinary, field-crossing papers and proposals that consider together analytical, empirical, literary, performative, artistic, and other creative approaches to this topic.
 - ***No Future?*** - What does it look like to understand and analyze an ending? How do religious and economic systems name, narrate, schematize, envision, or seek to prevent or advance an end? From apocalyptic writings to end-of-life care to theories of end-stage capitalism and lots more, papers and panels might consider any number of topics around closing, conclusion, cessation, finishing, finality, and related ways of remitting, resisting, or refusing a future.
- **Multispecies Relations in Extraction:** We seek papers and panels that focus on the political economies of nonhuman species and on the histories and logics of extraction. Papers may explore practices and politics on the ground, as well as the metaphoric and performative language of texts and stories.
- **The Political Economy of Emerging Technologies:** We invite papers and panels that examine emerging technologies within constellations of multibeing relations shaped by political economy. The contributions may address not only the dominating logics of leading technology companies, but also the use and creation of these technologies by startups and small-scale enterprises, as well as religious leaders, chaplains, and grassroots organizers.
- **Gospels of Health and Wellness** - Scholars have long chronicled the ways that health, wellness, and embodiment have been religious projects. We invite new work on this and related studies that consider how ‘health’ and ‘wellness’ are

being understood and approached today and the role of religion therein, especially in conversation with prominent and prosperous pharmaceutical and fitness economies.

- **Mutual Aid, Currency, and Rituals of Exchange** - How do religious and economic forms help conceive, mark, systematize, and manage exchange? We invite papers on ritual economies and political theologies of all types, from mutual aid programs, gifting practices, and sacrificial systems to monetary policies and financialization to crypto and shadow economies.
- **Teaching Religion and Economy** - How do we teach the study of religion and economy? What aims, questions, key terms, materials, techniques, and assignments help structure the work we do on these topics in the classroom? Where and when does this teaching happen (classrooms, podcasts, websites, etc), and how do these locales, chronologies of encounter, associated structures of financing, management, and relationality impact learning?

Statement of Purpose

This Unit sponsors multidisciplinary conversations that explore intersections between religious and economic modes of social life. Religion and Economy cultivates scholarship that asks how economic systems and orientations have developed through fields of thought, practice, and resistance that come into view through attention to the "religious." Encouraging inquiry that cuts across religious traditions, geographic locations, methods, and historical time periods, this Unit's collaborative explorations not only address and explore capitalist and non-capitalist economic systems but also consider how broader systems of "exchange" produce social relations among varied actors—from humans to spirits to material objects. By interrogating the concepts of religion and economy, this Unit also encourages scholars to consider the stakes of other concepts with ongoing currency in the study of religion, including secularism, spirituality, affect, desire, ritual, agency, value, and subject formation.

Chairs

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- Esra Tunc, San Diego State University
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In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Religion and Food Unit

Call for Proposals

This Group provides an opportunity for scholars to engage in the intersection of religion and food, foodways, and food ethics. We are interested in examining these topics across broad geographical areas, religious traditions, and historical eras. We seek papers investigating practices and beliefs related to food, drink, fasting, the production of food, the ethics of production and consumption, or on any aspect of religiously influenced foodways. Mindful of the AAR 2026 Annual Meeting theme of Future and Hope, the Religion and Food unit invites proposals concerning

As always, we welcome general proposals on the topic of religion and food.

1. Mindful of the AAR 2026 Annual Meeting theme of Future and Hope, the Religion and Food unit invites proposals concerning
 - Mothering, motherhood, and food futures: see joint call below at
 - Seeds & Growing Things; Generativity
 - Monotheists, Creation, and Care/ Indigenous Creation and Care
2. Mindful of the AAR 2026 Annual Meeting being held in Denver, CO, we invite papers engaging
 - Jolof rice and gumbo, Dr. Adrian Miller's work on Soul Food, the Netflix series "High on the Hog" with Jessica Harris
 - Gastrotourism, gentrification's effects on foodways,
 - Loss of SNAP/ food benefits, food security, food resilience, Denver Urban Gardens (DUG)
 - Food and protest, food activism, eating against ICE
 - Food Burdens: Matcha, ayahuasca, peyote, mezcal and frustrating traditional/ritual use
3. Food Nation and Food Narrative: 1776-2026 (250 years)
 - Is there an American food? Religion and Colonial food

- Governmentality of Food/ Food Governance: Dehumanizing food through policy; food and surveillance
 - Food and Surveillance: we are the harvest; blood into gold; blood glucose monitors, menstruation monitors
 - Food Creativity; gleanings, scraps, scarcity; sufficiency versus waste and unsustainability
 - Transnationalization of food; Migration: what happens when food travels?
 - Food Resilience in the Global South, eating extractively
 - Foods of our Ancestors: Women who have turned little into much; food dreams; appropriation of indigenous foods/ingredients (Matcha, ayahuasca, mezcal)
 - Foreclosing Futures: Loss of future, post-capitalist collapse, slow cancellation of the future of food, foreclosing the possibility of eating/edibility
4. The Religion and Food Unit also solicits recent and upcoming monographs for a possible roundtable on recent and upcoming books in Food and Religion.

[For potential Co-Sponsored Session with the Religion and Food Unit and the Motherhood and Religions Unit, we solicit papers that respond to the following call: **Nourishing Futures: Motherhood, Food, and Religion**](#)

Statement of Purpose

This Unit provides an opportunity for scholars to engage the intersection of religion and food, foodways, and food ethics. We are interested in examining these topics across religious traditions, geographical areas, and historical eras. We encourage critical reflection regarding:

- The relationships of religious commitments to food (production, preparation, consumption, and invention)
- Diet and sustainability
- Issues of food (in)justice, which may include food availability or insecurity, commitment to wellness, access to healthy foods, food deserts, etc.
- Environmental/ecological issues, e.g. desertification, flood, fire, and climate related food ethics issues
- Theological, spiritual, and religious interrelationships as expressed in food commitments or confluences
- The cross-cultural applicability of the categories of "religion" and "food" themselves

We seek to develop ongoing investigations into practices and beliefs related to food, drink, fasting, the production of food, the ethics of production and consumption, or on any aspect of religiously influenced foodways.

Chairs

- Aldea Mulhern
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- William Schanbacher
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In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Religion and Human Rights Unit

Call for Proposals

The Religion and Human Rights program unit seeks papers that explore the topics of religion and human rights from a breadth of scholarly perspectives. This may include analyses of the ways particular religious actors and traditions articulate the compatibility or incompatibility of religion and human rights; how human rights serve to complicate or enhance our understanding of categories such as "religion" and "secularity"; and how the intersection of religion and human rights implicates issues of race, gender, law, politics, ecology etc.

Proposals on any topic related to religion and human rights are welcome. In keeping with this year's presidential theme of Future/s, we are particularly interested in proposals on the following topics:

The future is informed by the past. Our unit seeks proposals for papers that reflect upon the 75th anniversary of the historic petition "We Charge Genocide" delivered to the United Nations Committee on Human Rights from the Civil Rights Congress. The report

details systemic patterns of racial murders, state-sanctioned executions of unarmed Black men and women killed by police and lynch mobs.

We invite papers that engage the significance of “We Charge Genocide” for the future of religion and human rights. Topics may include but are not limited to:

- How the “We Charge Genocide” petition has been used as a model for social movements to craft religious and moral arguments to engage the U.N. and other international human rights mechanism in the pursuit of justice;
- The legacy of the petition in informing both contemporary and future charges of genocide, rooted in the imposition of social conditions that lead to premature death due to social conditions such as poverty (economic violence), infant mortality, disease, inadequate medical care and education as well as violence;
- The religious significance of the petition in responding to the enduring entanglements of anti-Blackness, racism, sexism, police violence and fascism, and how the charges and concepts in “We Charge Genocide” might inform future scholarship and action related to religion, human rights, and social justice.

[For a possible co-sponsored session with Sociology of Religion](#), we invite papers on the future of the relationship between religion and human rights as examined through sociological methods or theories. Proposals may address the possibilities and pitfalls of studying and promoting human rights; ways that religious or secular communities are approaching human rights at a time of global upheaval; how religious groups are reshaping human rights in utopian or dystopian directions; how religious groups are rethinking the “human” in human rights, and more. Proposals may also consider the role of grassroots movements versus national or global institutions as sites for human rights mobilization, especially questions of what it means for human rights protections to arise “from below,” through the work and struggle of marginalized or minoritized communities. In this co-sponsorship, we welcome proposals that lie at the intersection of conceptual analysis of “religion and human rights” and forms of qualitative, quantitative, or social theoretical analysis that build knowledge about how religious or secular groups are navigating a changing world of religious and human rights claims and practices.

[For a possible co-sponsored session with the Native Traditions in the Americas program unit](#), we seek papers that explore the thought, practices, and lifeways of Indigenous communities, particularly in the Americas, and the language and concepts of human

rights. The future of human rights is intertwined with the work of communities who challenge colonial ideologies and practices and who draw on deep-rooted, living concepts and lifeways to make claims for community well-being while critiquing Western-centric notions of rights.

We are especially interested in how Indigenous thinkers and communities in the Americas use the language of human rights to advocate for respect for religious practices, honor for the land, and more, while recognizing that discourses of “human rights” often have complicated historical relationships with colonial ideas and institutions. We invite proposals that explore how members and leaders of Indigenous communities in the Americas navigate these nuances, reshaping thinking about “rights” and the well-being of human communities embedded in kinship ties with other species and the world around us.

Statement of Purpose

The Religion and Human Rights Unit seeks to enhance both scholarly and public conversation around the intersection of religion and human rights ideas and practices. We solicit papers in any area of religion and human rights studies. Topics we engage include: how particular religious actors and traditions articulate the compatibility or incompatibility of religion and human rights; how human rights serve to complicate or enhance our understanding of categories such as “religion” and “secularity”; how religious and human rights approaches address particular cases and social issues; how grassroots and social movement organizations approach ideas and practice of human rights; and how the intersection of religion and human rights implicates issues of race, gender, law, politics, etc. We recognize that both human rights and religious ideologies can inspire thought and action that benefits the vulnerable and promotes the common good; at the same time, both can serve the interests of power, oppression, and colonialist hegemony. Thus it is vitally important to evaluate and critique both. Participants in the unit approach these topics, and others, from diverse areas of study, methodologies, and perspectives. The unit also prioritizes the public understanding of religion in conversation with human rights ideas. Human rights is a much-discussed topic in the media and political circles, yet much public dialogue assumes that religion and human rights are either straightforwardly congruent with each other, or straightforwardly opposed to each other. The unit welcomes papers that critique, nuance, and enhance public understanding of the intersection of religion and human rights.

The Religion and Human Rights unit strives for diversity and critical conversation in its unit makeup and public output. Our selection process for unit steering committee and

chairs is open to all who express interest, and we intentionally recruit steering committee members from diverse demographic groups and intellectual and professional experiences. We strive to formulate our calls for papers to encourage submissions and presentations from diverse members of the AAR and to bring to light multiple diverse, critical perspectives on topics in religion and human rights.

The co-chairs compose the Call for Proposals for R&HR sessions for the AAR Annual Meeting. Steering committee members review, shape, and accept proposals for those sessions; review and report on sessions; and often serve as presiders or respondents for particular panels. Co-chairs communicate with the R&HR constituency.

The Steering Committee is made up of nine members, two of whom are elected by the members to serve as co-chairs. A Steering Committee term is three years, renewable for a second three years if everyone is amenable. The terms are staggered, so that there are continuity and change on the committee. During a total of six possible years, a member might serve a co-chair term, which is three years. A member elected to serve as co-chair has at least one full year's experience on the Steering Committee. The co-chair elections are staggered as well, so that each new co-chair serves with an experienced co-chair.

Chairs

- Christophe D. Ringer
christophe.ringer@ctschicago.edu
- Laura Alexander, University of Nebraska, Omaha
lealex@unomaha.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Religion and Memory Unit

Call for Proposals

Memories of Futures (not quite) Past

With the AAR presidential theme asking us to consider the future, how do useable pasts shape the religious world and the scholars who study it? What pasts have been

imagined in or left out of certain visions for the future? What futures do certain religious histories anticipate or foreclose? We welcome proposals on any period, geographic context, or religious tradition that explores how the future fits within the study of memory. Potential topics include, but are not limited to:

- Afro-Futurisms
- Nostalgia and Nationalism
- Manifest Destinies Past and Present
- Fascist Memories or Memories of Fascism
- Collective Memory and Resistance
- America 250

We are interested in papers that explore the connection between religion, memory, and the future across religious traditions, geographic contexts, and time (both contemporary and/or historical).

The Land Remembers

Does memory require sentience? Can rocks, rivers, trees, and dirt be said to remember? How do landscapes hold the memories of what has happened on and to them? How do religious beliefs and practices about land shape commemorative practices, and how do landscapes shape religious notions of remembering? We are interested in papers that explore the connection between religion, memory, and land across religious traditions, geographic contexts, and time (both contemporary and/or historical).

We also welcome papers, panels, and roundtables on other issues of religion and memory in any time period and any geographic context.

Statement of Purpose

This unit considers memory's role in the making of religions and the ways in which religions make memories. It explores the construction and representation of narratives of the past as memory in relation to religious practices, ideologies, and experiences. We encourage critical reflection on religion in relation to ideas of memory, heritage, and public history. We are interested in examining these topics across broad geographical areas, religious traditions, methodological practices, and historical eras.

Chairs

- Christopher Cantwell, Loyola University, Chicago
ccantwell1@luc.edu
 - Ella Myer, Emory University
ella.c.myer@gmail.com
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In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Religion and Migration Unit

Call for Proposals

The Religion and Migration Unit seeks both individual paper proposals and panel proposals (presider, three presenters, plus respondent). The Religion and Migration Unit is committed to diversity and inclusion. Panel session proposals should incorporate gender diversity within the panel; diversity of race/ethnicity, and rank are also highly encouraged.

The 2026 Religion and Migration Unit Call for Papers for the Annual Meeting to be held in Denver, CO welcomes proposals on the following themes:

1. Religion & Migration: Future Trajectories and Imaginaries

Across the globe, emerging and established communities of people on the move have come under pressure (immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, undocumented and displaced persons). In the U.S., such communities have been growing for a long period of time—with increasing diversification of the countries of origin—but they now find themselves in more unstable and unpredictable environments. Like many cities across the country, Denver has seen an increase in urban challenges as well as deportations that have led to growing concerns.

We seek papers or panel proposals that explore the past, present, and future potential for such communities in the U.S. How do the members of these communities envision their futures? What role does religion play for their imaginaries? What impact do these imaginaries have on current practices when addressing the status quo --whether

navigation, resignation, resistance or other? We are particularly interested in studies that take Denver as a site or starting point of reflection.

2. Religion & Migration: Exploring Transculturalism

Transculturalism involves a process where elements from different cultures are taken, transformed, and merged, leading to a new and complex cultural identity that extends beyond national or ethnic boundaries.

As a dynamic process, it is active and ongoing, rather than static. By exploring the concept of transculturalism from different vantage points, we can begin to think through the practical implications across the globe from diverse locations and cultural perspectives. How are the ongoing forces of transculturalism shaping migrant identities and experiences? How do im/migrant communities represent, construct or reconstruct cultural identities and traditions abroad? How, or in what ways do transnational communities connect and transcend real or imagined borders? What is the impact of religion and migration on beliefs and practices, on socio-political experiences and belonging, or bridging home and host countries? What is lost, gained or reinterpreted as a result of migration experiences and transcultural processes?

3. Religion, Migration, and Third-Country Deportations

Third-country deportations—understood as the removal of individuals in transit to states other than their countries of origin—have become a significant policy instrument in both European and American contexts. In the United States, recent years have seen a marked expansion of this provision within immigration law. While reports indicate that some deportees are held in foreign detention facilities, authorities often lack comprehensive information about the location and conditions of many others. These practices raise important questions concerning the intersection of deportation policies with religious and cultural considerations, particularly in light of national and international legal prohibitions against transferring individuals to contexts where their religious freedom may be at risk.

This call invites paper and panel proposals that critically engage with the nexus of religion, migration, and third-country deportations from empirical, explanatory, and normative perspectives. Submissions are welcomed from a broad range of disciplinary approaches, including but not limited to religious studies, human geography, law, political science, sociology, cultural studies, and theology. Of particular interest are contributions that highlight interdisciplinary perspectives on agency and lived experiences, as well as those that explore the broader implications of third-country deportations for religious liberty, human rights, and global migration governance.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit is a forum in which scholars working on religion and migration from multiple perspectives can interact across methodologies, religious traditions, and regions. We solicit papers addressing the religious practices, experiences, needs, and beliefs of migrating peoples who adapt to new environments and impact their societies of origin and destination. We understand religion and migration broadly, from the religious communities of rural migrants in regional cities to the new understandings of religion that second-generation children construct in order to make sense of their ethnic identities or ethical responses of receiving communities. If you are interested in furthering the discussion on religion and migration, please join the AAR Religion and Migration Group on Facebook.

Chairs

- Sana Patel
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 - Itohan Idumwonyi, Gonzaga University
fessyito@yahoo.co.nz
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In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Religion and Politics Unit

Call for Proposals

The Religion and Politics Unit welcomes papers, full panels, and roundtable proposals on any topic related to the intersections of religion and politics. We are especially interested in proposals that engage the 2026 presidential theme- "Future/s," address unfolding political events, consider international dynamics, or reflect on the conference location of Denver, Colorado.

We invite work that explores how AI technologies intersect with--and increasingly drive--religious movements, political imaginaries, and ethical debates. We welcome proposals examining how religious practitioners resist, reinterpret, or collaborate with nationalist ideologies, as well as analyses of religious participation in political protest, including cross-movement solidarities.

Other areas of particular interest include:

- Religion and immigration politics, including the ethical and legal implications of ICE enforcement, detention, and deaths in custody
- Temporal politics, such as how religious and political actors reconfigure the past to shape imagined futures, or how religious traditions help communities discern when to obey or resist unjust laws
- Affective futures, exploring the politics of hope, despair, anticipation, and apocalypticism
- The future of church-state relations, including debates over pluralism, secularism, and religious freedom
- Environmental futures, including how religious communities address climate change, public lands, water rights, and Indigenous sovereignty
- Carceral and abolitionist futures, exploring religious engagements with policing, prisons, and transformative justice
- Religion and political violence, including how communities navigate rising extremism, transnational conflicts, and the afterlives of war

We encourage proposals that are interdisciplinary, methodologically creative, and attentive to the multiple ways religion and politics shape--and are shaped by--our collective futures.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit provides a forum for scholars and professionals interested in the relationships among religion, the state, and political life, both in the United States and around the world. Our members focus on the interaction between religious and political values, movements, and commitments, and the role of religious individuals and communities in bodies politic. This focus includes attention to the ways in which religion and religious actors participate in public discourse, contribute to debates over public values and social policy, and affect — and are affected by — activity in the political sphere. We welcome members doing both normative and descriptive work from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, including religious studies, political science, philosophy, social ethics, law (including church–state studies), history (as it relates to contemporary understandings),

and theology. We seek to advance scholarly inquiry on religion and politics and we seek also to speak to broad and diverse publics about areas falling under the Unit's purview.

Chairs

- Scott Culpepper, Dordt University
scott.culpepper@dordt.edu
 - Candace Lukasik
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-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Religion and Popular Culture Unit

Call for Proposals

Apocalyptic Visions

The apocalypse: are we there yet? We invite proposals that consider apocalyptic visions and their fallout in media and popular culture. When we envision the apocalypse, whose world is it that is ending? What worlds have already ended? Is there a future post-apocalypse? In particular, we welcome presentations that interrogate the notion of the apocalypse through the critical lenses of queer and Indigenous theory.

Red, Black, and the Blues: Race and Religion in the Films of Ryan Coogler

In his body of work, Black filmmaker Ryan Coogler incorporates many rich and provocative aspects of African and African-American religious experiences, such as ancestor worship, Hoodoo, and various shades of Christianity, while also weaving together visuals, music, and manipulation of time and space. We invite proposals that provide insight into issues of race, faith, community, violence, and humanity in Coogler's filmography, including *Fruitvale Station* (2013), *Creed* (2015), the *Black Panther* series, *Sinners* (2025), and his short films.

Religion among the Stars: Star Trek

It's been 60 years since Star Trek helped us imagine the possibility of multiple cultures and races coming into contact, conflicting, and coexisting among the stars. We invite presentation proposals on the franchise and its fandom.

The Art of Religious Resistance

How does religion provide imagery and imaginaries for art created in protest of global authoritarian movements and violence in general? How does art create moments in time and space for resistance in all its many forms?

Co-Sponsored Panels

KPop, Demon Hunters, and Beyond: Korean Religion and Popular Culture (for co-sponsorship with Korean Religions)

The Korean Religions Unit and the Religion and Popular Culture Unit invite papers for co-sponsored panel on the theme of Korean religion and popular culture. The widely popular 2025 film KPop Demon Hunters has exposed many fans to elements of Korean religion and culture which the film draws upon. This film is just one recent example of how popular culture, from or based on Korea, intersects with Korean religion. In response to this growing phenomenon, we seek papers that explore the Korean religious content and themes of films and dramas and their presentation and popular reception as well as other linkages between religion popular culture related to Korea, including music. Papers may address narratives of Korean religion within popular culture and their reception, how religious communities engage with and respond to such popular works and trends, papers that examine connections between religion and the Korean Wave ("Hallyu") as well as K-pop and fandom, and other topics. We welcome submissions that approach the film and topic from various disciplines and perspectives, and which discuss broader considerations of religion and popular culture in connection with Korean content.

Teaching Islam, Gender, and Women through Multimedia Strategies and Challenges (for possible co-sponsorship with Islam, Gender, and Women Unit and Religion, Media, and Culture Unit)

This pedagogy-focused session invites educators to share an effective use of multimedia (film clips, online videos, music, digital or real life art/museum exhibitions, social media posts, or other audiovisual materials) in teaching topics related to Islam, gender, and women. Each presenter will lead a breakout table in discussion on pedagogical goals, learning outcomes, and practical strategies for fostering critical engagement about their chosen multimedia resource for about 50 minutes, followed by 5-7 minutes of summation for all attendees.

Proposals should:

- Identify the selected multimedia material and explain its relevance
- Describe the themes it addresses and the classroom conversations it opens
- Offer concrete teaching strategies, activities, and/or assignments that participants can adapt for their own courses

We especially welcome presentations that model a brief segment of the proposed classroom activity, allowing attendees to experience the material as students. Proposals from graduate students are also especially welcome.

Accepted presenters will be required to submit their slide deck or electronic materials by XDATE for inclusion in the program book.

IGW is committed to non-traditional formats for its sessions on scholarship related to the study of gender and women in Islam. Proposals that do not conform to these non-traditional formats, or variations to it, will not be considered.

OPEN CALL: We solicit research-based papers and pre-arranged panels on any topic related to the study of religion and popular culture, from any region or time period.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit is dedicated to the scholarly exploration of religious expression in a variety of cultural settings. We encourage a multidisciplinary display of scholarship in our sessions and are committed to taking popular culture seriously as an arena of religious and theological reflection and practice.

Chairs

- David Feltmate
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 - Kaitlyn Ugoretz
ugoretzresearch@gmail.com
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Religion and Public Schools: International Perspectives Unit

Call for Proposals

The “Religion and Public Schools: International Perspectives” (RPS) Unit focuses on the global relationship between religion and education (RE) across diverse historical, geographical, cultural, political, and pedagogical settings.

Religion Education Future(s) and Assessment(s)

Rapid social change, religious diversification, technological innovation, and renewed debates about the role of education in democratic and plural societies are re-shaping the role of RE. These transformations raise pressing questions about the future orientation of the field and about how its aims, learning outcomes, and social functions can be meaningfully assessed.

We invite contributions that address two closely and interconnected areas of reflection and practice in RE: future-oriented approaches to the field and questions of assessment and evaluation. We welcome theoretical, empirical, comparative, and practice-based contributions from different national and educational contexts.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

Religion and Education for the Future

- What does it mean for RE to prepare students for engaged citizenship in the coming decades?
- How are ideas such as democratic participation, social cohesion, critical thinking, and pluralism addressed within RE curricula and classroom practices?
- How have schools, educational systems, or national frameworks updated RE curricula or pedagogical approaches in response to changing social and religious landscapes?
- In what ways are contemporary religious and non-religious worldviews represented in RE today?
- How have teachers integrated digital tools, platforms, and emerging technologies into the religion classroom, and with what pedagogical aims?

Assessment in Religion Education

- What are the aims and learning objectives of RE, and how can these be articulated in assessable terms?
- How can RE address the challenge of assessing learning outcomes that are often qualitative, interpretative, or reflective in nature?
- What kinds of assessment practices are currently used in RE, and how do they align with stated educational goals?
- Examples of creative, formative, or alternative assessment tools in RE.
- New approaches to evaluation, including self-assessment, portfolio-based assessment, or dialogical and participatory models.

We encourage proposals that engage critically with current debates, offer innovative methodological approaches, reflect on concrete teaching and assessment practices, and align with the focus of our unit. Additionally, we welcome submissions outside these themes, including pre-arranged sessions offering global perspectives on RE.

We value sessions that embrace diversity across genders, racial/ethnic backgrounds, and a spectrum of fields, methodologies, and scholarly levels.

Co-sponsored session with Teaching Religion Unit, Teaching and Learning about Religion Beyond the Classroom

The landscape of education is changing rapidly, from primary school through university, and the structures that supported the academic study of religion are changing at the same time. There are more and more opportunities to teach and learn about religion outside of the traditional classroom setting, from museum exhibits designed to engage young children and their families with their religiously diverse neighbors, to community and continuing education; from new online opportunities to religious literacy training embedded in workforce development programs. This call seeks papers that examine the experiences and/or impacts of teaching or learning about religion in alternative settings.

Topics could include:

- teaching about religion in museums, libraries, and other cultural institutions;
- intergenerational learning or teaching opportunities;
- online courses outside of a university program;
- continuing education for casual learners (non-degree programs);
- public installations, exhibits, or experiences;
- students-focused programs outside of school hours;
- the integration of learning about religion with other forms of training.

Statement of Purpose

This Program Unit promotes the global and comparative study of "religion education" in public schools around the world. By encouraging interdisciplinary research on the ethical, legal, political, pedagogical, and theological issues that arise with the study of religion in elementary and secondary schools, we seek to deepen our understanding of alternative approaches to religion as an academic subject. We also hope to find new ways of responding to the increasing religious diversity in schools and societies and to study the relationship between religious education and citizenship education in pluralistic democratic societies.

Chairs

- Kate Soules
ksoules@religionanded.com

- Angela Bernardo, Sapienza University of Rome
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-

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Religion and Public Schools: International Perspectives Unit

Call for Proposals

Teaching Religion for the Future(s)

Teaching religion plays a key role in fostering knowledge about the place and role of religions throughout history and in contemporary contexts. As such, it can shape future societal scenarios on multiple levels. This raises critical questions about the ways in which teaching religion can help students to interpret the present, engage with uncertainty, and imagine alternative future(s) in informed and responsible ways. How can future thinking – or futuring – become a meaningful component of scholarship and pedagogy in religious education (RE), fostering critical thinking and religious literacy in the present moment?

This session invites papers that explore how RE is addressed in public schools, with particular attention to the contribution of specific methodological and theoretical approaches to building more aware and inclusive societies. Contributions may examine theoretical frameworks, pedagogical practices, or empirical case studies from different national and educational contexts, highlighting how future-oriented thinking is integrated into curricula, teaching practices, and scholarly approaches within RE.

Statement of Purpose

This Program Unit promotes the global and comparative study of "religion education" in public schools around the world. By encouraging interdisciplinary research on the ethical, legal, political, pedagogical, and theological issues that arise with the study of

religion in elementary and secondary schools, we seek to deepen our understanding of alternative approaches to religion as an academic subject. We also hope to find new ways of responding to the increasing religious diversity in schools and societies and to study the relationship between religious education and citizenship education in pluralistic democratic societies.

Chairs

- Kate Soules
ksoules@religionanded.com
 - Angela Bernardo, Sapienza University of Rome
angela.bernardo@uniroma1.it
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Religion and Science Fiction Unit

Call for Proposals

Individual papers and panel sessions are invited on the following themes:

- In response to the 2026 Annual Meeting theme, "Future/s," we seek proposals and invite joint sessions that explore the future of religion/s beyond the global and into the expansive, unknown infinities of space. We welcome papers and panels on future space religion/s as imagined in speculative fiction across all media (film, graphic novels, short story, novel, television series, cosplay, etc.). We also welcome papers and panels that use speculative-fiction theories to project the "*real*" evolution/devolution/mutation of religion/s in space. How will time and space affect religion (theology, organization, experience, politics, race, etc.) in the long durée of humanity in interstellar space? We are especially interested in proposals that highlight how Asian religious traditions are transformed in—and transformative of—our understanding of space futures.
- We seek proposals on speculative fiction's musings, extensions, and provocations regarding the future of "gender," "family," "love," and "relationships." We are particularly interested in Martha Wells's series *The Murderbot Diaries* for its explorations of the futures of gender, love, friendship, family, and relationality.

- We continue to welcome proposals that apply speculative-fiction theory to provoke mutation and innovation in the study of religion.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit challenges the study of religion through the infinite possibilities for world-making, "god"-imagining, community-forming, and human/species-becoming posed by speculative fiction (SF). Science fiction, fantasy, horror, slipstream, weird fictions, futurisms, and related genre movements in literary and visual media address basic questions and predicaments traditionally posed and answered by "religion." Through engagement with SF narratives the work of this Unit invites comparison, exchange, and mutation in the study of religion.

Chairs

- James Thrall, Knox College
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- Rudy V. Busto
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In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Religion and Sexuality Unit

Call for Proposals

We invite proposals for individual papers, paper sessions, and roundtable proposals in all areas of the study of religion and sexuality. We are interested in work which engages diverse contexts, geographies, religions and communities. Proposals should reflect sound engagement with existing scholarship along with innovative theoretical and/or methodological proposals around the study of religion and sexuality. We encourage the submission of coherent pre-arranged sessions, which could include roundtables, pedagogic sessions, or other creative presentation formats.

This year we especially encourage individual and paper sessions that address the following topics along with the 2026 Presidential Theme of the Future.

+ ***The Future of Sex: Beyond Reproduction:*** Considering human sexuality as trajectory. What does sexual pleasure and experimentation point us toward? Is there a future without sexual violence? Uses of story-telling, coalition building, and trauma studies from a wide variety of geographies and religious traditions encouraged.

+ ***Beyond Marriage:*** Considering hetero-coupling as a tool, rather than a goal of human thriving; marriage and religious nationalisms; contemporary and creative framings in relation to sexual politics and social justice; theoretical and conceptual innovations when considering these intersections.

+ ***Sexuality and Citizenship:*** Considering how the formation of sexual citizenship informs the future of the nation state. Creative theologies or philosophies of citizenship drawn from a wide variety of geographies and religious traditions.

+ ***Religion and Sexual Literacy:*** Considering how knowledge about sex and sexuality is transferred, taught, and framed in order to achieve a particular vision of the future.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit examines religion and sexuality, broadly conceptualized, and focuses on questions of why and how sex matters for particular religious persons, communities, or traditions. We welcome collaboration with other Program Units doing work in some area of sexuality. Distinguishing this Unit from other Program Units are an emphasis on empirical research and analysis and an intentionally multidisciplinary and comparative religious focus. We especially encourage interdisciplinary approaches, interest in gender (broadly defined), and strong attention to methodological issues. This unit is committed to diversity and inclusivity; pre-arranged panels should reflect gender and racial/ethnic diversity as well as diversity of field, method, context, and scholarly rank as appropriate.

Chairs

- Sara Moslener
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 - Megan Robertson
m.a.robertson@leeds.ac.uk
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In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Religion and the Social Sciences Unit

Call for Proposals

The Religion and Social Sciences Unit (RSS) supports scholarship at the intersection of the social sciences and religious or theological studies. Topic areas include the study of religious and theological questions through specific social scientific methodologies, the integration of theological and social scientific approaches to the study of religious communities and practices, and comparative assessments of current issues by humanities-based and social scientific methods.

As always, we welcome all proposals on any topic broadly related to religion and the social sciences, and encourage creative formats such as flash sessions, roundtables, discussion-based, collaborative sessions, etc. We particularly encourage pre-arranged sessions or papers session proposals to engage with a diversity of scholarship and scholars in regard to gender, race/ethnicity, sexuality, institutional identity, rank, and those work outside of the academy.

If you think our unit is a good fit for your proposal, please be sure to select it as your first choice.

For the 2026 meeting in Denver, in addition to general topics in religion and the social sciences, we are interested in papers, papers session, and roundtable proposals that offer social scientific methodological and/or theoretical analyses in regard to:

- **Faith-Based Actors in Tumultuous Times:** The U.S. has entered an era of increasing precarity and fear. LGBTQ+ persons fear increasing loss of

fundamental rights such as marriage equality. Members of immigrant communities fear increasing detainment and deportation. Women fear increasing loss of reproductive rights and autonomy over their bodies. Economically precarious Americans fear the increasing loss of social safety nets such as health insurance subsidies and SNAP benefits. For many, the future feels foreclosed. Into this space, faith-based actors offer creative responses to meet the needs of the times. We invite papers that use social scientific methods and/or scholarship to explore how faith-based communities are mobilizing, organizing, demonstrating, or otherwise stepping in to contest and/or fill the gaps left by the loss of protections and social assistance to vulnerable populations.

- **Disrupted Futures in Latinx/e Faith Communities:** Latinx/e faith communities are facing profound disruption as their members navigate the constant possibility of ICE raids, deportation, family separation, and ethnic profiling. We invite papers that offer social scientific research and empirical/applied religious study of on-the-ground tactics and strategies for survival, resistance, and resilience within and among these communities, including how Latinx/e faith communities are acting in tangible ways to protect vulnerable individuals, families, and communities.
- **Re-membering and Dis-membering the Past, Present, and Future:** We invite papers or pre-arranged panels that explore re-membering and dis-membering as a metaphor for shifting community formations and social connection, as well as the ways we interpret the present and construct futures with data from the past. Papers may explore questions such as: How is collective identity shaped in moments of crisis? To what extent are existing and past religious, spiritual, and moral resources used in novel ways amidst unsettled times and uncertain futures to define individual and collective visions of flourishing? How are humans collectively re-imagining and narrating the good life and a good society at both micro and macro levels at a time when so many shared ideals seem to be collapsing? What are social and spiritual models for imagining and organizing for a shared future amidst difference?
- **Religion, Technofacist Futures, and Resistance:** We welcome papers or pre-arranged panels that critically explore the complex ways that religion and spirituality intersect with emerging technologies, including bio-medical

technologies, AI, and LLMs; techno-driven visions of the ideal human and society; and the formation of new digital communities and modes of transmission. Relatedly, as we think about the future, what critical questions do the social sciences and specifically the social scientific study of religion need to be asking about the impact of the technology industry on religious people, religious communities, and religion in public life? To what extent are we seeing convergences between the religious right (or far-right) and Silicon Valley and/or the emerging modes of spiritual and social resistance?

- **Religion and the Anthropology of the Future:** Arjun Appadurai writes about the “anthropology of the future” -- the need for scholars to examine the “many ways in which humanity has encountered, managed, and anticipated the future as a cultural horizon.” Relatedly, adrienne maree brown reminds us, the quest to claim the future often involves struggle in the present between competing social-moral-political imaginations. Thus, we invite papers or pre-arranged panels that draw on the social sciences to examine the conditions under which future horizons are opened, made possible, or curtailed. What is the role of religion and spirituality in this process? We are especially interested in research that illuminates the theoretical and empirical stakes of human efforts to imagine alternative futures. Such work may include things like:
 - Study of actions by religious people and communities intended to make the imagined future visible in the present and/or to transcend the past, as well as efforts to challenge or interrogate particular visions of the future.
 - Study of tools, strategies, practices, discourses, and ideals used to motivate people towards and shape the contours of a hoped-for future -- and the role of religion and spirituality in this process.
 - Study of how efforts to instantiate and embody the future in the present may contain religious logics that work towards both progressive and conservative ends.
 - Attention to how individuals and groups are mapping their ideal futures and critiquing the present; seeking to materialize, work out conditions for future belonging in the community-to-come - i.e. sociopolitical contours, values, ethics.

Statement of Purpose

The Religion and Social Sciences Unit (RSS) supports scholarship at the intersection of the social sciences and religious or theological studies. Topic areas include the study of

religious and theological questions through specific social scientific methodologies, the integration of theological and social scientific approaches to the study of religious communities and practices, and comparative assessments of current issues by humanities-based and social scientific methods.

Chairs

- Sara Williams, Fairfield University
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 - Rachel Schneider
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-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Religion in Europe Unit

Call for Proposals

This Unit analyzes religion in both Eastern and Western Europe or related to Europe (broadly defined) in any historical or contemporary period. We encourage interdisciplinary, interreligious, and comparative approaches, and we particularly welcome submissions from members of underrepresented groups in the Academy.

Religious Imaginaries and Ecological Futures in Europe

How do emerging forms of ecological activism—from Green parties to radical movements such as Extinction Rebellion—engage with religious affect, eschatological imagination, or ethical worldviews traditionally associated with faith? Conversely, how do religious leaders, communities, and institutions participate in ecological struggles or reinterpret doctrines of creation, destiny, and apocalypse in light of climate crisis?

We welcome proposals that examine how European contexts shape the entanglement of religion and ecology—whether through political theology, affect theory, critical theory, or decolonial thought. Topics may include (but are not limited to):

- Apocalyptic and utopian temporalities in ecological movements;
- Religious hope, despair, and moral responsibility in times of planetary crisis;
- Futurity and eschatology in European political ecologies;
- The reemergence of spiritual or ethical vocabularies within secular environmentalism;
- Theoretical interventions in how “futures” are imagined, interrupted, or foreclosed in religion and ecology.

[*For a possible co-sponsored session with the Mysticism Unit and the Religion in Premodern Europe and the Mediterranean Unit.*](#)

Back to the Future: Mysticism, Apocalypse, and Innovation

This panel invites papers that explore how mystic writers and texts approach the theme of apocalypse. Of particular interest are historically grounded approaches to apocalyptic mysticism that consider premodern frameworks. Additional areas of focus include comparisons across traditions and between Eurocentric and non-Eurocentric perspectives, apocalypse and social reform, trans panic and apocalyptic futures, and apocalypse and the colonial imagination. Specific paper topics might include, but are not limited to:

- Repurposing of premodern frameworks in our contemporary moment
- Historical and contemporary theorizations of apocalypse and millenarianism
- Apocalyptic mysticism, neo-fascism, and accelerationism
- Decolonial interventions and apocalyptic narratives
- Imaginative reconfigurations of apocalyptic mysticism
- Technological visions of apocalypse (singularity, AI, and the posthuman)

We also welcome proposals beyond these themes, especially proposals for complete pre-arranged sessions related to religion and Europe, broadly interpreted. Successful sessions will reflect gender and racial/ethnic diversity, as well as diversity of field, method, and scholarly rank as appropriate.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit is designed to serve as a forum for scholarly dialogue on religious issues related to the social, cultural, and political contexts of Eastern and Western Europe and beyond, seeking to help guide critical conversations about Europe and its global entanglements. Our guiding principles include a commitment to scholarly dialogue

across disciplines, a comparative spirit sensitive to Europe's religious diversity, and a transhistorical appreciation of the full trajectory of European-related experiences.

Chairs

- Tyson Herberger
tyson.herberger@usn.no
 - John McCormack, Aurora University
jmccormack@aurora.edu
-

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Religion in Europe Unit

Call for Proposals

This Unit analyzes religion in both Eastern and Western Europe or related to Europe (broadly defined) in any historical or contemporary period. We encourage interdisciplinary, interreligious, and comparative approaches, and we particularly welcome submissions from members of underrepresented groups in the Academy.

For our June online meeting session, we are especially considering proposals related to:

Futures for Religions in Europe

- We invite proposals examining potential futures for religious institutions, practices, and communities in Europe (again, broadly defined). Contributors might examine continuities or discontinuities. We welcome diverse methods (qualitative or quantitative, historical, theological, social-scientific, etc.) and geographical foci (trans-national, national, local, etc.). We hope that this session might provoke comparative conversation that complicates understandings of the borders of spaces and places, of religious traditions, of the religious and the secular.

We also welcome proposals beyond this theme, especially proposals for complete pre-arranged sessions related to religion and Europe, broadly interpreted. Successful

sessions will reflect gender and racial/ethnic diversity, as well as diversity of field, method, and scholarly rank as appropriate.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit is designed to serve as a forum for scholarly dialogue on religious issues related to the social, cultural, and political contexts of Eastern and Western Europe and beyond, seeking to help guide critical conversations about Europe and its global entanglements. Our guiding principles include a commitment to scholarly dialogue across disciplines, a comparative spirit sensitive to Europe's religious diversity, and a transhistorical appreciation of the full trajectory of European-related experiences.

Chairs

- Tyson Herberger
tyson.herberger@usn.no
 - John McCormack, Aurora University
jmccormack@aurora.edu
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Religion in Premodern Europe and the Mediterranean Unit

Call for Proposals

We welcome proposals on all topics related to religion in premodern Europe and the Mediterranean, especially Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Our Program Unit facilitates comparative analysis of these traditions and explores the history of their entanglements. We encourage the submission of preformed panel proposals suitable for 90-minute time slots.

We especially welcome proposals that examine manuscript and early print cultures and explore how digital media change possibilities for scholarship today.

[For a possible session Co-Sponsored with Jewish Studies](#), we also seek respondents to two recently published books:

- Marc Herman, *After Revelation: The Rabbinic Past in the Medieval Islamic World* (Penn, 2025)
- Noam Sienna, *Jewish Books in North Africa: Between the Early Modern and Modern Worlds* (Indiana, 2025)

Potential respondents can address cultural exchange, book history, or other issues raised by either or both books.

[For a possible session Co-Sponsored with the Program Units in Mysticism and Religion in Europe](#), we seek proposals for "Back to the Future: Mysticism, Apocalypse, and Innovation." This panel invites papers that explore how mystic literature and visual culture approach the theme of apocalypse. Of particular interest are historically grounded approaches to apocalyptic mysticism that consider premodern frameworks. Additional areas of focus include comparisons across traditions and between Eurocentric and non-Eurocentric perspectives, apocalypse and social reform, trans panic and apocalyptic futures, and apocalypse and the colonial imagination. Specific paper topics might include, but are not limited to:

- Repurposing of premodern frameworks in our contemporary moment
- Historical and contemporary theorizations of apocalypse and millenarianism
- Apocalyptic mysticism, neo-fascism, and accelerationism
- Decolonial interventions and apocalyptic narratives
- Imaginative reconfigurations of apocalyptic mysticism
- Technological visions of apocalypse (singularity, AI, and the posthuman)

Statement of Purpose

This Unit aims to bring together scholars working on premodern Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in order to create a venue in which religious phenomena can be considered comparatively. Individual papers may be embedded in a single tradition, but presenters should be interested in engaging this material comparatively during the discussion period.

Chairs

- Lora Walsh

- ljwalsh@uark.edu
- Claire Fanger
claire@celestiscuria.org
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Religion in Southeast Asia Unit

Call for Proposals

The Religion in Southeast Asia Program Unit at the American Academy of Religion (AAR) invites proposals for individual papers, paper sessions, and roundtables. The deadline for submitting proposals is **March 6, 2026**. For those interested in proposing organized paper sessions, we would encourage you to consider a 90-minute session. As part of our ongoing effort to promote greater inclusiveness in the topics and participants involved in our Unit's activities, we encourage and invite proposals from scholars of all ethnic backgrounds, genders, professional ranks, and disciplinary perspectives. We will prioritize submissions from underrepresented groups and those who have not previously presented in this Program Unit.

With the AAR's 2026 theme of '**Future/s**' in mind, we are also seeking papers that consider the relationship between religion, social movements, governance, and freedom. Topics of interest suggested by 2025 meeting participants for the 2026 meeting in Denver, CO (November 21–24) include:

- Southeast Asian religions, ecologies, and environmental futures
- Experiences of and responses to Japanese empire and occupation
- Political theologies and visions for the future
- Religions in/and translation

Statement of Purpose

Situated at the nexus of several civilizational influences—including Indian, Chinese, and Middle Eastern—Southeast Asia, as a region, remains understudied in terms of its relevance to the theoretical and methodological study of religion. This neglect is in part

due to the tendency to reduce Southeast Asian religious systems to the named “world religions” often identified with other regions. As a result, indigenous practices are not viewed in terms of their conceptual and other linkages—and in some cases the dynamic interactions between those practices and the religious practices brought over by different classes of immigrants are frequently overlooked. However, and especially in the last fifteen years, exciting materials addressing different religious cultures in Southeast Asia have emerged. Hitherto, there has been little scholarly conversation at the AAR on Southeast Asia. And, perhaps even less commonly, are Southeast Asian religious cultures (e.g., Buddhist, Islamic, Christian, Hindu, “animist,” Chinese, and Pacific) put into conversation with one another. In light of this need in the field, we strive to provide a context for this conversation as well as to foster critical thinking about Southeast Asia as a region.

Chairs

- David Thang Moe, Yale University
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- MK Long, Dartmouth College
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In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Religion, Affect, and Emotion Unit

Call for Proposals

The Religion, Affect, and Emotion Unit invites proposals for panels and individual presenters that explore the affective, noncognitive, and passional dimensions of religion. We actively invite presentation formats that reimagine the space of the academic conference.

For the 2026 annual meeting, we are particularly interested in proposals that address either of two themes.

1) Presidential Theme Lightning Session: “Future/s”

Drawing on the 2026 presidential theme, “Future/s” we invite proposals for 8-10 minute papers that explore intersections of temporality, affect, and emotion. In line with our commitment to engaging diverse fields, we encourage broad interpretations of each of these concepts. Some viable ideas include the affective and religious dynamics of:

- queer futures and phenomenologies
- aberrations and ruptures in the past/present/future
- ancestral lineages and rituals
- fascism and futurity
- divination
- cyclical and linear temporalities
- feeling (in/out of) time
- just futuring in religious studies

Along with the 8-10 minute time limit for these presentations, we welcome the playful bending of usual presentation norms and forms. As with past lightning sessions, we expect that the presentations will be followed by lively and energizing conversation.

2) How do we feel about the US these days?

Given the impact of US American political realities on our lives—in the US and abroad, in the academy and beyond—we invite proposals that interrogate their affective and religious dimensions. Possible topics include:

- US American identity and xenophobia
- Christian Nationalism, its causes and uses
- Shifts in US American global influence
- “Patriot Games” and the upcoming US sesquicentennial
- Community organizing and political movements
- Academic freedom in US American schools

Statement of Purpose

This Unit provides space for theoretically-informed discussion of the relationship between religion, affect, and emotion. The Unit serves as a meeting point for conversations on the affective, noncognitive, and passional dimensions of religion coming from diverse fields, including anthropology, comparative religion, psychology, decolonial theory, gender and sexuality studies, cultural studies, philosophy, and theology. Proposals drawing on these theoretical resources to examine specific religious traditions, shifting historical understandings of religion and affect/emotion, comparative

work that looks at affective forms across traditions, and broader theoretical reflections are all welcome.

Chairs

- Shea Watts
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 - Marvin Wickware
marvin.wickware@lstc.edu
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Religion, Colonialism, and Postcolonialism Unit

Call for Proposals

In addition to papers and proposals dealing with religion, colonialism, and post-colonialism more broadly, we invite papers on the following topics:

- **"Haunting Future/s" (panel co-sponsored with Theology and Religious Reflection)**

In response to this year's presidential theme, we invite papers that investigate questions of futurity in theological and colonial discourses on haunting, spectrality, and ghostliness. Topics can include but are not limited to:

- Political messianism
- The "post" of postcolonialism
- "Vanishing races"
- (Post-)Colonial Melancholia
- Fascism and utopia in the settler colony (re: Jameson?)
- Theology and horror
- Theologies of spectral media
- Necropolitics and biopolitics

- Spectrality and the archive
- Imperial boomerangs
- "Survivance"
- Ancestral presences and interventions
- **Book panel: Tisa Wenger, *Spirits of Empire: How Settler Colonialism Made American Religion* (UNC, 2026)**
- [Legacies of Tomoko Masuzawa's *The Invention of World Religions* \(panel co-sponsored with Cultural History of the Study of Religion\)](#)

Some two decades after the publication of Tomoko Masuzawa's seminal account of the formation of the World Religions paradigm, we invite reflection on the multiple effects of her work. These may address any of the following: (1) the reception history of *Invention*; (2) its intellectual legacy, including continuities/discontinuities across various subfields; (3) its pedagogic impact; (4) the institutional effects or non-effects of the critique of the pluralist paradigm.

- **Competing Empires: Religion, Secularism, and Exceptionalism**
- **Theology, economics, and politics of "gold"**

Please note that the Religion, Colonialism and Postcolonialism Unit is deeply committed to inclusion and diversity. Please ensure that any full panel proposals are sensitive in their consideration of a plurality of gendered and racialized voices.

Thank you for considering sending a proposal to the Religion, Colonialism, and Postcolonialism Unit and we look forward to seeing you in Boston.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit presents an opportunity for scholars in various subfields of religious studies to explore a topic whose relevance cuts across specializations. We bring together scholars treating different time periods, geographical regions, and traditions in working to strengthen our field's role in the study of empire, colonialism, and postcolonialism.

Chairs

- Adam Stern, University of Wisconsin, Madison

- adam.stern@wisc.edu
 - Marlon Millner, Wesleyan University
marlonmillner2021@u.northwestern.edu
-

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Religion, Colonialism, and Postcolonialism **Unit**

Call for Proposals

We invite all papers and proposals dealing with topics related to religion, colonialism, and post-colonialism.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit presents an opportunity for scholars in various subfields of religious studies to explore a topic whose relevance cuts across specializations. We bring together scholars treating different time periods, geographical regions, and traditions in working to strengthen our field's role in the study of empire, colonialism, and postcolonialism.

Chairs

- Adam Stern, University of Wisconsin, Madison
adam.stern@wisc.edu
 - Marlon Millner, Wesleyan University
marlonmillner2021@u.northwestern.edu
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Religion, Film, and Visual Culture Unit

Call for Proposals

The Religion, Film, and Visual Culture Unit invites proposals on the following topics. We are committed to diversity and thus work to ensure attention to visual culture in a global context and to the gender, ethnic and geographic diversity of participants. Additionally, we expect presenters to incorporate visual media in presentations; authors should frame proposals such that they indicate their attention to the sensory factors of visual culture, including but not limited to visuals. Finally, we ask that authors be clear about their theoretical and methodological approaches and perspectives.

Call for Proposals for 2026 November Annual Meeting

Future/s: The 2026 AAR presidential theme for the annual meeting is “Future/s,” especially as it pertains to the future of religious scholarship within and without the academy, so we seek proposals that demonstrate concern for how film and visual media intersect with our ability to reckon with the future of Religious Studies as a discipline, its institutional homes, and how we might imagine the possibilities for scholars of religion. We also seek proposals that examine how our subjects and their artistic expressions formulate meaningful futures. What futures does film and visual culture open up for religious communities? How can their strategies for imaginative projection be put to use moving forward?

Visual Culture in Japanese Culture – Co-Sponsored with Japanese Religions Unit:

We seek proposals that explore the religious context of Japanese film, television, anime, and popular culture. We would also like proposals that show how visual culture has been employed in religious contexts, such as imagery, maps, illustrations, iconography, and collectibles. How do these contexts intersect and co-construct each other?

Visualizing Sacred Landscapes: Religious traditions often imagine geographies that plot out ontological possibilities for humans and the cosmos. We seek proposals that address how traditions visualize inner and cosmological realms. How do religions map the body? How is land pictured as sacred? What do future geographical domains look like across traditions? What strategies are most effective in understanding the visualization of sacred landscapes?

Horror and Haunting in Religion: As the horror genre continues to remain a fixture in popular culture, we are interested in focusing our attention on “haunting” stories and images (both fictional and non-fictional), and their relation to religion. “Haunting” may

include (but is not limited to): ghosts and spirits, seances and mediums, divination, ancestral worship, the occult, haunted locations, spirit photography, and a wide variety of other visual forms of the paranormal, supernatural, and spiritual.

Picturing Death and Dying: Documentaries such as *How to Die in Oregon* (2011), *Extremis* (2016), *Dick Johnson Is Dead* (2019), and *Come See Me in the Good Light* (2025) follow real-life individuals as they prepare for death after receiving a terminal diagnosis. How might such films—both documentary and fictional—serve as a kind of visual *memento mori*? We seek proposals that explore the visuals of death and dying, especially in religious contexts.

Animals in Film: Religions are typically understood from a human perspective or the vantage point of deities. Recent films, like *Good Boy* (2025), *Flow* (2024) and *Eo* (2022) have recentered the narrative subject of cinema and opened up new perspectives for understanding religion. We seek proposals that explore how animal characters have been used in film. What can we learn about religion when we focus on animals' perspective? What functions do they have in storytelling?

Buddhism as Cinematic Experience and Practice – Co-Sponsored with the Buddhism Unit (Contact: Dhondup T. Rekjong (rekjong@gmail.com) and Jue Liang (storylj@gmail.com))

Instead of focusing on the content of films as relevant to Buddhism, this panel queries the embodied aspects of Buddhism as both cinematic experience and practice. Potential topics include:

- Film viewing as a Buddhist practice (individual viewing, collective, conversational; locations, settings, multisensational experiences)
- Filmmaking or film viewing as a new mode of studying Buddhism
- Filmmaking as both a depiction of Buddhism on screen and a practice of Buddhism itself
- Filmmaking as a cinematic way of practicing Buddhism that moves beyond its textual, oral, and institutional authorities
- Presenting Buddhism within the frame of a film is like experiencing it in a particular space and time.

We welcome participation from filmmakers, artists, and other practitioners in filmmaking.

Key Scholarly Monographs: We're interested in organized panels focused on monographs centered on the subject of religion, film, and visual culture published in 2025 or 2026. These panels can take the form of critical review, generative roundtable responses, prompts for further exploration, author dialogue, and more. Be sure to include a brief summary of the book and clearly delineate its significance and relevance for the study of religion, film, and visual culture. Outline how the participants will contribute to a broad conversation on the subject and advance the book's arguments and conclusions.

Statement of Purpose

The Religion, Film, and Visual Culture Unit offers a forum for theory and methodology of the visual for those interested in the interdisciplinary study of religion, film, and visual culture. There is no single way to study religion and the visual, and we expect scholars to provide new perspectives on the way we understand visual culture and to provide this understanding through traditional and emerging methodologies.

Chairs

- Kristian Petersen
kristianpetersen20@mac.com
- Joel Mayward, George Fox University
jmayward@gmail.com

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Religion, Film, and Visual Culture Unit

Call for Proposals

For the online meeting, we invite individual paper submissions or full panel proposals on any theme related to Religion, Film, and Visual Culture. We are especially interested in proposals on the following:

- **International Film and Religion:** While Hollywood cinema has dominated the global film market it reflects the particular religious sensibilities and communities of North American creators and audiences. How are global religious practices, ideas, and communities taken up in international cinema? We seek proposals on the analysis of films and cinematic environments revolving around religion in African, Asian, South American, or Oceania.

Statement of Purpose

The Religion, Film, and Visual Culture Unit offers a forum for theory and methodology of the visual for those interested in the interdisciplinary study of religion, film, and visual culture. There is no single way to study religion and the visual, and we expect scholars to provide new perspectives on the way we understand visual culture and to provide this understanding through traditional and emerging methodologies.

Chairs

- Kristian Petersen
kristianpetersen20@mac.com
- Joel Mayward, George Fox University
jmayward@gmail.com

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Religion, Holocaust, and Genocide Unit

Call for Proposals

Tension between Holocaust studies and genocide studies

The study of religion is essential for understanding how genocides happen and how people engage in practices of justice and healing after genocide. Religious identity and religious structures of both victims and perpetrators have long been analyzed by scholars of the Holocaust and other genocides. Often these scholars have been in conversation with each other, including the Religion, Holocaust, and Genocide Unit at

AAR. Indeed, methodological approaches in religious studies lend themselves particularly well to studying disparate religious, political, geographical, and temporal contexts. Over the past two years, however, tensions between the fields of Holocaust and Genocide studies have made it difficult to be in conversation. This panel seeks papers that engage comparative approaches and/or highlight methodological approaches from religious studies that might reinvigorate these fields.

Session on practical strategies for teaching on genocide

Our current political polarization—especially given the U.S. administration’s attacks on higher education—can make the teaching of genocide precarious for instructors. How do scholars and instructors do their work when government agencies are threatened by it? How do we teach genocide when the family of our students are either victims or perpetrators of genocidal violence? We seek papers that explore pedagogical strategies in broaching how to balance government surveillance and student trust when teaching about contemporary genocides.

Navigating the memory of complicity

It has long been acknowledged that people and organizations connected to events of mass violence do not always fit neatly into roles of victim, perpetrator, and bystander. There may, in particular contexts, be more complex forms of complicity. The legacies of such complicity for future generations can be challenging and contested. We seek papers that explore the intersections between religion, complicity, mass violence, and memory. How have religious institutions variously participated in or obstructed attempts to expose and reflect upon past complicities? Or how has the historic complicity of religious ideas, institutions, or individuals been subsequently ignored, interrogated, or weaponised? Proposals that explore such dynamics in relation to any episode of genocide are welcomed.

Interreligious and Interfaith Engagement After Gaza

Cosponsored call with Interreligious/Interfaith Studies Unit. The events in Gaza have profoundly reshaped academic discourse and interreligious engagement both nationally and internationally. Communities across diverse religious, political, racial, and generational lines have been compelled to confront questions of solidarity, moral responsibility, and public witness in unprecedented ways. While many groups have deepened their collaborative efforts in response to the humanitarian crisis, others have experienced heightened tensions, fractured partnerships, or significant reevaluations of their approaches to dialogue and shared action.

College and university campuses have been particularly affected. Differences in generational perspectives have become more pronounced, and institutions have struggled to navigate the ethical, political, and pastoral complexities raised by student activism, administrative responses, and a variety of external pressures. These dynamics have placed interfaith initiatives under extraordinary strain.

For this session, we invite papers that critically and constructively examine intra-and-interfaith and interreligious work in the wake of the annihilation of Gaza. Possible themes include, but are not limited to:

How previously disparate communities or traditions have found common cause or forged new alliances

Cases in which longstanding interfaith partnerships have faltered, dissolved, or required significant reframing

The role of generational, racial, and political differences in shaping interfaith engagement around this topic

The impact of institutional, governmental, or public pressures on interfaith programs, discourse, and leadership

Internal tensions within interfaith spaces as participants negotiate competing commitments, narratives, and expectations

We seek contributions that draw from empirical research, theological or ethical analysis, historical perspectives, or practitioner experience. Our aim is to foster a nuanced, rigorous conversation about how interreligious engagement is being transformed by the ongoing crisis, and what possibilities and challenges lie ahead for interfaith work in this shifting landscape.

Rituals and mass violence

Cosponsored call with the Ritual Studies Unit: We invite papers that explore the intersections between ritualization and mass violence. Approaches to this topic may include themes such as rituals and victimhood, rituals and perpetration, and rituals and memories of mass violence. For example, how do communities facing violent persecution maintain rituals in situations of extreme disruption or develop rituals as a form of resilience and resistance? How do the perpetrators of large-scale violent acts ritualize their behaviours? What rituals develop for collective memory of violent histories and how do they draw on earlier traditions and/or create new innovations in community practice?

Statement of Purpose

The term “genocide” was coined by Raphael Lemkin in 1944, and in 1948 the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. In this context, our Unit treats prominent atrocities of the twentieth century, but topics of interest extend before and after this period as well beyond the legal definition of genocide. This Unit addresses religious aspects of genocidal conflicts, other mass atrocities, and human rights abuses that have made a deep and lasting impact on society, politics, and international affairs. Unit interests also include instructive lessons and reflections that Holocaust and Genocide Studies can lend to illuminating other human rights violations and instances of mass violence and the construal of genocide within a human rights violation spectrum that allows for the study of neglected or ignored conflicts that include a salient religious element. Our work is interdisciplinary and includes scholars from fields including History, Ethics, Theology, Philosophy, Jewish Studies, Church History, Anthropology, Political Science, Gender Studies, and regional area studies of Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East.

Chairs

- Benjamin Sax
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 - David Tollerton
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-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Religion, Media, and Culture Unit

Call for Proposals

The Religion, Media, and Culture Unit invites individual presentations, paper/multimedia research presentation sessions, and roundtable proposals on the following themes.

A. Independent Sessions:

1. Media Propaganda and the Sacred Canopy: Proposals that investigate the tactics of state-affiliated or state-supportive messaging, how the powerful speak about themselves and “others.” Examples could include the “Project Firewall” initiative from the U.S. Department of Labor, “Defend the Homeland” recruitment campaigns from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), “Godi media” in India, Israeli “hasbara,” Putin’s “Novorossiia” project, a “Patriots Only” Hong Kong, and more. What kind of future does such propaganda envision or seek to create? How does such propaganda act to deliver and/or reify the imagined worldviews of a political base?

2. Media Tactics of Resistance: Proposals that investigate “futures” entailing heavy surveillance, censorship, oppression, and/or rebellion – e.g., *V for Vendetta* (2005), *Sorry to Bother You* (2018), *Blood Quantum* (2019), and *One Battle After Another* (2025). Studies of games, graphic novels, and other media are welcomed. We also encourage studies of the resistant media tactics observed in instances of non-fiction – that is, social media campaigns, public protests, and civic organizing. Should enough quality papers be submitted, this session may warrant a co-sponsorship with the Indigenous Religious Traditions Unit.

3. Celebrity Media: Proposals that investigate the parasocial nature of online fascinations with celebrity – “haters” and “stans” alike. Examples include the meme glorification of Luigi Mangione, Charlie Kirk’s public assassination and subsequently mediatized hagiography and martyrdom, “trad wife” criticisms of Taylor Swift, and Sydney Sweeney’s racially-charged “Great Jeans” advertisement. What is the future of “stan” culture (cf. *Stans*, 2025), our socio-emotional connection with mediatized public figures?

4. Horror Media: Proposals that investigate the intersection of religion and horror (of any medium). Topics of dark supernaturalism, monstrosity, and madness are encouraged. Examples could include Ryan Murphy’s *MONSTER* anthology series or films such as *Lamb* (2021), *Late Night with the Devil* (2023), *Heretic* (2024), *The Substance* (2024), and *The Carpenter’s Son* (2025). Proposals could also investigate the use of “futurity” as a fictional construct or setting in horror, or the “future” of horror as an entertainment industry. Topics of apocalypticism and dystopia are encouraged. Examples could include Charlie Brooker’s *Black Mirror* anthology series.

B. Co-Sponsored Sessions:

5. The FUTURE of Teaching and Learning: Artificial Intelligence in the Classroom (co-sponsored between the Religion, Media, and Culture Unit, Teaching Religion Unit, and Class, Labor, and Religion Unit): We welcome presentations that (1) analyze and/or demonstrate innovative teaching methods/styles using various A.I.-answer

engines, per past experience or future teaching plans; (2) evaluate any obstacles that arise when A.I. enters the religious studies classroom; and (3) address the future of academic labor as related to AI. Potential concerns include plagiarism convenience, threats to academic integrity, "hallucination," inaccuracy, and bias deficiencies, "homogenized" thought, and compromises to student attention and effort. Proposals should consider how our work as educators is being affected by both changes to the university and AI; how the growing movement towards teaching, grading, and writing using AI tools affects our work.

6. Teaching Islam, Gender, and Women with Multimedia (co-sponsored between the Religion, Media, and Culture Unit, Islam, Gender, and Women Unit, and Religion and Popular Culture Unit): This pedagogy-focused session invites educators at all levels to share an effective use of multimedia (film clips, online videos, music, digital or real life art/museum exhibitions, social media posts, or other audiovisual materials) in teaching topics related to Islam, gender, and women. Each presenter will lead a breakout table in discussion on pedagogical goals, learning outcomes, and practical strategies for fostering critical engagement about their chosen multimedia resource for about 50 minutes, followed by 5-7 minutes of summation for all attendees.

Proposals should (1) identify the selected multimedia material and explain its relevance; (2) describe the themes it addresses and the classroom conversations it opens; and (3) offer concrete teaching strategies, activities, and/or assignments that participants can adapt for their own courses. We especially welcome presentations that model a brief segment of the proposed classroom activity, allowing attendees to experience the material as students. Note that accepted presenters will be required to submit their slide deck or electronic materials by XDATE for inclusion in the program book.

Religion, Media, and Culture supports the Islam, Gender, and Women Unit's commitment to non-traditional formats for its sessions on scholarship related to the study of gender and women in Islam. Proposals that do not conform to these non-traditional formats, or variations to it, will not be considered.

7. "Sportswashing" and "Reputation Laundering" (for a possible co-sponsored session with the Religion, Sport, and Play Unit): Proposals that investigate the complex religious and political dynamics at stake in the rising global economies of the future. Consider the example of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 campaign, the controversies surrounding the Riyadh Comedy Festival (2025), WrestleMania 43 (2027), their hosting of the FIFA World Cup (2034), and the ongoing LIV professional golf tour. How do these national events detract from a country's otherwise tarnished image, rehabilitating public opinion through sports worship and sacred leisure time? How is "sportswashing" used in more developed countries such as the United States? How are U.S. Americans equally

culpable within these business dynamics? What role does religion play here either as a co-participant in the state's dealings or as a source of critique? Studies of China, the United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, and others are also encouraged.

8. Open Call: We solicit research-based papers and pre-arranged panels on any topic related to the study of religion, media, and culture, from any region or time period.

RMC is committed to diversity and inclusivity. Pre-arranged panels should reflect gender and racial/ethnic diversity as well as diversity of field, method, and scholarly rank as appropriate. We strongly prefer papers that include audio/visual media and ask that proposals make use of media clear. We are also particularly interested in session proposals and presentations that break from traditional paper-reading formats. We encourage panels that propose innovative ways to develop collaborative conversation, especially those that allow for timely analysis of current events.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit provides a multidisciplinary forum for exploring the intersections between media and religion. Areas of interest include the participation of religion in digital culture, mediation of religion, the interplay between religious and media communities and between religious and media practices, and the significance of both media and religion in the transformation of religious structures and practices.

Chairs

- Sana Patel
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- William Chavez
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In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Religion, Sport, and Play Unit

Call for Proposals

The Religion, Sport, and Play Unit seeks individual paper and panel proposals for **two** sessions at the 2026 annual conference.

1. **(Co-sponsored with Religion, Media, and Culture unit)** "Sportswashing" and "Reputation Laundering": Proposals that investigate the complex religious and political dynamics at stake in the rising global economies of the future. Consider the example of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 campaign, the controversies surrounding the Riyadh Comedy Festival (2025), WrestleMania 43 (2027), their hosting of the FIFA World Cup (2034), and the ongoing LIV professional golf tour. How do these national events detract from a country's otherwise tarnished image, rehabilitating public opinion through sports worship and sacred leisure time? How is "sportswashing" used in more developed countries such as the United States? How are U.S. Americans equally culpable within these business dynamics? What role does religion play here either as a co-participant in the state's dealings or as a source of critique? Studies of China, the United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, and others are also encouraged.
2. The United States stands at a constitutional crisis threatening individual freedoms, international relations, and profound stress on democratic institutions. With the increasing political instability across the United States, the Religion, Sport, Play unit invites papers examining the many contemporary intersections of religion and politics in sporting spaces. Preference will be given to proposals focusing on the integration of white Christian nationalist ideologies and sport, professional athlete responses to the chaos, violence, and precarity of police and immigration forces, and World Cup boycotts and critiques.

The Religion, Sport, and Play Unit is committed to inclusion. Our Unit requires pre-arranged sessions or panel proposals to incorporate gender diversity; diversity of race, ethnicity, and rank are also highly encouraged.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit provides an opportunity for scholars to engage in emerging research at the intersection of religion and sport, games, and play. We are interested in examining these topics across broad geographical areas, religious traditions, and historical eras. We encourage critical reflection regarding relationships of religious institutions to sport,

play, and games; theological and spiritual experiences of participants and spectators invested in these activities; and the cross-cultural applicability of the received categories.

Chairs

- Kimberly Diaz
kdiaz038@ucr.edu
 - Terry Shoemaker, Arizona State University
terry.shoemaker@asu.edu
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Religions in the Latina/o Americas Unit

Call for Proposals

Religions in the Latina/o Americas invites proposals for individual papers and pre-arranged panels on any topic related to the interdisciplinary study of religion in Latin America and Latine/x religion in North America. We invite critical engagements with this year's theme on "future/s" especially with regards to the field as a professional activity. As we navigate an era of unprecedented uncertainty (marked by the precarity of the academic labor market, the shrinking of humanities departments, and the global crises of democracy) our scholarly community stands at a crossroads. For our contingent faculty, graduate students, and those forging para-academic paths, the "future" is not an abstract concept but a site of profound vulnerability. Yet, Latin American religious traditions have long been laboratories for "futuring" amidst crisis. From indigenous cosmologies that resist the "end of the world" to prophetic traditions that demand the kingdom of God on earth, the region offers a rich tapestry of imagination that refuses both easy despair and superficial hope.

Members of our unit are particularly interested in:

- Decolonial Futurities: How do Indigenous and Afro-Latin American traditions challenge Western linear notions of "the future"?

- Prophetic Imaginations: Revisiting Liberation Theology, Pentecostal utopianism, and grassroots movements that utilize religious rhetoric to demand radical socio-political shifts.
- Dystopia and Resistance: Critical assessments of how religious groups navigate authoritarianism, violence, and the "muscle of dystopic imagination" in contemporary Latin American politics.
- Materializing Hope: The role of aesthetics, art, film, and digital media in "enfleshing" religious futures. How do material practices make the imagined "future" tangible today?
- Global detention and displacement: How do religious actors and displaced persons navigate the "carceral landscapes" of modern borders? We invite papers on the "affectual potentials" of religious care in detention centers, the role of faith-based sanctuary networks, and how "spiritual citizenship" allows displaced communities to reclaim agency and imagine a future beyond the cage.

Emerging Scholars Session

Each year we try to dedicate one panel to emerging scholars, which includes advanced graduate students and recent PhDs who work in our field. Please do not hesitate to submit your work to our unit even if it is early in its development or exploratory; we provide a critical but encouraging environment for the professional development of early career scholars.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit fosters interdisciplinary and theoretically innovative analyses of Latina/o and Latin American religiosities and spiritualities in the Americas. We explore the richness and diversity of religious traditions in Latin America, the Caribbean, and the United States, highlighting the complex and often explosive relations between religion and politics in the region, the centrality of religion in the Americas since pre-Conquest times, and the global significance of religious events and lived religion in the region. Our goal is to advance knowledge and ways of knowing that expand traditional areas of religious studies throughout the Americas, mindful of transnational and global realities. Thus, we encourage studies that explore non-Western beliefs and practices, including the indigenous, the African diasporic, Buddhist, and Islamic, as well as those that advance more complex understanding of culturally hybrid Christianities. We encourage feminist-

and queer-centered perspectives as well as thought rooted in community experience. Diverse disciplinary and methodological perspectives are highlighted in presentation of this scholarship.

Chairs

- Justin Doran
jmdoran@middlebury.edu
-

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Religions in the Latina/o Americas Unit

Call for Proposals

If you are interested in participating in the AAR's new online-only June meeting, please feel welcome to submit proposals that indicate your specific interest in this meeting. For the June meeting, we encourage proposals that focus on the digital humanities and contemporary issues in online media. We are particularly interested in proposals that are not recitations of prepared papers but instead use the telemeeting format in intentional ways.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit fosters interdisciplinary and theoretically innovative analyses of Latina/o and Latin American religiosities and spiritualities in the Americas. We explore the richness and diversity of religious traditions in Latin America, the Caribbean, and the United States, highlighting the complex and often explosive relations between religion and politics in the region, the centrality of religion in the Americas since pre-Conquest times, and the global significance of religious events and lived religion in the region. Our goal is to advance knowledge and ways of knowing that expand traditional areas of religious studies throughout the Americas, mindful of transnational and global realities. Thus, we encourage studies that explore non-Western beliefs and practices, including the indigenous, the African diasporic, Buddhist, and Islamic, as well as those that advance more complex understanding of culturally hybrid Christianities. We encourage feminist-

and queer-centered perspectives as well as thought rooted in community experience. Diverse disciplinary and methodological perspectives are highlighted in presentation of this scholarship.

Chairs

- Justin Doran
jmdoran@middlebury.edu
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Religions, Medicines, and Healing Unit

Call for Proposals

The Religions, Medicines, and Healing Unit welcomes paper and/or panel proposals that explore specific intersections of religious and other healing traditions and practices. Proposals should address the social context of the topic, as well as theoretical and analytical frameworks, such as how this analysis helps us to understand religions, medicine, and healing in new ways. For 2026, we welcome any proposal that addresses our goals, and we have a particular interest in the following themes:

- **The Past & Future of Shamanisms**

75 years ago, historian of religion Mircea Eliade published his seminal *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (1951). Ambitious, provocative, and imperfect, Eliade's work irreversibly established the terminology and phenomenon of the shaman, the "specialist of the soul," within the study of religion. Despite controversies surrounding his positionality and research, Eliade has proven deeply influential in the study of shamanic practice as well as the study of religion. Decades later, what space and perspective does the "shaman" still occupy within scholarly communities? We invite proposals that unpack the academic employment, evaluation, and understanding of shamanism—broadly defined. How has shamanism troubled our artificial boundaries of religion/science, material/spiritual, health/illness, power/vulnerability and more? How has the study of marginal and subaltern shamanic practices enhanced our broader understanding of religion, culture, healing techniques, and cosmological beliefs? Is there

something unique and distinctly religious to the shaman's techniques of ecstasy, or can these healing technologies be isolated, marketed, and commodified as capitalist forms of "alternative medicine"? Must shamanism be defined by a sense of the archaic, or can it also be "new," embracing emerging techniques and practices, and gesturing to potential "futures" for the study of religion? How does "shamanism" remain a useful label and heuristic and, alternatively, how does it further the colonial project: a technique of power for othering and delegitimizing religious practices?

- **Healing Future/s: Experience, Expertise, and Expectation**

In keeping with the 2026 AAR presidential theme of FUTURE/S, the Religions, Medicines, and Healing Unit invites proposals that grapple with how medical and religious healing traditions imagine and work toward healthier futures. Healers, patients, and their communities do not simply wait for the future to arrive; they diagnose it, plan for it, worry about it, and occasionally try to coerce it into being. Whether it is the discipline of daily care, making interpretative sense of illness, or the hope invested in an unexpected recovery, both medical and religious approaches to healing anticipate what has not yet happened. Yet the "future" invoked in these practices is rarely neutral. It is shaped by the lived experiences of those who seek care, the authority of those who offer it, and the moral visions and social pressures that organize communities. How do people imagine a healthy future that they do not yet inhabit? Who gets to speak with authority about what that future should look like? And what happens when religious understandings of healing clash with medical ones, not only in principle but in the very practical work of tending to the unwell? Where do healing traditions resist potential futures—tacitly acknowledging the future inevitability of death and yet actively seeking to delay (or deny) its arrival? We welcome historical, ethnographic, and/or theoretical papers that take up these or related questions as we think together about how healing traditions help make, resist, and/or reinterpret the very futures that they anticipate.

The Religions, Medicines, and Healing Unit is committed to the value of diversity, equity, and social justice in our standards of excellence. For pre-arranged panels, we especially welcome proposals that reflect diversity of gender, ethnicity, race, field, method, and scholarly rank and directly address such within the proposal.

Statement of Purpose

The study of religions, medicines, and healing is a growing field within religious studies that draws on the disciplines and scholarship of history, anthropology (particularly medical anthropology), phenomenology, psychology, sociology, ethnic studies, ritual studies, gender studies, theology, political and economic theory, public health,

bioscientific epidemiology, history of science, comparative religion, and other interdisciplinary approaches to interpret meanings assigned to illness, affliction, and suffering; healing, health, and well-being; healing systems and traditions, their interactions, and the factors that influence them; and related topics and issues. As a broad area of inquiry, this field incorporates diverse theoretical orientations and methodological strategies in order to develop theories and methods specific to the study of illness, health, healing, and associated social relations from religious studies perspectives. Although religious texts serve as important resources in this endeavor, so do the many approaches to the study of lived religion, religious embodiment and material culture, and popular expressions of religiosity. Finally, like its sister field of medical anthropology, the field of religions, medicines, and healing encourages examination of how affliction and healing affect social bodies through fractured identities, political divides, structural violence, and colonialism. We support the work of graduate students, religion scholars, scholar-activists, and scholars in allied fields. We promote collaboration with other interdisciplinary Program Units and those focused on particular traditions and/or regions.

Chairs

- William McGrath, New York University
wmcgrath@nyu.edu
- Kristy Slominski, University of Arizona
kristy.slominski@gmail.com

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Religions, Medicines, and Healing Unit

Call for Proposals

For the June online sessions, the Religions, Medicines, and Healing Unit is especially interested in Roundtable proposals or Papers Session proposals on any topic related to religion and health, although individual paper proposals will still be considered. We welcome a wide range of academic perspectives and we are also open to interactive or creative online formats.

Statement of Purpose

The study of religions, medicines, and healing is a growing field within religious studies that draws on the disciplines and scholarship of history, anthropology (particularly medical anthropology), phenomenology, psychology, sociology, ethnic studies, ritual studies, gender studies, theology, political and economic theory, public health, bioscientific epidemiology, history of science, comparative religion, and other interdisciplinary approaches to interpret meanings assigned to illness, affliction, and suffering; healing, health, and well-being; healing systems and traditions, their interactions, and the factors that influence them; and related topics and issues. As a broad area of inquiry, this field incorporates diverse theoretical orientations and methodological strategies in order to develop theories and methods specific to the study of illness, health, healing, and associated social relations from religious studies perspectives. Although religious texts serve as important resources in this endeavor, so do the many approaches to the study of lived religion, religious embodiment and material culture, and popular expressions of religiosity. Finally, like its sister field of medical anthropology, the field of religions, medicines, and healing encourages examination of how affliction and healing affect social bodies through fractured identities, political divides, structural violence, and colonialism. We support the work of graduate students, religion scholars, scholar-activists, and scholars in allied fields. We promote collaboration with other interdisciplinary Program Units and those focused on particular traditions and/or regions.

Chairs

- William McGrath, New York University
wmcgrath@nyu.edu
- Kristy Slominski, University of Arizona
kristy.slominski@gmail.com

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Religions, Social Conflict, and Peace Unit

Call for Proposals

1. Authoritarianism, Islamophobia, anti-Latinx Narratives and imaginaries of resistance

At the turn of the 21st century, Samuel Huntington identified the United States as a nation of settlers facing multiple threats to its constitution, including Muslims and Latinx populations. Over the past two decades, both groups have become central targets in the discursive strategies of international fascism, now in power in the US and in multiple spaces throughout the world. The *Religions, Social Conflict, and Peace Studies* invites proposals that show entanglements in one or more of these topics:

Narratives of white genocide and replacement, particularly regarding Muslim and/or Latinx immigration.

- The new right-wing co-optation of Muslim and/or Latinx populations.
- New religioracial perspectives on whiteness in the United States regarding the future inclusion of a "Middle Eastern or North African" designation in the US Census
- They Are Eternal Foreigners: The denaturalization of longstanding Muslim and/or Latinx histories, memories, or individuals.
- Conspiracy theories that link Muslim and/or Latino Immigration with a Jewish plot to destroy Western civilization.
- Religious resistance against state oppression: Cross-cultural, Muslim and/or Latinx experiences.
- The intersection of Islamophobia and anti-Latinx sentiment with anti-Black racism, Sinophobia, anti-Native racism, and/or antisemitism.
- Liberationist and decolonial frameworks in resistance to racist and authoritarian structures.
- Fascism as "colonialism turned inward:" What the US and Europe can learn from Global South struggles?
- Doctrines of National/International Security, New Red/Green/Brown-scares.
- Conflictive Narratives of 'Freedom' and American consciousness.

2. Decolonizing "Internationalism": at a moment where liberal masks are off with imperial moves by the US and the return of extractive colonialism and the

collapse of the post WWII “world order” and the discourse of “the free world”, we invite a conversation that will revisit critiques of religion and liberal global politics and its collapse. Proposals may address, but are not limited to, the following topics:

- international law and the Gaza genocide against Palestinians
- Unjust peace and the role of international organizations.
- Pacification plans from above that failed.
- "The North is Cold because the South is Hot": Cold War lessons from Global South/East perspectives.
- International networks of repression in the Global South.
- Why do Western democracies support non-Western autocracies?
- Are we living through a new red scare?
- The Spirit of Bandung as an international network today.

3. Religion, Art, and Political Imagination

We are interested in exploring the role of religion in art and the production, disruption, and reconfiguration of political imagination. We are likewise interested in identifying the relevance of art and religious meaning-making and remaking in processes of social and political protests and visions of alternative political futures.

We seek papers that focus on the following (not an exhaustive list of topics):

- religion and literatures of resistance, exile, and annihilation
- protest art and slogans
- art and disruption of weaponized religious symbols
- art, religion, and the imagination of justice
- art, religion, and political domination
- art amid genocide

Statement of Purpose

Relationships between religions and the causes and resolution of social conflict are complex. On the one hand, religion is a major source of discord in our world, but on the other, religious agents have often played a central role in developing and encouraging nonviolent means of conflict resolution and sustainable peace. While religion as a factor in conflicts is often misunderstood by military and political leaders, it is also the case that the popular call for an end to injustice is quite often a religious voice. We seek to

add a critical dimension to the understanding of how religion influences and resolves social conflict. We want to develop and expand the traditional categories of moral reflection and response to war and also to investigate kindred conflicts — terrorism, humanitarian armed intervention, cultural and governmental repression, ecological degradation, and all of the factors that inhibit human flourishing. We also hope to encourage theoretical and practical reflection on religious peace-building by examining the discourses, practices, and community and institutional structures that promote just peace. Through our work, we hope to promote understanding of the relationships between social conflict and religions in ways that are theoretically sophisticated and practically applicable in diverse cultural contexts.

Chairs

- Santiago H. Slabodsky
santiago.slabodsky@hofstra.edu
 - Atalia Omer
aomer1@nd.edu
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Religious Conversions Unit

Call for Proposals

The Religious Conversions Unit welcomes individual paper or full paper/panel session proposals on any topic related to religious conversion (with a preference for fully formed panel proposals). We are particularly interested in papers and panels that challenge established understandings of the category of “conversion” and push the study of conversion in new directions. We are especially, but not exclusively, interested in featuring panels on the following topics at the 2026 annual meeting.

- Africana religions and conversion (e.g. scholarly responses to Katherine Gerbner’s *Archival Irruptions*; authority, freedom and/or the material reasons for and consequences of conversion, etc.)
- Weaponizing conversion (e.g. using the act of or responses to religious conversion, deconversion, or “apostasy” as a political weapon)

- Mixing religions without conversion (e.g. examining the material, practical, ritual and other dimensions of multiple-religious participation among individuals and communities)
- Belonging without Believing/Believing without Belonging

Papers and panels may address any historical period or cultural context, and use any methodological approach.

Questions may be directed to the co-chairs: Eliza Kent (ekent@skidmore.edu) and Kathleen M. Self (kself@stlawu.edu).

Statement of Purpose

This Unit studies the full spectrum of issues related to religious conversions, in any historical or geographic context, encompassing different forms of religious belief and practice. The scope of the issues we cover is broad and wide-ranging. We consider investigations into the reasons for various types of religious conversions including, but not limited to intellectual, theological, philosophical, historical, experiential, psychological, social, cultural, political, and economic causes. We also study the consequences of religious conversions, and deconversions, both individually and socially, and their implications. We encourage the methodologies of multiple disciplines, as well as interdisciplinary approaches.

Anonymity: Proposals are anonymous to chairs and steering committee members during review, but visible to chairs prior to final acceptance or rejection

Method of submission: PAPERS

Leadership:

Unit Co-Chair – Eliza F. Kent, Skidmore College, ekent@skidmore.edu

Unit Co-Chair – Kathleen Self, St. Lawrence University, kself@stlawu.edu

Chairs

- Eliza Kent, Skidmore College
ekent@skidmore.edu
- Kathleen M. Self, St. Lawrence University
kself@stlawu.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Ritual Studies Unit

Call for Proposals

The Ritual Studies Unit invites individual papers and full panel proposals from a variety of religious and cultural traditions exploring ritual in various local and transnational contexts. Proposals should engage with ritual theory in some way. This year, in keeping with the AAR's presidential theme of Future/s, we want to explore how ritual connects the past to future by preserving, adapting, critiquing, and creating modes of action that shape how the participants feel and think about who they are and who they can be. We are interested in sessions that experiment with new formats favoring increased interaction and discussion and we particularly encourage papers/presentations that involve actually doing ritual practices. We also like to see papers that bridge theoretical reflection with attention to specific practices, communities, technologies, texts, or case studies. Historical and philological scholarship is equally valued alongside ethnographic approaches.

This year, for the in-person conference in November we especially invite individual papers and full panel proposals that explore the following themes:

- **The future of Ritual Studies:** emerging scholars or theorists, new takes on foundational theories, new approaches or methods for studying ritual.
- **Ritual and protest:** ritual creativity in past, present, or imagined future protests; exploring when protest becomes a ritual.
- **Secular/SBNR Ritual:** rituals that emerge in secular spaces or for people who identify as spiritual but not religious; religion-like rituals for non-religious people.
- **Artificial Intelligence in/as/for Ritual (for a possible co-sponsored session with the AI and Religion Unit):** We invite papers that explore how artificial intelligence and ritual studies together illuminate questions of future(s). The convergence of these fields opens unique pathways for considering how futures are imagined, enacted, and materialized through both ancient practices and emergent technologies. Some papers may be related to particular practices (e.g., the [AI Jesus taking confession in a church in Switzerland](#), algorithmic divination, virtual tarot, simulated rituals), or more theoretically at the intersection of ritual studies and artificial intelligence.

- **Rituals and Mass Violence (for a possible co-Sponsorship with Religion, Holocaust, and Genocide Unit)**: We invite papers that explore the intersections between ritualization and mass violence. Approaches to this topic may include themes such as rituals and victimhood, rituals and perpetration, and rituals and memories of mass violence. For example, how do communities facing violent persecution maintain rituals in situations of extreme disruption or develop rituals as a form of resilience and resistance? How do the perpetrators of large-scale violent acts ritualize their behaviours? What rituals develop for collective memory of violent histories and how do they draw on earlier traditions and/or create new innovations in community practice?

Whenever possible, our sessions will be formatted to encourage interaction and group discussion on the basis of concise, pre-circulated papers of approximately five pages submitted for circulation by October 15, 2026. Because at least 30 minutes of every session will be reserved for discussion, presentation times will vary in accordance with the number of speakers in the session.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit provides a unique venue for the interdisciplinary exploration of ritual — broadly understood to include rites, ceremonies, religious and secular performances, and other ritual processes — in their many and varied contexts, and from a range of theoretical and methodological perspectives.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit provides a unique venue for the interdisciplinary exploration of ritual — broadly understood to include rites, ceremonies, religious and secular performances, and other ritual processes — in their many and varied contexts, and from a range of theoretical and methodological perspectives.

Chairs

- Joy Palacios, University of Calgary
joypalacios@gmail.com
- Courtney Applewhite
courtney.applewhite@epfl.ch

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Sacred Texts, Theory, and Theological Construction Unit

Call for Proposals

For 2026, the unit Sacred Texts, Theory, and Theological Construction (STTTC) will be offering two themed sessions, an open session, and an invited panel.

The first themed session invites papers that explore the question of: "What are/make 'sacred texts'?" This session/question is a part of a three-year plan to critically explore the unit's identity. We especially welcome discussions on "texts" that go beyond what is "written" but takes its etymological meaning what is "woven (*texere*)" in traditions (including rituals, symbols/icons, spaces/architecture, garments, music/chants, calendars, foodways, body paints, etc.) in conversation with Critical Theory (broadly defined), Cultural Studies, and Continental Philosophy. We are particularly interested in papers that go beyond the Jewish and Christian Scriptures.

[The second themed session is co-sponsored with the Kierkegaard, Religion, and Culture unit.](#) With the destructive forces of Christian nationalism on the rise and the future of democracy in the United States at stake, it is critical for us to consider how various frameworks of biblical hermeneutics reveal the motivations of human hearts more-so than they reveal about the biblical text itself. *How* we relate to the biblical text is constitutive of our desires and therefore of our lived theologies. Considering the existentially consequential nature of our various hermeneutical approaches, this co-sponsored session seeks papers that put Søren Kierkegaard's approach to biblical hermeneutics as found in *For Self-Examination* (1851) into conversation with past, present, and emerging trends in biblical hermeneutics and/or focus on the role that forms of biblical hermeneutics have played in the rise of Christian nationalism in the United States.

In the third session (an open session), we invite the submission of any papers that resonate with the general interests and mandate of STTTC. We are particularly interested in the exploration of emerging theoretical ventures (such as Afrofuturism, Afropessimism, critical mixed race studies, global indigenous solidarity/indigeneity,

cyborg theory, critical studies of artificial intelligence [AI], blue humanities, critical infrastructure studies, etc.) as well as of traditions have yet to be represented in the AAR (Zoroastrians, Mandaean, Samaritans, Ainu, Sámi, etc.). We also welcome full panel submissions on a specific theoretical approach or theorist (e.g., Octavia Butler and Afrofuturism), or a particular tradition (e.g., Zoroastrianism).

The fourth session (co-sponsored with the SBL Reading, Theory, & the Bible and the SBL Bible & Popular Culture units) will be an invited panel of scholars responding to the recently published book by Tina Pippin (the President of the SBL), *The Actual Jesus* (Cascade 2025). This session is closed to submission.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit works with the unique intersection of sacred texts, contemporary theory, and theological construction. We call for papers engaged in contemporary constructive theology (in its broadest sense) that think in innovative ways with sacred texts (including those beyond written scriptures, and beyond Jewish and Christian traditions), drawing on theoretical resources that challenge grand narratives and critically respond to power and hierarchies in society. Topics range from theological hermeneutics to the value of theology, interrogations of our new theoretical contexts to constructive theological proposals, and from the use of sacred texts by contemporary theorists to the use of those contemporary theorists in constructive theology. This unit encourages and is receptive to innovative and exploratory work that engages with Critical Theory (broadly defined), Cultural Studies, and/or Continental Philosophy, intersecting with either Sacred Texts and Theology/Philosophy of Religion. The unit also aims to create a space for discourse on sacred texts, religious traditions, and theoretical ideas that have yet to find a home in the guild.

Chairs

- Ludwig Noya
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- Haley Gabrielle, Greensboro College
haleykgabrielle@gmail.com

Schleiermacher Unit

Call for Proposals

Teaching the Canon: Schleiermacher

The Teaching Religion Unit and the Schleiermacher Unit invite papers for a possible co-sponsored session on the topic of "Teaching the Canon: Schleiermacher." What does it mean and what might it look like to teach "canonical" texts and figures in religion today? This session explores this question through a reexamination of F.D.E. Schleiermacher's place in the religion and theology curriculum. Whether as a lead-up to Barth's "No!" to natural theology, as a founder of the academic study of religion, or as early textual critic, Schleiermacher has long been a mainstay of the theological curriculum and courses on theory and methods in the study of religion. Generations of scholars have been exposed to debates over whether or not Schleiermacher's definition of religion's essence as lying in "feeling" rendered it beyond the scope of conceptual analysis and Schleiermacher's role in formulating the hermeneutic circle. The *Reden* and *Glaubenslehre* remain required readings in many religion classrooms. Yet many of the assumptions that have undergirded Schleiermacher's place in the curriculum have been complicated or challenged. Reception histories that have highlighted the distance between Schleiermacher and his appropriators, greater access to a wider breadth of Schleiermacher's intellectual production, increased attention to the historical and political context of Schleiermacher's work, and genealogies that have recontextualized the task of studying religion itself all have enormous implications for how Schleiermacher can (or whether he *should*) be taught today.

This session calls for proposals for individual papers, presentations, or panels that address the practical task of engaging F.D.E. Schleiermacher in the context of undergraduate programs, theological education, graduate school, preaching or public scholarship, engaging with recent research on Schleiermacher and exploring the place of historical context, close reading, genealogies, or lived religion in the classroom. Topics for proposals might include (but are not limited to) the following:

- The (ir)relevance of Schleiermacher's understanding of religion and approach to theology for introductory courses and graduate theory and methods seminars
- Exploring the way that historical narratives about the development of modern theology, the academic study of religion, or the rise of the modern university shape the way that Schleiermacher is presented and alternatives to situating

Schleiermacher's project as a foil or as a stepping stone to Ritschl / Troeltsch / Barth, the history of religions school / Otto / Eliade, or Dilthey / Gadamer

- How confessional and non-confessional institutional locations shape the reception of Schleiermacher's theological and academic project
- Teaching Schleiermacher as a social activist whose life and thought holds constructive potential for ethical and political issues
- Teaching Schleiermacher in a post-colonial and gender- / race-conscious way or in non-Western spaces.

The Schleiermacher Unit is committed to diversity and inclusivity. Pre-arranged sessions or panel proposals should reflect diversity of gender and/or race and ethnicity. Diversities of rank, method, and sub-discipline are also highly encouraged.

Statement of Purpose

The unit promotes scholarship – from specialists and non-specialists alike – that critically engage the thought and influence of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834). We encourage constructive, historical, and textual analyses that open new lines of inquiry into Schleiermacher's oeuvre and contribution to contemporary discussions in theology, religious studies, philosophy, ethics, and hermeneutics.

Chairs

- Calli Micale, Palmer Theological Seminary
calli.micale@eastern.edu
- Kevin Vander Schel
vanderschel@gonzaga.edu

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Schleiermacher Unit

Call for Proposals

(Co-sponsored with the Open and Relational Theologies Unit for the June online meeting)

Structuring the Future: Time and Development

This session investigates the theological and philosophical implications of time and development by bringing the thought of F.D.E. Schleiermacher into conversation with Open and Relational Theologies. We would like to explore how structures of human self-consciousness, especially temporality, shape religious consciousness. For example, we invite papers that ask:

- How do organic and developmental processes—natural, biological, or historical—serve as analogies for understanding divine immanence and its dynamic relationship to creation?
- What is the relationship between time and eternity in Schleiermacher's thought, and how does this relationship impact development in the present?
- How does Schleiermacher's understanding of the infinity of the universe, novelty, and contingency influence, converge with, or diverge from open and relational perspectives?
- In what ways might theological understandings of God's relationship with time inform our ethical and practical engagement with pressing contemporary issues?

We are interested in a wide range of methodological approaches, including papers that: analyze key texts and concepts (e.g. doctrine of creation) in relation to temporality; critically or constructively compare Schleiermacher's thought with Open and Relational Theologies; explore concepts of development, novelty, cosmic processes, and the interplay between structures of human self-consciousness and divine action.

The Schleiermacher Unit is committed to diversity and inclusivity. Pre-arranged sessions or panel proposals should reflect diversity of gender and/or race and ethnicity. Diversities of rank, method, and sub-discipline are also highly encouraged.

Statement of Purpose

The unit promotes scholarship – from specialists and non-specialists alike – that critically engage the thought and influence of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834). We encourage constructive, historical, and textual analyses that open new lines of inquiry into Schleiermacher's oeuvre and contribution to contemporary discussions in theology, religious studies, philosophy, ethics, and hermeneutics.

Chairs

- Calli Micale, Palmer Theological Seminary
calli.micale@eastern.edu
 - Kevin Vander Schel
vanderschel@gonzaga.edu
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Science, Technology, and Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

The Science, Technology, and Religion unit is open to panel and individual paper proposals on any topic encompassed by our central topics and drawing on the breadth of religious traditions and historical periods. In addition, we invite proposals in the following areas:

***Enemies of the Future:** As part of the 2026 AAR theme of *Future/s*, explorations of Luddism, anti-tech, anti-AI, intentionally low-tech, and anti-modern religion (e.g., Anabaptism).

***Techno-futures:** As part of the AAR 2026 presidential theme of *Future/s*, considerations of the transformative role of technology in creating new material forms, new scientific horizons, and new religious iterations. Does the science/religion dynamic change as technology changes?

***Funding Structures, Funding Collapse:** Studies of the transformed landscape of funding for science in the second Trump presidency and its implications for religion as well as how science and religion funding have built the field.

***Prediction and Uncertainty:** Considerations of science and prediction, of unpredictability, divination, prophecy, the affects of certainty/uncertainty, despair and hope, optimism/pessimism, and speculation.

***Revisiting *When Prophecy Fails* and *Cognitive Dissonance*:** Considerations of new research emerging in the past decade challenging or reframing Festinger et al.'s influential 1956 book *When Prophecy Fails* and Festinger's follow-up volume *Cognitive Dissonance*.

***Genealogies of Science and Religion (for a possible cosponsored session between the Science, Technology, and Religion and Cultural History of the Study of Religion units):** Where does science and religion—as a subfield—come from? What are the origin points, lineages, inflections, institutional politics, and material conditions of knowledge production that have led to the current field? Proposals may consider the Pitts Digital Collection repository of “American Academy of Religion Program Books” and/or explore the history of the STR unit (founded as “Theology and Science” in 1987) and related subdivisions of AAR/SBL. We welcome proposals from all scholarly ranks including graduate, contingent, and early-career scholars.

AI-generated proposals will not be considered.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit supports scholarship that explores the relationship of religion, theology, technology, and the natural sciences. We support research that attempts to bridge the gap between religious and scientific approaches to reality and encourage the development of constructive proposals that encourage engagement and dialogue with the sciences, along with a critical assessment of the meaning and impact of technologies for the human condition and the natural world.

Chairs

- Myrna Perez
sheldonm@ohio.edu
- Donovan Schaefer, University of Pennsylvania
doschaef@upenn.edu

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Science, Technology, and Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

The Science, Technology, and Religion unit is open to panel and individual paper proposals on any topic encompassed by our central topics and drawing on the breadth of religious traditions and historical periods.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit supports scholarship that explores the relationship of religion, theology, technology, and the natural sciences. We support research that attempts to bridge the gap between religious and scientific approaches to reality and encourage the development of constructive proposals that encourage engagement and dialogue with the sciences, along with a critical assessment of the meaning and impact of technologies for the human condition and the natural world.

Chairs

- Myrna Perez
sheldonm@ohio.edu
- Donovan Schaefer, University of Pennsylvania
doschaef@upenn.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Scriptural Reasoning Unit

Call for Proposals

For the 2026 meeting, the Scriptural Reasoning Unit will host two sessions.

Session 1 - Scriptural Reasoning (SR) Session: Vocation

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. This year, our SR session will consider texts that address the theme of vocation in the Qur'an, the Hebrew Bible, and the New Testament.

Session 2 - Authors Meet Readers: *Scriptural Reasoning: Abrahamic Inter-faith Practice* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2026)

This roundtable session will feature a conversation with the contributors to the new book on the practice of Scriptural Reasoning, Maria Dakake, Tom Greggs, and Steven Kepnes. *Scriptural Reasoning: Abrahamic Inter-faith Practice* provides an accessible and practical introduction to a unique form of inter-faith engagement centered on shared sacred text study. Rather than minimizing deep commitments to one's own faith, this approach encourages participants to enter more fully into their own traditions while offering and receiving hospitality across religious boundaries. Focusing on the Abrahamic faiths—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—this book equips students and lay practitioners to participate meaningfully in Scriptural Reasoning (SR) groups, where members of different faiths read and reason together from their respective Scriptures. See their book on the publisher's website, [here](#).

Statement of Purpose

Scriptural Reasoning (SR) is a practice of inter-religious text study in which participants from the three 'Abrahamic' religions (and increasingly, from other traditions as well) study short selections of their scriptures together in an open-ended but structured manner. When scholars read scripture across inter-religious difference, the effect is to put traditional wisdom and academic formation into play simultaneously. Over the years, this practice has proved effective at making familiar texts strange and offering a window into the deep patterns of reasoning and implicit logics of these different traditions. The Scriptural Reasoning Unit facilitates a unique mode of academic engagement within the setting of the AAR, rooted in this distinctive practice. It cultivates an approach to the academic study of scriptural traditions centered on the ways in which scriptures generate communities of religious practice: practices of study, of interpretation, of reflection, of ritual, and of social life. Its scholars seek to develop methods for analyzing aspects of this process and to offer philosophical or theological interventions in the ongoing life of the traditions.

Chairs

- Kelly Figueroa-Ray, Hamline University
chaplain@hamline.edu
 - Essam Fahim
essam.fahim@lums.edu.pk
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Secularism and Secularity Unit

Call for Proposals

We welcome all types of proposals, including but not limited to individual papers, prearranged papers panels, roundtables, keyword sessions, and other creative and experimental formats. All proposals related to secularism and secularity will be considered. In addition, we especially welcome proposals on the following topics:

The Post-Secular and Its Stakes (Co-Sponsored with the Cultural History of the Study of Religion Unit)

We invite proposals that take stock of the “post-secular” as a methodology, conceptual investment, and/or posture of critique in the interdisciplinary humanities. What difference(s) does the “post-secular” name? What historical, intellectual, and political attachments are at play in its deployment?

Technology and the Future of Secularization

Given the dramatic advances of artificial intelligence and other forms of digital technologies, our Unit also invites proposals seeking to directly interrogate how these new technological forms are shaping the processes and experiences of secularism and secularity. How should scholars interested in the academic study of secularism critically interrogate technological developments and how might this contribute to the field of religious studies more broadly?

The "Impasses" of Religious Studies

As the field of religious studies seeks to respond dynamically to the United States's current political and intellectual moment, we are also interested in developing a lightning-round panel identifying perceived impasses currently shaping conversations taking place within the discipline. Individuals interested in the lightning round may submit proposals through PAPERS or reach out to the co-chairs directly at the emails provided below.

Approaches that de-center conventional narratives of secularization or pay particular attention to geographic regions historically under-analyzed from within secularism studies are especially encouraged.

Statement of Purpose

The Secularism and Secularity Unit explores a broad a set of questions associated with the secular, including its complex entanglements with religion and spirituality. This inquiry entails the study of political secularism and its role in the construction of religion, as well as the study of secular people, who can be described with a variety of labels including atheist, agnostic, humanist, and freethinker. It also includes an ongoing reappraisal of the historical transformations named by "secularization," which signal the emergence of the modern and presuppose a break from the premodern. The group fosters new directions in secular studies by encouraging theoretically informed research that makes empirical contributions and engages with the subfield's rapidly growing interdisciplinary literature.

Chairs

- Rafael Vizcaino, DePaul University
r.vizcaino@depaul.edu
- Eric Stephen, University of South Florida
eric_stephen@mail.harvard.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Sikh Studies Unit

Call for Proposals

The following are proposed panel titles for 2026. Additional panel proposals are welcomed. We especially welcome suggestions for panels to be co-sponsored with other units. The Sikh Studies unit exclusively uses the AAR PAPERS system for all submissions. Proposed panel titles are listed with contact information. If interested, please contact the listed person(s) directly:

1. The Future of Sikh Studies.

What does the future hold for Sikh Studies as an academic field? This panel invites critical reflections on emerging research agendas, methodological innovations, and institutional challenges. Topics may include the impact of digital technologies on scholarship, strategies for decolonizing Sikh Studies, and approaches to sustaining the field amid shifting academic priorities. We welcome contributions that address global collaborations, funding landscapes, and the role of Sikh Studies in public discourse. By imagining possible futures for the discipline, this session aims to foster dialogue on how Sikh Studies can remain vibrant, inclusive, and responsive to contemporary realities.

2. Sikh Ethics and Global Futures: Human Rights, Climate, and AI

This panel explores how Sikh ethical principles inform responses to pressing global challenges. We invite papers on Sikh perspectives on climate justice, sustainability, and ecological ethics; human rights advocacy and future political formations; and AI governance and data ethics through Sikh lenses. Contributions may also consider intersections between Sikh ethics and global policy debates, highlighting how Sikh thought offers resources for imagining just and equitable futures. By engaging with these urgent issues, this session positions Sikh Studies within broader conversations on ethics, technology, and planetary well-being.

3. Sikh Political Imaginaries: Sovereignty and Global Governance

This panel investigates Sikh political thought and its visions for future governance. How do concepts such as miri-piri inform debates on sovereignty, democracy, and transnational activism? Papers may address historical movements for autonomy, contemporary Sikh engagement with human rights, and the role of diaspora

communities in shaping global political discourse. We welcome interdisciplinary approaches that connect Sikh political imaginaries to broader questions of justice, citizenship, and religious freedom. By situating Sikh perspectives within global governance debates, this session seeks to illuminate how religious traditions contribute to imagining futures of ethical and political possibility.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit provides a forum for highlighting the most recent and innovative scholarship in the area of Sikh studies. Our work draws from a broad range of methodological and theoretical approaches — history, postcolonial theory, performance theory, popular culture, philosophy, literary criticism, gender studies, etc. — by both established scholars as well as those new to the field. Seeking a balance between critical theory and substantive content, we seek to call into question key critical terms, challenge established frames of reference, and offer innovative and alternative ways in which Sikhs, Sikhism, and Sikhi can be understood and studied in the academy.

Chairs

- Jasjit Singh, University of Leeds
j.s.singh@leeds.ac.uk
- Simran Jeet Singh
simranjeetsingh@gmail.com

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy

Call for Proposals

The Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy (SACP) welcomes proposals for our **two 90min panels** at the American Academy of Religion annual meeting, to be held November 21–24, 2026 at Denver, whose presidential theme is [Future/s](#). Individual or panel proposals regarding any aspect of Asian or comparative philosophy are welcome.

Please submit through AAR PAPERS system. Typically, AAR submission site opens at the end of January, proposals due early to mid-March. You can find instructions here, https://papers.aarweb.org/sites/default/files/general/PAPERS_Instructio...

For the in-person November AAR 2026, **one** of our allotted two panels will be co-sponsored with Global-Critical Philosophy of Religion on the following theme.

Panel 1 (co-sponsor with GCPR) – Womb Cosmologies: A Cross-Cultural Conversation

CFP description – The metaphor and notion of womb have been the focus of inquiry and theorization in many cosmological and philosophical systems. The Chinese classic *Daodejing* frequently alludes to the metaphor of the womb/vagina as the generative force of the cosmos (mother of all things) and as the archetype of kindness (*shan*) or love (*ai, ci*), e.g., the spirit of the valley and the gate of the obscure she-best. The Arabic term for compassion/mercy/love *raḥama* comes from the root *raḥm* (womb). The Buddhist term for universal Buddha-nature, *tathāgatagarbha*, is literally the womb (*garbha*) of the thus-gone/come-one/Buddha who is the very embodiment of friendliness/love (*mettā*) and care (*karuṇā*). This co-sponsored panel invites scholars and philosophers to join a cross-cultural conversation about different womb cosmologies, their relations to love ethics, as well as their promises in bringing forth a friendlier future.

Panel 2 is an open session (omnibus, individual or panel proposals on any theme welcome) for all SACP members and friends interested in participating AAR 2026.

Statement of Purpose

The SACP was established in 1967 as a nonprofit organization aimed at advancing the development of the disciplines of Asian and comparative philosophy in the international academic arena, and bringing together Asian and Western philosophers for a mutually beneficial exchange of ideas. It holds panels in conjunction with the American Philosophical Association, the Association of Asian Studies, and the American Academy of Religion. Annual individual membership dues for the SACP are \$50 (\$30 for students and professors emeriti) and include a subscription to the SACP Forum. The Society also sponsors a monograph series on specialized topics published by the University of Hawai'i Press. For more information about the SACP and about the Journal, *Philosophy East and West*, please see our website at <http://www.sacpweb.org>.

Chairs

- Minjung Noh
min223@lehigh.edu
 - Jessica Zu
pureoneness@gmail.com
-

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy

Call for Proposals

SACP will host **one open session for the June online conference** (omnibus, individual or panel proposals on any theme welcome), primarily for international scholars who cannot travel to AAR in person in November. The online conference date is **June 23–25, 2026**.

Please submit through AAR PAPERS system. Typically, AAR submission site opens at the end of January, proposals due early to mid-March 2025. You can find instructions here, [https://papers.aarweb.org/sites/default/files/general/PAPERS Instructio...](https://papers.aarweb.org/sites/default/files/general/PAPERS%20Instructions.pdf)

Statement of Purpose

The SACP was established in 1967 as a nonprofit organization aimed at advancing the development of the disciplines of Asian and comparative philosophy in the international academic arena, and bringing together Asian and Western philosophers for a mutually beneficial exchange of ideas. It holds panels in conjunction with the American Philosophical Association, the Association of Asian Studies, and the American Academy of Religion. Annual individual membership dues for the SACP are \$50 (\$30 for students and professors emeriti) and include a subscription to the SACP Forum. The Society also sponsors a monograph series on specialized topics published by the University of Hawai'i Press. For more information about the SACP and about the Journal , *Philosophy East and West*, please see our website at <http://www.sacpweb.org>.

Chairs

- Minjung Noh
min223@lehigh.edu
 - Jessica Zu
pureoneness@gmail.com
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Society for Comparative Research on Iconic and Performative Texts

Call for Proposals

The Performance Criticism of the Bible and Other Ancient Texts (PC-BOAT) and the Society for Comparative Research on Iconic and Performative Texts (SCRIPT) invite papers for two joint sessions:

The first session invites papers that engage specifically with Ancient Theater, Material Culture, and Performance. Papers that engage with the intersections of ancient theater and its impact on the development and performance of the biblical texts, the material culture surrounding ancient theatrical performance are warmly welcome.

The second session is an open session on the Iconicity and Performativity of the Bible and Other Ancient Texts. This more broad-reaching session will hope to incorporate considerations of how scriptural texts function as iconic and/or performative texts.

Performances in either section are welcome and encouraged!

Statement of Purpose

The Society for Comparative Research on Iconic and Performative Texts (SCRIPT) encourages new scholarship on iconic and performative texts. Our goal is to foster academic discourse about the social functions of books and texts that exceed their semantic meaning and interpretation, such as their display as cultural artifacts, their

ritual use in religious and political ceremonies, their performance by recitation and theater, and their depiction in art.

Chairs

- David Dault, Loyola University, Chicago
sandburg.media@gmail.com
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Sociology of Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

The purpose of the Sociology of Religion Unit of the American Academy of Religion is to generate cross-fertilization between the Sociology of Religion and Religious Studies. We are open to papers in all areas and therefore encourage submissions of any topic relevant to the sociology of religion. This year, we are particularly interested in the following topics:

Topics related to the AAR presidential theme of “Future/s”

- We invite proposals regarding possible futures for the sociology of religion, new theories or methods, future of research design, future trends in religion analyzed sociologically, religious social movements working to shape the future, utopian or dystopian futures, secular or ethnonationalist futures, emergent spiritualities or secularities, and more.

Emergent Technologies and Religion

- We invite proposals that explore the relationship between emergent technologies and religion, spirituality, and secularity, including sociological research on artificial intelligence (AI) and religion, digital religion, religion and social media, religion online, online religions, religious media, parasocial religions, and more.

Sociology of Religion and Human Rights (Co-sponsored with the Religion and Human Rights Unit)

- For a possible co-sponsored session with the Religion and Human Rights Unit, we invite papers on the future of the relationship between religion and human rights as examined through sociological methods or theories. Proposals may address the possibilities and pitfalls of studying and promoting human rights; ways that religious or secular communities are approaching human rights at a time of global upheaval; how religious groups are reshaping human rights in utopian or dystopian directions; how religious groups are rethinking the “human” in human rights, and more. Proposals may also consider the role of grassroots movements versus national or global institutions as sites for human rights mobilization, especially questions of what it means for human rights protections to arise “from below,” through the work and struggle of marginalized or minoritized communities. In this co-sponsorship, we welcome proposals that lie at the intersection of conceptual analysis of “religion and human rights” and forms of qualitative, quantitative, or social theoretical analysis that build knowledge about how religious or secular groups are navigating a changing world of religious and human rights claims and practices.

Sociology and the Study of New Religious Movements (Co-sponsored with the New Religious Movements Unit)

- The Sociology of Religion and New Religious Movements Program Units invite proposals dealing with new religions and sociological theory and methods. We encourage proposals that examine how sociological theory and methods have shaped the study of new religions, studies of new religions informed by sociological theory and methods, and proposals for new approaches to the study of new religions informed by sociological theory and methods.

Hartmut Rosa and the Study of Religion (Co-sponsored with Critical Theory and Discourses on Religion Unit)

- German sociologist Hartmut Rosa’s theories of resonance and social acceleration in modernity have begun to influence the study of religion, and his recent writings that “democracy needs religion” offer a timely moment to consider his work for the sociology of religion. Rosa has written primarily in German, but his work has begun to be translated into English more recently, including key works like *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity* (2013) and *Resonance: A Sociology of Our Relationship to the World* (2021). This possible co-sponsored

session invites proposals that examine Rosa's theories for the study of religion or employ his theories for original research.

Civil Religion and Its Discontents

- How is the concept of "civil religion" useful and what are the shortcomings in using it to anchor discussions of religion in public life today? We invite proposals that examine either or both of these themes, or examine the concept in novel directions, using social theory or sociological methods.

Measuring Asian and Asian American Religions

- Measuring the religious membership and religiosity of Asians and Asian Americans using traditional survey questions is very difficult. A few recent major new surveys are changing the existing paradigm, with fascinating findings that could offer innovations to the theories and methods of the sociological study of Asian religions and beyond. We invite proposals that forge new models for measuring Asian and Asian American religions.

Quantitative and Computational Research

- We invite research utilizing quantitative and computational methods, including surveys, data and text mining, statistical analyses, geospatial studies, experimental methods, and original mixed-methods research. Results must be complete and analyzed by the time the annual meeting begins.

Global and Transnational Religions

- We invite sociological research of religion across nation-states within continents and across continents, such as Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, and more.

Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity and inclusion are core values of the Sociology of Religion Unit. For this reason, we encourage organizers of pre-formed panels to invite participants that are diverse in race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, ability, age, religion, region, discipline, methodology, professional status, and type of institution. In addition, we especially welcome proposals that focus on communities that have been historically underrepresented, including African, Latinx, Asian, Indigenous, and non-Christian communities, as well as on regions outside North America and Europe. In panel and paper proposals, we also welcome a

diversity of methodologies, including quantitative, qualitative, historical, and theoretical. When preparing your panel or roundtable proposal, please include the demographic data you provide to the AAR and explain how your panel's participants instantiate diversity.

Review Process

All proposals will be evaluated according to the following criteria: a descriptive title; a clearly formulated argument; clearly identified methodology and sources; engagement with relevant secondary literature; explicit articulation of an original contribution to the field; relevance to our unit's CFP; potential for co-sponsorships with other units. Further suggestions for AAR proposal writers can be found in Kecia Ali's "Writing a Successful Annual Meeting Proposal." Anonymity: Proposals are anonymous to chairs and steering committee members during initial review, but visible prior to final acceptance or rejection.

Publication

The Sociology of Religion Unit regularly co-sponsors panels with the peer-reviewed journal *Critical Research on Religion* (<http://crr.sagepub.com>), published by SAGE Publications. Presenters of promising papers in Sociology of Religion Unit panels may be invited to turn their papers into articles and submit them for peer review to *Critical Research on Religion*.

Statement of Purpose

The Sociology of Religion Unit of the American Academy of Religion serves as a bridge between religious studies and the subdiscipline of sociology of religion. It functions as a two-way conduit not only to import sociological research into religious studies but also to export the research of religious studies into both the subdiscipline and the broader field of sociology. Only through a cross-fertilization transgressing departmental boundaries can there be breakthroughs in research in both fields. The unit has a wide conception of sociology of religion. It is open to a multiplicity of paradigms and methodologies utilized in the subfield and sociology more broadly: theoretical as well as empirical, quantitative, qualitative, and historical. By liaising with other Program Units, the Sociology of Religion Unit is able to bring the rich diversity of critical and analytical perspectives that are housed in the American Academy of Religion into mainstream sociology of religion. Conversely, it aims to provide scholars of the study of religion with a deeper understanding of the landscape of sociology of religion.

Chairs

- Simranjit Steel, University of Memphis
s.steel@memphis.edu
 - Anna Sun
anna.x.sun@duke.edu
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

South Asian Religions Unit

Call for Proposals

The Steering Committee of the South Asian Religions (SARI) Unit invites colleagues to submit proposals for the 2026 AAR Annual Meetings: June 2026 (online) and November 2026 (in person) in Denver, CO. SARI's mission is to provide a venue for new research on the many religious cultures, literatures, and histories of South Asia as they have developed in global contexts. We have a strong preference for sessions in which the papers cover a range of South Asian traditions, regions, and languages. Some themes already identified as potential papers sessions are listed below—please contact the associated colleagues for details about potential collaborations. Panels and papers are also encouraged that respond to the 2025 AAR Presidential Theme: "FUTURE/S"

The SARI Steering Committee encourages full panel submissions (i.e., papers Sessions and roundtables rather than single papers) except for papers for the New Directions panel (see below). For the 2026 Annual Meeting, SARI has a flexible allotment of panel formats: three 2-hour sessions and two 90-minute sessions. SARI can also sponsor one additional paper session if it is co-sponsored with another Unit. In your proposal, you may specify your preferred panel format (120 or 90 minutes), but the time allotted for accepted panels varies based on the overall programming needs. We encourage roundtables as they tend to create more dynamic conversations between participants and audience members. If relevant, list any potential co-sponsoring Unit with your proposal.

If you are looking for collaborators towards proposing a panel session, please feel free to reach out to colleagues on the SARI listservs and/or contact the SARI co-chairs SherAli Tareen (SherAli.Tareen@fandm.edu) and Bhakti Mamtora

(mamtora@arizona.edu) for assistance or to email the colleagues listed below if there is a topic that is interesting to you.

All Papers Session Panel Proposals must be submitted through the PAPERS system on the AAR website.

New Directions in South Asian Religions

The SARI Steering Committee accepts individual paper submissions for the “New Directions in South Asian Religions” to provide space for new scholarship in our field. To be eligible, applicants must (1) be ABD doctoral students (or recent graduates) from a Ph.D. program in South Asian religions and (2) never have presented at the national AAR meeting. Accepted panelists will be mentored by a senior colleague with appropriately specialized expertise. To apply, email your proposal (and any other queries) to Aarti Patel (abp6177@psu.edu) and Aalekhya Malladi (aalekhya.malladi@mcgill.ca) co-convenors of the panel for 2026 AND upload your individual paper proposal in the AAR’s PAPERS system, labeled as a “New Directions” submission.

Trans* Religion(s) in South Asia - Meghan Hartman (mhartman@barnard.edu)

Do trans people have a genre problem? Countless memoirs demand articulations of “journeys” for a cisgender audience; rehearsals of dysphoria and tight self-narrativization unlock the key to legal and medical transition. The endless iteration of trans confession goes on. These are genre problems that emerge from the implicit assumption that the possibility of transness (when it is only narrowly understood via medical transition and legal definition) is thanks to a modern secular state. This panel seeks to overturn this assumption that often alienates trans* from religion.

Instead, we are interested in the ways trans* and religion work together throughout various contexts and historical periods of South Asia. Trans* is a capacious analytic in its own right, not simply as an invocation to think about gender identity, but also think about affect, kinship, caste, techniques of embodiment, religion, hagiography, normativity and much more. We invite papers to think about potential questions such as the following: how might early modern theologies in South Asia be a richer place to think about trans* than what modern genres afford? In what ways has caste/class informed gender shifting in religious practices? How might the mapping of transness itself be insufficient or illuminating when thinking of gender nonconformity in religious traditions of South Asia? What might subversive normativities look like (e.g. the norms governing groups or communities seen as anti-normative?) What to make of religious

mythologies used in service to grant rights to gender minorities while reifying other hegemonies?

Special attention to methodologies, and their strengths/pitfalls, is encouraged. For instance, what restrictions or levity might an ethnographer enjoy that a historian of premodern South Asian religions might not? And vice versa? How might a historian resist models of recuperation in service of modern evidentiary standards to prove trans people always existed? And of course, how does the invisible immediate we call translation inform your work? Trans and queer scholars, please send in your work! You are encouraged to apply.

Devotional Uses of AI – J. Barton Scott (barton.scott@utoronto.ca)

Since the release of ChatGPT as commercial technology in 2022, consumer-facing AI platforms have rapidly transformed the visual landscape of South Asian religions, resulting in new kinds of images (as of Hindu deities) and new modes of producing and circulating images. This panel will ask how AI is reshaping a variety of religious traditions through empirical attention to the kinds of usages that have emerged and rapidly assumed hegemonic status in the past three years and counting.

Religion, Speculative Fiction, and Pedagogy - Aalekhya Malladi (aalekhya.malladi@mcgill.ca)

Building on the insightful dialogue that came out of the Bollywood, Hindutva, and Pedagogy panel this year, this panel interrogates the role of speculative fiction in teaching religions broadly and South Asian traditions more specifically. This panel will consider questions such as how can we teach religious studies through “fictional” religions? How do representations of religions in speculative fiction media (film, literature, television) spark conversations among students about religion in our own world? How can speculative fiction help students to think differently about the category of religion? How does the rise of superhero/fantasy genre films in India reflect the changing cultural and political landscape? What can we learn about religion from fan culture?

The Political Theology of God in South Asia – Zehra Mehdi (zm2261@columbia.edu)

The panel invites a discussion on the diverse ways in which minorities (religious/caste, sexual/gender, national/migrant) invoke of imaginaries of God (s) apprehend their personal and/ or political predicament.

From Provisional to Permanent: The Architectural Evolution of South Asian Sacred Spaces in North America – Tilak Parekh (tp459@cam.ac.uk)

The religious landscapes of North America and Europe are currently witnessing a profound architectural shift: the transition of South Asian sacred spaces from adaptive reuse—converted churches, warehouses, and community centers—to monumental, purpose-built environments. This panel interrogates the "materiality of the sacred" by examining the architectural, structural, and civic evolution of contemporary South Asian religious centers, including the Hindu mandir, the Islamic masjid, the Sikh gurdwara, the Jain derasar, and the Buddhist vihara.

Moving beyond the study of rituals that take place within these walls, we analyze the agency of the built environment itself. How does the shift from provisional drywall to permanent brick, imported marble, or monumental concrete alter the experience of the practitioner? We explore the transnational flow of design, the negotiation of traditional architectural canons and Islamic spatial principles with modern Western zoning laws, and the politics of visibility. As these structures transform from invisible, provisional spaces to permanent civic landmarks, they reshape local skylines and sensory regimes. This session invites papers that analyze the construction of the sacred, investigating how material, structure, and space function not merely as containers for the holy, but as active participants in the production of diverse South Asian religious subjectivities.

Future of the study of South Asia at Colleges and Universities – Karen Pechilis (kpechili@drew.edu)

In our contested U.S. context, including shifting enrollments, budget cuts, and attacks on diversity as well as the Humanities, how has the study of South Asia, especially South Asian religions, been affected, according to faculty members' experiences? How are courses on South Asian religions contextualized at the institution – program, department, major, etc.? What is attracting students to such courses and/or programs today? What are some differences experienced by type of institutional context (large R1, small liberal arts, tiers, etc.)? How can we work together to shape the future? The particular focus would be U.S. colleges and universities, though some comparative information could be helpful.

Sovereignty in Colonial India – Brian Pennington (bpennington4@elon.edu)

Classic notions of sovereignty entail ideas of territory, legitimacy, and power, while Leela Prasad has recently invited us to think about it in terms of the subjective and narrative realms that colonialism could not touch. This session will examine the contours of sovereignty in British-ruled India and seek to expand on these generative insights.

Muslim Utopias in India Amidst Attempted Erasures – Claire Robison (crobison@bowdoin.edu) and Tim Dobe (dobetimo@grinnell.edu)

What does it mean to imagine an ideal place grounded in Muslim identity when it is

hotly contested, even threatened with erasure? What forms of Muslim identity may be safely celebrated in public and who 'gets' to represent them? What space is there to be a Muslim ally in Hindu religious spaces or to imagine religious utopias outside of sectarian divides? While complicated by the legacy of Partition and entanglements of political Islam with modern South Asian nation-states, Muslim and Islamicate notions of and experiments with ideal space continue to hold weight in India as well as neighboring South Asian nations. This ranges from the cultivation of utopian public spaces, such as renovated Mughal gardens in urban India, to multireligious solidarities and spaces centered in Muslim nonviolence. How do efforts to sustain, revive, or imagine such utopian spaces contest both an exclusivist vision of India and provide alternate visions of what Islam and Muslim culture on the subcontinent can be?

Orality and Aurality in South Asian Religions - Maharshi Vyas (mmvyas@unc.edu)

This panel seeks to bring forth research that offers innovative approaches to theorizing the oral, aural, and sonic dimensions of South Asian religions. The panel invites papers that examine the sensory interplay between sound, speech, and silence within religious practices; socio-political contexts; public spaces; or the construction of history and memory. Topics may include, but are not limited to, sound and performance, sound and technology, or other explorations of how sonic practices shape South Asian religious life and experience.

Black Studies and South Asian Studies – Anand Venkatkrishnan (anandv8@uchicago.edu)

The world systems of race, caste, and colonialism have long brought together Black and South Asian peoples and perspectives in conflict and cooperation. However, the same is only intermittently true for the fields of study, especially in the American Academy of Religion, of which they are both subject and object. This panel invites reflections on Black and South Asian histories of diaspora, displacement, and devotion, and on the critical theories and methods that accompany and elude their respective fields.

Roundtable discussion of a recent book - SherAli Tareen (sherali.tareen@famdm.edu) and Bhakti Mamtara (mamtora@uarizona.edu)

We are hoping to make this a more common feature of SARI annual offerings, with the stipulation that the book to be discussed should touch on the diversity of South Asian religious traditions and/or the complexity of religion as a category in relation to South Asian religions.

If you are looking for collaborators towards proposing a panel session, please feel free to reach out to colleagues on the SARI listservs and/or contact the SARI co-chairs SherAli Tareen (SherAli.Tareen@fandm.edu) and Bhakti Mamtora (mamtora@arizona.edu) for assistance or to email the colleagues listed below if there is a topic that is interesting to you.

All Papers Session Panel Proposals must be submitted through the PAPERS system on the AAR website.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit's mission is to provide a venue for new and important research in the many religious cultures, texts, and histories of South Asia. Within the area of South Asia, all world religions exist in unique forms, from religions that originated in India — such as Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Tantra, and tribal religions — to religions that have taken on longstanding and distinctive forms in South Asia — such as Islam, Judaism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism. The focus of our work is thus on the religious, cultural, and intellectual traditions generated in South Asia, but not limited to that geographic region, and changes that have occurred in those traditions over several millennia. Scholars of South Asian religious traditions explore the distinctive manifestations of these traditions within and beyond the subcontinent, their interactions, and their movements to and expressions in other parts of the world. This Unit encourages contextualizing religion within debates on a broad array of parallel and intersecting issues, such as (but not limited to) politics, secularism, literature, philology, globalization, modernity, colonialism and postcolonialism, history, society, media, popular culture, material and visual culture, and economics. Our scholarship often emphasizes sessions and papers that look at more than one tradition and thus frequently entail some degree of comparative approach. Our website is <https://sari.arizona.edu>. We also have a listserv, which is essential to the work of our Unit. Information on joining the listserv can be found on our website.

Chairs

- SherAli Tareen
stareen@fandm.edu
- Bhakti Mamtora, University of Arizona
mamtora@arizona.edu

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

South Asian Religions Unit

Call for Proposals

The Steering Committee of the South Asian Religions (SARI) Unit invites colleagues to submit proposals for the June 2026 online AAR Annual Meeting. SARI's mission is to provide a venue for new research on the many religious cultures, literatures, and histories of South Asia as they have developed in global contexts. We have a strong preference for sessions in which the papers cover a range of South Asian traditions, regions, and languages.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit's mission is to provide a venue for new and important research in the many religious cultures, texts, and histories of South Asia. Within the area of South Asia, all world religions exist in unique forms, from religions that originated in India — such as Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Tantra, and tribal religions — to religions that have taken on longstanding and distinctive forms in South Asia — such as Islam, Judaism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism. The focus of our work is thus on the religious, cultural, and intellectual traditions generated in South Asia, but not limited to that geographic region, and changes that have occurred in those traditions over several millennia. Scholars of South Asian religious traditions explore the distinctive manifestations of these traditions within and beyond the subcontinent, their interactions, and their movements to and expressions in other parts of the world. This Unit encourages contextualizing religion within debates on a broad array of parallel and intersecting issues, such as (but not limited to) politics, secularism, literature, philology, globalization, modernity, colonialism and postcolonialism, history, society, media, popular culture, material and visual culture, and economics. Our scholarship often emphasizes sessions and papers that look at more than one tradition and thus frequently entail some degree of comparative approach. Our website is <https://sari.arizona.edu>. We also have a listserv, which is essential to the work of our Unit. Information on joining the listserv can be found on our website.

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stareen@fandm.edu
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-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Space, Place, and Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

We welcome individual papers, papers sessions, and roundtable proposals for topics exploring space and place as they relate to religion. We are always interested in papers and sessions that employ theoretically or methodologically self-conscious and innovative approaches to understanding space and place as they relate to, condition, and constitute aspects of religious life including belief, ritual, meaning, aesthetics, and experience. We welcome ethnographically-informed studies of sites and historically-informed studies of texts that shed light on the role of space and place in religious traditions. Space, Place, and Religion dedicates one of its sessions to religious spaces in Asia. Our Unit is committed to diversity and inclusivity; pre-arranged panels and sessions should reflect gender, racial, and ethnic diversity as well as the diversity of field, method, and scholarly rank.

For the November 2026 meeting, we are particularly interested in:

1. Proposals that contend with issues of authority and agency—what decisions and negotiations swirl around the construction and use of space? We welcome submissions that treat the legalities of space, including zoning, land use, and the juridical frameworks of environmental protections and resource extraction. Sacred sites are never only sacred; they are deeply implicated in the legal, economic, infrastructural, and environmental systems that produce space itself. We also invite submissions that consider environmental issues and resource extraction more broadly, and that point toward new understandings of religion in contexts of resource extraction, and the management and exploitation of lands

and waters, including rivers and watersheds, mountain ecosystems, and energy infrastructures.

2. Proposals that explore refugee spaces. Refugee camps, detention centers, informal settlements, shelters, etc., are usually temporary responses to crisis. But these sites frequently become long-term and even permanent, landscapes of social, political, and religious life. This session invites papers that analyze such spaces as religiously significant environments shaped by design, governance, material infrastructure, and everyday practices. We are especially interested in how refugee spaces are planned, built, regulated, and inhabited, how they often transform from temporary to permanent spaces, and what that means in reference to religion, and how religious actors and material and embodied practices are constrained or improvised in such spaces.
3. Proposals that consider transpacific networks that connect Asian contexts to the American West. This includes proposals on Asian religious spaces in the US, including in the mountain West and in the Denver area. We are especially interested in proposals that explore religious understandings of space-making, resettlement, environment, and resources, as well as proposals that analyze tensions between transmitted spatial practices and those that are prevalent in the American West.
4. Proposals that employ spatial methodologies, especially those that leverage new or emergent techniques in data, visualization, modeling, and spatial theory. We are particularly interested in work that pushes beyond descriptive “mapping” toward analytical, critical, and interpretive spatial methods. These might include autoethnographic or other critical qualitative methods. These might also interrogate specific spatial characteristics (temporality, ambiguity, ephemerality, etc.) or the understanding of “space” in new ways.
5. [For a co-sponsorship with Religion and Memory Unit](#), proposals that address how “The Land Remembers.” Does memory require sentience? Can rocks, rivers, trees, and dirt be said to remember? How do landscapes hold the memories of what has happened on or to them? How do religious beliefs and practices about land shape commemorative practices, and how do landscapes shape religious notions of remembering? We are interested in papers that explore the connection between religion, memory, and land across religious traditions, geographic contexts, and time (both contemporary and/or historical).

Statement of Purpose

This Unit is a forum for exploring religious sites and the spatial dimensions of religions. We feature ethnographically-informed studies of living sites, historically-informed studies of texts and artifacts, and analyses of architecture and landscape. Our work seeks to shed light on the role of space and place in religious traditions and communities or to examine religious activity (performance, ritual, and practice) in spatial contexts. This Unit recognizes that spaces and places, real and imagined/visionary, are constitutive elements in religious life; it is dedicated to investigating how they contribute to contemplative, ritualistic, artistic, economic, ethnic, or political aspects of religious life using a variety of approaches and methods. We expect to include at least one session focused on spaces and places in Asia, in addition to sessions focused on other themes, regions, traditions or advancing the theoretical analysis of space and place.

Chairs

- Katie Oxx, Saint Joseph's University
koxx@sju.edu
 - Courtney Bruntz, Institute of Buddhist Studies
courtney.bruntz@gmail.com
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Special Session

Call for Proposals

A limited number of special sessions are approved by the Program Committee each year. These are intended to be experimental, creative, or timely sessions that address an area of interest that does not naturally fall within the purview of one or more existing Program Units OR that address a current issue/event of interest to multiple AAR constituencies. The Program Committee occasionally approves special sessions for sessions that would be one-time only or special to the year or location. Special Sessions may only be submitted through PAPERS. Under exceptional circumstances, special sessions may also be proposed to address a pressing issue that arises after the proposal deadline.

Guidelines for special sessions:

- Special sessions are accepted through PAPERS only.
- Special session proposals must provide a rationale based on the criteria above.
- Special sessions must use one of the prearranged session proposal formats (papers session or roundtable).
- Make sure the special session does not cover an area already covered by an existing program unit. If a proposal fits within an established program unit's mission, the proposal will be forwarded to that unit. If a proposal is submitted both as a special session and also to a program unit, it will be eliminated from consideration as a special session.

The Program Committee evaluates all Special Session proposals. Notification of program acceptance will be announced in April.

Call for Proposals for Online June Meeting

The Program Committee encourages proposals for special sessions to the Online June Sessions of the Annual Meetings.

Chairs

- Claudia Schippert, American Academy of Religion
claudiaschippert@gmail.com
- Ann Gleig
ann.gleig@ucf.edu
- Amy Defibaugh, American Academy of Religion
adefibaugh@aarweb.org

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

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In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Study of Islam Unit

Call for Proposals

This Unit encourages proposals in all areas of Islamic studies. Successful proposals will reflect theoretical and methodological sophistication and engagement with existing scholarship, along with innovative examination of Muslim practices, texts, and material culture in diverse contexts and geographies. In addition to individual paper proposals, we especially encourage the submission of coherent pre-arranged sessions involving multiple scholars, including traditional paper panels, roundtable or lightning sessions, or other creative presentation formats. We also encourage proposals with attention to classroom and public pedagogies.

It is an explicit requirement of our Unit for pre-arranged panels to incorporate diversity along the lines of gender, race, institutional context, and rank.

If your proposal is accepted and you agree to be on the program, we expect you to appear in-person to participate in your session at the Annual Meeting, barring unforeseeable exceptional circumstances. Please note that the Islamic Studies Program Units have a policy according to which no-shows may be barred from the program for the following year.

In light of the intense uncertainties we are currently facing, this year's presidential theme exhorts us to consider our collective "future/s," in order to "imagine futures beyond despair on the one hand, or superficial hope on the other." With this in mind, the Study of Islam unit is interested in how the future is imagined, foreclosed, or manufactured within Muslim traditions and lifeworlds, as well as in the precarious institutions where we study them. We are particularly interested in the following areas in relation to this theme:

- Lessons from apocalyptic times (whether past or contemporary)
- The future of Islamic studies as a field and within institutions of higher education
- The end of DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion), and the potential for Islamic Studies to be an alternative way of envisioning DEI work
- Muslim children, youth, and future-making
- Islamic Studies and artificial intelligence

- Indigenous Studies and Islamic Studies: shared/divergent conceptualizations of time, land, and survival; comparative approaches to settler-colonialism, resistance, and the stewardship of the future

As always, we encourage submissions on topics of general interest, such as the Qur'an and hadith, Islamic law and ethics, philosophy and theology, mysticism, ritual, gender and sexuality, race and politics, and other areas. Furthermore, we encourage proposals dealing with Shi'ism within and across these areas, as well as other forms of Islam that have been rendered marginal or peripheral.

As we have done for many years now, we also invite proposals for a special Graduate Student Session: This session will offer advanced graduate students the opportunity to present for 5 minutes on their dissertation research, followed by short responses from other panelists and open discussion. If you are a graduate student nearing completion of your dissertation, and are interested in talking succinctly about your research in this session, please submit a paper proposal through the PAPERS system with the abstract and proposal the same text and length (maximum 150 words), and indicate that your submission is for this special session format at the top of the proposal.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit is a home for the academic study of Islam within the AAR. This Unit encompasses various approaches and subjects, from Qur'anic studies to modern reform movements and from textual research to sociology. The Unit also has enduring interests in pedagogical issues associated with the teaching of Islam and prioritizes, through two signature sessions, mentoring of early-career scholars. The purpose of the Unit is both to provide a forum for dialogue among differing approaches and projects within Islamic studies and also to provide opportunities for the discussion of work that affects the overall field of the study of religion. We normally meet for five to seven sessions at each Annual Meeting. We often coordinate our work with other Islam-related AAR Program Units, including the Contemporary Islam Unit, the Islam, Gender, Women Unit, the Islamic Mysticism Unit, Teaching Islamophobia Unit, and the Qur'an Unit.

Chairs

- Zaid Adhami
za2@williams.edu
- Samah Choudhury, Illinois Institute of Technology
schoudhury3@illinoistech.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Tantric Studies Unit

Call for Proposals

We invite papers on the following topics:

- New Books in Tantric Studies. Contact: Richard Payne <rkpayne1@mac.com>
- Conceptualizing Experience. Contact: Elaine Fisher <emf@stanford.edu>
- Antinomianism Across Tantric Traditions. Contact: Patrick Lambolet <p.lambelet@maitripa.org>
- Prāṇa, Prāṇāyāma, and the Subtle Body. Contacts: Ana Laura Funes Maderey <afunesmaderey@fairfield.edu> and Shaman Hatley <shaman.hatley@umb.edu>

Preformed paper panels or roundtables are strongly encouraged and may be structured to fill 2.0-hour or 1.5-hour session meeting times. Panel proposals may engage any topic or concern, with the above being only some of the possibilities.

We encourage our members to consider the diversity of traditions, geographical areas, and disciplines as well as the diversity of participants, responders, and presiders when putting together panel proposals. Please also take into consideration whether your panel would benefit from being co-sponsored with another Unit or Units of the AAR.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit brings together scholars who utilize a range of methodological and theoretical perspectives in their studies of the complex religious, social, and cultural phenomena known collectively as tantra. "Tantra" refers to a range of esoteric religious traditions that developed in India and were disseminated throughout Asia during the first millennium CE. These diverse traditions have used mental and bodily disciplines, devotional and ritual practices, and gendered cosmologies, and have created elaborate artistic as well as sociopolitical systems. The collective study of tantra has led to several important conclusions: • The demonstrated diversity of tantric practices and ideologies demands a plurality of methods, theories, and interpretative strategies by scholars • These richly varied tantric traditions became, by the twelfth century CE, central to many

Asian religious and sociopolitical systems, including those of India, Nepal, Tibet, Mongolia, Cambodia, Japan, and China • Various traditional Asian forms of tantra have been brought to the Western world since the early twentieth century and are undergoing a vital process of reinterpretation and appropriation Our goal is to provide a venue for scholars of different areas of tantric studies to collaborate across traditional boundaries of religious traditions (e.g., Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism), present-day nation-states, geography (e.g., India, Tibet, China, Japan), and academic disciplines (e.g., history of religions, anthropology, art history, linguistics, sociology). We seek to be a cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary enterprise. Tantra as a set of practices — a religious technology — and as a set of doctrines explaining, justifying, and rationalizing those practices, in fact, exists across religious, national, and geographical boundaries. For example, an adequate understanding of Japanese Tantric Buddhist practice and doctrine requires not only locating it in an East Asian Buddhist context but also in an Indian and South Asian context where the juxtaposition of Buddhist and Hindu tantras can fruitfully reveal aspects that might otherwise remain obscured. Similarly, by setting Buddhist materials in relation to Hindu traditions — both of which might otherwise be seen either as uniquely Hindu or Buddhist — will be highlighted as part of a broader, shared tantric discourse. This Unit will also allow scholars to present new methodologies for the study of tantra and help to bridge more traditional academic approaches, such as textual-based and fieldwork-based studies. We seek to further the study of tantra as a global, transnational phenomena and as an important new religious movement. Finally, the Unit will also explore new perspectives for studies of gender, power, identity, and sexuality that are so germane to modern religious scholarship.

Chairs

- Anya Golovkova
agolovkova@lakeforest.edu
- Shaman Hatley
shaman.hatley@umb.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Teaching Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

The Teaching Religion Unit critically examines pedagogical theory and practice. We particularly value proposals that combine scholarship of teaching and learning *and* innovative teaching practices. We invite both individual paper proposals as well as proposals for fully-developed roundtables or sessions. For 2026, paper and panel proposals that address the following themes are especially welcome:

Back to the Future / Revisiting the Classics

Aligned with the 2026 Annual Meeting theme of "Future/s," the Teaching Religion Unit invites proposals for presentations and/or teaching demonstrations on the theme of "back to the future." We seek presentations that revisit classic aspects of classroom teaching – effective lecturing, foundations for discussion, and more – with an eye toward how these classics remain relevant or can be adapted moving forward. This is meant to be a practical session framed for an audience looking to learn core pedagogical techniques that are supported by Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

"Teaching Tactics"

The Teaching Religion Unit regularly hosts an annual session on "Teaching Tactics," which features lightning-round presentations (7-10 minutes total) of a specific teaching technique, assignment, etc., followed by discussion. This year we are particularly interested in presentations that not only describe a teaching tactic, but demonstrate an actual lesson or model engaged, interactive, and experiential pedagogy. For 2026, we are considering a themed Teaching Tactics session centered around tactics for ethical formation (peacebuilding, compassionate listening, collaboration, group work, etc.).

The FUTURE of Teaching and Learning: Artificial Intelligence in the Classroom

The Religion, Media, and Culture Unit, Teaching Religion Unit, and Class, Labor, and Religion Unit invite proposals for a possible co-sponsored session. We hope to facilitate discussions that:

- Analyze and/or demonstrate innovative teaching methods/styles using various A.I.-answer engines – per past experience or future teaching plans.
- Evaluate any obstacles that arise when A.I. enters the religious studies classroom. Potential concerns include plagiarism convenience, threats to academic integrity, "hallucination," inaccuracy, and bias deficiencies, "homogenized" thought, and compromises to student attention and effort.

- Address the future of academic labor as related to AI: how our work as educators is being affected by both changes to the university and AI. How does the growing movement towards teaching, grading, and writing using AI tools affect our work? How might it further implicate us and our students in unjust labor, environmental impact, and structural injustice broadly understood?

Teaching and Learning about Religion Beyond the Classroom

The Teaching Religion Unit and Religion and Public Schools Unit invite proposals for a possible co-sponsored session. The landscape of education is changing rapidly, from primary school through university, and the structures that supported the academic study of religion are changing at the same time. There are more and more opportunities to teach and learn about religion outside of the traditional classroom setting, from museum exhibits designed to engage young children and their families with their religiously diverse neighbors, to community and continuing education; from new online opportunities to religious literacy training embedded in workforce development programs. This call seeks papers that examine the experiences and/or impacts of teaching or learning about religion in alternative settings.

Topics could include:

- teaching about religion in museums, libraries, and other cultural institutions;
- intergenerational learning or teaching opportunities;
- online courses outside of a university program;
- continuing education for casual learners (non-degree programs);
- public installations, exhibits, or experiences;
- students-focused programs outside of school hours;
- the integration of learning about religion with other forms of training.

Teaching the Canon: Schleiermacher

The Teaching Religion Unit and the Schleiermacher Unit invite papers for a possible co-sponsored session on the topic of "Teaching the Canon: Schleiermacher." What does it mean and what might it look like to teach "canonical" texts and figures in religion today? This session explores this question through a reexamination of F.D.E. Schleiermacher's place in the religion and theology curriculum. Whether as a lead-up to Barth's "No!" to natural theology, as a founder of the academic study of religion, or as early textual critic, Schleiermacher has long been a mainstay of the theological curriculum and courses on theory and methods in the study of religion. Generations of scholars have been exposed to debates over whether or not Schleiermacher's definition of religion's essence as lying in "feeling" rendered it beyond the scope of conceptual

analysis and Schleiermacher's role in formulating the hermeneutic circle. The Reden and Glaubenslehre remain required readings in many religion classrooms. Yet many of the assumptions that have undergirded Schleiermacher's place in the curriculum have been complicated or challenged. Reception histories that have highlighted the distance between Schleiermacher and his appropriators, greater access to a wider breadth of Schleiermacher's intellectual production, increased attention to the historical and political context of Schleiermacher's work, and genealogies that have recontextualized the task of studying religion itself all have enormous implications for how Schleiermacher can (or whether he should) be taught today.

This session calls for proposals for individual papers, presentations, or panels that address the practical task of engaging F.D.E. Schleiermacher in the context of undergraduate programs, theological education, graduate school, preaching or public scholarship, engaging with recent research on Schleiermacher and exploring the place of historical context, close reading, genealogies, or lived religion in the classroom. Topics for proposals might include (but are not limited to) the following:

- The (ir)relevance of Schleiermacher's understanding of religion and approach to theology for introductory courses and graduate theory and methods seminars
- Exploring the way that historical narratives about the development of modern theology, the academic study of religion, or the rise of the modern university shape the way that Schleiermacher is presented and alternatives to situating Schleiermacher's project as a foil or as a stepping stone to Ritschl / Troeltsch / Barth, the history of religions school / Otto / Eliade, or Dilthey / Gadamer
- How confessional and non-confessional institutional locations shape the reception of Schleiermacher's theological and academic project
- Teaching Schleiermacher as a social activist whose life and thought holds constructive potential for ethical and political issues
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Roundtable Discussion: The Dialogic Classroom in Higher Education

The Teaching Religion Unit also plans to host a pre-arranged roundtable discussion with authors of the book, *The Dialogic Classroom in Higher Education* (Routledge, 2026).

General Call

We invite proposals for individual papers and panel sessions that join innovative teaching practice with the scholarship of teaching and learning. Of particular interest this year are papers that might include: re-enchanting the teaching of religion, teaching

religion responsibly with/in the context of AI, teaching alternative texts (podcasts, graphic novels, streaming series), teaching to scale (large/small classes, grading), trauma-informed pedagogy, and/or competency based education in religious studies. Preference will be given to presentation formats that model engaged, interactive, and experiential pedagogy.

Statement of Purpose

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Chairs

- Kate DeConinck
kydeconinck@gmail.com
- Joseph Tucker Edmonds
jtuckere@iupui.edu

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

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General Call

We invite proposals for individual papers and panel sessions that join innovative teaching practice with the scholarship of teaching and learning. Of particular interest this year are papers that might include: re-enchanting the teaching of religion, teaching religion responsibly with/in the context of AI, teaching alternative texts (podcasts, graphic novels, streaming series), teaching to scale (large/small classes, grading), trauma-informed pedagogy, and/or competency based education in religious studies. Preference will be given to presentation formats that model engaged, interactive, and experiential pedagogy.

Statement of Purpose

The Teaching Religion Unit critically examines pedagogical theory and practice. We invite proposals that join innovative teaching practice with the scholarship of teaching and learning. Preference will be given to presentation formats that model engaged, interactive, and experiential pedagogy.

Chairs

- Kate DeConinck
kydeconinck@gmail.com
 - Joseph Tucker Edmonds
jtuckere@iupui.edu
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Theological, Pedagogical, and Ethical Approaches to Israel/Palestine Seminar

Call for Proposals

We are looking for papers on the following topics that examine pedagogical and ethical approaches:

General Topics:

- Interrogating Settler Antisemitism and the Question of Genocide
- Settler-Colonialism, Indigenous Struggles, Israel/Palestine, and Religion from 1492-1948
- Global Holocaust Memory/Global Nakba Memory

Theology:

- Spiritual Methods to Resist Scholasticide
 - The Judeo-Islamic Tradition as a Resource for Israel/Palestine
- Christian-Jewish Dialogue on Anti-Zionism

Pedagogy:

- Compulsory Zionism: The New Humanism in the Academy
- Israel/Palestine in the Study of Religion in North America
- Strategies to Overcome Futuricide
 - Art as public pedagogy in Palestinian resistance
 - Oral Histories of Student Activism

Ethics:

- Ethical and Religious Perspectives on Boycott, Divestment, and Sanction
- BDS and Learned Societies
- Relating Climate Change, Immigration Restrictions and the War on Gaza

Statement of Purpose

This seminar is designed to bring a religious studies dimension to the emergent theological, pedagogical, ethical, and social scientific inquiry on Israel/Palestine that is developing in a variety of subfields across academia. We intend to contribute to a number of cutting-edge discourses that create interdependencies among Islamic, Christian, Jewish and secular conversations. Our focus will be on **ethical** questions raised by the century-old conflict in Israel/Palestine, including, for example, the political uses of archeological programs, religious tours, and the participation of international organizations. We will survey **theological** questions that emerge from interactions, both pacific and conflictual. The seminar will engage mainstream theological discourses, and also those emerging from collectives that are pushed aside or subsumed by reigning discourses. Because Israel/Palestine has been a subject causing major controversy in academia and especially in our Religious Studies classrooms we will interrogate **pedagogical** questions and strategies to discover how we can create educational frameworks that respect multiple identities and contribute to social justice. Finally, the seminar will explore **anthropological and sociological** frameworks that focus on multiple nationalisms, modern capitalistic and socialist development, imperialisms, critique of political economy, settler colonialism, interfaith dialogue and modernity/coloniality to examine their connections to the religious studies analysis of the conflict. The seminar will welcome all AAR members who write, teach, and think about these subjects and welcome respectful encounters with scholars with opposing views that will benefit the development of new approaches to Israel/Palestine Studies.

Chairs

- Jason Springs, University of Notre Dame
jspring1@nd.edu
- Rebecca Alpert
ralpert@temple.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Theology and Continental Philosophy Unit

Call for Proposals

The Theology and Continental Philosophy Unit invites individual paper proposals, panel proposals, and roundtables on any of the following topics, or any others within our unit's area of focus. We also encourage proposals to combine aspects of the topics listed below:

- Philosophies and theologies of sport - especially as related to phenomenologies of the body, religious nationalisms, moral panics around gender and sexuality, and/or engagement with specific theorists like CLR James
- New Schmittianism - work engaging the resurgence of theories of sovereignty rooted in Roman Catholic thought, critiques of sovereignty, uncomfortable alliances between Catholic and Evangelical nationalisms
- The future of speculation - assessments of so-called artificial intelligence on political economy and higher education, the relationship between financial tools and forms of thought, and/or intellectual life beyond or against the university
- Materialisms and religion - conflicts, challenges, and lines of alliance
- Recent work in non-Christian philosophies of religion

Statement of Purpose

This Unit seeks to further discussions at the intersection of post-Kantian philosophy in its various permutations with historical and contemporary theological reflection. While we remain centered on continental European thought (even and especially beyond the borders of the continent) on the philosophical side, the term "theology" in our parlance extends to critical reflection on a range of religions worldwide, and we are particularly interested to expand our offerings in Judaism, Islam, and marginalized traditions (such as witchcraft) in coming years. Contact the Program Unit Chairs if you seek further information on the Unit's activities.

Chairs

- Marika Rose
marika.rose@dcu.ie

- Anthony Paul Smith
anthonypaul.smith@gmail.com
-

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Theology and Continental Philosophy Unit

Call for Proposals

The Theology and Continental Philosophy Unit invites individual paper proposals, panel proposals, and roundtables on any of the following topics, or any others within our unit's area of focus. We also encourage proposals to combine aspects of the topics listed below:

- Philosophies and theologies of sport - especially as related to phenomenologies of the body, religious nationalisms, moral panics around gender and sexuality, and/or engagement with specific theorists like CLR James
- New Schmittianism - work engaging the resurgence of theories of sovereignty rooted in Roman Catholic thought, critiques of sovereignty, uncomfortable alliances between Catholic and Evangelical nationalisms
- The future of speculation - assessments of so-called artificial intelligence on political economy and higher education, the relationship between financial tools and forms of thought, and/or intellectual life beyond or against the university
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Statement of Purpose

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as witchcraft) in coming years. Contact the Program Unit Chairs if you seek further information on the Unit's activities.

Chairs

- Marika Rose
marika.rose@dcu.ie
 - Anthony Paul Smith
anthonypaul.smith@gmail.com
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Theology and Religious Reflection Unit

Call for Proposals

The Theology and Religious Reflection unit seeks paper and panel proposals on the following topics, as well as on topics related to the unit's general remit.

- Proposals and panels that consider the significance of geography, space, and place in theology and/or religion.
- Proposals and panels dealing with satanic panics (e.g., Conjuring, Dungeons and Dragons)
- Proposals that, in connection with this year's presidential theme, look at how futurity configures and reconfigures notions of spirit and/or the human.
- Proposals centering on activism and confrontations with power in academia, and the ways that these confrontations witness to possible futures.

"Haunting Future/s," for a potential panel co-sponsored by the Religion, Colonialism, and Postcolonialism Unit and Theology and Religious Reflection Unit:

- In response to this year's presidential theme, we invite papers that investigate questions of futurity in theological and colonial discourses on haunting, spectrality, and ghostliness. Topics can include but are not limited to:

- Political messianism
- The “post” of postcolonialism
- “Vanishing races”
- (Post-)Colonial Melancholia
- Fascism and utopia in the settler colony (re: Jameson?)
- Theology and horror
- Theologies of spectral media
- Necropolitics and biopolitics
- Spectrality and the archive
- Imperial boomerangs
- "Survivance"
- Ancestral presences and interventions

For a potential co-sponsored panel between Lesbian-Feminisms and Religion Unit, Feminist Theory and Religious Reflection Unit, and Theology and Religious Reflection Unit:

A panel engaging Wendy Mallette’s *Lesbian Feminist Killjoys: Sin, Queer Negativity, and Inherited Guilt* (NYU Press, 2026). This is a largely pre-arranged author-meets-respondents session, but we are interested in including additional scholars interested in historical and/or theological approaches to queer, lesbian, feminist, and trans studies, Christian discourse on sin, and American religious cultures. Please email Siobhan Kelly (smk@ku.edu) if you would like to be considered as a panelist.

Statement of Purpose

The Theology and Religious Reflection Unit is committed to fostering broad, interdisciplinary conversations in the study of religion and theology. We aim to cultivate a site of intersection and engagement for scholars working in various religious contexts who also have interests in the wider aspects of mutual interest in our field (theological, theoretical, methodological, political, ethical). Our Unit promotes constructive work that typically includes an emphasis on critical engagement as well as conceptual and social transformation.

Chairs

- Seth Gaiters, North Carolina State University
sethgaiters@gmail.com

- Eleanor Craig
elcatcraig@gmail.com
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Theology of Martin Luther King Jr. Unit

Call for Proposals

Engaging King Studies in and for the Future – Open Call (90 minutes)

The Theology of Martin Luther King Jr. Unit invites proposals for an open call for papers and panels focused on engaging new possibilities and identifying needed directions in King scholarship. We are interested in compelling papers or panels that draw upon sources in religion and theological studies, as well as those beyond religion and theology to identify the potential significance of Kingian theology and broader King studies for the near and longer-term future. We are open to papers from a broad range of foci, disciplines, and methodologies. Below are some questions that display potential directions, but this call is not limited to the questions listed here. It is an open call.

- How can engagement with Kingian theology help name what it means to be and remain human amidst the growing realities of artificial intelligence and other technological developments (humanoid bots, privatized space travel, etc.)?
- Considering current trajectories in global politics, what notions of leadership will be needed, and what can be gained by engaging Martin Luther King, Jr. and his interlocutors as a critical resource in discerning new models of leadership?
- How might current scholarly giants and newer scholars in King studies come together to chart new paths together?
- How might religious communities lean on King as a critical resource for constructing theologies and practices of freedom?
- How might the theological insights, practices, and commitments of figures who influenced King, the SCLC, and the broader civil rights movement point to new and necessary directions in Kingian theological discourse? Some examples could be Ella Baker, Septima Clark, Dorothy Cotton, Bayard Rustin, and Thich Nhat Han.
- What is the significance of King's notion of nonviolence in light of current shifts in technology, human relationships, and/or global politics.

- How might discourse in Black studies identify important interlocutors, generate helpful language, and chart new directions in Kingian theology? How might Kingian theological discourse contribute to Black studies?

Martin Luther King, Jr. and Public Pedagogy (90 minutes)

While Martin Luther King, Jr. was an academic theologian, his primary environment for teaching was not the classroom. Rather, his students were demonstration participants and resisters, event attendees, TV viewers, U.S. Government officials, American voters, and citizens and leaders of nations across the globe. As the world continues to grapple with what King taught in his shortened life, it is important to consider the legacies of King and the Civil Rights Movement as they relate to pedagogy. In light of this, the Theology of Martin Luther King Jr. Unit invites proposals for papers and panels focused on the work of public pedagogy. We are especially interested in the following topics:

- Martin Luther King, Jr.'s use of legal documents as sacred and secular texts to frame his sermons and political philosophy
- Identifiable philosophies, theological nuances, and practices in King's public pedagogy
- Creative pedagogies embodied by Martin Luther King, Jr. and other civil rights leaders
- Critical analysis of the Civil Rights Movement's impactful teaching moments through the lens of pedagogy
- What political leaders have learned from King and what aspects of King's pedagogy generated the learning
- The possibilities and limits of King's public pedagogy today

Statement of Purpose

The work of this Unit is focused on creating conversations around the unique contributions of Martin Luther King Jr. to the Christian theological tradition in the twentieth century and to the religious, cultural, political, and economic consequences of his work. We are particularly interested in the many facets of the Civil Rights Movement, of which King was a significant part. These explorations have included a focus on the role of women in the movement, the economic dimensions of King's work, and his use of both the theological traditions and rhetoric of the Black Church. In all of our sessions we are interested in fostering inter- and multidisciplinary approaches to this project.

Chairs

- Barbara Annette Fears, Howard University
barbara.fears@howard.edu
 - Montague Williams
montaguewilliams@pointloma.edu
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Tibetan and Himalayan Religions Unit

Call for Proposals

We are looking forward to another year of excellent THRU programming in 2026 in Denver!

As a reminder, you do not need to be an AAR member to submit a proposal to the annual meeting; however, you do have to become a member to present at the annual meeting.

Khyentse Foundation travel grants will be available for Tibetan and Himalayan scholars whose papers are accepted, so please keep this in mind as you consider your applications, the composition of your panels, etc. And please spread the word about these grants!

We have the option of holding a panel at the June online meeting. This could be a particularly good opportunity for involving scholars from afar, and those who are unable to travel. Please contact us if you have ideas for an online panel in June.

Proposals for the in-person meeting in Denver are welcome on any theme or topic related to the Tibetan and Himalayan Religions Unit. The presidential theme for 2026, suggested by incoming president Laurel Schneider, is "Future/s." Proposals do not need to relate to the presidential theme but we encourage you to read Schneider's summary of the theme, and to engage with it if it speaks to you.

Please see below the proposed in-person panel sessions we've received, and which we are now publicizing through this call for papers. Contact details of the organizers are

below, and you should reach out to them to express your interest. And you are more than welcome to propose your own panel or paper outside of what is listed here.

- **Ceci n'est pas une Thangka: Attending to the Unexpected in Tibetan Religious Contexts**

- This panel seeks to foreground Tibetan religious phenomena that maintain lives distinct from their seemingly intended purposes. These may include the following:
 - Religious images that are eaten
 - Narrative murals that are not encountered as stories
 - Medicine/pills that are never consumed
 - Texts that aren't read
 - Clothes/ornaments that are not meant to be worn
 - Ritual objects never used for their rituals
- Our intention is to move beyond taking objects, practices, and ideas at face value, remaining attentive to the unexpected, and finding meaning in the hidden or unforeseen. **Contact: Dominique Townsend (dt80@columbia.edu) and Andy Quintmann (aquintman@wesleyan.edu)**

- **Motherhood in Tibetan Buddhism**

- This panel takes next year's AAR theme of "Future/s" somewhat literally and examines the role of birth and motherhood in Tibetan Buddhism. Papers exploring topics such as amchi natal care, mothering figures like as Queen Maya or Tara, mother Dakinis, the aim of loving all sentient beings as if they were our mother, or other papers related to the literal or symbolic act of motherhood are welcomed. **Contact: Maddy Tevonian (madeleinetevonian@hds.harvard.edu)**

- **Preservation as Future-Making**

- This panel will explore how the representations of preservation—in Buddhist narratives, rituals, spaces, lineages, or material cultures—function as a strategy for constructing Buddhist futures. Studies of any Buddhist tradition or genre are welcome. We hope to bring diverse materials in conversation to illuminate how Buddhists have coped with calamities, theorized continuity, and cultivated future worlds through acts of preservation. **Contact: Arushi Bahuguna (arushib@g.ucla.edu)**

- **Religious Thinkers as Co-Theorists: The Future of Critical Theory on Religion**

- Working off the 2026 AAR theme of "Future/s," this panel asks us to imagine a future of critical theory where religious intellectuals outside the

academy are not simply subjects to be studied, but colleagues to think alongside. This panel aims to challenge the disciplinary norms that treat the academy as the primary creator of and authority on "theory" about religion. What new terms arise, which ideas fall out of favor, and what networks of relationships appear when we treat religious intellectuals as theorists of religion in their own right? This panel does not aim to valorize religious knowledge as somehow more authentic or true, but rather to extend to it the same interest, scrutiny, and care scholars provide to canonical theorists. What does the future of the field look like if we acknowledge that some of the most sophisticated theorists of religion have been studied, categorized, and provincialized as its objects? **Contact: Matthew**

Drew (matthewdrew2028@u.northwestern.edu) and **Dominique Townsend** (dt80@columbia.edu)

- **Promises and Prophecy in 20th–21st century Tibetan Buddhism**

- This panel will focus on prophecy and messianism in Tibetan Buddhism and traditions derived from it, such as Mongolian Buddhism, Yellow Shamanism, and Burkhanism, starting from the 20th-century rule of the 13th Dalai Lama and continuing until today and beyond, focusing on the idea of futures and their diversity, ranging from ruinous war (such as in the Iron Dog prophecy) to a golden age of state formation, as in the Burkhanist dream of Oyrot reestablishment. **Contact: Gregory Zeldovich** (gkzeldovich@gmail.com)

- **Food and Tibetan Buddhism**

- Food serves as a major factor among different social environments, often serving as a communal bridge between individuals and groups to bond over. Within the field of religion such as Judaism and Regla de Ocha-Ifa, food has also been found to connect to a wide variety of factors, from dietary rules and taboos to ethnographic accounts surrounding the preparation of offerings to becoming symbolic vehicles for political ideologies. Following through with the topic of "lived religion," food is meant to offer an alternative intermediary into other parts of Tibetan Buddhist life that may look into such factors as materiality, anthropology, and whatnot. This panel invites papers to explore diverse purposes that food serves in Tibetan Buddhism and the larger Himalayan religious purview. **Contact: Demian Choi** (dchoi@hds.harvard.edu)

- **Contested Futures: Responses to Development Projects in Tibet**

- What kind of future is being built in Tibet, and for whom? Development projects—from infrastructure megaprojects and conservation initiatives to resettlement schemes and digital governance systems—materialize

particular visions of progress while foreclosing others. This panel examines how Tibetans within Tibet and in exile negotiate, critique, and support state-led development agendas that deliver "modernization" with all of its attendant displacements. Drawing on the conference theme of "future/s," we invite papers that critically analyze the politics of development in Tibetan contexts and the ways Tibetans articulate alternative futures in the face of imposed change. **Contact: Matthew Drew** (matthewdrew2028@u.northwestern.edu)

- **Conquest and Resistance in Tibet and the Himalayas**

- In line with the 2026 theme of 'Future/s', this panel invites papers on the way that religion plays a part in acts of and ideas about conquest and resistance in Tibet and the Himalayas. Papers can be on events in the past, the present, or in potential futures. Relevant topics include (but are not limited to): the Buddhist 'conquest' of Tibet; the expansion of a Tibetan Buddhist empire; Mongol and/or Chinese rule in the Himalayas under Buddhist preceptorship; Himalayan artistic depictions of conquest and/or resistance; indigenous Himalayan religions' (e.g., Bönpo) resistance to Buddhism; the gendered body in the context of conquest and resistance; the role of religion in present-day and/or future resistance movements. **Contact: Seth Auster-Rosen** (sethausterrosen@uchicago.edu)

Statement of Purpose

This Unit's mission is to create an environment that promotes discussion among scholars taking diverse approaches to the study of Tibetan and Himalayan religions. Our identity and cohesion derive from the fact that we deal with a delimited geocultural space, but the intellectual excitement comes from the fact that we are specialists in different historical periods and cultural areas, from the fact that we are interested in different religious traditions, and from the fact that we have different methodological approaches to the study of religion. In particular, we encourage scholarship that approaches Tibetan and Himalayan religions through a wide range of approaches:

Multidisciplinary focus — we are committed to methodological diversity and to promoting scholarship that challenges the traditional disciplinary dichotomies through which the field has defined itself, such as text/practice, written/oral, philology/ethnography, and humanistic/social scientific study.

Transregional focus — we encourage a holistic approach to the study of Tibet and the Himalaya as a region, albeit a diverse one. One of the most important features of

religious traditions in our field — perhaps in every field — is the degree to which they are inextricably connected, and it is only through the exploration of such interconnections that the phenomenon of religion in the Tibeto-Himalayan region can be understood. Such interconnections often cut across ethnonational boundaries.

Focus on cultural history — in recent times, the study of Asian religions has taken a quite drastic cultural/historical turn. Nowhere is this more evident than in the study of Tibetan and Himalayan religions. A previous generation of scholars was concerned principally with elite religious institutions — and more specifically with their doctrinal/philosophical texts. Today scholarship is much more diverse. A new generation of scholars is concerned, for example, with folk religious practices, religion and material culture, the politics of religious institutions, the representation of Tibetan religions in the media, and the historical construction of the field itself.

This Unit is committed to fostering such a multifaceted approach to the cultural history of Tibet and the Himalayas.

Chairs

- Jue Liang
storylj@gmail.com
- Brandon Dotson, Georgetown University
brandon.dotson@wolfson.oxon.org

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Traditions of Eastern Late Antiquity Unit

Call for Proposals

Paper proposals related to any aspect of Eastern Late Antique religion are welcome. We especially encourage proposals on two themes. First, in keeping with the presidential theme for 2026, the future, we welcome proposals that relate to themes of affect, hope, and despair in the traditions of Eastern Late Antiquity. Second, we encourage proposals on the legacy of orientalism and the appropriateness of scholars also functioning as

activists on behalf of and conservationists in relation to endangered minority traditions that we study and which exist in the present day.

Statement of Purpose

This program unit focused on Late Antiquity in the East aims to provide a home for the study of religious traditions that are rooted in Mesopotamia, Persia, and western Asia, particularly those parts that were outside the Roman cultural reach such as Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, and Mandaism. While the unit will focus on late antiquity, many of these traditions, and particularly their extant texts come to us from much later periods, and this scholarly issue will be part of our discussions. In addition, many of the traditions that were born in this time and place also spread to other parts of the world, and the study of them in those forms and contexts also has a place within this program unit, as does investigation of their response to the rise of Islam in the region. In addition, this unit's focus is not exclusively on those traditions that developed uniquely in this region, but also those which, when transplanted there, had significant evolutions in that milieu that differ from their counterparts in other times and places (e.g. Christianity, Judaism). We likewise encourage research which focuses on the interaction between the various communities and traditions of this place and time.

Chairs

- James McGrath
jfmcgrat@butler.edu
- Laura Locke Estes
lblestes@gmail.com

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Transformative Scholarship and Pedagogy Unit

Call for Proposals

1. “Critical Issues in Transformative Pedagogy: Insights From 50 Years into the Future”

Imagine it is the year 2076. What does it look like to pursue pedagogy fifty years in the future? What role, if any, do educators still play in fostering transformative experiences for students and communities in this new landscape? How have societal shifts influenced the development of education? How, if at all, has artificial intelligence changed the labor of researchers and pedagogues who strive to connect scholarship with social change? What are the mechanics of teaching and learning? Which critical issues are at the fore? And, how do researchers think about the pedagogical norms and trajectories of 2076? In line with this year’s presidential theme, we invite proposals for papers and panels that stage a conversation with this imagined future in order to (1) cast a vision for aspirational possibilities, (2) bring attention to potential risks yet under-appreciated, and/or (3) critically reflect on today’s pedagogical landscape from the vantage point of future generations.

2. “Evolving Methods in Community-Engaged Research and Pedagogy”

While “sage on the stage” is a heavily critiqued pedagogical model, the same critique has not been extended to the “sage on the page” approach to research and writing—at least not as explicitly. Yet, one may find the seeds of such a criticism in the growing number of teacher-scholars practicing the crafts of teaching, learning, researching, and writing in partnership with communities outside of formally academic institutions. Despite this momentum, it is still relatively uncommon to find community-engaged methods practiced in the classroom. We invite proposals for papers and panels that articulate and critically reflect on methods for community-engaged research and pedagogy. We especially invite proposals (1) from teacher-scholars actively partnering with a community on research projects that are mutually designed and equitably led, (2) on projects leading to concrete action for justice in the community, and/or (3) on research incorporated into a class that invites students into the research.

3. Colonizing Decolonialization: Has “Decolonize the Academy” been Co-opted by the Academy?

In recent decades, decolonial theory and practice have become increasingly incorporated within academic institutions as an effort to recognize the immense degree to which the academy is both constructed through colonialism and perpetuates colonial domination. This awareness is now accompanied by an increasing emphasis on the

ethically urgent task of decolonizing the academy. As is always the case, however, a common strategy of power structures for preserving themselves is to co-opt the language of liberatory movements for its own purposes. We invite proposals for papers and panels that consider whether and specifically how the language of “decolonizing the academy” is vulnerable to such cooptation, what the ramifications are (especially for those who are already significantly disenfranchised within academia), and how the work of decolonization can continue effectively amidst this kind of obfuscation.

4. Transformative Psychology of Religion (Co-Sponsored with Psychology, Culture, and Religion Unit)

Once criticized as reductionistic in its study of religion, the psychology of religion has more recently pivoted toward more lively and transformative approaches to practice with lived experience, communities, and pedagogy. This co-sponsored session invites proposals that highlight how research insights in the psychology of religion translate into transformative practice, public engagement, and caregiving contexts. Of particular interest are proposals that utilize psychological theory to help strategize concrete practices and interventions for political organizing and resisting oppression. Both individual papers and organized panels are encouraged for submission.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit seeks to provide a forum for exploring transformative scholarship and pedagogy across religious traditions and scholarly disciplines, challenging the traditional boundaries between scholarship and activism while experimenting with alternative approaches to teaching and the production of knowledge.

Chairs

- Hilary Scarsella
hilaryjscarsella@gmail.com
- Peter Capretto, Phillips Theological Seminary
peter.capretto@ptstulsa.edu

Vatican II Studies Unit

Call for Proposals

“Artisans of a New Humanity:”

Imagining Future/s *in* and *with* the World

The Second Vatican Council was revolutionary for its integration of historical methods into its deliberations and documents, distinguishing it from earlier councils. If *Lumen Gentium* recognized the eschatological value of the pilgrim church whose inner nature and purpose can only be realized while journeying toward God's kingdom (LG ch.VII), *Gaudium et Spes* articulated the Church's mission to be a servant to the contemporary world, learning from the “experience of past ages, the progress of the sciences, and the treasures hidden in the various forms of human culture” (GS, 44). Pope Francis’ recent 2023 *motu proprio Ad Theologium Promovendum* builds on the Council’s teachings by clearly articulating the need to learn from the world through a *transdisciplinary* method that fosters a dynamic interaction between theology and other academic disciplines (such as economics, sociology, and political science) to effectively journey toward God's kingdom while actively addressing the concrete challenges of contemporary human existence.

When considering the period leading up to, during, and after the Council, how does treating theology/Church from a historical (and later contextual) perspective facilitate interdisciplinary exploration of the future? How can collaborative methods (such as *Conversations in the Spirit*) serve as a resource for grassroots initiatives that address current pressing issues, while imagining “other possible futures, past and present?” How might contemporary uses of interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary methods help the Church become “artisans of a new humanity” (GS, 30)?

Curated/Closed Call Session: Event, Legacy, and Vision: The Future of Vatican II Studies

In response to the FUTURE/S challenge posed in the AAR Presidential Theme 2026, namely to interrogate the narratives, traditions, and scholarly practices that both open up and delimit the horizons of our disciplines, this session invites critical reflection on the *Future of Vatican II Studies*. With six decades of scholarship behind us and the 60th jubilee now past, we raise the question if we are at an endpoint, a continuation, or the threshold of a new era in Vatican II research?

This session takes recent major initiatives as its point of departure, considering them as the basis to identify lessons learned, evaluate current trajectories, and articulate possible pathways forward. Three initiatives will serve as focal points for this collective inquiry:

1. **Vatican II: Event and Mandate** – as this project and its unfolding volumes (Herder/Peeters) present an international, collaborative endeavor developing intercontinental and intercultural histories and commentaries of the Council and its documents.
2. **The Legacy and Limits of Vatican II in an Age of Crisis** – as this volume (Liturgical Press) critically highlights the limits of past research while proposing new methodological and hermeneutical trajectories.
3. **Vision of Vatican II on Revelation, Church, Ecumenism, and Education** – as this project and its unfolding volumes (Brepols) seek to advance the global reception of Vatican II with particular attention to history, intertextuality, and global reception.

By placing these initiatives in dialogue, the session – featuring two speakers and two respondents – seeks to address several guiding questions, including to whom the future of Vatican II Studies belongs, how the field can serve both academia and society in the coming decades, which dominant narratives continue to shape the discipline; and where these may need to be revised, expanded, or disrupted.

***** We will also co-sponsor a session with Ecclesiological Investigations and Christian Spiritualities on the topic of Difficult Conversations *****

Statement of Purpose

This Unit gives scholarly attention to the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), one of the most significant events in the history of the Catholic Church — an event that had wide-ranging implications for other faiths, other Christian churches, and for the wider world alike. This Unit has a double focus: first, deepening the understanding of the history of Vatican II, its link with movements of renewal in Catholic theology and in the Church in the decades prior to Vatican II, and the history of the reception of the Council, and the redaction history of the different documents of the Council; second, a strong theological one both to the hermeneutical issues connected to methods of interpreting conciliar teaching and its ongoing reception in a changing context. By looking more closely at the past, our Unit hopes to promote greater conciliarity and synodality in the Christian churches in the present. In this second mandate of its presence within the American Academy of Religion, the Vatican II Studies Unit turns its attention to the reception of Vatican II within the various social and cultural contexts of the Americas

and elsewhere, and to its continuing influence in the changing context of twenty-first century global Christianity.

Chairs

- Dries Bosschaert
dries.bosschaert@kuleuven.be
 - Jaisy Joseph, Villanova University
jaisy.joseph@villanova.edu
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Vernacular Landscapes and Global Dialogues: Understanding Buddhist Monasticism Seminar

Call for Proposals

1. Monastic Rules and Regulations: this year's roundtable discussion invites new research on the rules, etiquettes, ordinations, and behaviors that are embodied in monastic lives. Expanding on traditional scholarship that centers the Vinaya as the site of articulation for regulating monastic life, this roundtable offers new insights into the literary, cultural, ritual, financial, and political aspects of organizational documents and regulatory actions in Buddhist monasticism.

Call for Papers

Vernacular Landscapes and Global Dialogues: Understanding Buddhist Monasticism Seminar

Theme for 2026: Monastic Rules and Regulations

The *Vernacular Landscapes and Global Dialogues: Understanding Buddhist Monasticism* Seminar invites paper proposals for its 2026 annual meeting, focused

on **Monastic Rules and Regulations**. This year's roundtable seeks new research on the rules, etiquette, ordinations, and forms of conduct that shape and are embodied in monastic lives across Buddhist traditions and historical periods.

Expanding beyond scholarship that centers the Vinaya as the primary site for regulating monastic life, the seminar welcomes work that examines the broader literary, cultural, ritual, financial, technological, and political dimensions of monastic regulation. We are particularly interested in how rules are produced, interpreted, negotiated, contested, and adapted in lived monastic contexts, as well as how they mediate relationships between monastics, institutions, states, donors, and lay communities.

We encourage contributions that attend to vernacular practices and global exchanges, highlighting how regulatory frameworks operate across regions, lineages, and historical moments—from pre-modern scholastic settings to contemporary monasteries navigating digital technologies and generational change.

Topics of Interest

Papers may address, but are not limited to, the following themes:

- Buddhist reform movements and the reinterpretation or reconfiguration of monastic rules in different historical and regional contexts
- Rules and regulations governing sexuality, gender, and bodily discipline in monastic life
- Ordination practices, temporary vows, and regulatory frameworks for lay participation in monastic spaces
- Rules governing interactions between monastics and the public, including hospitality, access, and ritual boundaries
- Financial, administrative, and organizational documents as sites of monastic regulation
- The impact of contemporary technologies, including AI, on monastic education, authority, discipline, and transmission

Here are some of the **ideas collected at the business meeting**. **Please reach out to the people proposing those ideas if you want to collaborate.**

- Rohit Singh: Buddhist reform movements in different contexts (singhr@denison.edu)
- Damien Choi: AI, Gen Z, and Buddhist Monasticism (demiandc@bu.edu)
- Fan Wu: Monasticism and scholasticism in pre-modern times (fan.wu2@email.ucr.edu)

- Learned Foote: monastic rules on sexuality (learned.m.foote@lawrence.edu)
- Damien Choi: confession, purification, admitting to faults (demiandc@bu.edu)
- Learned Foote: rules for the public when people come to visit monasteries, temporary vows for laypeople learned. (m.foote@lawrence.edu)

Submission Guidelines

Please submit a paper proposal of **250–300 words**, including a clear statement of argument, sources, and methodological approach. Proposals should indicate how the paper engages the theme of monastic rules and regulations and contributes to broader conversations in Buddhist Studies.

Submission details, deadlines, and presentation format will be announced by the seminar organizers in advance of the annual meeting.

We especially welcome contributions from scholars working across disciplinary, linguistic, and regional boundaries, and from those whose work foregrounds lived monastic practice alongside textual and institutional analysis.

Statement of Purpose

This five-year seminar brings together the rich threads of Buddhist monasticism, especially the current changes found in Buddhist monastic communities throughout the world, to rethink scholarly definitions of Buddhism from the perspective of how it is defined, envisioned, and practiced within Buddhist monasteries. While we would welcome scholars who study the history of Buddhist monasticism, we aim to explore what Buddhist monasticism looks like today. Bringing together scholars from diverse disciplines and backgrounds, with localized expertise in Buddhist traditions, the seminar contributes to a holistic theoretical understanding of Buddhist monasticism as an embodied system of religious ideals, as well as a new vision of teaching Buddhism in the classroom.

Chairs

- Manuel Lopez
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- Jue Liang
storylj@gmail.com

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Wesleyan and Methodist Studies Unit

Call for Proposals

Theme: Methodist Connectionalism in America and Beyond – A Future-Focused Retrospective on the Work and Influence of Russell E. Richey

Long before the late Russell E. Richey (1941-2025) gathered thirteen of his previously published essays in *Methodist Connectionalism: Historical Perspectives* (Nashville: GBHEM, 2009), he had made his mark on Methodist history by transforming the way we study it and expanding the horizons of whose voices were welcome. For this session, in honor of his legacy, both seasoned and emerging scholars are invited to propose their own innovative perspectives on what keeps Methodists connected, not only in America but worldwide.

Theme: Innovations in Methodist Systematic Theology

Despite many proclamations of its demise, systematic theology continues to be a living genre for Methodists and Wesleyans, as evidenced by, among others, the ongoing *Christian Theology* of Thomas Noble and the forthcoming volume *Love Divine* by Thomas McCall and Jason Vickers. In keeping with the theme of this year's conference, this panel invites papers that imagine the future of Methodist and Wesleyan systematic theology. Topics could include: Methodist systematics in the present and future compared with systematic theologies of the past; the present and future role of systematic theology in the teaching of theology; the future of systematic theology in an increasingly globalized Methodist movement; the challenge and promise of writing Wesleyan systematic theology in the present moment.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit seeks to promote the critical understanding and appropriation of Wesleyan and Methodist traditions. Our sessions are purposefully structured to encourage not only historical/sociological studies, but also theological reflection, critique, and

extension. We understand Wesleyan traditions to include Methodist, Holiness, and other related strands of Christian tradition.

Chairs

- Natalya Cherry, Brite Divinity School
natalyacherry@gmail.com
 - Jung Choi
jchoi@div.duke.edu
-

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Wesleyan and Methodist Studies Unit

Call for Proposals

Theme: Women's Ordination in Worldwide Wesleyan Traditions

Methodism and many holiness-brands around the world share rich Wesleyan roots, yet they flourish in a multitude of contexts and societies, manifesting unique interpretations and practices. As the United Methodist Church in 2026 marks the 70th anniversary of full clergy rights for women in one of its predecessor denominations, The Methodist Church, it is essential to recognize that many other branches of Methodism across the world have embraced female clergy, pastors and preachers long before this milestone.

Together, they reflect the deep-seated tradition of female leadership and ministry within Methodism and the broader holiness movements.

Across the world, compelling narratives exist about pioneering women who shattered barriers and embraced their callings, often finding strong support from their communities. Today, women continue to hold significant positions, influence, and impact within the Wesleyan and Methodist churches, yet must also confront challenges related to their roles in ministry, including the metaphorical “stained-glass ceiling” and pervasive prejudices.

This session invites scholars to delve into the history of female clergy, as well as to examine current struggles and triumphs within various global and contextual settings.

We encourage submissions that highlight the interplay of history, social dynamics, and the ongoing journey of women in ministry across cultural contexts of Wesleyan and Methodist churches and spaces.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit seeks to promote the critical understanding and appropriation of Wesleyan and Methodist traditions. Our sessions are purposefully structured to encourage not only historical/sociological studies, but also theological reflection, critique, and extension. We understand Wesleyan traditions to include Methodist, Holiness, and other related strands of Christian tradition.

Chairs

- Natalya Cherry, Brite Divinity School
natalyacherry@gmail.com
 - Jung Choi
jchoi@div.duke.edu
-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Womanist Approaches to Religion and Society Unit

Call for Proposals

The Womanist Approaches to Religion & Society Unit welcomes papers that highlight one or more of the following topics:

Womanist Approaches to FUTURE/S: Envisioning the Future, and For Whom?

The Womanist Approaches Unit invites the exploration of envisioning future/s in its widest sense. The AAR Incoming President's remarks on the theme, "FUTURE/S" states, "The future" is a contested idea that looms large in human traditions and functions diversely in the collective story of many cultures." Proposals can include papers, panels,

literary, and artistic approaches to elucidate a critical lens. Amid the systemic and structurally marginalized communities of color, generational realities of disparities can be the impetus for collective determination to dignify a sense of being and becoming. To envision the future, and for whom - raises the urgency for communities of people to build a future where there is enough room and love for everybody.

Selected Topics

The Womanist Approaches Unit invites proposals that engage the selected topics in dialogue with womanist religious approaches and perspectives:

African Womanism Revisited: Opportunities and Tensions in African and African Diaspora perspectives

Contemporary debates within womanist thought invite renewed interrogation of its conceptual boundaries, particularly regarding its relevance and applicability to Black women's contexts beyond African American lived experiences. As scholarship increasingly engages African indigenous religious traditions and the complex intersections of Christian and African spirituality across the continent and diaspora, this panel examines how interreligious expression, cultural hybridity, and intersectional identity formation inform and complicate womanism's global trajectories. **(Papers Panel)**

Grace, Grit and Governance: Womanist Pathways to Thrive in Academic Preparation and Leadership Performance

Examine the multiplicity of ways that women experience the academy, from student scholars to faculty and administrative leadership, to consider what it means to be in community theologically and structurally while holding the authenticity of personal identity, faith values, career path goals to navigate the systemic "-isms." **(Papers Panel / Co-Sponsor: Women of Color Scholarship Teaching and Activism Unit)**

Karen Baker-Fletcher's forthcoming publication *Power, Resilience, and the Black Madonna: Mamie Till and Mary at the Foot of the Cross* (WJK Press, 2026), and honoring her 30+ years of scholarship.

This session celebrates the remarkable scholarly, pedagogical, and creative contributions of Dr. Karen Baker-Fletcher over more than three decades as theologian, professor, mentor, poet, and author. Engaging her most recent publication on Mamie Till alongside

her expansive body of work, panelists will reflect on the enduring influence of her womanist theological imagination and the transformative impact of her scholarship and mentorship within the academy and beyond. Dr. Karen Baker Fletcher will be a respondent. **(Book Author Roundtable / Open Papers)**

SINNERS: Ancestral Memory, Generational Storytelling & the Spiritual Imagination of Freedom

The film SINNERS, directed by Ryan Coogler, evokes rich theological and spiritual questions rooted in the African Diaspora experience. This panel invites womanist and interdisciplinary perspectives to explore how the film's messaging on spiritual pathways link ancestral knowing with generational telling—illuminating past, present, and future quests for resilience, liberation, and communal flourishing. Papers may engage themes of memory, embodiment, intergenerational spirituality, and freedom as expressed through Black religious imagination and cinematic storytelling. **(Invited Panel/Roundtable or Open Papers/ Co-sponsor: Black Theology Unit)**

Over Our Heads and Sittin' on High: Womanist Spiritual Technologies, Afrofuturism, and the Sound of Sacred Imagination

Lisa Allen, *Over My Head: The Power of Ancestral Music to Future the Black Church*, and Melanie Hill, *Colored Women Sittin' on High: Womanist Sermonic Practice in Literature and Music*.

We invite papers reflecting on Allen's and /or Hill's texts to discuss the Womanist-Afrofuturist spiritual technologies of imagination, improvisation, and adaptability function through spiritual practices of liturgy, ritual, preaching, story, myth, Conjure, and time exploration to help communities envision themselves into generative, hope-filled futures. **(Open Papers / Authors will be respondents/ Co-sponsor: Afro-American Religious History Unit)**

Open Call for Papers

Womanist Approaches welcomes compelling papers that utilize womanist methodologies and engage womanist topics beyond the themes presented above.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit provides a forum for religious scholarship that engages theoretical and methodological approaches that recognize the four-part definition of a Womanist as defined by Alice Walker. The expanded emphasis of womanist approaches to religion and society nurtures interdisciplinary scholarship, encourages interreligious dialogue, and seeks to engage scholars and practitioners in fields outside the study of religion. We are particularly concerned with fostering scholarship that bridges theory and practice and addresses public justice issues in religion and society.

Chairs

- Valerie Miles-Tribble, Berkeley School of Theology
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 - Candace Laughinghouse
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-

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Womanist Approaches to Religion and Society Unit

Call for Proposals

The Womanist Approaches Unit invites interdisciplinary work by emerging scholars to present papers that engage womanist theory and/or praxis within respective fields of study as a lens for conscious inquiry.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit provides a forum for religious scholarship that engages theoretical and methodological approaches that recognize the four-part definition of a Womanist as defined by Alice Walker. The expanded emphasis of womanist approaches to religion

and society nurtures interdisciplinary scholarship, encourages interreligious dialogue, and seeks to engage scholars and practitioners in fields outside the study of religion. We are particularly concerned with fostering scholarship that bridges theory and practice and addresses public justice issues in religion and society.

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macsvmt@gmail.com
 - Candace Laughinghouse
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-

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Women and Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

Theme: FUTURE/S

The Women and Religion Unit of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) invites proposals for the 2026 June Meeting organized around the presidential theme Future/s. The theme calls for critical reflection on the contested idea of “the future” and its significance for religious scholarship, practice, and imagination. In a time of profound uncertainty – within the academy, across global communities, and for the well-being of the earth – scholars of religion are uniquely positioned to explore how narratives, traditions, and practices shape visions of what lies ahead.

We seek proposals that engage the intersections of women, gender, and religion with this theme, asking: What future/s are possible beyond despair or superficial hope? How do feminist, womanist, queer, and decolonial perspectives reimagine religious horizons? What resources – textual, ritual, material, and spiritual—might help us build futures marked by justice, care, and creativity?

Our unit values inclusivity, interdisciplinary approaches, and non-traditional formats. We encourage submissions that amplify marginalized voices and foster dialogue across fields and methodologies. Below are suggested areas of focus to inspire your proposals:

1. Spiritual Harm and Futures of Care

Spiritual harm remains an urgent concern across traditions and contexts. Yet the concept itself is under-defined and under-researched. How do we name and theorize spiritual harm in ways that honor lived experiences and open pathways toward accountability and healing? What methodologies center survivors' voices and agency? How do we address the ethical and emotional toll on researchers who study harm? And what resources—ritual, theological, communal, or material—might enable reparative futures?

We welcome proposals that:

- Investigate gendered and intersectional dimensions of spiritual harm and abuse.
- Develop or critique definitions and frameworks for understanding spiritual harm.
- Explore survivor-focused and trauma-informed methodologies in research and practice.
- Examine researcher safety, ethics, and well-being in studying harm.
- Analyze how communities envision futures of accountability, repair, and spiritual resilience.

2. Indigenous and First Nations Epistemologies

We acknowledge the Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Ute tribes of the lands now called Denver. Indigenous and First Nation traditions offer profound resources for imagining future/s grounded in relationality, reciprocity, and resilience. These epistemologies challenge dominant Western paradigms and invite us to rethink what constitutes knowledge, community, and flourishing. How do storytelling, ritual, and land-based practices shape visions of ecological and spiritual futures? How do Indigenous and First Nation women's voices and leadership reconfigure religious scholarship and activism?

We welcome proposals that:

- Highlight First Nations women's contributions to future-thinking and cultural continuity.
- Examine Indigenous epistemologies as "texts" that inform ecological ethics and spiritual practices.
- Explore decolonial approaches to pedagogy and research in theological and religious studies.

- Analyze how Indigenous cosmologies and practices disrupt extractive and colonial narratives of progress.
- Consider collaborative methodologies that honor sovereignty and relational accountability.

3. Futures of Textuality

What counts as a “text” in theological and religious scholarship? Beyond written words, bodies, garments, sacred objects, and lived experiences carry meaning and authority. Expanding definitions of textuality opens new possibilities for feminist, womanist, materialist, and sensory approaches to scholarship. How might these shifts transform our understanding of future imagination and practice?

We invite proposals that:

- Reimagine textuality through feminist, womanist, decolonial, and queer lenses.
- Investigate embodied and sensory dimensions of interpretation.
- Explore how digital media, visual culture, and performance reshape textual authority.
- Analyze the implications of these expanded definitions for future scholarship and pedagogy.

4. Intersectionality and Future/s of Justice

Futures are never neutral—they are shaped by intersecting systems of power and privilege. Inspired by intersectional feminist and womanist frameworks, we invite proposals that interrogate how race, gender, sexuality, class, and religion converge in shaping visions of justice and liberation.

Possible topics include:

- Critiques of structural inequities and their impact on religious communities and scholarship.
- Activist, theological, and scholarly responses to oppression and violence.
- Transnational and collaborative visions for justice-oriented futures.
- Creative engagements with art, ritual, and storytelling as tools for resistance and transformation.

5. Emerging Scholars Session Co-Sponsored with AAR/SBL Women’s Caucus

With the AAR/SBL Women’s Caucus we invite submissions from graduate students and early career scholars, of any age, to present innovative research asking fresh questions

at the intersection of gender and religion in light of the conference theme “Future/s.” As the precariousness of academic religious scholarship persists, how might intersectional feminist, womanist, queer or decolonialist perspectives be at the forefront of future, innovative methodologies and academic thinking? We are particularly interested in proposals that present thoughtful and engaging perspectives of how transhumanism may affect the dynamics of race and gender. For example, how transhumanism may breach race/gender lines or how it might reify colonialist and gender-discriminatory ideology. We also invite proposals that:

- Present innovative research on women, gender, and religion in relation to FUTURE/S.
- Engage intergenerational and intercultural perspectives on feminist scholarship in religion.
- Offer bold, imaginative approaches to the challenges and possibilities of future-thinking for feminist intersectional scholarship women in religion.

Statement of Purpose

The Women and Religion Unit seeks to promote inclusivity and excellence in scholarship. We have been intentional about including participants/presenters from interdisciplinary approaches and encouraging non-traditional ways of sharing scholarly work on the intersection of women’s and gender studies and religious and theological studies. In making selections for the annual sessions, we work collaboratively with other program units of AAR to promote scholarly conversations across fields and methodologies. We are committed to providing an inclusive scholarly environment where new voices can be heard, and critical analyses of women and religion can be advanced.

Chairs

- Tracy McEwan
tracy.mcewan@outlook.com
- Mahjabeen Dhala, Graduate Theological Union
mebsdhal@gmail.com

Women and Religion Unit

Call for Proposals

Future/s

The Women and Religion Unit invite proposals for a session at the June 2026 meeting organized around the theme Future/s.

The theme invites critical reflection on the contested idea of “the future” and its significance for religious scholarship, practice, and imagination. In a time of profound uncertainty—within the academy, across global communities, and for the well-being of the earth—scholars of religion are uniquely positioned to explore how narratives, traditions, and practices shape visions of what lies ahead.

We seek proposals that engage the intersections of women, gender, and religion with this theme, asking: What future/s are possible beyond despair or superficial hope? How might feminist, womanist, queer, and decolonial perspectives reimagine religious horizons? What resources—textual, ritual, material, and spiritual—might help us build futures marked by justice, care, and creativity?

Our unit values inclusivity, interdisciplinary approaches, and non-traditional formats. We encourage submissions that amplify marginalized voices and foster dialogue across fields and methodologies. We invite international and First Nations scholars to contribute.

Below are suggested areas of focus to inspire your proposals:

Spiritual harm remains an urgent concern across traditions and contexts. Yet the concept itself is under-defined and under-researched. How do we name and theorize spiritual harm in ways that honor lived experiences and open pathways toward accountability and healing? What methodologies center survivors’ voices and agency? How do we address the ethical and emotional toll on researchers who study harm? And what resources—ritual, theological, communal, or material—might enable reparative futures?

Indigenous and First Nation traditions offer profound resources for imagining future/s grounded in relationality, reciprocity, and resilience. These epistemologies challenge dominant Western paradigms and invite us to rethink what constitutes knowledge, community, and flourishing. How do storytelling, ritual, and land-based

practices shape visions of ecological and spiritual futures? How do Indigenous and First Nation women's voices and leadership reconfigure religious scholarship and activism?

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Chairs

- Tracy McEwan
tracy.mcewan@outlook.com
- Mahjabeen Dhala, Graduate Theological Union
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In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Women of Color Scholarship, Teaching, and Activism Unit

Call for Proposals

The Women of Color Scholarship, Teaching, and Activism unit (WOCSTA) welcomes submissions of individual presentations, organized panels, and roundtable discussions that are in keeping with the unit's purpose: this unit fosters intellectual exchange in the fields of religious studies and theology as they are developing in diverse communities of color from a gendered analysis.

While the AAR features Program Units from diverse communities of color, we provide a space for conversation between communities of color. Understanding identity as performative and shifting, we make the very category of “women of color” itself a site for political and intellectual engagement. We encourage non-traditional formats that foster conversation, engagement, and meaning-making among panelists and session attendees.

In keeping with the presidential theme of “future/s,” we wish to amplify the invitation to *examine* and *envision* “other possible futures, past and present” as “our gatherings are powerful opportunities for collective re-imagining and action.”

Possible topics/areas of engagement as related to this topic may include:

Alternative Futures OUTside the Academy

- What do futures that decenter academic institutions/the Academy look like?
- What possibilities emerge when futures are practiced as Imagination/Play/Rest/Wonder/Resistance?
- What futures do we foreclose if we do not attend to the environment/earth?
- What can we learn from ancestral wisdom traditions and how can they bridge chronological and dialogical divides for a future outside the Academy?
- What futures might we imagine that make room for multiple ways of knowing and being, especially attending to embodied and sensory practices and postures?

Alternative Futures INSide the Academy

- How do we cultivate imaginative pedagogical praxis as a way of unlearning what we were taught and reframing our approaches to teaching and learning?
- How does the practicing of wisdom traditions prepare us for the future? How can this be seen as a mode of decolonizing the Academy?
- What can we learn from ancestral wisdom traditions and how can they bridge chronological and dialogical divides for a future inside the Academy?

→ What practices of learning, scholarship, and living might be needed in an Academy whose future is precarious? What practices from past and present endangered communities might be brought forward as a means to decolonize the Academy?

Statement of Purpose

This Unit fosters intellectual exchange in the fields of religious studies and theology as they are developing in diverse communities of color from a gendered analysis. While the AAR features Program Units from diverse communities of color, we provide a space for conversation between communities of color. This Unit does not assume a prior “women of color” identity, but centers a woman of color analytic that deconstructs the intersecting logics of gender and race. At the same time, we do not hold to a “post-identity” framework and are also concerned with the status of women of color in the academy, the politics of pedagogy, and the relationship between women-of-color-centered activism and scholarship. Understanding identity as performative and shifting, we make the very category of “women of color” itself a site for political and intellectual engagement.

Chairs

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- Oluwatomisin Oredein
tomioredein@gmail.com

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

World Christianity Unit

Call for Proposals

For the 2026 annual meeting, the World Christianity Unit plans feature two sessions solely within our unit, as well as one session co-sponsored with the Chinese Christianities Unit. We are hoping that all our sessions will speak in some way to the AAR presidential theme of Future/s.

In 2006, historian Dana L. Robert asked a pointed question in the *International Bulletin of Mission Research*: "What would the study of Christianity in Africa, Asia, and Latin America look like if scholars put women into the center of their research?" Bolstered by decades of research on the history of women in mission, her question sparked a wave of new historical, missiological, and social scientific research on the role of women in World Christianity in the past, present, and future. The World Christianity unit calls for papers on the study of women in World Christianity 20 years after Robert's appeal, that dialogue with the main contours of the article, such as women's majority status in congregations worldwide, leadership imbalance, gendered dynamics of pilgrimage and popular Catholicism, etc. while also interrogating the (re)imaginings, and actions required to construct future(s) that critically interrogate the realities women encounter - gender-based violence, discrimination, impact of climate change, and war, economic inequalities and the attending intersections these issues engender. At the same time there is the need to engage with Robert's concluding thoughts on the relationship between gender and church decline. As women undergo different forms of religious conversion and switching within Christianity and other religious practices, what is the impact on the future and vitality of Christianity?

Second, we invite proposals that explore how Christian communities around the world imagine, negotiate, and bring into being various futures, whether social, theological, ecological, technological, or political. The theme offers an opportunity to consider how Christian actors draw on dis/inherited narratives, material practices, and ritual sensibilities to craft possibilities that move beyond dystopic inevitability or superficial hope. Possible approaches include the reimagining of theology and ethics in global contexts; eschatological and apocalyptic sensibilities that shape communal horizons; and changing patterns of Christian belonging amid processes of deconversion, disaffiliation, or reconfigured religious authority. We especially welcome proposals attentive to generational and technological transformations—such as the role of Gen Z and Gen Alpha, digital networks, artificial intelligence, and other modes of emerging Christian practice.

Finally, we seek to explore the multiple crises and uncertainties that frame contemporary Christian life and that animate diverse visions of the future. We invite proposals that address how Christian communities imagine ecological futures amid accelerating environmental degradation; how conflict, migration, and political instability reconfigure Christian identities and moral commitments; and how local practices or traditions perceived as "disappearing" shape communal responses to vulnerability and change. We are especially interested in papers that illuminate how Christian narratives, rituals, and social ethics are mobilized to confront global precarity, generate resilience, or articulate alternative social worlds.

In co-sponsorship with the Chinese Christianities unit, we invite reflection on the future(s) of “Chinese Christianities as World Christianity,” focusing on how Chinese Churches around the world adapt, change, and express their faith in different parts of the world, negotiating their cultural identities and their conception of the global Church in conversation with local life in any place where the Chinese find themselves, from Brazil to Canada, Indonesia to Spain, and across the African continent.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit seeks to explore the intercultural, interconfessional, and interreligious dynamics of Christianity as a world religion, bringing into conversation scholars in the disciplines of history, mission studies, ecumenical studies, theology, sociology of religion, anthropology of religion, and religious studies.

Chairs

- Grace Vargas, Texas Christian University
g.vargas@tcu.edu
- Janice McLean-Farrell
jmclean-farrell@nbts.edu

Online June Annual Meeting 2026

World Christianity Unit

Call for Proposals

For the 2026 June meeting, the World Christianity Unit plans feature one session solely within our unit. We are hoping that our session will speak in some way to the AAR presidential theme of Future/s.

We invite proposals that explore how Christian communities around the world imagine, negotiate, and bring into being various futures, whether social, theological, ecological, technological, or political. The theme offers an opportunity to consider how Christian actors draw on dis/inherited narratives, material practices, and ritual sensibilities to craft

possibilities that move beyond dystopic inevitability or superficial hope. Possible approaches include the reimagining of theology and ethics in global contexts; eschatological and apocalyptic sensibilities that shape communal horizons; and changing patterns of Christian belonging amid processes of deconversion, disaffiliation, or reconfigured religious authority. We especially welcome proposals attentive to generational and technological transformations—such as the role of Gen Z and Gen Alpha, digital networks, artificial intelligence, and other modes of emerging Christian practice.

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Chairs

- Grace Vargas, Texas Christian University
g.vargas@tcu.edu
- Janice McLean-Farrell
jmclean-farrell@nbts.edu

Yoga in Theory and Practice Unit

Call for Proposals

We invite proposals on the following topics. Please contact the organizing scholar(s) listed next to each topic for more information (if you feel your work might fit into more than one category, please feel free to contact organizers together).

We especially invite full panel proposals and please also consider co-sponsoring with another unit.

Yogic Perception (Alberta Ferraro) albertaferraro@gmail.com

Prāṇa, Prāṇāyāma, and the Subtle Body (Shaman Hatley, Ana Funes Maderoy) shaman.hatley@umb.edu, afunesmaderoy@fairfield.edu

Yoga and Fascism (Sheena Sood) sheena.sood@delval.edu

Yoga and Psychology (Patton Burchett) peburchett@wm.edu

Yoga and Ethical Cultivation (Alba Rodríguez Juan) arodr539@ucr.edu

A retrospective on theory and method in the study of yoga (Ruth Westoby, Suzanne Newcombe) ruth.westoby@ochs.org.uk, suzanne.newcombe@open.ac.uk

A Cultural History of Yoga by Shreena Gandhi — book review roundtable (Sheena Sood) sheena.sood@delval.edu

We are also open to other **full-panel** proposals on any other topic falling under the purview of Yoga Studies.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit seeks to elucidate the religious and sectarian representations of yoga in South Asian history and the profoundly fascinating contemporary yoga culture that has emerged in the past century. Among other topics that are addressed in our Unit is the

emergence of modern yoga out of the encounter between Indian and European cultures in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In connection with this, it examines the relative pervasiveness of spiritual and religious ideologies in manifest or latent forms within the contemporary yoga scene, and the overarching sociological relevance of yoga within global culture. We also examine changing paradigms with respect to the nature and function of yoga in the larger South Asian religious context. Our goal is to provide a venue in which the body of scholars working in this area can collectively evaluate this extremely timely material. We actively pursue scholars from Europe, Asia, and other areas that have worked at length on these issues, so as to bring an important international component to the Unit.

Chairs

- Christopher Jain Miller, Arihanta Institute / Claremont School of Theology
christopher.miller@arihantainstitute.org
 - Alba Rodriguez Juan
arodr539@ucr.edu
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Online June Annual Meeting 2026

Yoga in Theory and Practice Unit

Call for Proposals

We are open also for proposals for the June online meeting under the purview of Yoga Studies.

Statement of Purpose

This Unit seeks to elucidate the religious and sectarian representations of yoga in South Asian history and the profoundly fascinating contemporary yoga culture that has emerged in the past century. Among other topics that are addressed in our Unit is the emergence of modern yoga out of the encounter between Indian and European cultures

in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In connection with this, it examines the relative pervasiveness of spiritual and religious ideologies in manifest or latent forms within the contemporary yoga scene, and the overarching sociological relevance of yoga within global culture. We also examine changing paradigms with respect to the nature and function of yoga in the larger South Asian religious context. Our goal is to provide a venue in which the body of scholars working in this area can collectively evaluate this extremely timely material. We actively pursue scholars from Europe, Asia, and other areas that have worked at length on these issues, so as to bring an important international component to the Unit.

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christopher.miller@arihantainstitute.org
- Alba Rodriguez Juan
arodr539@ucr.edu

In-person November Annual Meeting 2026

Yogācāra Studies Unit

Call for Proposals

Our CFP outlines a set of panel topics for which we are particularly interested in soliciting proposals. If you would like to participate in a panel on one of these topics, please contact the person listed. Anyone is also welcome to propose a panel or a paper on a topic in Yogācāra Studies that is not listed here. Panel proposals are much more likely to be accepted than individual paper proposals, so it is best to try to find other scholars and to jointly make a panel proposal on your topic. Feel free to contact the unit co-chairs (Douglas Duckworth, duckworth@temple.edu or Jingjing Li, j.li@phil.leidenuniv.nl) with any questions about proposals.

- Text panel: We are looking for proposals from groups of scholars to lead the assembled group in a discussion of a selected passage from a key text. The text can be extant in just one or in any combination of Buddhist languages. The ideal proposal is from a team of scholars working on the text, and the ideal panel

format involves a combination of comments from the presenters and discussion with the audience. The following are some proposal ideas that have already been generated, but scholars working on other texts are very welcome to submit a text panel proposal. Anyone with questions about how a text panel should be structured is free to contact the unit co-chairs Douglas Duckworth (duckworth@temple.edu) and Jingjing Li (j.li@phil.leidenuniv.nl).

- On Vasubandhu's *Viṃśatikā*. Contact Jessica Zu (xzu@usc.edu) if you are interested in participating.
- Paper panel: Yogācāra ethics. Contact Szilvia Szanyi (szilvia.szanyi@theology.ox.ac.uk) if you are interested in participating.
- Paper panel: Yogācāra and the body. Contact Nobuyoshi Yamabe (yamabe@waseda.jp) if you are interested in participating.
- Paper panel: Yogācāra and (self-)destruction. Contact Billy Brewster (ernestbillings.brewster@oeaw.ac.at) if you are interested in participating.

Statement of Purpose

The Yogācāra tradition within Buddhism provides the seminal basis for many forms of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Yogācāra was the preeminent Buddhist school for many centuries in India, East Asia, and Tibet. Even after its relative decline as a distinct tradition, its teachings continued to provide the basis for both the theory and practice of subsequent Buddhist Mahāyāna schools throughout Asia, and it has seen a resurgence in the 20th and 21st century in Asia, including in China, Hong Kong, Japan, and among Tibetans.

Chairs

- Jingjing Li
j.li@hum.leidenuniv.nl
- Douglas S. Duckworth
douglas.duckworth@temple.edu

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Open call for Yogācāra Studies. Contact Jingjing Li (j.li@phil.leidenuniv.nl) for panel or paper proposals.

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Tray "Administration menu" opened.