

PERSPECTIVES On Religion – A Mid-Year Update

From the Department of Religious Studies at The University of Iowa

Note from the Chair

A heartfelt THANK YOU to everyone who has expressed support for the Department of Religious Studies in various ways recently! This fall, I wrote about the difficulties the department has been facing, and I am happy to report that there have been some very positive developments.

University leadership has now affirmed its strong support for Religious Studies as an autonomous department with a critical role to play at the UI and for the State of Iowa. Senior UI leaders are also committed to fostering our highly successful graduate program and our growing undergraduate courses. They are furthermore helping us to think strategically about how to expand our base of majors. To that end, since I complete my term as director/chair in June, Professor David Cuning from the UI Department of Philosophy, who has very successfully led his department in increasing their majors, has generously agreed to help us in this endeavor as interim chair of Religious Studies during the 2023-24 academic year. This will also help our staffing situation as we will have an additional faculty member to do some of the legwork. After three very significant retirements and the freeing up of two historic endowed chairs we are down to a small group of faculty. Another major goal over the next few years will be filling our endowed chairs and restoring other faculty positions, for which university leadership has promised support. We in the department are very optimistic about the future and are united in our commitment to the department's success. As you will see from this newsletter update, our faculty and graduate students continue to excel in the proud almost 100-year tradition of the department. Historically, the success and very existence of the department had been tightly bound to our community of supporters, and so it continues today.

We are extremely grateful to you all! Morten Schlütter, Director

FACULTY NEWS

Dr. Kristy Nabhan-Warren was one of the presenters at this year's 40th Presidential Lecture on March 2nd. Kristy, along with Witold Krajewski, presented "Rivers of Discovery: UI Research, Iowa, and the World." Krajewski and Nabhan-Warren explored how research from the UI matters to our regional, national, and global understanding of our past, present, and future.



Dr. Nabhan-Warren, in addition to serving as associate vice president for research in the Office of the Vice President for Research, is the V.O. and Elizabeth Kahl Figge Chair in Catholic Studies in the Department of Religious Studies, and also has an appointment in GWSS. The Presidential Lecture Series provides an opportunity for distinguished faculty members to present significant aspects of their work to the greater university community and general public. The University established the annual series to encourage intellectual communication among the many disciplines that constitute the UI, as well as to provide a public forum for scholarship, research, and creative achievement. For the full article see: tinyurl.com/2p8dnxjd

Dr. Hyaewool Choi will serve as the new vice president of the Association for Asian Studies (AAS). In this position, she will automatically become president of the organization in 2024-25 and is the first Korean-born scholar to hold this office in the more than 80-year history of the organization.



Dr. Choi is the C. Maxwell and Elizabeth M. Stanley Family and Korea Foundation Chair in Korean Studies in the Department of Religious Studies and also serves as chair of the Department of Gender, Women's and Sexuality Studies, as well as founding director of the Korean Studies Research Network.

Her role with AAS is a four-year commitment—and she plans to focus on several themes while in the position. "I would like to foster inter-area, transnational, and diasporic studies by cultivating active collaboration not only between the humanities and social sciences but also in the natural, medical, and environmental sciences," Choi says. "I will strive to engage with a broad range of scholars and students to foster AAS as a safe, equitable, and inspiring scholarly society," she adds. Choi also says she feels that in

response to a growing demand for timely and relevant scholarship on the critically important issues of our time, we need to cultivate creative and responsible engagement with issues of the day for the public good.

The Association for Asian Studies is a scholarly, non-political, non-profit professional association with approximately 6,500 members worldwide. Founded in 1941, it is the largest organization of its kind. For the full article see: tinyurl.com/y833vnka

GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS



The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences awarded **Kaitlyn Lindgren-Hansen** (4th year PhD candidate) a Dissertation Writing Fellowship to support the completion of her dissertation, “A Medium’s Media: Spiritualism and Women’s Writing in the Nineteenth-Century U.S.” Kaitlyn’s project examines the impact of women’s writing on 19th-century U.S. spiritualism. This project advances research on nineteenth-century U.S. spiritualism by centering the writing of its practitioners. She proposes that spiritualist women’s writing used writing media as material and metaphorical bridges between the living and the dead. Her advisor Dr. Diana Cates states, “Ms. Lindgren-Hansen has outstanding research and writing skills—among the very best of the 16 PhD students I have directed over my 32-year career at the University of Iowa.”

The College of Liberal Arts & Sciences awards ten students each year with the precious gift of time to complete a PhD dissertation, thus having the beneficial effects of improving degree completion rates and reducing time to degree. The award provides a stipend during the summer and fall 2023 semesters with the goal of defending by the end of Spring 2024.

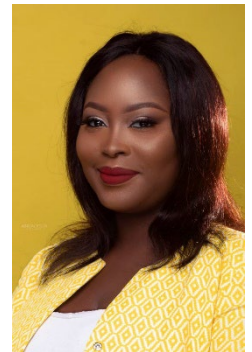
John Sheridan (5th year PhD candidate) was awarded a Marcus Bach Fellowship from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences to support the completion of his dissertation, “Hutterite Religion, Emotion, and Matter: How Hutterites “Dress” and are “Dressed” By Their World.” Sheridan’s project is based on ten years of ethnographic fieldnotes, hundreds of interviews, and immersive visits to and overnight stays at forty colonies in the U.S. and Canada. He ultimately seeks to show how Hutterite religion is a dynamic blend of rural American and Canadian blue-



collar values and practices that are shaped by emotion and material as much as “traditional” Anabaptism. Thus, demonstrate that Hutterites are not some insignificant obscure “other,” but instead a microcosm and paradigmatic example of white conservative rural Christians.

Dr. Marcus Bach was a professor in the School of Religion (now the Department of Religious Studies) from 1945-1964. Bach devoted a lifetime to increasing understanding and appreciation of diverse philosophical and religious perspectives. He wrote a total of three works on the Hutterites and was one of the early scholars to study Hutterites in North America. This is one of four awards made that provide a single semester of support which includes a stipend, fringe benefits, tuition scholarship and 50% fees. Projects must focus on intercultural communication and/or the understanding of diverse philosophies and religious perspectives; especially proposals which show an awareness of the ideas and research of Dr. Bach.

Osamamen Oba Eduviere (2nd year PhD student) was featured in the Iowa Magazine for her work on the African Immigrant Experience in Iowa. Osamamen is collaborating with UI faculty members Brady G’sell and Amy Weismann on “Homebuilding in the Heartland,” a grant-funded project to learn how African immigrants adjust to life in Iowa. Osamamen created and maintains a database of organizations that provide services to immigrants in the state, interviews African Iowans about their stories, and invites migrants to keep journals of their experiences.



In addition to her work with migrants, Osamamen recently published op-eds in Nigeria’s *Guardian* newspaper on topics such as the threat posed to education by the terrorist group Boko Haram and the pollution in the Niger Delta that has forced people to leave their homes. For the full article see:

tinyurl.com/yc234tat

We are excited to participate in UI’s One Day for Iowa on March 29! It’s always a great day to support the Department of Religious Studies. Visit our direct link at: <https://1dayforiowa.org/fa-religiousstudies23!>