

# PERSPECTIVES *On Religion*

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## New Frontiers in Religious Studies

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The proliferation of digital culture has invigorated research and the life of the mind, not only in STEM disciplines but also in the liberal arts. Over the past ten years, various methods, theories, and practices have coalesced into the rich field of digital humanities or DH. While DH is especially well represented in English departments, Religious Studies and other humanities disciplines are now contributing a great deal to the field. Several faculty members of the UI Department of Religious Studies are working on DH-related projects. They are exploring new techniques for generating and disseminating knowledge, and they are reflecting on the far-reaching social and ethical implications of new forms of digital media.

For example, Prof. Paul Dilley is engaged in digital textual analysis using a procedure known as distant reading. Distant reading entails the study of large groups of texts (far too many for a human to read) by means of computer algorithms, which compare, contrast, categorize, and re-present texts. Perhaps the most popular form of distant reading is topic modeling, which takes a large literary corpus and produces a pre-set number of “topics,” namely, groups of words with a high probability of appearing closely together. Human readers then label the topics and use them to study global properties of the corpus. Prof. Dilley has overseen the production of the most complete online collection of Latin literature through the 6th century CE, the “Iowa Canon of Authors and Works.” He plans to topic-model this collection with one of his graduate

seminars, which will yield new insights into large-scale literary history, including the effect of Christianization on Latin culture. Prof. Dilley is also part of a related online project, “Big Ancient Mediterranean” (BAM), which he founded with Prof. Sarah Bond, a colleague in Iowa’s Department of Classics (Ryan Horne, a Mellon postdoctoral fellow at UNC Chapel Hill, is the lead developer). BAM users can browse data associated with almost 6,000 Latin authors and works, from the 3rd century BCE to the 6th century CE, with the help of a timeline and geographic visualization.

Prof. Robert Cargill’s extensive work in DH includes the Digi-Tel Azekah Visualization Project, which comprises a 3D, real-time digital model of an ancient archaeological site in Israel. The model not only catalogues the excavation’s progress, but also allows scholars to work with the remains of physical structures to visualize what the structures might have looked like before they were reduced to rubble. After the digital model is launched, people will be able to tour the virtual reconstructions from their desks or smartphones. Prof. Cargill lectures frequently to academic and public audiences, using TV, radio, and the internet to help people grasp the remarkable potential of 3D modeling, as well as the importance of the study of religion.

Whereas Professors Dilley and Cargill use digital technologies to perform new kinds of research and reach more expansive audiences, Prof. Jenna Supp-Montgomery researches and teaches *about* these and other

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## New Frontiers (cont.)

aspects of digital culture. In her undergraduate course, “Digital Media and Religion,” she encourages students to think critically about the history of digital technologies and the kinds of social and technological lives that have emerged in digital culture. In particular, her students dig into questions like, “Are digital media really so new?” “What are the promises and perils that digital media present to us?” “What contingent possibilities emerge when we live with and through digital technologies?”

Prof. Diana Cates has created a new online course, “Hard Cases in Healthcare: Ethics at the Beginning of Life,” which features an Open Simulator-based virtual world called Medville. In this world, students take on avatar bodies and visit a virtual clinic. They view videos that simulate lifelike encounters with healthcare providers or patients, hopefully engaging their minds *and* emotions. Students ponder and discuss the ethical

dimensions of each case. They also begin to grasp the profound impact that religion can have on people’s decision making, particularly when it comes to matters of life and death. The creation of Medville was a collaborative effort between Prof. Cates, Prof. James Elmborg of the School of Library and Information Science, and two undergraduate students, Alyssa O’Neal (clinic architect and builder) and Shanea Condon (clinic manager), all of whom were supported by Digital Bridges for Humanistic Inquiry, which is itself a collaborative project connecting the University of Iowa and Grinnell College, funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Also in the realm of teaching, one of the department’s lecturers, Dr. Robert Gerstmyer, regularly utilizes TILE classrooms for teaching his courses “Harry Potter: The Mystery and Magic of Life” and “Narnia and Beyond: The Writings of C. S. Lewis.” TILE stands for

Transform, Interact, Learn, Engage. TILE classrooms consist of circular tables for student seating, with video screens and white boards along each of the walls. The motivation for creating TILE classrooms at the UI was to promote “active-learning pedagogy, enabled by technology and class equipment configuration,” and students report that they do, indeed, value a classroom environment that fosters student collaboration and concurrent small group discussions.

The department looks forward to pursuing many new forms of DH research, teaching, and public engagement, which will allow faculty members to remain on the cutting edges of their respective sub-fields and share with a wide swath of the public the impact that digital technologies are having on higher education, the framing and resolution of big social problems, and diverse experiences of being human.

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## Alumni Create “Thesacredprofane” Podcast

Three of the department’s PhD alumni have undertaken a new project – a weekly podcast that asks big questions in small places. Dan Boscaljon (’09), J. Sage Elwell (’08), and Glenn Whitehouse (’98) all earned their PhDs under the direction of David Klemm. While they all “teach serious classes about serious stuff...they try not to take themselves too seriously.” The podcast is a place to do what they love and have fun doing it.

The podcast is a way of inquiring into the paradoxes at the heart of a technologized, secularized world. It provides a series of investigations into classical human themes. It merges popular culture, art, philosophy, politics, and theology to explore the sublime and mundane dimensions of the human experience.

Each season revolves around a single question and each episode in the season applies that question to a specific “text” from philosophy/theology, art/pop

culture, or politics/society. The question for Season 1 was “What is Justice?” and explored everything from Netflix’s House of Cards to Derrida’s essay on “The Force of Law.” The question for Season 2 is “What is Love?” The team will reflect on Romeo and Juliet, bell hooks, Rilke, Dworkin, Tillich, 80’s rock ballads and more.

You can find the podcast on their web site: <http://www.thesacredprofane.com>; on iTunes at: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/thesacredprofane-podcast/id1126159659>; or on Stitcher at: <http://www.stitcher.com/podcast/thesacredprofane>. And you can visit their Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/459168410943974/>

The Department is pleased to see the continuation of personal and professional relationships such as these, which have been forged in the creative crucible of our graduate program.

## A Vibrant Graduate Student Community

The Religion Graduate Student Organization, or RGSO (pronounced Rig-so), is the dynamic student body of the University of Iowa's Religious Studies Department. 15 officers and members of RGSO, all graduate students affiliated with the department, expertly plan and execute several projects as a part of their service to the department and the university community.

RGSO, which is governed by a constitution, is a recognized student organization with a seat in the Graduate Student Senate and its committees, as well as the COGS local union. Currently, 7 elected officers serve on 12 committees to maintain the vital relationships between graduate students, faculty, and religious studies undergraduate students.

RGSO plans and executes several major events hosted by the department. Its officers are the face of religious studies at UI during Hawkeye visit days, interacting with over 300 prospective students and their families at the majors-minors fairs. To further increase the department's visibility, RGSO hosts an ice-cream social each year off the busy T. Anne Cleary pedestrian walkway. We advertise our department's courses through one-on-one interactions with over 60 students who stop by our tables.

We also organize, with assistance from Dr. Jordan Smith, the annual Trivulation night, movie night, and a public event on different themes during the spring semester. For Trivulation, faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students gather in the department for a lively, competitive trivia night complete with a Halloween costume contest, prizes, and pizza.



This event has attracted nearly 100 undergraduates in our recent past. The sight of them filling up every inch of the department is worth the time-consuming effort RGSO invests in making this night a resounding success. RGSO is indebted to Maureen Walterhouse and Robin Burns, without whose assistance these events would not yield so much success.

One of the main aims of RGSO is to be a resource and an advocate for the graduate students. To nourish graduate students academically and socially, RGSO frequently plans events exclusively for them. We, the members, help each other develop necessary skills by organizing writing groups and lecture series where faculty address us on topics such as conducting fieldwork, where and how to publish as graduate students, alt-ac careers, networking at conferences such as the American Academy of Religion's annual meeting, and the use of library resources. With assistance from Prof. Jenna Supp-Montgomerie, who creates a supportive intellectual space for us to meet and discuss topics of academic import, and who generously hosts us most months,

several RGSO members participate in a monthly inter-departmental, interdisciplinary reading group on critical theory. We are also each other's champions, lending an ear, a shoulder, an expertise, and a respite from work during a social hour every week.

Lastly, RGSO seeks to maintain congeniality between graduate students and faculty, by organizing an end-of-the-semester party for the department to come together and socialize in a casual environment. Formally, RGSO facilitates a two-way communication of suggestions and concerns between these two groups, with support from the DEO and the DGS, by occupying a seat at the bi-weekly faculty meetings.

RGSO's officer body constitutes a group of dedicated, creative, and smart individuals with a commitment to personal and academic growth, as well as service to the department. Despite being a small student organization, RGSO is a prominent and fundamental part of the department.

*Iva Patel*  
RGSO Co-Coordinator

## Department Lectures

Over the past year, the department has organized, sponsored, or co-sponsored many events. For example, we collaborated with the Obermann Center, the School of Music, the Antiochian Orthodox Diocese of the Midwest, and Arts Share to bring the Anchiskhati Choir to Iowa City. (February 26) The Anchiskhati Choir is the world's leading exponent of Georgian polyphonic choral music, specializing in ancient Georgian sacred and secular songs with the authentic instrumental accompaniment.

Dr. Candida Moss presented an E.P. Adler lecture, "Pope Frances, Religion, and the Media: How to Get Behind the Hype" (March 3). Dr. Moss is a professor of New Testament & Early Christianity at the University of Notre Dame.

Dr. Wendell Wallach, consultant, ethicist, and scholar at Yale University's Interdisciplinary Center for Bioethics, presented "Robots, Human Brain Implants, and Ethics" (April 2016).

The department was one of many who co-sponsored a Craft Critique Culture Conference on "Bridging

Divides" with Keynote speaker Jerome McGann, John Stewart Bryan Professor of English, University of Virginia (April 8-9).

The Sonia Sands lecture was held on April 21 with Diane Oetting, Advocate for the Southern Poverty Law Center. She spoke on "The People on the March: Continuing the Fight for Justice."

Darrell Cannon, activist, inspirational speaker, leader in the movement for reparations for the Chicago Police Torture survivors, and advisory board member of the Chicago Torture Justice Memorials gave a classroom presentation and led a public discussion on "The Meaning and Reality of Torture" (May 5).

With the University of Iowa Center for Human Rights, the department co-sponsored a lecture by Suki Kim on her book, *Without You there is No Us: My Time With the Sons of North Korea's Elite* (October 9).

The Department welcomed back two alumni to speak about their current book *The Bible in Political Debate: What Does it Really Say?* on October 18. Rodney Werline (PhD 1995) and Frances Flannery



(PhD 2000) are co-editors of the volume, which was released in September. Both Rod and Frances studied under the guidance of Prof. George Nickelsburg.

Dr. Laurie Maffly-Kipp from Washington University in St. Louis presented an E.P. Adler Lecture on October 26. She spoke on "Baptizing the Founding Fathers: Mormon as Alternative Nationalism."

Sage Elwell presented a colloquium on his current research regarding what he calls the seven deadly sins of digital culture (November 15).



## Outside Fellowships for Graduate Students:

### Kayla Wheeler receives Dissertation Diversity Pre-doctoral Fellowship at Ithaca College

Kayla was named the first Philosophy and Religion fellow at Ithaca College. She will be teaching in the department of Philosophy and Religion and be an affiliated faculty member in Women and Gender Studies. Kayla will use this fellowship to do archival work at the Schomburg Library in NYC. During the fall semester she is teaching Black Lives Matter: Religion and Justice, and during the spring semester she will be teaching Gender and Sexuality in Islam. Kayla notes that being in Ithaca has allowed her access to the Cornell University Costume and Textile Collection, which explores Muslim women's dress practices. This collection has proven to be invaluable for her research. Kayla's dissertation, "Fashioning Muslim Women: YouTube as a Site for Creating Alternative Femininities," provides an investigation of gender, race, and bodily practices through a textual analysis of YouTube videos produced by Black American vloggers Najwa Niang and Nadira Abdul-Quddus of "Muslimah2Muslimah."



### Gwendolyn Gillson Receives a Fulbright from Japan-United States Fulbright Commission

This past spring, Gwendolyn was named a Fulbright Graduate Research Fellow with the Japan-United States Fulbright Commission, an award designed to facilitate cross-cultural understanding through academic research and cultural exchange. Her project explores the ways that older and younger Japanese women are utilizing and transforming Jōdoshū (Pure Land Sect) Buddhism through social engagement projects to meet the demands of everyday life in a country suffering from the "demographic crisis" instigated by an aging population. The core of her dissertation is an ethnography consisting of three parts: surveys, interviews, and participant observation. She is currently working with the Yoshimizu Women's Group comprised of primarily older women who come together to talk about Buddhism; in January she will move to Tokyo to work with a nun who runs a counselling group for younger women. As a Visiting Researcher at Jōdo-affiliated Bukkyo University in Kyoto, she has access to the sect's closed archive which houses materials relating to the modern developments of Jōdoshū and their socially-engaged efforts. The Fulbright grant is enabling her to write her dissertation entitled "Women Creating the Pure Land: Socially Engaged Buddhism in Japan's Jōdo Sect," which will be the first full-length work on Jōdoshū in English.

### Daniel Amodeo Studies Mandarin on a Huayu Enrichment Scholarship

Daniel Amodeo spent the fall semester in Taiwan studying Mandarin at Fo Guang University's well regarded Chinese Language Center (佛光大學華語中心) in Yilan, Taiwan. He is preparing to take the HSK (華語水平考試) language exam. The new HSK is an international standardized exam that tests and rates Chinese language proficiency. It assesses non-native Chinese speakers' abilities in using the Chinese language in their daily, academic and professional lives. As a recipient of a Huayu Enrichment Scholarship, Daniel's studies were made possible by Taiwan's Ministry of Education's generosity. He was also supported by a scholarship from the department's Barbara W. and Rex Montgomery Religious Studies Fund. While in Taiwan Daniel conducted research for his dissertation, which seeks to explain the causes of the qigong craze that swept the Chinese mainland in the 1990s.

## FACULTY PERSPECTIVES

**Robert Cargill** published his second book, *The Cities that Built the Bible* (HarperOne), which was released in March 2016. Dr. Cargill gave lectures as part of a book tour, including presentations at the Smithsonian, George Washington University, UCLA, and Hendrix College, as well as book readings at Agudas Achim Congregation and First Presbyterian Church in Iowa City. He was interviewed by Charity Nebbe for the full hour of her Iowa Public Radio show, “Talk of Iowa” in April 2016. In November 2015, he flew to Israel to film season two of *Finding Jesus*, which will air on CNN in March 2017. Presently, Dr. Cargill is completing the manuscript for his forthcoming Oxford University Press book on the biblical figure of Melchizedek, which is due out in November of 2017.

**Diana Fritz Cates** completed her fourth year as Department Chair. In the realm of research, she was awarded a Major Project Grant from the UI Office of the VP for Research and Economic Development to support a multi-disciplinary study on unit practices that foster the resiliency of nurses who work in existentially-fraught environments; she continued work on her book, *Ethics of Love and Hatred*; she completed an essay “Approaching the Morality of Emotion: Specifying the Object of Inquiry” for a forthcoming volume, *Feeling Religion*, edited by John Corrigan; she delivered an address at University of St. Catherine (St. Paul, Minnesota) on “Theological Study in and as a Community of Friendship”; and she participated in a Faculty Roundtable on the topic of “Virtual Bridges: Establishing Digital Connections between Communities” as part of a Craft, Critique, and Culture Conference at the University of Iowa. In the realm of teaching, Prof. Cates developed a new online course in collaboration with James Elmborg of the School of Library and Information Science on ethics at the beginning of life, which allows students to confront challenging issues in assisted reproductive technology, genetic engineering, and neonatal medical futility within

a virtual clinic environment. She also re-designed the graduate course Teaching and Public Engagement on Topics of Religion to include guest presentations by most of the Religious Studies faculty. In the realm of service, she continued to serve the university and her profession, while also participating in broader public engagement. She served as Chair of the Advisory Board of the UI Center for Human Rights; a Trustee and frequent manuscript reviewer for the *Journal of Religious Ethics*; and a reviewer for other journals and academic presses.

**Paul Dilley** taught a re-developed version of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, focusing on the connections between these three Abrahamic religions. He has signed a contract with Cambridge University Press (UK office), to publish his book, *Monasteries and the Care of Souls in Late Antique Christianity: Cognition and Discipline*, which explores the training of thoughts in ancient Christian monastic communities. This book is one of the first sustained applications of cognitive studies, particularly within anthropology, to religion in Late Antiquity. Dr. Dilley is co-PI with Katherine Tachau and Timothy Barrett of the 2016-2017 Mellon-Sawyer seminar at the University of Iowa, “Textual and Cultural Exchanges: The Manuscript Across Pre-Modern Eurasia.” Over 20 international scholars and conservators will visit campus over the coming academic year to give a series of public lectures, as well as discuss their work and build manuscript models with seminar participants comprised of University of Iowa faculty and graduate students. He continues working on the critical edition of a Coptic manuscript containing the only surviving copy of writings by the famous Christian heretic Mani. The 360-page papyrus codex is held at the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin, where he worked for several weeks in June with his colleagues Iain Gardner (Sydney) and Jason BeDuhn (Northern Arizona); the first of the edition’s four fascicles will be published by Brill’s

Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies series in 2017. Finally, with co-PI Sarah Bond and Lead Developer Ryan Horne, he continues to build the “Big Ancient Mediterranean,” a website for the co-ordinated search of geospatial, network, and textual data from the ancient world; he and Bond organized the 2016 Obermann Center for Advanced Studies Summer Symposium, “Linking the Big Ancient Mediterranean,” June 6-8. This website is related to a series of innovative articles, currently in development, which apply strategies of “distant reading” to large digital corpora of ancient texts.

Next spring, **Jay Holstein** will offer a new online version of RELS:2775 The Bible and the Holocaust through the Division of Continuing Education. This course has been taught for decades in the classroom setting. Prof. Holstein completely rewrote the online version of the course, producing new video lectures created for this format and delivered via ICON.

**Kristy Nabhan-Warren** was promoted to Full Professor (Summer 2016) and is thrilled to represent the Department of Religious Studies at this new level. On the research front she is working on two new manuscripts, which are mutually informing. One project is entitled *Brown Religion in America: Guadalupe and the American Woman*. This book will be part of The University of Chicago Press’ prestigious Chicago History of Religions (CHAR) series edited by John Corrigan. It will offer a fresh approach to Latino/a religious studies by offering an ethnographically-informed historical synthesis of the Latino/a reconquest of América. The book will maintain continuity with other books on U.S. Latino/a religions by emphasizing U.S. Latinos’ and Latinas’ migratory, familial, and ethno-religious experiences; yet it will stand out from most books on the topic in that meta-connections will be made between Latino/a people’s lived experiences and broader themes in U.S. religious history. Dr. Kristy’s other new manuscript

project, *Cornbelt Catholicism: Brown, White and Religious in the Heartland* (to be published with The University of North Carolina Press) focuses on contemporary issues of race, religion and culture in Iowa and is based on Dr. Kristy's current and ongoing ethnographic research in Eastern Iowa. She will also be editing a brand-new book series, "Ethnographies of Religion," with the University of North Carolina Press. She will work closely with UNC Press Senior Acquisitions Editor Elaine Maisner to publish two exceptional ethnographies of religion in the Americas each year. The series was launched at the annual conference of The American Academy of Religion in November 2016. Dr. Kristy is looking forward to supporting junior and senior scholars' research in what should be a great series that reflects well on the department's intellectual leadership. On the teaching front Dr. Kristy continues to enjoy being in the classroom and simultaneously inspiring her students and learning from them. Her "Religions in America Today" remains a popular GenEd course and is visited by prospective students and their parents each fall. She will continue to teach this class and her other GenEd course "Sport and Religion in America." She offers graduate seminars as well; the newest iteration will be "Writing Religion, Writing Culture" in the Spring 2017. As far as service to our campus community goes, Dr. Kristy was invited to be a University of Iowa Homecoming parade Judge and loved the experience. While she is a Hoosier by birth and is a proud graduate of Indiana University ('92 BA and '01 Ph.D.), she has become a full-fledged Hawkeye. Her three children have thoroughly enjoyed the perks of being a PK "Professor's Kid" here at UI. Taking home bags of candy from the parade and seeing Herky up close were just two recent manifestations of this privilege. On the broader community service front she continues to volunteer in her children's schools and is a parent-teacher room parent liaison for Horn Elementary, a culturally and religiously diverse elementary school on Iowa City's West Side, where her two youngest children attend. She is also a

laundress for Hometies Daycare each second weekend of the month throughout the year.

**Raymond Mentzer** continues to teach an entry level sequence of courses on medieval and modern religious culture as well as more advanced courses on the history of religious transformation and confessional violence in early modern Europe. Dr. Mentzer's ongoing research program includes the publication of a collection of essays, *A Companion to the Huguenots* (Leiden, 2016). Co-edited with Bertrand Van Ruymbeke (Université de Paris), it appeared in the Brill's series of Companions to the Christian Tradition. He published a book chapter, co-authored by Philippe Chareyre, "Organizing the Churches and Reforming Society," with Philippe Chareyre, in *A Companion to the Huguenots* (2016), pp. 17-42. Six other book chapters are in various stages of preparation and production. Recent book reviews appeared in the *Catholic Historical Review*, *Renaissance Quarterly*, and *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*. He organized and chaired a session on "The Limits of Consistorial Authority: Geneva and France" for the meeting of the Sixteenth Century Society and Conference in Bruges, Belgium, 18-20 August 2016. Mentzer continues to serve on the Governing Board of the H.H. Meeter Center for Calvin Studies, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan. He is a member of the editorial board of the *Sixteenth Century Journal*, the *Revue d'histoire du protestantisme* (Paris) and *Cristianesimo nella Storia* (Bologna). In addition, he serves on the editorial committees of several monograph series, including the *History of Christian Ecumenism* (Bologna), the *Archives des Églises réformées de France* (Paris), and *Early Modern Studies*. He is the American representative to the International Commission for the History and Study of Christianity, a subunit of the International Commission of Historical Sciences (a UNESCO organization).

**Micheline Pesantubbee** continues to work on her book project on Native American women and religious movements. She is also completing

a book chapter on Lakota and bison recovery as part of a larger project on Native Foodways in a Global Economy that she is co-editing with Michael Zogry. The idea for this collection of essays grew out of a Native American Traditions in the Americas Group session on indigenous foods and religion at the 2013 AAR annual meeting. Dr. Pesantubbee also continues to co-chair the Native American Traditions in the Americas Group and participates in the AAR's mentoring programs for junior faculty and graduate students. She continues to teach her American Indian Environmentalism course as well as Sacred World of Native Americans. She also is working on a new course, "Fed Up with Organized Religion." This course will examine the growing phenomena of Nones or Dones, factors contributing to disinterest in organized religion, and the perceived distinctions between being spiritual and being religious.

**Morten Schlütter**, Associate Professor of Chinese Religions, is still the director of the UI Center for Asian and Pacific Studies (CAPS) where he seeks to promote programming on East Asian religions as much as possible. His CAPS appointment was recently renewed for another three years. Otherwise, Dr. Schlütter is continuing his teaching and research on Buddhism and Chinese religions. During the past year, he gave invited talks at the University of Copenhagen and Brown University. He also helped organize the Conference on Sutra Transmission and Translation, held at the Dunhuang Research Academy in Dunhuang, China, June 2016, where he gave a paper entitled "The Platform Sūtra, Textual Criticism, and the Study of Dunhuang Materials." Dr. Schlütter also worked on the development of several new courses, and designed a new syllabus for Living Religions of the East, which he taught for the first time during the fall semester of 2016. He also reviewed several book manuscripts and articles for publication, and wrote book reviews. In the spring semester of 2017, Schlütter will be the Interim DEO in the Department while Diana Cates is on a research leave.

**Frederick Smith** was in the Himalayan region of India for the academic year 2015-16 on a Fulbright-Nehru Senior Research Fellowship. His project was to look into the regionalization of the ancient Indian epic, the Mahabharata: how its narrative has changed; how it is transmitted locally through small-scale pilgrimages and narrative and dramatic performances; and how present geography has been superimposed on the geography of the 2000 year old Sanskrit epic. He has become the Chair of the Department of Asian & Slavic Languages & Literature, thrust into a major administrative role for the first time. He has published three papers, one on the history of well-being in India (with Isabelle Clark-Dèces), a second on the ephemera produced at the performances of Vedic rituals in Central and South India (in a memorial volume for the late Vedic scholar Frits Staal), and a third on the modernity of Vedic ritual in a book on modern Hinduism intended for students. He has several articles in press. He has lectured in the last year in Rome, Krakow (Poland), and in many conferences and for other arranged talks in India.

**Jordan Smith**, Lecturer in Biblical Studies, is enjoying another fun but busy year. This is his third year serving as the Undergraduate Outreach Coordinator for the department, which continues to allow him to place his primary emphasis on teaching, advising students, and strengthening our undergraduate program. He greatly appreciates the hard work and help of the graduate students in putting on events to increase the department's visibility on campus and attract new students. Also to increase the department's visibility on campus and in the community, he has given several talks about the Bible in the modern world to student and community organizations. He is currently writing a book, *Soldiers of Christ Arise: Martyrdom, Human (Self) Sacrifice, and the Conquest of the Promised Land*, and hopes to have it completed by the end of the year.

**Ahmed Souaiaia** taught three courses per semester during the academic year 2015-16, offered several independent research courses for graduate and undergraduate students, and continued to mentor MA, Ph.D., and SJD students enrolled in the departments of Religious Studies, History, International Studies, and the College of Law, where he holds joint appointments. Supported through APAP's Building Bridges grant, Professor Souaiaia, in partnership with Hancher, will organize a 30-month program, under the banner of *Embracing Complexity: Contemporary Islamic Expressions*, to help artists, scholars, and instructors develop activities and events intended to introduce Islamic arts and Muslim artists to local, regional, and national audiences. The highly competitive and generous award administered by the Association of Performing Arts Presenters (APAP) and funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art will help integrate artistic performances and scholarship within the interdisciplinary curriculum focusing on Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Iowa.

**Jenna Supp-Montgomerie** researches the role of religious discourse and practice in the negotiation of technological change. This year, she was invited to join a select group of ten scholars of religion and media from around the world who will meet over the next three years to undertake a major project on the problem of religion in the media age. The group will reexamine the boundaries among scholarship, journalism, and publics. This working group, hosted by the University of Colorado Boulder's Center for Religion, Media and Culture, will begin meeting in spring of 2017. Dr. Supp-Montgomerie continues to work on her book manuscript about the role of religion in the creation and use of the first electric global communication network. Her revisions this year are fueled by her happy participation

in the National Center for Faculty Diversity and Development's Faculty Success Program. This past spring, she was an invited respondent at the Drew Transdisciplinary Colloquium on affect theory. She developed a new class this year on this topic, called "Religion Beyond Belief: Emotion and Communication." One of the highlights of her work at the University of Iowa has been to host a monthly reading group in critical theory for graduate students and faculty from Religious Studies, Communication Studies, and related departments.

Indiana University Press published a new edition of **Richard Brent Turner's** book on New Orleans (October 2016). *Jazz Religion, The Second Line, and Black New Orleans: After Hurricane Katrina, New Edition* is available in paperback and includes a new introduction, selected bibliography, and new photographs by the author. An examination of the musical, religious, and political landscape of black New Orleans before and after Hurricane Katrina, this revised edition examines how these factors play out in a new millennium of global apartheid. Professor Turner explores the history and contemporary significance of second lines—the group of dancers that follows the first procession of church and club members, brass bands, and grand marshals in black New Orleans's jazz street parades. Here music and religion interplay, and Turner's study reveals how these identities and traditions from Haiti and West and Central Africa are reinterpreted. He also describes how second-line participants create their own social space and become proficient in the arts of political disguise, resistance, and performance. Prof. Turner is author of *Islam in the African-American Experience* (IUP, 2003). In the late 1990s, he lived in New Orleans while teaching at Xavier University.



## Religious Studies Graduate Students receive Ballard Seashore Dissertation Fellowships

**Kyle Dieleman**

**The Battle for the Sabbath in the Dutch Reformation: Devotion or Desecration?**

Kyle Dieleman is in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of his PhD program working with Prof. Raymond Mentzer. Kyle's previous awards include Alice Marguerite Blough Award (2014), Alice Lampe Heidel and John B. Heidel Memorial Award (2015), Graduate College Post Comprehensive Research Fellowship (2015), and a Fellowship at the Leibniz-Institute for European History, Mainz, Germany. Kyle describes his dissertation as follows:

My dissertation concerns the theological and practical importance of the Sabbath in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the Reformed communities found in the Netherlands. The Protestant Reformation in the Netherlands has been the focus of a great deal of research, but the ways in which the Sabbath was viewed and practiced among Dutch Reformed Christians has gone largely unstudied. My research will fill a scholarly gap by first addressing how Dutch Reformed theologians understand the Sabbath and then examining how Dutch Reformed congregants actually practiced the Sabbath. The project addresses important issues regarding how people used their time and how power imbalances in relationships affected behavior. In addition, it sheds light on the ever-complicated societal relationship between religion and politics.

My intention is to create a fuller, clearer picture of the Protestant Reformation in the Dutch Republic. Scholars have typically associated strict Sunday observance only with English and American Puritanism, but my project demonstrates that a strict enforcement of Sunday observance also arose in the Dutch Reformation. This historical revision is important for understanding the Protestant Reformation in Europe but also opens the door for a more complete understanding of religion in America when these groups immigrated to North America. Furthermore, my research provides insights into the religiously plural situation in the Dutch Republic. My project will show that the Sabbath was a way in which the Dutch Reformed congregations sought to establish their religious and confessional identity in religiously plural settings that included Catholic, Lutheran, and Anabaptist groups. In this way, my research helps us understand how religious groups have acted historically and, by extension, how they might do so in contemporary society.

**John R. Kennedy**

**En el Nombre de Dios: Baroque Piety, Local Religion, and the Last Will and Testament in Late Colonial Monterrey**

John Kennedy is in his 5<sup>th</sup> year of his PhD program working with Prof. Raymond Mentzer. John was awarded a Ballard-Seashore Dissertation Fellowship and a Marcus Bach Fellowship for 2016-17 giving him a full year of funding. John's past awards include Alice Lampe Heidel & John B. Heidel Memorial Award (2013), John P. Boyle Award (2015), Graduate College Post Comprehensive Research Fellowship (2015), and a T. Anne Cleary International Dissertation Fellowship (2015). John describes his dissertation as follows:

My dissertation is about forms of locally-based piety, especially religious devotionalism within the population of eighteenth-century Spanish descendants in Monterrey, Mexico. I aim to understand the slow move away from baroque Catholicism, which can be described as highly ritualistic and ostentatious, towards reform Catholicism, which can be described as an individualistic and rationalistic form of Catholicism that emerged in Europe during the Enlightenment. I propose that Monterrey's distance from other urban centers and its lack of ecclesiastical infrastructures made it a distinctive frontier town, where a baroque-infused piety dominated until the creation of the diocese in 1777. I demonstrate that late eighteenth century testators, although still concerned for their individual souls, abandoned the practice of requesting a plethora of masses for the dead to benefit the souls of others and disregarded showy funerals for the sake of humility. What emerges in late eighteenth-century Monterrey is a hybrid form of Catholicism, blending baroque practices, pious reforms, and Marian devotionalism, invoking both the Virgin of Guadalupe and Our Lady of the Oak. "En el Nombre de Dios" is a case study about the staying power of traditions and the enduring flexibility of religion.

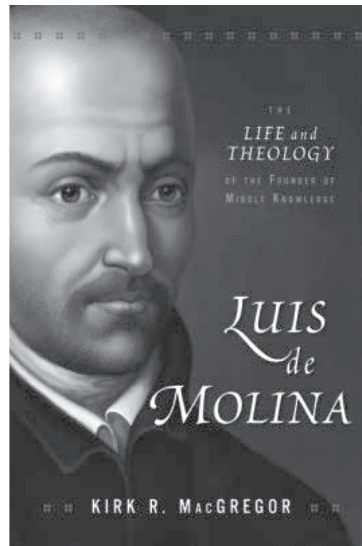
My methodology is historical, and I draw upon last wills and testaments in addition to city council records from three archives in Monterrey: 1. Archivo Histórico de Monterrey, 2. Archivo General del Estado de Nuevo León, and 3. Archivo Histórico del Arzobispado de Monterrey. My dissertation samples 100 out of the 260 extant last wills and testaments from 1700-1810 to ascertain changes and continuities in Catholic piety. Testators indicate their concerns for piety through burial and funeral requests and pious bequests to benefit church adornment, charities, orphans, slaves, and schools. I obtained digital photographs of these historical documents last year thanks to a T. Anne Cleary International Dissertation Fellowship.

My project will demonstrate that late eighteenth-century testators adhered to the concerns of the reformers, e.g., humble funerals and gifts to the poor, and at the same time sought to maintain the continuity of other long-established practices, e.g., burial in Franciscan habits and masses for the dead to benefit the soul of the testator.

## Alumni Books

### **Luis de Molina: The Life And Theology Of The Founder Of Middle Knowledge**

By Kirk R. MacGregor (PhD, 2005)



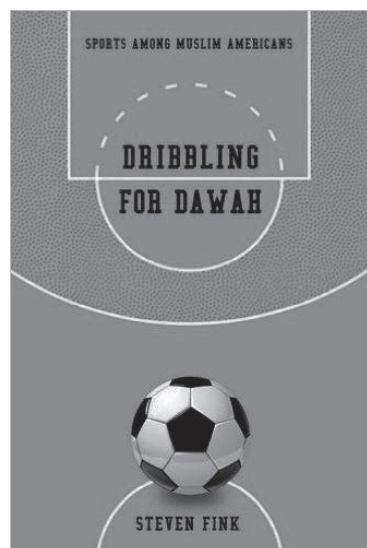
When Luis de Molina died in Madrid in 1600, he had every reason to believe he was about to be anathematized by Pope Clement VIII. The Protestant Reformation was splitting Europe, tribunals of the Inquisition met regularly in a dozen Spanish cities, and the Pope had launched a commission two years earlier to investigate Molina's writings. Molina was eventually vindicated, though the decision came seven years after his death. In the centuries that followed, Molina was relegated to relatively minor status in the history of theology until a renaissance of interest in recent years. His doctrine of God's "middle knowledge," in particular, has been appropriated by a number of current philosophers and theologians. In *Luis de Molina*, MacGregor outlines the main contours of Molina's subtle and far-reaching philosophical theology, covering his views on God's foreknowledge, salvation and predestination, poverty and obedience, and social justice. Drawing on writings of Molina never translated into English, MacGregor also provides insight into the experiences that shaped Molina's dramatic life. Today Molina's thought remains as fresh and relevant as ever, as it offers a rapprochement between Calvinism and Arminianism, a view of salvation that fully upholds both divine predestination and human free will.

"*Luis de Molina* is crafted with thoughtfulness, detailed research, and engaging narrative. Religion scholars with interests in Molinism and the doctrine of middle knowledge will acquire fresh insight into issues of God's sovereignty, grace, providence, and predestination and their relation to human free will and social justice." John K. Simmons, Professor of Religious Studies, Emeritus, Western Illinois University

Kirk MacGregor is currently an Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Religion at McPherson College in McPherson, Kansas.

### **Dribbling for Dawah: Sports among Muslim Americans**

by Steven Fink (PhD, 2007)



Amidst a proliferation of scholarly literature about Islam in the United States, very little attention has been given to sports among Muslim Americans. While books about professional Muslim athletes can be found, this is the first book to investigate Muslim American sports at the local level, looking at Muslim basketball leagues, sports programs at mosques and Islamic schools, and sports events hosted by Muslim organizations.

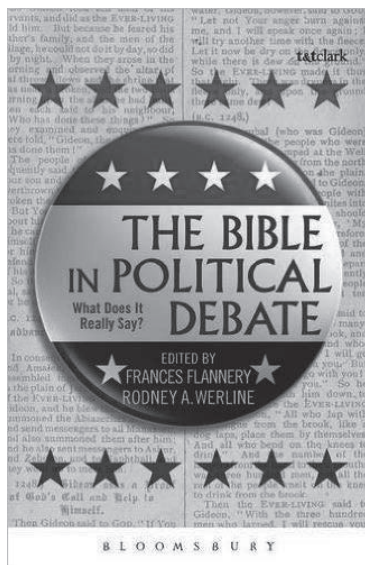
Drawing upon personal interviews and observations as well as scholarly sources, this book demonstrates that participation in sports activities plays a vital role in strengthening Islamic piety and fellowship, and in connecting Muslims with non-Muslims in post-9/11 America.

Because of these roles, this book places Muslim American sports within the trajectory of the Muslim "dawah movement," part of a worldwide revival with particular momentum for many Muslim Americans since 9/11. Additionally, the book places Muslim athletic endeavors within the stream of American religious history by exploring relationships between these sports activities and those of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Protestants, Catholics, Mormons, and Jews.

Steven Fink is currently an Associate Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire.

## The Bible in Political Debate: What Does it Really Say?

by Frances Flannery (Editor) (PhD 2000), Rodney A. Werline (Editor) (PhD 1995)



Politicians and pundits regularly invoke the Bible in social and political debates on a host of controversial social and political issues, including: abortion, stem-cell research, gay marriage, the death penalty, separation of church and state, family values, climate change, income distribution, teaching evolution in schools, taxation, school prayer, aid for the poor, and immigration. But is the Bible often used out of context in these major debates?

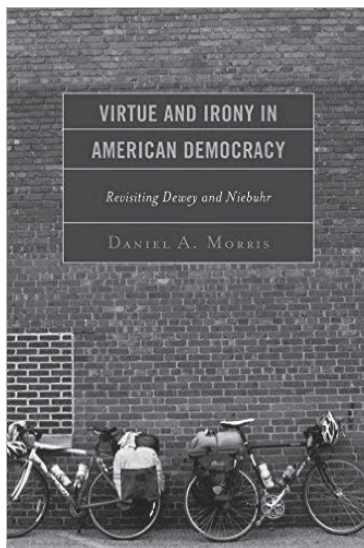
This book includes essays by fourteen biblical scholars who examine the uses of the Bible in political debates, uncovering the original historical contexts and meanings of the biblical verses that are commonly cited. The contributors take a non-confessional approach, rooted in non-partisan scholarship, to show how specific texts have at times been distorted in order to support particular views. At the same time, they show how the Bible can sometimes make for unsettling reading in the modern day. The key questions remain: What does the Bible really say? Should the Bible be used to form public policy?

Frances Flannery is Director at the Center for the Interdisciplinary Study of Terrorism and Peace, and Professor of Religion at James Madison University.

Rodney A. Werline is Professor of Religious Studies, Lemay and Marie Barnhill Endowed Chair in Religious Studies, and Director, Barton College Center for Religious Studies at Barton College.

## Virtue and Irony in American Democracy: Revisiting Dewey and Niebuhr

By Daniel A. Morris (PhD 2012)

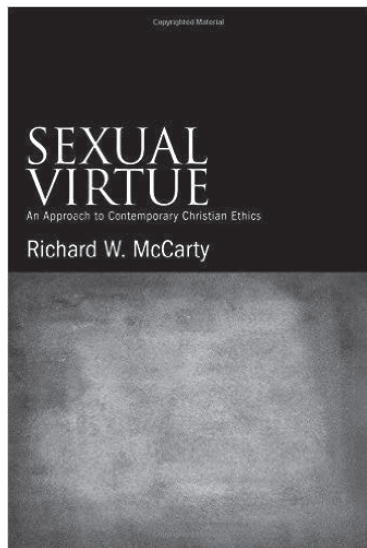


What virtues are necessary for democracy to succeed? This book turns to John Dewey and Reinhold Niebuhr, two of America's most influential theorists of democracy, to answer this question. Dewey and Niebuhr both implied—although for very different reasons—that humility and mutual-ity are important virtues for the success of people rule. Not only do these virtues allow people to participate well in their own governance, they also equip us to meet challenges to democracy generated by free-market economic policy and practices. Ironically, though, Dewey and Niebuhr quarreled with each other for twenty years and missed the opportunity to achieve political consensus. In their discourse with each other they failed to become “one out of many,” a task that is distilled in the democratic rallying cry “e pluribus unum.” This failure itself reflects a deficiency in democratic virtue. Thus, exploring the Dewey/Niebuhr debate with attention to their discursive failures reveals the importance of a third virtue: democratic tolerance. If democracy is to succeed, we must cultivate a deeper hospitality toward difference than Dewey and Niebuhr were able to extend to each other.

Daniel Morris is currently a Lecturer in Religious Studies at Augustana College.

### **Sexual Virtue: An Approach to Contemporary Christian Ethics**

By Richard McCarty (PhD 2008)

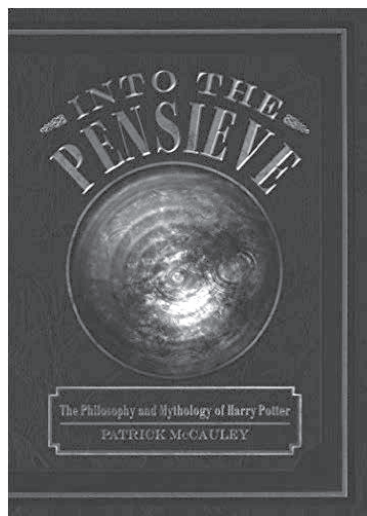


Richard W. McCarty offers a compassionate and inclusive conception of sexual virtue, one that liberates Christians from traditional patriarchal requirements for heterosexuality, marriage, and procreation. Daring to depart from ongoing debates about what Aristotle or Aquinas had to say, this book sets a new course centered on virtue ethics. It employs new insights from the sciences, biblical scholarship, analyses of church traditions, and revisionist natural law thinking. Eschewing simple deconstruction of traditional Christian norms for sexual morality, McCarty offers constructive ideas about what might count as real human goods for people in a wide variety of sexual relationships. Recreation, relational intimacy, and selective acts of procreation are three ends of sexual virtue that promote human happiness and can be appreciated in a broad Christian framework. While primarily referencing the Roman Catholic intellectual tradition, McCarty's work is also vital and accessible to those from Protestant backgrounds. Addressed to LGBT and straight readers, *Sexual Virtue* provides a compassionate sexual ethics for our time.

Richard McCarty is currently an Associate Professor at Mercyhurst University.

### **Into the Pensieve: The Philosophy and Mythology of Harry Potter**

By Patrick McCauley (PhD 2006)

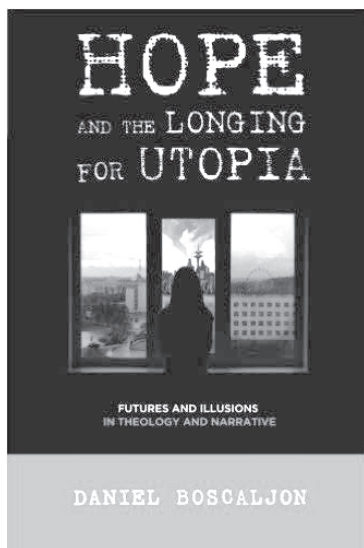


This book takes a look at the arc of the storyline in Harry Potter, digging below the surface to explore ethical, mythological, and religious meanings in J.K. Rowling's best-selling series. Why do we find ourselves so intrigued with the tale of Harry Potter? Many of the millions who passionately read the Harry Potter series found they could relate to the details, dreams, and fears of Harry's life. From a phoenix that dies and rises again to Dumbledore, a character who appears in a realm beyond death, there can be little doubt that Rowling's story delves into profound themes and ideas. She tackles issues of grief, responsibility, individual excellence, and heroism in the face of violence and corruption. This philosophical analysis shows that if, in fact, we do find ourselves reflected in Harry's story, then we may also find that our destiny and individual potential resonates with his as well.

Patrick McCauley is an Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Chestnut Hill College.

## HOPE AND THE LONGING FOR UTOPIA: Futures and Illusions in Theology and Narrative

By Daniel Boscaljon (PhD 2009)

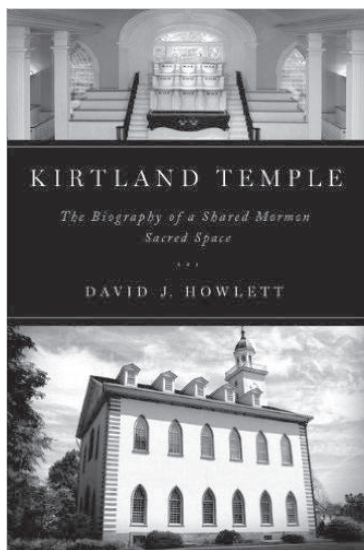


At present the battle over who defines our future is being waged most publicly by secular and religious fundamentalists. *Hope and the Longing for Utopia* offers an alternative position, disclosing a conceptual path toward potential worlds that resist a limited view of human potential and the gift of religion. In addition to outlining the value of embracing unknown potentialities, these twelve interdisciplinary essays explore why it has become crucial that we commit to hoping for values that resist traditional ideological commitments. Contextualized by contemporary writing on utopia, and drawing from a wealth of times and cultures ranging from Calvin's Geneva to early twentieth-century Japanese children's stories to Hollywood cinema, these essays cumulatively disclose the fundamental importance of resisting tantalizing certainties while considering the importance of the unknown and unknowable. Beginning with a set of four essays outlining the importance of hope and utopia as diagnostic concepts, and following with four concrete examples, the collection ends with a set of essays that provide theological speculations on the need to embrace finitude and limitations in a world increasingly enframed by secularizing impulses. Overall, this book discloses how hope and utopia illuminate ways to think past simplified wishes for the future.

Daniel Boscaljon is currently a Visiting Assistant Professor at Cornell College.

## Kirtland Temple, The Biography of a Shared Mormon Sacred Space

By David Howlett (PhD 2010)



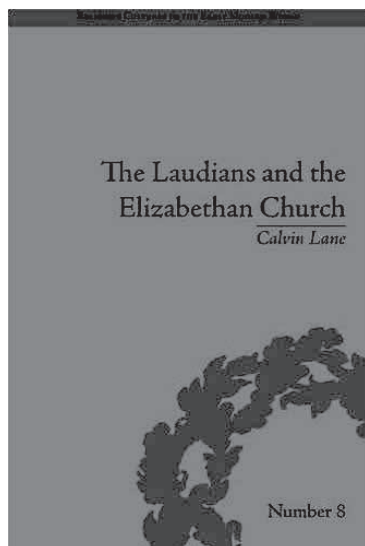
The only temple completed by Mormonism's founder, Joseph Smith Jr., the Kirtland Temple in Kirtland, Ohio, receives 30,000 Mormon pilgrims every year. Though the site is sacred to all Mormons, the temple's religious significance and the space itself are contested by rival Mormon dominations: its owner, the relatively liberal Community of Christ, and the larger Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

David J. Howlett sets the biography of Kirtland Temple against the backdrop of religious rivalry. The two sides have long contested the temple's ownership, purpose, and significance in both the courts and Mormon literature. Yet members of each denomination have occasionally cooperated to establish periods of co-worship, host joint tours, and create friendships. Howlett uses the temple to build a model for understanding what he calls parallel pilgrimage--the set of dynamics of disagreement and alliance by religious rivals at a shared sacred site. At the same time, he illuminates social and intellectual changes in the two main branches of Mormonism since the 1830s, providing a much-needed history of the lesser-known Community of Christ. Best First Book Award, Mormon History Association, 2015 and Smith-Pettit Best Book Award, John Whitmer Historical Association, 2015.

David Howlett is currently a Visiting Assistant Professor at Skidmore College.

**The Laudians and the Elizabethan Church:  
History, Conformity and Religious Identity in Post-Reformation England**

By L. Calvin Lane (PhD 2010)



Notions of religious conformity in England were redefined during the mid-seventeenth century; for many it was as though the previous century's reformation was being reversed. Lane considers how a select group of churchmen – the Laudians – reshaped the meaning of church conformity during a period of religious and political turmoil. He emphasizes the Laudians' use of history in their arguments, particularly their creative appeal to common sensibilities about the reign of Elizabeth I as a 'Golden Age'. This book assesses the way historical claims functioned within the discourse of religious and political legitimacy in early modern England. On the basis of this monograph, Dr. Lane was elected Fellow of the Royal Historical Society in London.

Calvin Lane is currently serving as Adjunct Professor of History at Write State University, Affiliate Professor at Nashotah House Theological Seminary, and Associate Rector at St. George's Episcopal Church in Dayton, Ohio.



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# PERSPECTIVES

## On Religion

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Department of Religious Studies  
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Iowa City, IA 52242-1376

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## FROM THE DIRECTOR'S CHAIR 2016



*Diana Fritz Cates*

As the Department of Religious Studies approaches its 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2017, its faculty enters a time of grateful recollection and anticipation. We are making plans to accentuate the department's historic influence on public higher education in the United States; honor the scholars whose ideas have shaped our identity; affirm the staff members who have made our daily operation both possible and pleasant; and acknowledge the graduate students who have challenged and extended the best that the faculty has had to offer. We remember the undergraduate students who have taken a chance on us, entered our classrooms, and permitted us to enter their lives. We also imagine the contributions that we have yet to make to the common good.

Please join us at this time of celebration. Watch our website and participate in our scheduled events. Visit our Facebook page and share your memories and aspirations for the department. Tell us about the accomplishments that we have helped to make possible. Do what you can to help us grow even more responsive to the needs of the future.

We are thankful for alumni and friends who have sought to make a difference in the world by making a difference to the work of the department. You have endowed three faculty chairs. You have established graduate student scholarships, which provide precious time for thinking, research, and writing. You have incentivized undergraduates' best work through named student awards. You have supported our public programming. And you have made it possible for faculty members to push ourselves continually beyond our limits by traveling to high-profile conferences to develop our ideas. Your engagement will have an impact for generations to come.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Diana Fritz Cates".

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Diana Fritz Cates  
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