
Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, this is an abbreviated newsletter.

Department of
Religious Studies

IOWA

College of Liberal Arts
and Sciences

PERSPECTIVES *On Religion*

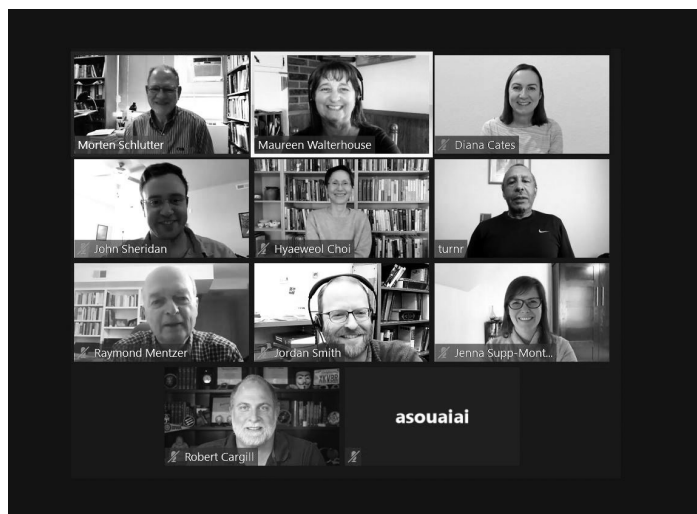
Fall 2020 • Volume 27

A Different Kind of Year

This has been a strange and unsettling year for everyone, and it is clear that the current state of affairs will continue well into 2021. However, the department has been adapting to the new reality and it is going quite well. Working and meeting remotely has become routine, and our faculty and students have all become highly adept at this new way of teaching and learning. Our faculty and teaching assistants are doing whatever it takes to continue to meet our goal of preparing students to be informed and capable citizens of the world, and also providing them the tools to think critically.

Similar to other institutions of learning all over the world, most of our classes and public programs are being offered on-line through Zoom. If you ask any of our faculty and TAs, they would likely tell you that they would prefer face to face lectures, classes, and colloquia; but there is an upside to Zoom as well. Because Covid-19 has forced us to use technology in ways we never have before, we have been able to reach people in far-reaching places that we would never have been able to reach before. People have been able to “attend” our lectures and events from all over Iowa, Nebraska, and other states, and even from Turkey! Once we are back to a “normal” world where Covid-19 is no longer a threat we hope to be able to continue having Zoom or other on-line platforms as an option for those who cannot attend our events in person.

Covid-19 and getting turned on to Zoom, have also had a big impact of our research. Just a year ago (how that now seems like a distant past!) faculty and graduate students would travel across the US and across the world to attend conferences with other academics. As fun and inspiring as that was, it was also time-consuming, expensive, and exhausting. Now we just sit down at our computers at home and are instantly among colleagues from



all over the world. So as much as we look forward to be traveling again, many of us may still choose to connect via Zoom to at least some conferences in the future.

So, we may be able to take something positive away from the current situation, and integrate what we have learned to better carry out our mission to advance the collaborative study of religion through critical, multi-methodological and trans-national discourse. In the future, we will continue to find new ways to explore the origins and practices of the world's religions, fostering respect for religious and cultural diversity, and promoting the practical application of a knowledge of religious traditions in public life.

Morten Schlütter
DEO Religious Studies

Turner named a 2020 Fellow of the American Council of Learned Societies



Richard Brent Turner is a 2020 recipient of the ACLS Fellowship which honors scholars in the humanities and humanistic social sciences who have the potential to make significant contributions to knowledge in their fields. The fellowship gives the recipients a year off from teaching, so they can focus on their scholarship.

Dr. Turner will be working on a book project; *Soundtrack to a Movement: African American Islam, Jazz, and Black Internationalism*, which explores how jazz helped propel the rise of African American Islam during the era of global Black liberation.

Amid the social change and liberation of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, the tenor saxophonist Archie Shepp recorded a tribute to Malcolm X's emancipatory political consciousness. Shepp saw similarities between his revolutionary hero and John Coltrane, one of the most influential jazz musicians of the era. Later, the esteemed trumpeter Miles Davis echoed Shepp's sentiment, recognizing that Coltrane's music represented the very passion, rage, rebellion, and love that Malcolm X preached.

Soundtrack to a Movement examines the link between the revolutionary Black Islam of the

post-WWII generation and jazz music. It argues that from the late 1940s and '50s through the 1970s, Islam rose in prominence among African Americans in part because of the embrace of the religion among jazz musicians. The book demonstrates that the values that Islam and jazz shared—Black affirmation, freedom, and self-determination—were key to the growth of African American Islamic communities, and that it was jazz musicians who led the way in shaping encounters with Islam as they developed a Black Atlantic “cool” that shaped both Black religion and jazz styles.

Soundtrack to a Movement demonstrates how by expressing their values through the rejection of systemic racism, the construction of Black notions of masculinity and femininity, and the development of an African American religious internationalism, both jazz musicians and Black Muslims engaged with a global Black consciousness and interconnected resistance movements in the African diaspora and Africa.

Richard Brent Turner is a Professor in the Department of Religious Studies and the African American Studies Program at the University of Iowa. His other published works include *Jazz Religion*, *the Second Line*, and *Black New Orleans, New Edition*, and *Islam in the African-American Experience, Second Edition*.

AAR/SBL Annual Reception Happy Hour invitation

The AAR/SBL is going virtual and so is our Annual Reception! We don't want to miss the chance to connect with our friends and alumni, so please visit our Zoom Happy Hour on **Sunday, Dec. 6, 6-7:30pm CST**. We look forward to seeing everyone, and we will set up breakout rooms for people to connect individually.

Here's the Zoom Link: <https://uiowa.zoom.us/j/96578305081>
Be sure to watch for updates on our Facebook and Webpage
(<https://www.facebook.com/UIDeptofReligiousStudies>)
(<https://clas.uiowa.edu/religion/>)

Alumni Job News

Below are recent updates from alumni. If you have news to share in our newsletter updates or web page updates, we hope you will submit your information on a new form on our webpage! This link can be found in our Alumni pages for both undergraduate and graduates: <https://clas.uiowa.edu/religion/alumni>



Nathan Eric Dickman, PhD 2009, is now an Assistant professor at University of the Ozarks in Clarksville, Arkansas



Iva Patel, PhD 2020 is now an Assistant Professor of Religion at Augsburg University in Minneapolis, Minnesota



Gwendolyn Gillson, PhD 2018 is now an Assistant Professor at Illinois College in Jacksonville, Illinois



Jan Rippentrop Schnell, PhD 2020 is now an Assistant Professor of Liturgics at Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa



David Greder, PhD 2015, is now an Assistant Professor of Religion at Waldorf University in Forest City, Iowa



Kayla Wheeler, PhD 2017 is now an Assistant Professor of Gender and Diversity Studies at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio



AbbyLynn Helgevold, PhD 2013, is now an Assistant Professor and Board of Regents Distinguished Professor in Ethics at Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa.

Congratulations to all these talented and accomplished academics! We are very proud of you!

THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

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Jay Holstein: A Golden Legacy of Learning



“I can’t believe it’s been 50 years, because it’s all gone by in a blink of an eye.”

“I have some firm views about how to teach the Jewish experience. There is not a natural constituency at the university since there are so few Jewish

students, and that’s why I’ve never strayed far from what the human situation is rooted in: food, sex, and death.”

--Jay Holstein

Well over a thousand alumni and friends tuned in to YouTube Live on October 22 to help celebrate Jay Holstein’s 50 years of teaching at the University of Iowa. Organized by the Center for University Advancement, the evening was lively mix of congratulatory video messages from Jay’s friends, family, and former students, coming in from all over the country. The magician and author, Nate Staniforth, was the real-time host, and throughout the

program he was reading messages of congratulations coming in from viewers. The program culminated with a “Golden Legacy” lecture by Jay.

The Department of Religious Studies faculty and staff congratulate Jay in reaching this unusual milestone for anyone in academia. 50 years’ of teaching would be remarkable for anyone, but especially for Jay who has touched something deep inside the minds of literally thousands of students. The department has been fortunate indeed to have Jay on its faculty for so many years. Thank you, Jay, for your great contributions to the department and to religious studies at the UI!

Thanks to the Center for University Advancement for putting together a wonderful evening of memories. In case you missed it, you will be able to view the event here:
[youtube.com/watch?v=KzhDckC6Ogc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KzhDckC6Ogc)

You can also follow this link <https://magazine.foriowa.org/story.php?ed=true&storyid=1947> for a Question and Answer session with Prof. Holstein, along with a link to a 1997 video interview of Jay with Ellen Buchanan from the Iowa City Public Library

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