

PERSPECTIVES *On Religion*

Fall 2024 • Volume 31

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Dr. Kristy Nabhan-Warren
Professor, Figge Chair of Catholic Studies
Associate Vice President of Research, Office of the
Vice President for Research (OVPR)

During my time at The University of Iowa I have been able to experience several administrative roles and have grown as a person and as a leader. I began my administrative leadership journey as Director of Graduate Studies for Religious Studies one year after I came to Iowa (2013-2016), followed by two mid-level administrative roles, both at the invitation of the then-CLAS Dean: Division Chair for the Division of Interdisciplinary Programs (2020-2022) and then by our current CLAS Dean to step in as Acting Department Chair/DEO for the Department of Rhetoric (2021-2022). It was my leadership success in these roles that led me to apply for the newly created position of Associate Vice President of Research in the Office of Vice President of Research. I am currently in year three of a three-year position as AVP and oversee research initiatives and support in the arts, humanities, and social sciences. I am proud of what I have accomplished during this time and have thoroughly enjoyed the service-oriented culture of OVPR. I have found that while I am not in the classroom in the traditional sense, I am continually teaching and conveying the importance of the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (HASS) to colleagues across our university. We need university administrators who not only understand HASS but who are immersed in these fields themselves. Being in my current university-wide administrative role is an immense privilege as well as opportunity to

promote and amplify the fields I care so deeply about. Moreover, my training as an ethnographer, as someone who translates cultures and lexicons, has come in very handy in my current administrative role as I translate HASS each and every day.



Working with OVPR's talented staff that is mission-focused has been a highlight of my career so far. In my time at The University of Iowa I have grown into an effective leader not only for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, but for all of campus. I have developed and have followed through on several high profile CLAS and university-wide initiatives (including a \$275,000 competitive internal grant with my OVPR colleague Leslie Revaux "Writing for the Public Good" and naming new directors with new visions for the two centers I oversee: Obermann and Public Policy Center/CSSI). The threads that bind all of the components of my career together are relationship building, mentorship, and a deep commitment to strengthening our university. The way I have done that and continue to do that is by investing in people. I have actively leveraged those connections to support our faculty, staff, and university at large. It is always my goal that in whatever position I am in that I

Reflections on Supporting Research (cont.)

bring positive attention to the Humanities and to my home discipline of Religious Studies. I remain active as a scholar, public lecturer, and mentor, including several Religious Studies graduate students, and see myself as a lifelong ambassador for Religious Studies and my subfield Catholic Studies.

I have long believed that as scholars we must seek for new ways to share our research with the broader public, and I encourage my colleagues in Religious Studies and all of our departments to look into sharing their research expertise with rigorous public-facing venues such as *The Conversation* <https://theconversation.com/us>

Leslie Revaux and my “Writing for the Public Good” is all about supporting and promoting faculty and graduate students’ research and helping to connect their research with public-facing news outlets. Come talk to Leslie and me about publishing your work in *The Conversation*. It is a wonderful way to get your academic work and research out there! And please come talk to me about applying for outside research grants as well as internal funding with the Arts and Humanities Initiative (AHI) which is funded by OVPR and which I oversee with my Research Development Office (RDO) colleague Britt Ryan.

Prof. Brandon Dean’s Religious Studies Undergraduate Outreach

Visiting Assistant Professor Brandon Dean has about a dozen undergraduate students who get together regularly to discuss ideas about community places and events centered around religion that are of interest to them and others.

The Religious Studies Undergraduate Steering Committee is a new group of dedicated majors, minors, and other interested students who have been collaborating this semester to bring engaging and fun outreach activities to the department. Their first big event—a Halloween party following a guided cemetery walk—was a resounding success. The team managed to transform Gilmore Hall in under 30 minutes, entertain a crowd of around thirty people despite a few last-minute technical glitches with the DVD player, and clean up seamlessly afterward.

In addition, the second annual Cemetery Walk welcomed students and the public to a walking tour of Oakland Cemetery, where Prof. Dean discussed how to read the headstones to get a better picture of Iowa City through the years.

The Steering Committee recently hosted an exclusive election-themed movie night featuring *God’s Not Dead: In God We Trust*, and they’re already planning for the spring semester. Up next is a global religious foods-themed potluck dinner, complete with educational demonstrations and entertain-



Photo by Jim Slosiarek/The Gazette

ment. Stay tuned for more exciting events and opportunities to connect with the Religious Studies community!

To read more about Prof. Dean’s Cemetery Walk as featured in the Cedar Rapids Gazette article by Vanessa Miller follow this link: <https://www.thegazette.com/higher-education/reading-cemeteries-reveals-clues-about-past-and-present-university-of-iowa-professor-says/>

Publications & Presentations: Faculty

Diana Cates

Publications:

Political Polarization and Tending the Flames of Hostility. In *Religion and Social Criticism: Tradition, Method, and Values*. Bharat Ranganathan and Caroline Anglim, eds. Palgrave MacMillan, 217-250.

Presentations:

“Shai Held’s Conception of Love.” Invited professional seminar discussant. New York, NY, 2024

Mindfulness and Emotional Resilience.” Presenter. Schwartz Center Rounds, UIHC, 2023

Hyaewool Choi

Presentations:

Keynote Address, “Street Food: Recipes for Everyday Life Politics in Global Korea,” at the conference, “Transforming Asia with Food: Women and Everyday Life,” Cornell University, April 19-20, 2024

Invited Speaker, “Gender and Populist Nationalism,” Harvard Yenching Institute Roundtable, Harvard University, March 20, 2024

Keynote Address, “Home Cooking and Gendered Labor in Global Korea,” at the Southeast Asia Conference of the Association for Asian Studies, Wake Forest University, January 26-28, 2024

Paul Dilley

Publications:

“The Manichaean Story of Adam and Eve: Violent Demonic Sexuality between Gnostic and Zoroastrian Traditions,” *Gnosis* 9 (2024): 211-236.

Presentations:

“Communicating Revealed Texts: Best Practices for Born-Digital Editions using Enhanced Imaging,” Lightning Round presentations, University of Toronto Old Books New Science Research Group (May 2024, via Zoom)

“Early Manichaean Texts as World Literature” Mani in Cambridge 3 Conference, Cambridge, England (May 2024)

“Monastic Renunciation, Hagiography, and Mental Health,” Cognitive Theories and Later Latin Conference, The Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (May 2024; Invited)

Hosted an international workshop at the University of Iowa as part of my NEH Grant: “Communicating Revealed Texts: Best Practices for Born Digital Editions using Enhanced Imaging.” June 29-30

Invited to participate in the Schmidt Sciences workshop on Artificial Intelligence and the Humanities at Oxford, September 2024

Morten Schlütter

Presentation:

“Meditation in Chinese Chan Buddhism Reassessed, and the Annual Conference, Association for Asian Studies, 2023.

Ahmed Souaiaia

Publications:

Muqaddima of Ibn Khaldun: Making a Living, US: ITST, ISBN: 979-8888230039, Pages: 211, Year, 2023.

Reading and interpreting Ibn Khaldun’s economic philosophy. *Journal of Philosophical Economics*, 2023, Volume XVI, pp 100-129.

Publications Presentations, and Grants: Graduate Students

Fwangmun Oscar Danladi

Publications:

“Exploring the Complex Interplay of Bodies, Land, and Identity in Middle Belt Nigeria Cosmologies” Presentation at *Seventeenth Annual ASMEA Conference*, Washington, D.C. Nov. 2-4, 2024.

“Hybridity of Spirituality and Identity: Exploring the Intersection of Indigenous Religious Imagination and Christian Beliefs in Middle Belt Nigeria.” Presentation at *Stott-Bediako Forum on Transformation Revisited: Mission and Gospel Imagination (Online)* Oct. 30, 2024.

“Sacred Soil: Exploring the Complex Interplay of Bodies, Land, and Identity in Middle Belt Nigeria Cosmologies.” Presentation at *Yale Divinity School, the Graduate Conference in Religion & Ecology*, New Haven, CT, Feb. 23, 2024.

Hasan Degerli

Presentation:

“Military Martyrdom in Late Antique Christianity” at the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, 2024

Kefas Lamak

Publications:

Peer Reviewed Journal Articles

“History from the Margin: Indigenous African Women as Missionaries, Preachers, Evangelists, and Receivers of Christianity in the Interactions of Niger Missions in the Middle Belt States of Nigeria from 1841-1930.” *Journal of Anglican and Episcopal History* (accepted for publication) November 2024

“Reading Black Theology of Liberation in the African American Christian Experience of the 1900s through 2000s” *Black Theology: An International Journal*, DOI: 10.1080/14769948.2365007, 171-192, August 2024

“Trends and Shifts: Migration, Reverse Missions, and African Catholic Priests in Iowa City, USA.” *Journal of Global Catholicism*, 8-29, July 2024

Book Reviews

The Theology of Mercy Amba Oduyoye: *Ecumenism, Feminism, and Communal Practice* by Amba Oduyoye. Indiana, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2023. *Journal of Anglican and History*, March 2024

May, 2024. *Decolonization and the Remaking of Christianity* by Elizabeth A. Foster and Udi Greenberg (eds.). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2023. *Journal of Religious History*, *Wiley Online Library*, 1-2, May 2024

Crashed Reality? Gender Dynamics in Nigerian Pentecostalism by Itohan Mercy Idumwonyi. Boston, Leiden: Brill, 2024) *Pneuma Journal*, September 2024

Navigating Womanhood in Contemporary Botswana by Stephanie S. Sterling. London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2023. *Journal of Gender Studies* 33(4), 483-484, September 2024

Religious Entanglements: Central African Pentecostalism, the Creation of Cultural Knowledge, and the Making of the Luba Katanga by David Maxwel. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin, 2022. *Journal of Studies in World Christianity*, 274-275, July 2024

Presentations:

Yahweh, Allah, and Ubangiji in the Hausa Translation of the Bible in northern Nigeria and Postcolonial Consciousness. Society of Biblical Literature and American Academy of Religion Annual Conference, November 2024.

Religious Appropriation of the Slave Trade: Conversion in Christianity and Islam at the Dawn of the Trans-Atlantic and Sub-Saharan Slavery. Society of Biblical Literature and American Academy of Religion Annual Conference, November 2024.

Science and Faith: Christian approaches to COVID-19 in the City of Jos and in Environs, 2020-2024. Society for the Scientific Study of Religion and the Religious Research Association Annual Conference, October 2024.

History from the Margin: Indigenous African Women as Missionaries, Preachers, Evangelists, and Receivers of Christianity in the Interactions of Niger Missions in the Middle Belt States of Nigeria from 1860-1930. Association for the Study of the Middle East and Africa, Annual conference, November 2023. African Studies Association Canadian Association of African Studies (CAAS) Annual conference, June 2024.

Publications Presentations, and Grants: Graduate Students (*cont.*)

Osamamen Oba Eduviere

Publications:

Book Review

Religious Studies Review: Volume 49 (4). Stewart, Diane & Johnson Terrence. Obeah, Orisa, and Religious Identity in Trinidad: Africana Nations and the Power of Black Sacred Imagination, Volumes I&II. Durham: Duke University, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1111/rsr.16840>

Public Scholarship:

Osamamen Oba Eduviere and Brady G'sell The Conversation US: <https://theconversation.com/from-church-to-the-mosque-faith-and-friends-help-iowas-african-immigrants-and-refugees-build-a-sense-of-home-218909>

Presentation:

“Intersectionality and Religion: Possibilities for African Migrant Women in Iowa” at the Association for the Sociology of Religion 2024 Conference, Montreal, Canada, August 2024

Shahla Shahreen

Publications:

“Female radicalisation in Bangladesh: an investigation of its scope, extent and key motivations behind”, Critical Studies on Terrorism, 17 (2), pp. 153-175, Shahreen, Shahla & Mostofa, Shafi Md (2024). DOI: 10.1080/17539153.2024.2320958. Link: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17539153.2024.2320958>

“Interfaith Dialogue to Counter Radicalization in Bangladesh: An Approach to Move from Extremism to Pluralism”, Social Science Review (The Dhaka University Studies, Part-D), 40(1), pp. 165-184 (2023). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3329/ssr.v40i1.69082>. Link: <https://www.banglajol.info/index.php/SSR/article/view/69082/46374>

Robin Burns Retires

The department's long time administrative assistant Robin Burns retired following the Adler Luncheon May 2024. Robin started part time in 2006, moving to full time shortly after that. Robin performed many jobs for the department, always with a smile and a can-do attitude. What brought her the most joy was interacting with and providing support for our students; decorating the office for homecoming or the holidays; and planning events that provided food, like the Pre-Finals Stress Relief week. She also worked closely with our graduate students during the admissions process, helping so many as they transitioned to life in Iowa City. We are especially proud of her work offering support to our international students who were adjusting to life in an American university. Robin plans to continue to work with the University's international student cohort in her retirement.



All of us in Religious Studies wish her the very best!

The Department Mourns the Loss of Dr. J. Kenneth Kuntz - 1934-2023

The Department of Religious Studies faculty, staff, students, and emeritus professors are mourning the loss of Professor Emeritus J. Kenneth Kuntz, who passed away on Friday, December 8, 2023. Dr. Kuntz earned his Th.D. from Union Theological Seminary in New York City, working under the mentorship of Dr. James Muilenburg, and in 1967 he joined our department, then named School of Religion as an Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies. Dr. Kuntz's focus in scholarship and teaching was Old Testament literature, history, and thought, with a special emphasis on the Psalms. Ken was a valued member of the department for 39 years, and a beloved friend beyond his tenure.

In 2021, Dr. Kuntz was honored with a Festschrift entitled "Biblical Wisdom, Then and Now", with entries from a few of Ken's former students and colleagues. Below are excerpts from the Foreword by Alan J. Hauser:

I was Ken's first PhD student to complete the graduate program in the School of Religion at the University of Iowa. I remember vividly my initial meeting with him as I began my doctoral program in August 1968. Ken was welcoming, supportive, and friendly as he and I discussed the graduate program I hoped to pursue, focusing on biblical studies, especially the Old Testament. His warmth and openness immediately made me feel at home, and for that I will always be grateful. I also recall his enthusiasm for wisdom literature, which led him to gently nudge me into the seminar on wisdom literature he was preparing to teach that fall. It became quite clear that his interest in wisdom ran broad and deep, and was contagious.

As his graduate student, one of the things that impressed me immediately about Ken was his openness, indeed eagerness, to consider new ideas and approaches. After an almost fifty-year career teaching biblical scholarship at a state university and being an active participant in Society of Biblical Literature regional, national, and international conferences, I must say that Ken is one of the most open-minded biblical scholars I have ever met. I am not saying he will always agree with new ideas and new approaches, but he will always give them careful consideration, think them through, learn from them, and incorporate them when reasonable into what he is doing. Scholarship in the 1990s, and now in the new millennium, has been trending more and



more in that direction, but in the 60s, 70s, and 80s that was not easily found, as scholars tended to group themselves into schools, defending resiliently their own ramparts of scholarship. Ken, on behalf of all your graduate students, I say "Thank you for this skill in interacting so constructively with your graduate students."

Wisdom literature has clearly been one of Ken's primary interests. [His] interest in wisdom in the Psalms also led him into numerous studies and articles focused around the Psalms as well as biblical Hebrew poetry. The articles in this volume clearly are reflective of Ken's openness to embracing new perspectives for studying and making use of biblical literature. Wisdom not only had something to say to the ancient Israelites; it clearly has something to say to us today. That many of Ken's doctoral students are included in this volume, presenting articles applying ancient Israelite wisdom to the problems and issues we face today, is a tribute to the scholarly broad-mindedness Ken has always instilled in his graduate students. That some of Ken's colleagues are also included is a tribute to his kindness and a testimony to the esteem in which he is held. It is an honor to celebrate with Ken these fruits of his many years of teaching and scholarship.

The Department Mourns the Loss of Dr. David E. Klemm – 1947-2024

David Klemm—scholar, mentor, and pioneer in the study of religious hermeneutics and theological humanism—passed away on March 17, 2024, after a decades long battle with primary systemic Amyloidosis. Thanks to his will, character, and the loving care of his wife Cathy, David spent his last years enjoying time with his children, stepchildren, grandchildren, and dogs. He enjoyed reading and watching sports—particularly soccer and Chicago teams (not the Cubs)—after his illness kept him from a formerly active life involving running, swimming, tennis and golfing.

David began his career studying under Robert Scharlemann at the University of Iowa, succeeding Scharlemann as the keeper of a tradition of German-style hermeneutics grounded in the work of Frederic Schlegel, as well as Paul Tillich, and Paul Ricoeur. He published widely on Ricoeur, including an important monograph on Ricoeur's hermeneutics. This foundation empowered David's explorations of Religion and Nature, Religion and Science, Religion and Literature, and Religion and the Arts. These interdisciplinary strands would often converge, demonstrating why thinking theologically required literature, art, nature, and physics. David's expansive interests grew from a diverse set of traditional underpinnings. His theological understanding embraced his Catholic upbringing and Protestant theological training, and expanded to include teachings from Trungpa Rinpoche and the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, as well as C.G. Jung's depth psychology. His last years of teaching focused exclusively on Buddhism, for learners at the Garchen Mila Buddhist Center in Iowa City.

Almost as impressive as David's wide range of publications and invited lectures was his dedication to service. Until illness forced his retirement, he served on the editorial board for *the Journal of the American Academy of Religion* as well as the *Oxford Journal of Literature and Theology*. In addition to many leadership roles in the Department of Religious Studies (including roles as Director of Religious Studies, Director of Graduate Studies, Undergraduate Chair, and the Honors Program Advisor) David left his mark on the wider culture of the University of Iowa, spending six years as the Director of the University Honors Program, and five years as part of the Faculty Assembly and Faculty Senate. Outside of Iowa, David was active on



steering committees for the American Academy of Religion and was an external reviewer for 10 tenure decisions at peer institutions.

Although his organizational mind and desire to foster the growth of those around him meant that he enjoyed and excelled in leadership roles, David's primary passion was teaching. He mentored 20 PhD students as primary supervisor, served on 5 additional student defenses in Religious Studies, and on 22 doctoral committees for students from 10 other departments across the university. He received the Marion L. Huit Award for Faculty Excellence; the Certificate of Appreciation for significant contributions as Director of the Honors Program; the University of Iowa Hancher-Finkbine Medalion, presented to one faculty member each year for learning, leadership and loyalty to the University of Iowa; and was elected as a faculty member of Omicron Delta Kappa Honorary Society. His brilliance, tempered by his wit and passion for playing his tunes (Bob Dylan, Neil Young) before class, was influential for a sea of undergraduates during his twenty-five year career.

David's work notably demonstrated the value of friendship. Until his illness, David had published

Dr. David E. Klemm (cont.)

with colleagues William Klink in explorations of consciousness, and William Schweiker in *Religion and the Human Future*, which articulated a vision for a prescient approach to understanding called Theological Humanism. He also published forwards for books written by other friends—Thomas J. J. Altizer and David Jasper. Dale Wright, another early friend, remained an ongoing intellectual collaborator.

This legacy of appreciating the importance of friendships as part of good scholarship, anchored in David's ability to balance a brilliant intellect with a sparkling wit, remains alive among the many graduate students whom he mentored—many of whom have remained collaborators over the past decades, continuing to think through the potentiality of the project of theological humanism.

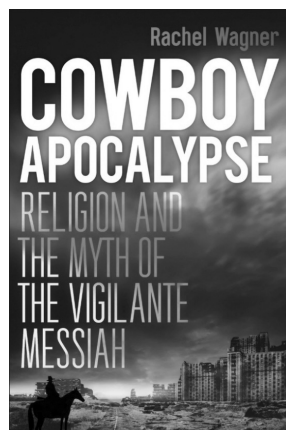
I had the rare fortune of being a student and collaborator—and friend—of David's. His dedication to teaching was unflagging—after watching a jaw-droppingly brilliant lecture in one of the last seminars he taught, I learned that he had gone to the ER, seriously ill, and returned for a meeting two days later. He was a fierce advocate for truth and integrity, using this passion to debate the merits of his positions. More importantly, he was magnanimous—a great souled man who was able

to provide needed encouragement to several of his students—even after they graduated. His generosity in friendship extended to students, engaging and encouraging them to participate in conferences, journals, and other opportunities.

I knew David as a friend after graduation, and learned his softer side. I heard him laud his wife and children, saw his deep love for his dogs. We drank tea and he told me life was not limited to faculty positions. I heard about his time before enrolling at Iowa. His incredible character, stripped of physical strength, displayed a raw beauty and sensitivity that was a gift to know. Even when pain was clearly visible, he continued to express a calm serenity and compassion for those around. Witnessing this, I sensed that beneath the sheer power of his brilliant mind, David was a prized companion because of the quality of his soul. While I was his student, people would at times call me “David,” rather than “Daniel.” This was high praise. But more than the accident of a shared starting syllable, I suspect that these moments of confusion speak to the power of his influence. I suspect that David's soul will continue to sparkle in and through the lives of those he knew and loved for many years to come.

By Dan Boscaljon, PhD, 2009

ALUMNI BOOKS



Cowboy Apocalypse

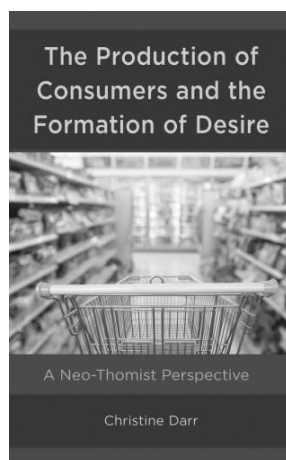
By Rachel Wagner

In the midst of widespread mass shootings in America, a common motif stands out: the perpetrators of these attacks often view themselves as vigilante saviors, whose job it is to regulate society in a way that exterminates their enemies.

In this fascinating critique, Rachel Wagner makes the case that this unfortunate phenomenon is best understood through the idea of the cowboy apocalypse. She shows that across much US media, from video games and blockbuster movies to novels and TV, a story arc has been created that provides a complete myth about the end of the world and the future after that. In these stories, the cowboy messiah is envisioned as a good guy with a gun. But he doesn't save the world. He just saves his world: he protects his family and

others he deems worthy while embracing the chance to wipe the global slate clean and start fresh, with survivors testing their mettle on a new frontier.

Wagner illuminates the links between Christian apocalypticism, American gun culture, and the romanticization of the white male-dominated American frontier, showing how the vigilante has come to be regarded as a new savior figure, out to protect the world for white supremacy and patriarchy. She also offers ways to respond with other powerful cultural myths, making use of media to tell other stories. *Cowboy Apocalypse* offers a new means of making sense of how guns profoundly shape American life, and how we might engage with them otherwise.



The Production of Consumers and the Formation of Desire

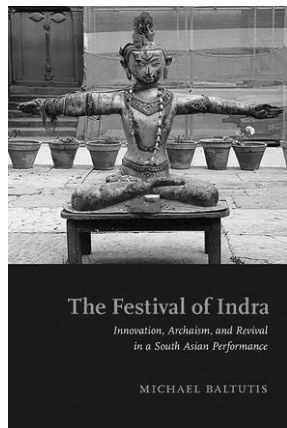
A Neo-Thomist Perspective

By Christine Darr

We live in a society surrounded by stuff and bombarded with advertisements that try to convince us that shopping will improve our lives. Sometimes our lives do improve, yet our purchases are more often motivated by an impulse to satisfy immediate desires rather than reflective deliberation about how our purchasing choices enable us to live the lives we want. Christian moral reflection often criticizes this conundrum as “mindless consumerism,” arguing that it pulls Christians away from loving God above all things. While such critiques often encourage Christians to focus their desire on God rather than material goods, we might still wonder how we can exercise such control over our desires. By attending to desire itself—how it arises, how it is shaped by social context, and its role in cultivating a virtuous life—we can learn how to

desire and then act in ways that are more consonant with our conception of what it means to live well. Within the Christian tradition, Thomas Aquinas offers a compelling model of human desire that, when juxtaposed with Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social practices, can help us make more considered judgments about how to navigate the consumer society in which we live.

ALUMNI BOOKS (cont.)

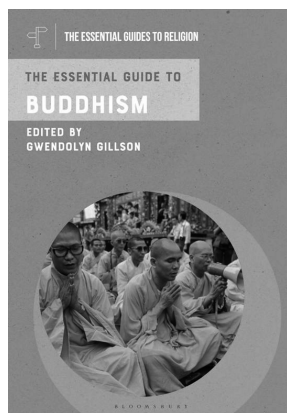


The Festival of Indra

Innovation, Archaism, and Revival in a South Asian Performance

By Michael Baltutis

The Festival of Indra details the textual and performative history of an important South Asian festival and its role in the development of classical Hinduism. Drawing on various genres of Sanskrit textual sources—especially the epic Mahābhārata—the book highlights the innovative ways that this annual public festival has supported the stable royal power responsible for the sponsorship of these texts. More than just a textual project, however, the book devotes significant ethnographic attention to the only contemporary performance of this festival that adheres to the classical Sanskrit record: the Indrajatra of Kathmandu, Nepal. Here, Indra’s tall pole remains the festival’s focal point, though its addition of the royal blessing by Kumari, the “living goddess” of Nepal, and the regular presence of the fierce god Bhairav show several significant ways that ritual agents have re-constructed this festival over the past two thousand years.



The Essential Guide to Buddhism

By Gwendolyn Gillson (Anthology Editor)

Beginning with an overview of Buddhism, this book explores the religion’s origins in northern India and Nepal, through to its development and spread across Asia, to its vibrant and sometimes contradictory present.

The book covers key topics in the study of Buddhism, including its rituals and its scriptures, meditation and monasticism, and death and afterlife. The book also includes contemporary issues such as Buddhism and economics and socially engaged Buddhism.

Notes from the Chair



The Religious Studies department continues to show its resilience as we double down on our longstanding strengths in research, teaching and mentoring in the face of a steady decrease in faculty numbers. Faculty continue to produce cutting edge research: publishing articles, directing grants, and serving in important roles within their disciplines. For example, Professor Cates is serving as the co-editor of the *Journal of Religious Ethics* and Hyaewool Choi is the current president of the Association of Asian Studies. Faculty research is closely connected to other responsibilities, especially teaching at the undergraduate and graduate level.

Our goal is to make the religious studies department a hub for undergraduate research. To that end, we have recently instituted two new scholarships for which all of our majors are eligible to apply. The first offers research support, up to \$600, to do a research project guided by a faculty member; the second offers travel support, up to \$800, which students can use for domestic or international travel for research or training related to their program in Religious Studies. We are also taking steps to expand our events for undergraduates and outreach to the community, continuing the monthly lunches in the third-floor atrium, where students in all of our classes have the opportunity to meet with each other and faculty; and through special events, such as the departmental Game Night in October and Brandon Dean's pre-Halloween tour of the Oakland Cemetery, which was also open to the entire Iowa City community. Finally, we have instituted an undergraduate Religious Studies Steering Committee to plan more events.

We are also instituting a new series of visits, talks, and presentations by departmental alumni. This will highlight the successes of our graduates, and also show our current majors and minors the various possibilities that a degree in Religious Studies opens up in our complex economy. The first visitor, Lori Rath, a partner at a law firm in Seattle, graduated with a B.A. from our department in 1993, before going on to further study of religion in Scotland and eventually obtained a J.D. from the University of Washington. She discussed her career path with our undergraduate students and faculty at a lunch in November. We are updating our alumni records and will host at least one such event per semester in the coming years.

The graduate program, though smaller than it once was, maintains its high quality. We have implemented several new changes to the curriculum, such as giving students the option of take-home comprehensive exams, which require a more extensive essay than the 3-hour, same day format. Our graduate students continue to thrive in coursework, research, and teaching. They have received a number of competitive university awards, including the post-comprehensive fellowship and the dissertation writing fellowship. As a department, we have a commitment to fund graduate student participation in conferences at which they present papers or otherwise participate; and also research travel for their dissertation when applications to other sources are unsuccessful, or to supplement other funding. Our alumni continue to thrive. To name just a few examples, Pranav Prakash, Ph.D. 2021, is finishing up a Junior Research Fellowship at Oxford, and will join Florida State's Religious Studies department as an Assistant Professor in Fall 2025. Kayla Wheeler, Ph.D. 2018, was recently selected as a Young Scholar in American Religion; Gwendolyn Gillson, Ph.D. 2018, recently published an edited volume, *The Essential Guide to Buddhism* (Bloomsbury, 2024).

As we prepare for our 100th Anniversary, we will continue to maintain frequent communications with our alumni and our supporters. We look forward to being in touch!

Paul C. Dilley

Paul Dilley

PERSPECTIVES On Religion

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Department of Religious Studies

One Hundred Years of Teaching about Religions of the World

Look for news and updates on our web page (<https://clas.uiowa.edu/religion/>)



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David Cunning
Director

Maureen Waltherhouse
Editor

How you can Contribute:

The Department of Religious Studies aims to be a hub of interdisciplinary inquiry into religious ideas, experiences, cultural expressions, and social movements. Religious Studies faculty makes use of multiple methods of study, including historical, philosophical, ethical, literary, linguistic, psychological, ethnographic, and digital approaches. We help students and the public to become better-informed, more nuanced thinkers who can successfully navigate a world of religious diversity. We rely on support from generous donors to continue to provide these enriching opportunities.

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To support faculty, staff and students in the Department of Religious Studies, please visit givetoioowa.org/2023RE99 or contact Travis Foss at the UI Center for Advancement (travis.foss@foriowa.org).