



Fostering Excellence In the Study of Religion

American Academy of Religion

In This Issue

Friends:

Greetings from the Luce Center in Atlanta! This month's e-bulletin is one of our largest ever and contains a large number of important items: news about the Annual Meeting in Montréal; options for charitable giving; information about our next Luce Summer Seminar; committee nominations; a new Statement of Best Practices for Academic Job Offers; news for our student members; several calls for contributions within the Academy; research grants; benchmarking humanities in America; and other items.

With every good wish in this winter season, I offer you my thanks for your participation in the work of our Academy.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jack Fitzmier".

Jack Fitzmier
Executive Director

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ANNUAL MEETING NEWS

Leadership Workshop

The Academic Relations Committee will begin a three-year sequence of workshops exploring the implications of the Teagle/AAR White Paper "The Religion Major and Liberal Education" in Montréal on Friday, November 6, 2009. This year's day-long workshop, "Three Religion Majors Meet in a Café: What Do They Have in Common?" is led by Eugene V. Gallagher, Connecticut College, and will address five common characteristics the White Paper identified of a religious studies major: intercultural and comparative, multidisciplinary, critical, integrative, and creative and constructive. Participants will then

explore the presence of these characteristics in the design of majors in different institutional contexts (small public, large public, private, and theological). The workshop will conclude with presentations and discussions about how we address these characteristics in ways attentive both to our responsibilities as educators and to the students and the reasons they are in our programs. Registration can be done when you register for the Annual Meeting. Since there is a limit of 75 people, we strongly encourage early registration. See the March issue of *Religious Studies News* for more details on the workshop.

Sustainability Workshop

The AAR Sustainability Task Force is sponsoring a half-day workshop at the Annual Meeting in Montréal on Friday, November 6. The workshop, “Religious Studies in an Age of Global Warming: Transforming Ourselves, Our Students, and Our Universities,” will be led by Roger Gottlieb, Worcester Polytechnic Institute and a task force member, and Stephanie Kaza, University of Vermont. Teaching the environmental crisis poses unique challenges and opportunities for higher education. The scope and extent of the threat demands that faculty inform themselves about a host of practical, theological, moral, historical, and political concerns that probably were not part of their original scholarly field. This workshop will explore these challenges and opportunities, giving participants the chance to examine their own responses to the environmental crisis, to engage with faculty concerning teaching resources, sample syllabi and course modules, instructional themes, and ways to connect with other academic departments and the wider campus sustainability movement. Registration can be done when you register for the Annual Meeting. Early registration is encouraged as the workshop is limited to the first 75 people. See the upcoming May issue of *Religious Studies News* for more details on the workshop.

Annual Meeting Job Center

Annual Meeting Job Center preregistration is currently open for candidates. Employer preregistration will open April 20. Preregistration will close for both candidates and employers on October 12. Register early to receive full benefits. For more information, see <http://www.aarweb.org/jump/jobcenter>.

Additional Meetings

If you wish to schedule an Additional Meeting in conjunction with the AAR Annual Meeting in Montréal, please use the [online Additional Meetings request system](#). The online system allows you to:

- Enter complete information for the Additional Meeting, including special time, setup, or advertising requests.
- Check on the status for all of your Additional Meeting requests; you will be able to see all requests on the Additional Meetings main menu. Enter as many requests as you'd like; the online

request system is open now!

- Create your Additional Meeting theme and advertising copy (if any) for publication in the online *Program Book* and onsite *Annual Meeting Program Book*.
- Receive e-mail confirmations and receipts of your Additional Meeting requests for your records.

Additional Meeting requests are scheduled Thursday, November 5 through Tuesday, November 10 on a first-come, first-served basis. Please note that AAR does not permit any Additional Meetings sessions of a programmatic nature (i.e., scholarly panel or paper presentations) to occur during AAR session times (9:00 am–11:30 am and 1:00 pm–6:30 pm) beginning at noon on Saturday. This policy is to prevent any thematic conflicts between AAR and Additional Meetings. More information about Additional Meetings policies, rates, and deadlines is [available online](#). The priority deadline for scheduling and publication in the Annual Meeting Program Planner is **May 1, 2009**, so submit your Additional Meeting requests today!

Registration and Housing

Registration and Housing for the 2009 Annual Meeting are now open. You must be registered to secure housing. “Advance” registration rates are in effect until September 15. Check your March *Religious Studies News* for the AAR Registration and Housing brochure containing all the details, and visit the [AAR website](#) to register and book housing online

RECURRING GIVING OPTION FOR CHARITABLE DONATIONS

Would you like to contribute to the Academy Fund but would like to make payments over time? AAR has added a new feature to our online giving page allowing donors to make a charitable contribution with a recurring payment on a credit card. We are excited to offer this option that will make your charitable giving easier by breaking out payments over time. To learn more, please visit our secure online giving page at www.aarweb.org/donate or contact Margaret Jenkins at 404-727-7928 or Margaret.Jenkins@aarweb.org.

SUMMER SEMINARS ON THEOLOGIES OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM AND COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY: COHORT TWO

The American Academy of Religion is pleased to announce the

formation of Cohort Two of our Luce Summer Seminars.

These week-long seminars will provide training to theological education faculty who are often preparing students for future religious leadership and ministry. The Theological Education Steering Committee invites applications from theological educators interested in pursuing the following questions. The seminars will help address the question of religious diversity as a question of faith, that is to say, as a properly theological question: What is the meaning of my neighbor's faith for mine? While we expect that the bulk of applicants will come from seminaries and divinity schools, we also welcome theological educators who teach in theology and religious studies departments.

The seminars, composed of twenty-five participants and eight instructors, are designed for those relatively new to the theologies of religious pluralism and comparative theology, allowing them to learn from scholars and advance their understanding. The result of the summer seminars will be to increase the number of theological educators who can teach in the areas of theologies of religious pluralism and comparative theology in a variety of institutions in which theological education takes place. All accepted applicants will be awarded a cash stipend of \$1,000, plus the grant will cover their expenses incurred in their participation in the seminars.

Cohort Two will meet June 13–20, 2010 at Union Theological Seminary, New York City; then on October 29, 2010 at the Annual Meeting, Atlanta; and, finally May 29–June 5, 2011 at the University of Chicago Divinity School, Chicago.

The application deadline for Cohort Two is **January 15, 2010**. All accepted applicants will be notified by late February 2010.

Further information on the seminars can be found at http://www.aarweb.org/Programs/Summer_Seminars

COMMITTEE NOMINATIONS

The following committees and task forces will have openings this year: Academic Relations Committee, Book Award Juries, Career Services Advisory Committee, Graduate Student Committee, International Connections Committee, Public Understanding of Religion Committee, Status of LGBTIQ Persons in the Profession Task Force, Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities in the Profession Committee, Status of Women in the Profession Committee, Teaching and Learning Committee, and the Theological Education Steering Committee. If you want to nominate a colleague or yourself, please send a letter explaining your interest in serving on the particular committee, your participation in the AAR, your academic and professional interests, and a C.V. to nominations@aarweb.org; or by fax to: 404-727-7959; or mail to: Jack Fitzmier, Executive Director / American Academy of Religion / 825 Houston Mill RD NE STE 300 / Atlanta, GA 30329-4205 / USA. Deadline for submittal is **May 1, 2009**.

STATEMENT OF BEST PRACTICES FOR ACADEMIC JOB OFFERS

The American Academy of Religion acknowledges that the search for faculty positions in the field of religion is a complex and sensitive process for candidates and employers. At its October 2008 meeting, the Board of Directors approved a Statement of Best Practices for Academic Job Offers. The statement, composed and submitted by the Job Placement Task Force, provides some guidelines by which prospective employers and employees might navigate the job placement process. The Statement of Best Practices is [available online](#).

All departments and programs who seek to use AAR's Career Services, including Job Postings and the Annual Meeting Job Center, will be asked to indicate whether they abide by these best practices. We encourage you to discuss these best practices with faculty in your department. To add your institution to the list of those supporting this statement, contact Tim Renick at trenick@gsu.edu.

ESPECIALLY FOR STUDENTS

Call for Submissions: Religion Beyond the Boundaries

The Graduate Student Committee of the AAR invites submissions from student members for its second annual "Religion Beyond the Boundaries" event at the AAR Annual Meeting, Montréal, Québec, from November 7–10, 2009. Beyond the Boundaries takes our discussions of religion outside of the ivory tower and into the community. Students are invited to prepare a public presentation of their work to be delivered as part of a series of evening coffee shop talks. Three 45-minute presentations will be selected.

Although we welcome proposals on any topic, talks touching on the relationship between aboriginal peoples and the Church in Canada, Jewish Montréal, and multiculturalism and religion in Canada are particularly welcomed.

This is a great opportunity to put your research into a new, and very useful, framework. Practice your job talk! Explain the relevance of your work to your community members! Come be a public intellectual for a day!

Please send a 150-word abstract of your proposed talk to Janet Gunn, GSC Member, (contact.gunn@gmail.com) no later than **May 15, 2009**.

New Editor-in-Chief of the Student E-newsletter

The Graduate Student Committee (GSC) would like to congratulate Charles Bersen on being selected the first Editor-in-Chief of AAR's recently launched quarterly graduate student E-newsletter, *Speaking of Students*. Charles is a doctoral candidate in history and critical theories of religion at Vanderbilt University. He brings a wealth of journalistic and writing experience to this two year position that commenced January 2009.

The GSC would also like to extend our gratitude to the Interim Editor of the graduate student E-newsletter, Janet Gunn, for her efforts. Janet is a member of the GSC and is a Graduate Student Member-at-Large for the Canadian Society for the Study of Religion.

NEW SPOTLIGHT ON THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION EDITOR

At the recent meeting of the Theological Education Steering Committee, Emmanuel Lartey, of Candler School of Theology, was appointed the new *Spotlight on Theological Education* editor. Each issue focuses on a particular theme, setting, or concern to theological education. *Spotlight* appears as a special supplement to *Religious Studies News* in the March issue as a member benefit.

CALL FOR AAR SERIES BOOK EDITOR

The Publications Committee seeks a book editor for the Teaching Religious Studies series, which is published in cooperation with Oxford University Press.

Further information on books published in this series can be found [here](#).

AAR series editors help set editorial policy, acquire manuscripts, and work with Oxford University Press in seeing manuscripts through to publication. Further information on the entire Oxford/AAR book series can be found [here](#). The required finalist interviews for the position will take place at the Publications Committee meeting, on Saturday, November 7, 2009 at the 2009 Annual Meeting in Montréal, Canada. Further information on the Publications Committee can be found [here](#).

The new editor will assume office on January 1, 2010, for a five-year (renewable once) term, and is expected to attend the two meetings of the Publications Committee: on the Saturday morning of the Annual Meeting and at the offices of Oxford University Press, in New York City, usually in mid-March.

This is a volunteer position. All applicants must be members of the American Academy of Religion. Please e-mail inquires, nominations (self-nominations are also encouraged), and applications (a letter

describing interests and qualifications, plus a current curriculum vita) by Word or PDF attachment to Cheryl Kirk-Duggan, Publications Committee Chair, at cduggan@shawu.edu. The application deadline is **September 1, 2009**.

JAAR CALL FOR PAPERS

Religion and Reasons: Justification, Argument, and Cultural Difference

Are religious reasons similar to or fundamentally different from scientific and scholarly reasons? The *JAAR* invites papers that explore the features of reason, justification, and legitimization in religious contexts. Religions provide many kinds of reasons for belief and action. Much attention, for example, has been given to the forms of reasoning embedded in cultural forms labeled as “magic” and “divination,” and similar issues arise for a host of other practices, including textual exegesis.

Do particular examples of religious reasoning bring fundamental problems for understanding across cultures or conceptual schemes? How are reasons, whether religious or scientific, implicated in contestations for influence or power? Does consideration of religious reasoning challenge contemporary academic understandings of what counts as reason or rationality?

Topics may include but are not limited to:

- The forms of reasoning embedded in interpretative activities such as divination, dream interpretation, and textual exegesis;
- The roles of extraordinary states (such as mysticism, shamanism, possession, and paranormal phenomena) in discovering and legitimating both knowledge and norms for practice;
- The persuasive dimensions of performative practices including dance and theater;
- The philosophical grounds for argumentation, rhetoric, and cross-cultural interpretation; and
- The complexities in accounts of western, scientific, or scholarly reasoning that are contrasted with religious reasoning. We particularly encourage papers that offer both specific case studies and theoretical reflection.

Deadline for submission is Monday, **August 3, 2009**. Please submit papers to:

Journal of the American Academy of Religion
Department of Religious Studies
PO Box 400126
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, VA 22904-4126

Please direct queries to jaar@virginia.edu.

The Return of Religion after “Religion”: Consequences for Theology and Religious Studies

Talk about “the return of religion” continues to be omnipresent in public conversation and within a variety of academic fields. Along with this talk about religion’s return has come a new attention to theology. Indeed, the centrality of theology is evident in the work of scholars who are not themselves theologians (the work of Agamben, Badiou, and Žižek on political theology; Eric Santner’s notion of “psychotheology,” the attention to theology in recent American political philosophy in William Connolly’s *Why I Am Not a Secularist* and Jeffrey Stout’s *Democracy and Tradition*).

However, public talk about the return of religion is taking place at precisely the same time as we see within the academic study of religion a sharp genealogical critique of the category “religion” from both theologians (Milbank) and scholars of religion (Asad, Balagangadhara, Dubuisson, King, Masuzawa). The category is now under fire as essentialist, provincially western, imbricated in colonial projects and the like.

What are we to make of this juxtaposition? How are we to think about the prominence of public discourse about “religion” precisely when the category is under fire within the academic study of religion? *JAAR* invites proposals for a special issue that critically examines the return of religion after “religion” and its consequences for both theology and religious studies.

- What is the meaning of “the return of religion” for theology and religious studies more broadly?
- How might genealogical interrogations of the category “religion” by theologians and religious studies scholars reconfigure both fields?
- How do we think these two questions together?
- How will the growing prominence of religious voices in the public sphere reshape our ideas about theological reflection and the work of religious studies more broadly? What obligations fall to theologians and religious studies scholars in an era in which religion is an integral if contested aspect of public discourse?
- How do both scholarly communities take up this nexus of issues in a context marked by robust religious diversity?

Deadline for submission is Monday, **June 1, 2009**. Please submit papers to:

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Please direct queries to jaar@virginia.edu.

RESEARCH GRANTS

Each year the AAR awards grants of up to \$5,000 for individual and collaborative research projects. The deadline to apply for a 2009 grant is **August 1, 2009**. For sustainability purposes, we will no longer accept paper applications. All applicants must apply online on the AAR website. For additional information, see <http://www.aarweb.org/Programs/Grants>.

BENCHMARKING HUMANITIES IN AMERICA

The American Academy of Arts and Sciences (AASS) recently unveiled the Humanities Indicators, a prototype set of statistical data about the humanities in the United States. The new online resource is available at www.HumanitiesIndicators.org.

Organized in collaboration with a consortium of national humanities organizations, the Humanities Indicators are the first effort to provide scholars, policymakers, and the public with a comprehensive picture of the state of the humanities, from primary to higher education to public humanities activities. The collection of empirical data is modeled after the National Science Board's Science and Engineering Indicators and creates reliable benchmarks to guide future analysis of the state of the humanities. Without data, it is impossible to assess the effectiveness, impact, and needs of the humanities.

REGIONAL MEETINGS

Meetings of the AAR regions occur in the spring. Check the [Regional Meeting](#) page for details. All AAR members are welcome to participate in any region's activities.

UPDATING YOUR MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

We will be sending out the *Annual Meeting Program Planner*, name badges, and information on the Annual Meeting later this year. Help us reduce our mailing costs and make sure you get the Annual Meeting materials, *JAAR*, and *Religious Studies News*, by logging onto your membership page on the AAR website and verifying that your contact information is correct. Simply log in to [My AAR](#) and select "Change Contact Information" to make your updates.

