# religiousstudies AAR EDITION NEWS

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RELIGION & THEOLOGY PROGRAMS CENSUS



**And...**

**ISLAM:**
*Responding to September 11th*

A special section beginning on p. 9

***Spotlight on Teaching about Religion in the Schools***

*A special Spotlight sponsored by the Religion in the Schools Task Force*

# 2002 AAR Staff Directory

**Kyle Cole, Ph.D.**
*Media Officer*
E-MAIL: kcole@aarweb.org
TEL: 404-727-4725

**Barbara DeConcini, Ph.D.**
*Executive Director and Treasurer*
E-MAIL: bdeconcini@aarweb.org
TEL: 404-727-3049

**Joe DeRose**
*Director of Membership and Technology Services*
E-MAIL: jderose@aarweb.org
TEL: 404-727-3049

**Ina Ferrell**
*Accountant*
E-MAIL: iferrell@aarweb.org
TEL: 404-727-2331

**Edward R. Gray, Ph.D.**
*Director of Academic Relations*
E-MAIL: egray@aarweb.org
TEL: 404-727-2270

**John Harrison**
*Director of Finance and Operations/ Deputy Executive Director*
E-MAIL: jharrison@aarweb.org
TEL: 404-727-7954

**Steve Herrick**
*Director of External Relations*
E-MAIL: sherrick@aarweb.org
TEL: 404-727-7948

**Aislinn Jones**
*Annual Meeting Program Director*
E-MAIL: ajones@aarweb.org
TEL: 404-727-8123

**Anne Kentch**
*Office Manager*
E-MAIL: akentch@aarweb.org
TEL: 404-727-3026

**Emily Noonan**
*Project Assistant*
E-MAIL: enoonan@aarweb.org
TEL: 404-727-3049

**Shannon Planck**
*Director of Development*
E-MAIL: splanck@aarweb.org
TEL: 404-727-7928

**Susan Snider**
*Administrative Assistant*
E-MAIL: ssnider@aarweb.org
TEL: 404-727-4711

***Religious Studies News, AAR Edition*** is published quarterly by the American Academy of Religion in January, March, April, and October. Letters to the editor and features examining professional issues in the field are welcome from all readers. Please send editorial pieces in electronic uncompressed file format only (MS Word is preferred) to: *rsneditor@aarweb.org.*

Subscriptions to individuals and institutions are available. See *www.aarweb.org/publications/rsn* for more information.

Deadlines for submissions:

| | |
|---|---|
| *March:* | December 15 |
| *April:* | February 15 |
| *October:* | July 15 |

**Advertising**
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**Publisher:**
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**825 Houston Mill Road, NE**
**Suite 300**
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**Editor-in-Chief:**
Edward R. Gray, Ph.D.

**Production Manager:**
Anne Kentch

**Layout:**
Jill Connolly, Decatur, GA



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# 2002 Member Calendar

Dates are subject to change. Check *www.aarweb.org* for the latest information.

## March

*Religious Studies News—AAR Edition March 2002 issue*

*Journal of the American Academy of Religion, March 2002 issue.* For more information on AAR publications, see *www.aarweb.org/publications* or go directly to the JAAR home page hosted by Oxford University Press, *www3.oup.co.uk/jaarel/*

**March 1.** 2002 Annual Meeting proposals due to Program Unit Chairs.

**March 1.** Book award nominations due from publishers. For more information see *www.aarweb.org/awards/bookrules.asp*

**March 2-3.** Committee on International Connections meeting, Atlanta.

**March 8-10.** Southeast regional meeting, Atlanta.

**March 9-10.** Southwest regional meeting, Irving, Texas.

**March 14-15.** Mid-Atlantic regional meeting, Baltimore.

**March 15.** Submissions for the May 2002 issue of *Religious Studies News* due. For more information, see *www.aarweb.org/publications/rsn/default.asp*

**March 22-23.** Jefferson Day. Jefferson Day is an advocacy event organized by the National Humanities Alliance and co-sponsored by the AAR and more than twenty organizations to promote support for the National Endowment for the Humanities. For more information, see *www.nhalliance.org/jd* and p.22 for a conversation about the event.

**March 23** Committee on Publications meeting, New York.

**March 24-26.** West regional meeting, Moraga, California.

(For more information on regional meetings, see *www.aarweb.org/regions/meetings.asp*)

## April

**April 1.** Notification of acceptance of Annual Meeting paper proposals by Program Unit Chairs.

**April 5-6.** Committee on the Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities in the Profession meeting, Atlanta.

**April 5-6.** Upper Midwest regional meeting, St. Paul.

**April 5-7.** Midwest regional meeting, Chicago.

**April 12.** New England-Maritimes regional meeting, Waltham, Massachusetts.

**April 13-14.** Annual Spring Board of Directors meeting, Toronto.

**April 27-28,** Eastern International regional meeting, Ottawa.

**April 19-20,** Rocky Mountain-Great Plains regional meeting, Omaha.

(For more information on regional meetings, see *www.aarweb.org/regions/meetings.asp*)

## May

*Religious Studies News—AAR Edition May 2002 issue*

*Spotlight on Teaching Spring 2002 issue*

Registration materials mailed with *RSN.*

**May 1.** Nominations (including self-nominations) for committee appointments requested. For more information, see *www.aarweb.org/membership/volunteering.asp*

**May 3-5.** Pacific Northwest Regional Meeting, Eugene, Oregon.

**May 15.** Annual Meeting registration opens for 2002 Annual Meeting.

**May 15.** Registration for the Employment Information Services Center opens.

Housing and Additional Meeting requests due for priority consideration in late May.

For more Annual Meeting information, see *www.aarweb.org/annualmeet/2002/default.asp*

## June

*Journal of the American Academy of Religion, June 2002 issue.*

**June 15.** Membership renewal deadline for 2002 Annual Meeting participants.

## July

Membership deadline for Annual Meeting program participants. Check *www.aarweb.org/annualmeet/2002/default.asp* for more detailed information.

**July 1.** New fiscal year begins.

**July 15.** Submissions for the October 2002 issue of *Religious Studies News—AAR Edition* due. For more information, see *www.aarweb.org/publications/rsn/default.asp*

## August

**August 1.** Research Grant Applications due. For more information, see *www.aarweb.org/grants/default.asp*

**August 1.** Regional development grant applications due to regional secretaries.

**August 1.** Change of address due for priority receipt of the 2002 Annual Meeting program.

**August 15.** Membership renewal period for 2003 begins.

## September

*Journal of the American Academy of Religion, September 2002 issue.* For more information on AAR publications, see *www.aarweb.org/publications/default.asp* or go directly to the JAAR home page hosted by Oxford University Press, *www3.oup.co.uk/jaarel/*

Annual Meeting Program Books mailed to members.

Annual Fund appeal begins.

## October

*Religious Studies News—AAR Edition, October 2002 issue*

*Spotlight on Teaching, Fall 2002 issue*

**October 1-31:** AAR officer election period. Candidate profiles will be published in *RSN.*

## November

**November 1.** Research grant awards announced.

**November 22.** Fall meeting of the Board of Directors, Toronto.

**November 22.** Chairs Workshop at the Annual Meeting, Toronto. Free for departments enrolled in the Academic Relations Program. For more information, see *www.aarweb.org/department/acadrel.asp*

**November 23-26.** Annual Meeting, Toronto. Held concurrently with the Society of Biblical Literature each November, comprising some 8,000 registrants, 200 publishers, and 100 hiring departments.

**November 24.** Annual Business Meeting and breakfast. See the Annual Meeting program for exact time and place.

## December

*Journal of the American Academy of Religion, December 2002 issue.*

**December 5.** New program unit proposals due.

**December 13-14.** Program Committee meeting, Atlanta.

**December 15.** Submissions for the March 2003 issue of *Religious Studies News* due. For more information, see *www.aarweb.org/publications/rsn/default.asp*

**December 31.** Membership renewal for 2003 due. Renew online at *www.aarweb.org/renewal/page01.asp*

## And keep in mind throughout the year...

Regional organizations have various deadlines throughout the fall for their Calls for Papers. See *www.aarweb.org/regions/default.asp*

***In the Field.*** News of events and opportunities for scholars of religion. *In the Field* is a members-only online publication produced ten times a year on the first of the month. In the Field accepts calls for papers, grant news, conference announcements, and other opportunities appropriate for scholars of religion of no more than 100 words. Submit text electronically by the 20th of the month for the following issue to *inthefield@aarweb.org.*

***Openings:*** *Employment Opportunities for Scholars of Religion*

*Openings* editions are viewable from the first through the last day of each month. Openings ads are to be submitted by the 20th of the previous month. For more information, see *www.aarweb.org/openings/submitad1.asp*

*religiousstudies* AAR EDITION NEWS

*Religious Studies News, AAR Edition* is the newspaper of record for the field especially designed to serve the professional needs of persons involved in teaching and scholarship in religion (broadly construed to include religious studies, theology, and sacred texts). Published quarterly by the American Academy of Religion, *RSN* is received by some 10,000 scholars, departments enrolled in the Academic Relations Program, and by libraries at colleges and universities across North America and abroad. *Religious Studies News, AAR Edition*, communicates the important events of the field and related areas. It provides a forum for members and others to examine critical issues in education, pedagogy (especially through the bi-annual *Spotlight on Teaching*), research, publishing, and the public understanding of religion. It also publishes news about the services and programs of the AAR and other organizations including employment services and registration information for the AAR Annual Meeting.

For writing and advertising guidelines, please see *www.aarweb.org/publications/rsn.asp*

# Satisfaction High at Denver Annual Meeting

FROM THE AVAILABILITY of food to the signage outside meeting rooms, members who responded to the 2001 Annual Meeting Survey answered with consistently high marks. More results of the survey are available at *www.aarweb.org/annualmeet/2001/survey/results.asp*.

If you attended the Annual Meeting in Denver, you probably noticed that there seemed to be fewer attendees than in previous years. But, with the final registration numbers in, there were only 545 fewer attendees than last year in Nashville, in fact. There were 8,321 attendees in Nashville and 7,776 in Denver. Based on the self-report on the registration form, 50% of attendees identified as AAR members, 34% as SBL members, 2% as members of both organizations, and 12% as non-members. After the U.S., the majority of attendees again, came from Canada, the UK, and the Netherlands, edging Israel and Germany by one attendee. U.S. states with the greatest representation were California (726); Illinois (344); New York (314); Massachusetts (294); Texas (276); and Pennsylvania (266). Both Tennessee and Georgia dropped out of the top spots (replaced by Massachusetts and Pennsylvania) from last year, no doubt due to proximity to Nashville.

Online registrations jumped by 9% in 2001 over 2000 to 42%. Fax/Mail accounted for 28% of registrations; and 18% of attendees registered by phone, down 8% from last year. Hotel reservations took a similar trajectory to registrations: 40% of bookings were made online; 33% were made via fax/mail and 27% over the phone.

Over the week of the meeting, the total number of hotel rooms booked was just under 13,000. The "peak night" was Friday night with just under 3,400 rooms booked throughout Denver.

## *Annual Meeting Survey Results 2001*

The post-Annual Meeting survey, which began after the Annual Meeting in Nashville in 2000, has become an important facet of how the AAR's Program Committee, Executive Office staff, and Board of Directors can quickly respond to the concerns of members about the Annual Meeting.

Again, the Executive Office staff would like to thank every member who participated in the survey. We have attended very carefully to your comments and suggestions, and we are committed to continuing to offer an excellent Annual Meeting experience.

The 2001 post-Annual Meeting survey received 598 responses. Not every respondent answered every question. Overall, a huge majority (93%) expressed satisfaction or great satisfaction with the Annual Meeting in general. Members also expressed a high level of satisfaction (89-96%) with the signage outside of meeting rooms; meeting room spaces; exhibit facilities; and the pre-registration process. Less satisfaction was expressed with the convenience of the airport (21%) and the use of the *Annual Meeting Program At-A-Glance* for locating meeting rooms (39%), though 58% of attendees did not seem to mind using the smaller booklet.

The reinstated Members Party was also a hit for those who attended: 20% were satisfied or very satisfied, while 4% were not. For those who were not, Aislinn Jones, the Annual Meeting Program Director would be keen to hear from you at *annualmeeting@aarweb.org*.

**Annual Meeting Survey Results**
*www.aarweb.org/annualmeet/2001/survey/results.asp*

# Second Chairs Annual Meeting Workshop a Success in Denver

FIFTY DEPARTMENT HEADS registered for a special, daylong workshop for department chairs sponsored by the Academic Relations Program. Dr. Peter Seldin, Pace University Distinguished Professor, led "Evaluating and Advancing Teaching in the Religious Studies Department." Seldin is one of the most sought after specialists in the evaluation and development of faculty and administrative performance. Seldin focused on new insights into evaluating teaching, and on developing the knowledge and skill that more successful approaches to assessing and improving teaching require.

The workshop drew a range of chairs from different institutional sectors. "Virtually every department and program in religion assesses faculty teaching performance, so there was lively discussion about what makes it effective and what does not," according to workshop presenter Laurie Patton, chair of the Religion Department at Emory University.

A workshop for the 2002 Annual Meeting is being planned as a continuing part of the AAR's strengthening College and University Religion & Theology Programs initiative (supported by a grant from the Lilly Endowment, Inc). Departments enrolled in the Academic Relations Program receive free registration. For information on enrolling, please see *www.aarweb.org/department*

Seldin's most recent book is designed to guide chairs in constructing administrative portfolios. Other titles include: *Changing Practices in Evaluating Teaching* (1999); *The Teaching Portfolio, Second Edition* (1997); *Improving College Teaching* (1995); *Successful Use of Teaching Portfolios* (1993); *The Teaching Portfolio* (1991); *How Administrators Can Improve Teaching* (1990).

# Annual Meeting Policy Update

FOR THE 2002 Annual Meeting in Toronto and all subsequent years, all participants on the Annual Meeting program must be registered for the meeting as either regular, student, or retired members, rather than at the spouse/partner rate. Participants who are registered at the spouse/partner rate will be asked to change their registrations before they receive their name badges or participate on the program.

# Do you have something to say?

*RSN* welcomes essays by members, particularly those reflecting on professional practices and institutional locations, or on the place of the study of religion in the academy.

We also welcome suggestions for any of the regular features and letters to the editor. Please see page two for submission information. Articles or essays about teaching should be directed to Richard Freund, Editor of *Spotlight on Teaching*, University of Hartford. E-mail:*Freund@mail.hartford.edu*

*American Academy of Religion*

# 2001 Annual Business Meeting Minutes

**Denver Convention Center**
**November 18, 2001**
**7:30 a.m.**

1. Call to Order: President Rebecca S. Chopp. The meeting was called to order at 7:45 a.m.

2. Approval of 2000 Business Meeting Minutes. A motion was made to approve the Minutes and was unanimously approved.

3. Memorial List. The Memorial List was read and a moment of silence was observed.

4. President's Report: Rebecca S. Chopp

President Chopp reported that the year 2001 was a very productive one in the Academy, marked with exceptional events. She talked about the AAR Executive Committee's decision-making process about the NAACP's call for a boycott of the Adam's Mark Hotel. She also discussed the Board's response to the events and impacts of September 11, 2001.

5. Executive Director and Treasurer's Report: Barbara DeConcini

Barbara DeConcini gave thanks and a public tribute to the AAR staff. She discussed the AAR 2001 Annual Report. The 2001 Annual Report highlights two important AAR initiatives: the Media Referral Program and the Departmental Services Program. Thanks to the Pew Charitable Trusts' generosity and to the prodigious work of Steve Herrick, Director of External Relations, the AAR Media Referral Database will go live in spring 2002. Thanks to the Lilly Endowment's support and to Edward Gray, Director of Academic Relations, AAR has completed a census of undergraduate study in the field. We're following this up with a graduate census in 2002.

The Academy had another strong year financially, despite a small drop in student membership numbers, which is attributable to the discontinuation of AAR/SBL joint memberships. There was, however, a growth in the regular membership category. Annual Meeting registration is down by about 6% this year, likely due to September 11. We are confident that we built our budgets conservatively enough to weather this small downturn.

Next year's Annual Meeting in Toronto will mark the second time the event will be held outside the United States. The meting will include a special attention to Canadian scholarship in religion, with an emphasis on Japanese scholarship in religion planned for the 2003 meeting in Atlanta.

Finally, DeConcini introduced the AAR board members who were present and thanked them for their leadership and service in the Academy. She also thanked the president and the Executive Committee for their leadership in difficult times nationally.

6. 2001 Election Results: Rebecca S. Chopp

President Chopp encouraged nominations for service in the Academy. She then introduced Vasudha Narayanan as president, Robert Orsi as president-elect, Jane McAuliffe as vice president, and Susan Henking as secretary. She thanked Ronald Green, who served as secretary for 6 years, and Elizabeth Pullen, who served as student director for two. She then turned the gavel over to Professor Narayanan, who thanked everyone, and with no new business, called for the meeting to be adjourned. It was 8:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne M. Kentch, for Ronald M. Green, Secretary

# From College Course Syllabus to Teaching about Religion in the Schools

BRUCE GRELLE, California State University, Chico, announced the selection of Connie Ambler, Ceila Brewer Marshall, and Ellen Purdum to participate in a special project funded by the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL). It will strengthen online teaching and learning resources for a secondary school audience.

Working under the direction of the Grelle, the general project editor, collaborative pairs of tertiary and secondary-level faculty will create new resources for including the study of religion in secondary school social studies curricula. Teams will work in three areas: religion in US history; religion and politics; and religion in literature & the arts.

Each team will select an appropriate college-level course syllabus (or syllabi) and investigate what they see as the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) embedded in the syllabus and its construction. They will explore all aspects of the syllabus — course objectives, reading, assignments, evaluation — with a view toward using it as a resource to develop a secondary-school level course, module, or series of lesson plans, as appropriate.

Findings of the project will be reported through special programming at the AAR Annual Meeting, through *Religious Studies News-AAR Edition*, as well as online at *www.aarweb.org*.

For more information, see *www.aarweb.org*

# Chairs Summer Seminar

*RE-IMAGINING the Role of Department Chair* was chosen as the tentative theme for a day-long workshop for department chairs coming in June 2003. A group of experienced department chairs and members of the Academic Relationship Task Force convened during the Annual Meeting in Denver to discuss programming for the event. Among the sessions and presentations discussed were those focusing on becoming an entrepreneurial chair, examining how religion fits into (or doesn't) the general education curriculum, "educating" the dean, understanding university budgets, mentoring junior faculty, and how to keep yourself rejuvenated.

A good deal of focus centered on the teaching the importance of doing our homework. "We need to offer models for rendering articulate the core role religion plays in our institutions," Terrence Tilley, Chair at the University of Dayton, who attended the session, told *RSN*. These include strategies of making religion essential, necessary, and integrated. And "getting others to rely on us," Tilley added.

The workshop plans to draw lightly on outside experts and concentrate on a structure of breakout sessions of chairs at like institutions, the use of case studies, and both formal and informal opportunities for harnessing the collective wisdom in the group to teach one another.

# Development Program Launched

BARBARA DECONCINI, Executive Director, announced in October that Shannon Planck, the Annual Meeting Program Director, has been appointed to the AAR's newly created Director of Development position. Planck came to the AAR executive office in July of 1999, after managing the most successful annual campaign in the history of the Atlanta Legal Aid Society.

In her new position, Planck will plan and implement a comprehensive development program for the Academy. Specifically, she will enhance the Academy's foundation work, modest annual fund, planned giving, and membership development programs.

About her new position Planck told *RSN*, "I'm just thrilled. This is an excellent opportunity. I look forward to finding monies for all of our great ideas to improve member services."

Planck has been responsible for the planning of the Annual Meeting since she came to the AAR executive offices. In that capacity, she has automated many of the functions of the job in an effort to ease the work of the volunteer program unit chairs who solicit the programmatic material for the meeting.

# New Policy on Student Memberships

PLEASE NOTE a new policy, approved by the Board of Directors at the November Board Meeting, affecting student memberships: Beginning with the 2003 membership year, individuals who have had student memberships for seven or more years (not necessarily sequential), will be required to renew at the regular membership rate. Gratis student liaison memberships will also apply toward the seven-year limit on student memberships.

Student membership fees are priced at below cost and are thus subsidized by the general membership. A limit on tenure of student memberships better serves the needs of all members and will help the AAR maintain its affordable membership dues, which are among the lowest in ACLS societies.

# Employment Information Services 2001 Report

THE EMPLOYMENT Information Services Center at the 2001 Annual Meetings of the American Academy of Religion and Society of Biblical Literature provided almost one hundred institutions and hundreds of candidates registered for the Annual Meeting interview facilities, a message service, job listings, and candidate credentials for review. Candidates enjoyed lower fees (by 20%) from the previous year.

The Center hosted its first "open house," to encourage prospective future users to become acquainted with the Center's particular methods for facilitating communication between candidates and employers. The Center's Interview Hall was opened for the first time to any Annual Meeting registrant invited to an interview without charge.

Approximately two hundred candidates made early use of the Center on Friday evening during the walk-through of the site provided by Center staff. Steven Friesen and Patricia Beckman, both of University of Missouri, Columbia, Debra Washington-Mubashshir, Beloit College, and Edward R. Gray, AAR Director of Academic Relations, offered advice on how to make the most use of the Center.

The EIS advisory committee sponsored a special topics forum, "If I Knew Then What I Know Now": Lessons From the First Year on the Job. Former users of the Center — Faith Kirkham Hawkins, Gustavus Adolphus College; Michael J. Brown, Emory University; and Thomas Pearson, Muhlenberg College, and Richard Rosengarten, University of Chicago — offered advice about the first year on the job. The panel addressed contending with developing new courses, teaching new students, completing a dissertation, balancing career and family life, and learning the local cultures of their new department, institution, and locality.

Departments enrolled in the AAR's Academic Relations Program received a 20% discount on all EIS fees. (Editor's note, more information on the Academic Relations Program is available on the Academic Relations Program webpage and inside on p. 13)

**Candidates**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Total | 398 | |
| Pre-Registered | 297 | 75% |
| On-Site | 101 | 25% |
| Female | 137 | 34.4% |
| Male | 261 | 65.6% |

N.B., New this year, members invited to interview for a position were not required to register for the EIS Center.

**Employers**

| | |
|---|---|
| Total Registrants | 96 |
| Pre-Registered | 69 |
| On-Site | 25 |
| Positions Available | 103 |
| Ratio of Candidates to Positions | 1:4 |

| Classifications | Candidates | Employers |
|---|---|---|
| Arts, Literature & Religion | 41 | 2 |
| Religions of Africa & Oceania | 6 | 1 |
| East Asian Religions | 25 | 14 |
| Early Christian Literature/ New Testament | 99 | 25 |
| Ethics | 75 | 11 |
| Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament | 70 | 21 |
| History of Christianity/ Church History | 87 | 13 |
| Islamic Studies | 19 | 9 |
| Judaic Studies | 29 | 7 |
| Practical Theology | 29 | 5 |
| Racial & Ethnic Studies in Religion | 28 | 4 |
| Religions of North America | 34 | 8 |
| Religions of South America | 3 | 0 |
| Social Scientific Study of Religion | 38 | 4 |
| South Asian Religions | 35 | 8 |
| Theology & Philosophy of Religion | 144 | 28 |
| Women's Studies in Religion | 53 | 2 |
| Other | 62 | 8 |

N.B., Candidates could designate up to three classifications. Employers could designate multiple classifications.

# Editors Named to Monograph Series

PRESIDENT REBECCA CHOPP appointed two new editors, Kimberly Rae Connor and James Wetzel, to two of the AAR monograph series published by Oxford University Press. The appointments came after a national search to replace Carole Myscofski and Mary McClintock Fulkerson at the conclusion of their terms.

Kimberly Rae Connor, the new editor for the *Academy* Series, is Assistant Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of San Francisco. Connor attended Gettysburg College, where she received a B.A. in English. She earned an M.A. in Literature and Theology at the University of Bristol, England, and completed her graduate studies at the University of Virginia, receiving a Ph.D. in Religion and Literature in 1991. Connor has taught various courses in religion and literature in a variety of settings, including an independent high school, a community college, a state university, and small liberal arts colleges. Currently, she is an assistant professor at the University of San Francisco where she teaches a variety of interdisciplinary courses. Connor has published two books on African American culture, *Conversion and Visions in the Writings of African American Women*, and *Imagining Grace: Liberating Theologies in the Slave Narrative Tradition*, which was selected by Choice as an outstanding academic title for 2000. Connor has received grants for her work from The Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and The National Endowment for the Humanities, and was a participant in the Lilly/Luce Foundations AAR Teaching Workshops. In addition to her books, she has published over two dozen articles, reviews, and encyclopedia entries on topics related to African American religion and literature, multicultural pedagogy, and AIDS.

As the new ***Academy*** Series editor, Connor identified two important contributions the series makes to the AAR: "The *Academy* series serves the academic community by providing a venue for first-time book authors. The process of transforming their dissertations into books assists emerging scholars in making the transition from graduate student to academic professional, and provides them a forum for presenting their work as part of the ongoing academic conversation. The *Academy* series also serves the academic study of religion by offering a 'foretaste of the feast to come,' signaling new directions in the field, and demonstrating the vitality of graduate study in religious studies."

**James Wetzel** is an Associate Professor of Philosophy and Religion at Colgate University, where he regularly teaches courses in the philosophy of religion, medieval philosophy, and philosophical psychology. His book, "*Augustine and the Limits of Virtue*" was published by Cambridge University Press (1992). Titles of some of his recent essays include "Some Thoughts on the Anachronism of Forgiveness" (*Journal of Religious Ethics*); "Crisis Mentalities: Augustine after Descartes" (*American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*); and "A Meditation on Hell: Lessons from Dante" (*Modern Theology,* forthcoming).

Wetzel notes that "These are interesting times to study religion. Perhaps the times have always been interesting, but it is hard not to notice the peculiar urgency of the study of religion in our days of contested identities and cultural interdependencies."

Wetzel's series, ***Reflection and Theory in the Study of Religion***, is the AAR series that invites self-conscious reflection on the legacy of religion from any number of critical perspectives. "The self-conscious part is the recognition that the study of religion is closely allied to a study of religious studies, of the means by which the object of study is being addressed," Wetzel continued. "There is no presupposition in the series, however, about how explicit that part should be. Although the series aims in its collection of titles to contribute broadly to what may be termed 'a philosophy of religious studies,' there is plenty of room for a diversity of approaches, tastes, and temperaments in individual contributions."

"I am glad to have the opportunity to work with our two newest editors," Terry Godlove, chair of the Publications Committee, told *RSN*. Godlove also thanked Myscofski and Fulkerson for "their outstanding contributions to the Academy's publications program."

## *Academy* Series

The *Academy* series is dedicated to publishing outstanding dissertations in the field of religious studies. The series is highly selective; only the most exceptional manuscripts are eligible for consideration. The *Academy* series seeks to reflect the full range of cultural areas and methodological approaches in the field. Its current mandate is to broaden and diversify the range of its publications. To be considered for the *Academy* series, a dissertation must be nominated by the dissertation adviser or a member of the dissertation committee. The nominating letter should explain in detail to what measure the dissertation is technically competent, why it is a genuine contribution to scholarship within its field, and why it is of sufficiently wide interest to be suitable for publication in book form.

Address all inquiries and nominations to the series editor:
Kimberly Rae Connor
*Academy* Series Editor
143 De Montfort Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94112-1707
WK TEL: 415-422-2869
HM PH: 415-333-5029
FAX: 415-422-5036
E-MAIL: *connork@usfca.edu*

## *Reflection and Theory in the Study of Religion* Series

The *Reflection and Theory in the Study of Religion* series publishes books and monographs that contribute to theoretical reflection in theology, ethics, philosophy, hermeneutics, methodologies, comparative religion, and the like. The series is particularly interested in contemporary approaches that employ gender, class, sexuality, and race philosophies in constructive analyses.

Address inquiries and submissions to the series editor:
James Wetzel, Editor
*Reflection and Theory in the Study of Religion* Series
(Until June of 2002:)
Department of Religion
Seventy-Nine Hall
Princeton University
Princeton, New Jersey 08544
WK TEL: 315-824-7683
HM TEL: 315-824-2355
FAX: 315-228-7998
E-MAIL: *jwetzel@mail.colgate.edu*

(After June 2002:)
Department of Philosophy and Religion
Colgate University
Hamilton, New York 13346

For more information, see *http://www.aarweb.org/publications/publishing.asp*

# New Annual Meeting Program Director Named

AISLINN JONES has joined the AAR staff as Annual Meeting Program Director, succeeding Shannon Planck, newly named Development Director. Jones will knit together three strands of interests and work experience: events planning, web development, and the study of religion.

After graduating from the University of Georgia with a degree in Public Relations, she pursued a career as a Web Developer at IBM where she worked on high profile Web sites for clients such as the State Hermitage Museum of St. Petersburg, Russia and the 1999 Grammy Awards.

Jones' interest in the field of religion is long-standing and she finally left IBM to return to school; she is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Religious Studies at the University of Stirling, Scotland. She has also been a key organizational team member for several conferences and events since her undergraduate days. Jones plans to continue making the sometimes daunting Annual Meeting process more automated and accessible to AAR program unit chairs and members. "I'm so excited about this opportunity and I'm eager to work with such a high-caliber group of people," Jones told *RSN*.

# Tazim Kassam to Edit *Spotlight on Teaching*

TAZIM R. KASSAM, Syracuse University, will become the new editor of *Spotlight on Teaching*. Kassam will succeed Richard Freund at the end of his term this year. *Spotlight* is a biannual publication of the American Academy of Religion addressing teaching and learning issues in the field. It appears as an insert in *Religious Studies News-AAR Edition*. (See the *Spotlight* on teaching religion in the schools in this issue). Rebecca Chopp, 2001 AAR President, made the appointment on the recommendation of the Committee on Teaching and Learning (CTL). The committee unanimously recommended Kassam after it conducted a national search for the volunteer position. As editor she will also serve as an ex-officio member of the committee.

Kassam guest edited *Spotlight on Teaching Religion and Music*, Spring 2001. "I found editing the issue on music so rewarding intellectually, pedagogically, and collegially," Kassam reported. "So you can imagine how happy I am to continue Richard's fine work." Freund (University of Hartford) continues as editor with responsibility to plan the two issues scheduled for 2003. Kassam, nonetheless, will begin to work almost immediately to conceive and plan her initial issues in 2004. "I'm delighted that we have found someone with Tazim's knowledge of the field, editorial experience, and insight into the challenges and opportunities in the field of teaching and learning," Tom Peterson, Alfred University, chair of the CTL, told *RSN*.

Kassam is Associate Professor of Religion at Syracuse University. A historian of religions specializing in the Islamic tradition, her research interests include gender, ritual, devotional literature, and syncretism. Her book, *Songs of Wisdom and Circles of Dance* (SUNY Press: 1995) explores the origins and creative synthesis of Hindu-Muslim ideas expressed in the song tradition of the Ismaili Muslims of the Indian Subcontinent.

# REGIONAL NEWS

## Mid-Atlantic Regional Meeting

Baltimore Radisson Hotel at Cross Keys
100 Village Square, Baltimore, MD 21210

**Thursday-Friday, March 14-15, 2002**

This year we're pleased to heartily invite you to join us for the Mid-Atlantic AAR Regional meeting, scheduled on Thursday and Friday, March 14-15, 2002, at the Baltimore Radisson Hotel at Cross Keys, conveniently located at the Northern Parkway exit on I-93, in a relaxed, wooded setting just six miles north of Baltimore's Inner Harbor. The Radisson offers free parking in its own garage, an on-site restaurant with room service, 24-hour security, and a scheduled shuttle bus to downtown Baltimore's many cultural and sightseeing attractions. The attached courtyard shopping atrium also features a bank, deli, and bookstore, along with other stores. Updates on travel directions and other topics, including specific program papers and times, are available on our web site at *www.geocities.com/mar-aar*. The overnight room rate is $114.00 plus tax (single or double); for overnight accommodations, call 800-756-7285 or 410-532-6900, and be sure to mention that you are attending our meeting.

This year our MAR-AAR plenary speaker will be Dr. Diana Eck, Professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies, Harvard University. She will talk on: ***"A New Religious America: Challenges for the Academy."*** Her books include *Banaras, City of Light* (1983), *Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image* (1981, 1996) and *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Boseman to Banaras* (1993). Currently head of The Pluralism Project (*http://www.pluralism.org*), with support of the Lilly Endowment, Pew Charitable Trust, the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, she has also been instrumental in publishing its work, such as *World Religions in Boston: A Guide to Communities and Resources* (1994), and a new CD-ROM entitled *On Common Ground: World Religions in America* (1997). Her most recent work, *A New Religious America* (Harper SanFrancisco, 2001) addresses the challenges posed by the new religious diversity in the U.S.

As in the past, we will be meeting jointly with the Mid-Atlantic Society of Biblical Literature. The SBL plenary talk will feature Dr. Reginald Fuller, will speak on ***"Jesus and Christology: 1930-2002."*** For questions about the SBL program, please contact: Dr. Christina Bucher, SBL Regional Coordinator, Elizabethtown College, College Avenue, Elizabethtown, PA 17022 ( Phone: 717-361-1182 ).

Discounted preregistration is available for the meeting; simply use the form provided here or at our web-site. If you plan to attend the Regional Women's Caucus meeting, or the Graduate Students' Lunch, please check the corresponding box. The Graduate Students' Lunch is free for the first 25 graduate students who sign up. To reduce costs, the Region will again prepare a list of members willing to share arrangements for travel or accommodations. For this, or any other questions, contact: Dr. Frank Connolly-Weinert, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, St. John's University, Jamaica, NY 11439 (TEL: 718-990-6161, Ext.5433; FAX: 718-990-1907, E-MAIL: *fdcw@aol.com* ).

## New England/Maritimes Regional Meeting

**Friday, April 12, 2002**
Brandeis University, Waltham, MA
**Ecology: The State of Nature and the State of Humans**

**Program Highlights**
**9:00-12:15:** Teaching Workshop: Teaching the Bible in the Humanities, Directed by Michael Zank, Boston University

**1:30-2:45:** AAR Plenary: Emilie Townes, Union Theological Seminary
**4:30-5:15:** Joint AAR-SBL Reception
For more information please contact Barbara Darling-Smith, Program Director, at Wheaton College Religion Department, Norton, MA 02766; (508) 286-3693 or *bsmith@wheatonma.edu*

## Pacific Northwest AAR Regional Meeting

**Call for Papers**
University of Oregon, Eugene, OR
May 3-5, 2002

Submit a 150-word abstract for each proposed paper by **February 1, 2002** to the appropriate Chair listed below. Participants in the Pacific Northwest AAR/SBL and ASOR Regional Meeting may present only one paper and must be registered for the meeting to participate. Papers not fitting into any of the categories below should be sent directly to Linda S. Schearing, Religious Studies Department, Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA 99258-0001 (*schearing@gonzaga.edu*) Panels and special topics sessions are welcome!

**Theology and Philosophy of Religion:** Norm Metzler, Concordia University, 2811 NE Holman, Portland, OR 97211. *nmetzler@cu-portland.edu*

**History of Christianity and North American Religions:** Robert Hauck, Spokane Community College, 1810 N. Greene, MS 2011, Spokane, WA 99217. *rhauck@scc.spokane.cc.wa.us*

**Women and Religion:** Ardy Bass, Religious Studies Department, Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA 99258-0001. *bassa@gonzaga.edu*

**History of Religions:** Nick Gier, Philosophy Department, University of Idaho, Moscow, ID 83844-3016 *ngier@uidaho.edu*

**Religion and Society:** Gary Chamberlain, Department of Theology & Religious Studies, Seattle University, 900 Broadway, Seattle, WA 98122. *Gchamber@seattleu.edu*

**Special Topics — Interreligious Dialogue With the Natural Sciences:** Papers for this section should focus on conceptual dialogue with the natural sciences from the perspective of the traditions normally included under the academic discipline "history of religions." Accordingly, papers written from Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, Islamic, and Chinese religious perspectives in dialogue with the natural on such broad topics as cosmology, evolution, stem cell research, ecofeminism, the relation between mind and body, the problem of suffering in light of the theory of evolution, the anthropic principle, and the problem of consciousness are especially welcome. This section is co-chaired by Paul Ingram (Department of Religion, Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, WA 98447-0003, *ingrampo@plu.edu* and Mark Unno, Department of Religious Studies, 1294 University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403-1294 *munno@darkwing.uoregon.edu*)

**Special Topics — Cross-Cultural Views of the Self:** Papers that address the issue of the human self from different religious and methodological perspectives are invited. Nick Gier, Philosophy Department, University of Idaho, Moscow, ID 83844-3016. *ngier@uidaho.edu*

## Southeastern Commission for the Study of Religion

Southeastern Regional Meeting 2002
March 8-10, 2002
Atlanta Marriott Century Center
Atlanta, GA

**Program Highlights**

**FRIDAY EVENING, MARCH 8**
**8:15-9:30 pm**
AAR/SBL/ASOR: Plenary Session
Presidential Addresses
Herbert Burhenn, University of Tennessee, Chattanooga, and Jerry L. Sumney, Lexington Theological Seminary, Presiding
Announcements of Student Awards
AAR: Caroline Medine, University of Georgia
- "*Oedipus at Colonus*" and "*The Gospel at Colonus*": *Black Religious Experience and the Classical Text*

SBL: W. Sibley Towner, Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Education
- Novus Ordo Seculorum: *The Bible Interprets America*

**9:30-11:00 pm**
Conference Reception

**Saturday, March 9**
**5:00-5:45 pm**
AAR/SBL/ASOR/SE (SECSOR): Joint Business Meeting
AAR/SE and SBL/SE Business Meetings (immediately following)
All members of the societies are invited.

**8:15-9:30 pm**
Plenary Session
Jerry L. Sumney, Lexington Theological Seminary, Presiding
Beverly Roberts Gaventa, Princeton Theological Seminary
- *Whatever Happened to the Prophesying Daughters?*

Complete program information and registration forms are available on the SECSOR web site (*www.utc.edu/~secsor*) or from the Executive Director, Herbert Burhenn, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Tennessee, Chattanooga, TN 37403 (423-755-4635; *Herbert-Burhenn@utc.edu*). Hotel reservations may be placed by calling 1-404-325-0000. The conference room rate is $89 per night. Reservations placed after February 21 will be accepted on a space available basis.

## Southwest Region

**TEACHING RELIGION IN THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY**
*A Workshop for Doctoral Candidates & Teachers Early in Their Careers*
Conducted by Paula Cooey, Macalester College and Professors from the Southwest Region
**March 8-9** (Friday afternoon-Saturday morning)
Harvey Hotel, DFW Airport

**Application:** Send name, school, degree program, date of completion, and current position to Andrew O. Fort, Dept. of Religion, TCU Box 298100, Fort Worth, TX, 76129; e-mail at *a.fort@tcu.edu*

RELIGION & THEOLOGY PROGRAMS
CENSUS

# The Study of Religion Counts

## What We Know (and what we don't know) about the Shape of the Field

JONATHAN Z. SMITH, University of Chicago, and Linell E. Cady, Arizona State University, gave thoughtful responses to findings from the undergraduate Census of Religion and Theology during a special topics forum (STF), "The Study of Religion Counts: What We Know (and What We Don't) About the Shape of the Field" during the Annual Meeting in Denver. Smith and Cady responded to a preliminary research summary of the Census by Edward R. Gray, Director of Academic Relations. The research findings summary focuses on what has been learned from the census about programs, faculty, and enrollments at the undergraduate level, and reflects on what the data reveals about the state of the field. The Census summary was published in the Fall 2001 issue of *Religious Studies News, AAR Edition*, and is also available online (*www.aarweb.org*). The Census of Religion and Theology Programs was supported by a grant from the Lilly Endowment.

The research design, data collection strategies, and measures needed for filling lacunae in our knowledge was also discussed. The Academic Relations Task Force sponsored this Special Topics Forum. Panelists included Edward R. Gray, American Academy of Religion; Lance Selfa, National Opinion Research Center; and James B. Wiggins, Syracuse University, presiding.

# What does the Census data say about the study of religion?

## A private sector response

*Jonathan Z. Smith, University of Chicago*

LET ME BEGIN by celebrating both our Academy and our profession for this Census. Within our field, it may yet take on the sort of mythic importance attached to the one invented by Luke in the service of one of the religious traditions we study. The AAR's initiative in undertaking this effort, with the crucial assistance of NORC, and the administrative labor necessary to bring it to fulfillment, along with the outstanding number of responses by our colleagues, has, already, gone a long way towards answering a pressing need in thinking about any educational enterprise: the replacement of anecdotes by data. Coupled with the recommendation for a special effort at re-surveying departmental structure, and with the proposed graduate program census, we will, at long last, come close to possessing a synoptic portrait of the total field in North America. The only piece that would be still lacking is a survey of the rapidly growing number of programs in religion in public schools, often designed in consultation with local college and university faculties.

Since the summary of the *Census* results was first published in the Fall issue of *Religious Studies News*, it has been a fascinating and instructive exercise to compare the results of this survey of the "total universe" of collegiate religion programs with one's impression of the state of the field gleaned from the more selective samples characteristic of past surveys; a set of influential reports on what might be termed with the new configuration of religious studies, ranging from Claude Welch's 1972, ACLS study, *Religious and Theological Studies in American Higher Education*, reprinted in JAAR. (Indeed, the title for today's session echoes the two questions that served as the heading of the concluding section to Hart's report, What do we not know that we need to know? What do we know from the present study that should lead to action and/or follow up studies?"). Today, a mature confidence has properly replaced the tentative hopefulness and the uncertainty that characterized the earlier surveys and studies of the 60's and 70's, which were largely spurred by the explosion in religion programs in public institutions (one report, edited by Milton McLean, reviewed 25 state programs in 1960; 135 in a second version in 1967). This explosion had an enduring influence on private institutions (especially, non-sectarian colleges), often resulting in the conversion of Bible departments into religious studies programs, or in separating out the study of religion from philosophy. The present *Census* numbers would stun the authors of these earlier reports. Employing strict criteria, NORC identified a "core universe" of 1,480 programs in religion. While the raw numbers were not published, using unforgivably crude arithmetic, if I multiply out the average of the averages, this appears to convert to something in excess of 8,000 faculty; 40,000 majors; nearly 50,000 individual courses - some 25% of which are located in public institutions. We may not always know what we are doing, but we are doing exceedingly well at it!

It has been equally instructive to compare what the *Census*' numerical data tells us with the quite different sort of information, gained by intensive interviews and observation at four institutions, in the just-published ethnography by Conrad Cherry, Betty DeBerg, and Amanda Portfield, *Religion on Campus*. This work, among other things, reminds us both of the extraordinary number of extracurricular courses in religious studies (from informal Bible-study groups to professional programs sponsored by national religious organizations), and of just how little the current AAR Census tells us about our students. Such lacks are, perhaps, appropriate to its institutional focus on faculty and on departmental structures, but they remain lacks nevertheless.

To take up the matter of students. We have had, as of yet, no report on the answer to question A7, as to whether a department or program offers a "minor in religion". The question of the growing trend of the 'double major' was not asked. The survey format will not allow us to discern, in either case, any patterns in what the 'companion' major might be. Similarly, without a disaggregation of the "total enrollment" figures asked for by question C12, it is impossible to gauge how many college students take only a single course in religion, how many are elective recidivists, how many are majors. Nor will a focus on "total enrollment" allow us to determine how many courses in other departments or programs are 'counted' as part of a student's religion major. That is to say, on the basis of the published Census data, we can begin to guess the degree to which religious studies programs support the liberal arts curriculum; we cannot clarify the degree to which the offerings of other departments support the religious studies curriculum. This support, at times, reflects intellectual interests; at times, it is made urgent by the relatively small size of the faculty in many religion programs.

Shifting attention to faculty matters, the Census summary provides too little information on the nearly 50% of the programs who describe themselves, in answer

See **SMITH**, p.23

# What does the Census data say about the study of religion?

## A public sector perspective

*Linell Cady, Arizona State University*

### *Editor's Note:*

*Linell Cady is Professor of Religious Studies at Arizona State University. "Religious Studies, Theology, and the University: Changing Maps, Shifting Terrain," a volume of essays co-edited with Delwin Brown, will be published by SUNY in the fall.*

I WANT TO BEGIN by acknowledging the importance of this study for getting a handle on undergraduate programs in religion and theology in North America, and providing some information that can ground and correct our intuitions about the size and character of the field. We clearly needed to gain a more empirically informed understanding of what is going on in the study of religion, and we are fortunate that the AAR, with support from the Lilly Endowment, has been able to oversee the completion of this project. In his summary of the findings, Edward Gray notes that "our knowledge of the field has grown exponentially" from this study.[1] I suppose that is necessarily true, when starting from virtually nothing. That statistical metaphor did make me laugh, reminding me that what is "not said" with statistics is often as important as what is "said." I have been asked to reflect upon the findings of the Census from the perspective of public higher education. My remarks are based upon Edward Gray's highlights of the findings, since the entire data set has not yet been released.

Although the Census does provide a snapshot of the field as currently configured, it is clear that the picture will become much more revealing as it is situated in a comparative framework. The Census collected important information in a number of areas, including: the size of the faculty, broken down by type of institution and full-time and part-time positions; the number of religious studies majors and degrees awarded in the field; and the total enrollment in undergraduate religion courses. This information will grow in importance as we are able to identify trends in the field. For example, knowing the current number of majors in religious studies nationally is much less significant than knowing whether the number is growing, static, or on the decline. The same holds true for the total enrollment in undergraduate courses in religion. Information on national trends regarding majors and total undergraduate enrollment in the field can be quite useful for individual departments seeking to interpret their own enrollment patterns. The Census questionnaire did ask units to report information in a number of these areas not only for the 1999-2000 academic year, but for 1996-97 year as well. Since this revealing information regarding historical trends is not included in the highlights of the findings, I wonder whether the omission is due to a sizable percentage of chairs not providing historical data that is not always very easy to retrieve. If this is the case, the meaning and value of the current data lies primarily in the future, when we can use it as a base to track ourselves through time.

In addition to capturing the periodic fluctuations in our own total undergraduate enrollment in religion courses, it would also be useful to secure total institutional undergraduate enrollment from each institution for comparative purposes. This would allow us to determine whether the field of religion is growing, static, or declining in relation to growth rates within higher education as a whole.

The Census portrait will also gain in interpretive value through comparison to data from related disciplines within the liberal arts. The number of majors or faculty — by institutional type or in the aggregate - will be much more significant when contrasted with similar data from, say, the discipline of history or philosophy. We could not even begin to understand ourselves in relationship to our academic neighbors until we began to gather this type of institutional information. Again, the Census is a critical first step in an ongoing process that promises to yield significant self-understanding as we locate ourselves in relation to the past and to neighboring disciplines in the liberal arts.

But enough about future promise. I want to consider what the data indicates about the current shape of the field, addressing first the issue of the institutionalization of the academic study of religion within higher education. Through a series of screening steps, the study identified 1,480 academic programs in North America in which the study of religion is a central focus. Data collection concentrated on this group. Focusing attention on this group is necessary if we are to grasp the shape of the field. It is also important, however, to situate the field in relationship to the broader universe of higher education. According to the US Secretary of Education, there are 6,836 institutions of higher education in this country. Narrowing this down to accredited, or in Canada "recognized" institutions that are public or private not-for-profit, the study identified 3,274 US and 395 Canadian institutions in the broader universe of higher education.[2]

See **CADY**, p.21

# In Memoriam: Julia Ching

*Amir Hussain, Department of Religious Studies, California State University, Northridge*

CHING DIED ON October 26, 2001. Many of you may know her work as one of our finest scholars of religion in China. She was a University Professor at the University of Toronto, the highest rank given to those who have made a significant contribution to world-wide scholarship. She was also inducted into the Order of Canada, the highest award Canada has for its citizens. I knew Julia, and wrote a review of one of her last books for the *University of Toronto Quarterly*. It offers some insight into the person that she was.

*Julia Ching. The Butterfly Healing: A Life Between East and West*

Novalis 1998. xii, 220. US$16.00

"...And you want to travel with her
And you want to travel blind
And you know that you can trust her
For she's touched your perfect body with her mind."

-*Leonard Cohen*, "Suzanne"

Julia Ching is one of the world's leading authorities on China, an author of more than a dozen books on Chinese religion and philosophy. She holds the title of "University Professor," the University of Toronto's highest honor for faculty. It was as an undergraduate student at Toronto in the 1980's, that I first got to know Professor Ching. Until reading this powerful work, I had no idea that she was also a gifted poet. I can find no better reaction to her work than in the words of another Canadian poet, Leonard Cohen. You want to travel with her.

This book is many things. First and foremost, it is an autobiography of an extraordinary life, lived "in a place called the world" (p. 3). Second, it is a story of sickness and healing, both of the body and the spirit. Third, it is an introduction to the religions and cultures of the world. Finally, it is about the struggles in the academy of those of us who are not white: those who are often welcomed in theory but not in practice.

Professor Ching tells her story, beginning with her birth in Shanghai, movements between Hong Kong and Shanghai as a refugee ("My earliest memories are of war", p. 11), and then to the United States for university study. It was there that she entered the convent (the Ursuline order of nuns), remaining with them for almost two decades. And it was during this time that she had her first experience with cancer. Much of the book is concerned with the various cancers and concomitant medical problems that she encountered. It introduces the reader to different medicines, and to several technologies for dealing with illness. In this regard, the book is a survivor's story, told with courage and honesty.

See **CHING**, p22

## Public Understanding of Religion

*Editor's Note:*

*The AAR selected three journalists to receive its Awards for Best In-Depth Reporting on Religion in 2000. In the Fall 2001 issue, RSN reprinted a story by awardee Richard Ostling of the* Associated Press. *He won the category for news outlets over 100,000 circulation. Rhonda Parks Manville of the* Santa Barbara Press-News *won the category for news outlets under 100,000.*

*Manville submitted stories on memorials near fatality sites, recent historical Jesus scholarship, Spiritualism, the eco-spirituality movement, and the dialogue between medical professionals and Jehovah's on blood transfusions. The award jury noted that her stories "range widely yet carefully over the religious landscape of southern California, showing sensitivity and discernment as she provides a vivid sense of the variety in contemporary religions."*

*The award is overseen by the AAR's Public Understanding of Religion Committee, Dena S. Davis, chair, which appoints one of the committee members and two other people to judge the submissions. The jurors were Edmund B. Lambeth, professor emeritus of journalism at the University of Missouri at Columbia, Anthony Pinn, assistant professor of religious studies at Macalester College, and Mark Silk, director of the Center for the Study of Religion in Public Life and editor of* Religion in the News.

*Winner for the under 100,000 circulation category*

*One of five articles submitted for the award*

# Public Mourning Displays A Desire To Reconnect: Senseless tragedy yields to need for sacred space



*Rhonda Parks Manville, Santa Barbara News-Press*

**February 2, 2000**

A BOUQUET OF FLOWERS bobbed in the waves off Stearns Wharf, tossed there as a tribute to the 88 lives lost in the Alaska Airlines jet crash on Jan. 31.

Like so many other tragedies in recent years — the bombing in Oklahoma City, the shootings at Columbine High School, and the sudden deaths of Princess Diana and John F. Kennedy Jr. — the crash of Flight 261 moved ordinary people to memorialize individuals they did not know.

Religious experts, psychologists and grief counselors say the growing trend of mourning for strangers and erecting shrines of flowers and candles near the site of tragic deaths is a multifaceted phenomenon.

While public displays of grief are partly intended to help comfort bereaved family members, they also indicate that people are yearning to connect with each other, with the sacred, and with their own grief and sorrow. Some see these expressions of loss as an attempt to reclaim a feeling of belonging, as well as to show that life is meaningful — even if it is disturbingly uncertain.

"This crash was the archetypal statement of meaninglessness, with people on holiday with their children and whole families wiped out," said UCSB religious studies professor Richard Hecht.

"Going out and making these memorial gestures is a way of stating that life cannot be meaningless. We want to memorialize these people. We will not allow their lives to go into oblivion."

In the crush of modern life, with so little time for reflection, tragedy sometimes has a way of reminding people of what counts most. Performing some sort of ritual, such as placing flowers near a crash site, makes people feel better. It is a form of healing, grief experts say.

"In some sense, we are grieving because we don't know what tomorrow will bring. A public loss like this shakes up our security and it shows us how fragile life is," said Kate Schellie, program director of Grief and Loss Services in Santa Maria.

"We live in a little bubble, thinking that we can control life, and that is a myth, a fantasy. Doing something allows us to take control of things again."

In the weeks following the Alaska Airlines crash, hundreds of people traveled to Port Hueneme from nearby cities and towns to place flowers, teddy bears, candles and notes on the sand. Some mourners dropped to their knees in prayer.

The Rev. Michelle Woodhouse of Montecito's All Saints-by-the-Sea Episcopal Church went to Port Hueneme, the hub of the recovery effort, to assist the Red Cross. Many people arrived at the scene in the first week to pay respects to the dead, and it was a moving sight, she said.

"In the face of such a horrendous tragedy so close to home, I saw people leaving mementos on the beach as an outpouring of their compassion," Woodhouse said. "People are good, and they want to touch these families. There is a solidarity with those who are grieving. And who knows what history each person brings, what losses they may have experienced that helped them to act on their compassion. This is a way of reaching out to others."

When Barbara Garcia-Weed went to the beach to place a white cross in the sand, she found herself hugging another woman who had come to place flowers at the site. "We looked at each other and we just knew" what the other was feeling, although they had never met before.

"I placed myself in the position of those families that were suffering and I wanted them to know that we cared about them," said Garcia-Weed of Ventura. "Public vigils are a way of showing that we care. People need to help each other in times of need,

See **MOURNING**, p.16

AAR

SPECIAL FEATURE

# ISLAM

### *Editor's Note:*

*The previous issue of* RSN *was in press on September 11th. Although some time has passed since then, this special section of* RSN *is still timely. We thank the Study of Islam section and others for contributing to this special section.* *See related essay on p.17.*

## Resources for teaching Islam

### *Editor's Note:*

*This article reviews twelve books and two films, including:*

Chittick, William, and Sachiko Murata. *Vision of Islam*. Saint Paul: Paragon, 1995 (1557785163).

Elias, Jamal J. Islam. (Religions of the World Series) Paramus, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999 (0132662639).

Ernst, Carl W. *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism*. Boston: Shambhala, 1997 (1570621802).

Denny, Frederick. *An Introduction to Islam*. Chicago: Kazi Publications, 1996 (0614214149).

Esack, Farid. *On Being a Muslim*. Oxford: Oneworld, 1999 (1851681469).

Esposito, John. (ed.) *The Oxford History of Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999 (0195107993).

Humphreys, R. Stephen. *Between Memory and Desire*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001 (0520229185).

Kanafani, Ghassan. *Men in the Sun*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1998 (0894108573).

Kurzman, Charles. (ed.) *Liberal Islam*. A Sourcebook. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998 (0195116224).

Lings, Martin. *Muhammad*. Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1995 (094662125X).

Salih, Tayeb. *Season of Migration to the North.* Westport: Heinemann, 1970 (0435900668).

Sells, Michael. *Approaching the Qur'an. Ashland* (OR): White Cloud Press, 1999 (1883991269).

**Videos:**

Umm Kulthum: *A Voice Like Egypt*. 1996. Directed by Michal Goldman. 67 min.

On Boys, *Girls and the Veil.* 1995. Directed by Yousry Nasrallah. 73 min.

### *Omid Safi, Colgate University*

A GREAT BURDEN often falls on the shoulders of the "Islam course" to be all things to all people: a bit of Qur'an, Prophet Muhammad's life, early formations of Islamic thought, some mysticism and philosophy, constructions of gender and sexuality, colonial and post-colonial experiences, and Islam in America. In addressing these various themes, I try to emphasize Islam as a tradition-in-the-making, rather than an eternal, unchanging "Tradition" that simply descended from heaven fully developed. The Qur'an may be seen by Muslims as Divinely revealed, but formulating the Islamic tradition(s) involves contestation and debate among various communities. I also highlight internal struggles for definition and categories, so that my students get a sense of the ways in which the issue of who has spoken and continues to speak for Islam is a contested issue. To do this, I like to have some texts (such as Chittick) that position themselves as normative presentations of Islam, and others (such as Ernst and Esack), which take an approach that emphasizes the ongoing debates. The syllabus for this course is available on-line, at: *http://classes.colgate.edu/osafi/*

I come back to again and again to certain texts in teaching my courses. For Qur'an, I find little that compares with Michael Sells' *Approaching the Qur'an*. The text features superb translations with just the right amount of commentary, and insightful attention to issues of sound and gender. The book comes with a CD featuring 33 tracks of recitation by male and female reciters from various parts of the Muslim world.

For the life of the Prophet, I still like Martin Lings' *Muhammad*: *His life based on the earliest sources*. It is a long but wonderful way for students to make connections between the Qur'an and episodes in Muhammad's life.

For a self-styled normative presentation of Islam (which we both engage and problematize in class), there are few works at the level of sophistication of William Chittick and Sachiko Murata's *Vision of Islam*. The students appreciate the subtle and philosophical tone, while they also point to the need to complement it with more historical and anthropological approaches in other texts.

For a discussion of the Sufi tradition, I rely on Carl W. Ernst's *Sufism: An essential introduction to the philosophy and practice of the mystical tradition of Islam*. In addition to its superb discussion of Sufi teachings, it highlights the role of Euro-American scholars in constructing Islam and Sufism, and talks about the Sufi tradition as one simultaneously championed and contested by different Muslims.

At times, it is difficult to find contemporary texts by Muslims who engage their tradition in a critical, first person voice. One of the most successful, in my estimation, is Farid Esack's *On Being a Muslim*: *Finding a religious path in the world today*. It quite vigorously engages issues of religious authority, gender constructions, class and racial issues, and exclusivism in contemporary Muslim societies.

The main strength of approaching material through these different sources is that it shatters the students' pre-set expectation of a monolithic, universal, eternally unchanging Islam. It forces them to confront the commonalities and the varieties — the contestation — of interpretations of Islam. This, it seems to me, is one of the main goals of any course in religious studies.

### *Alfons H. Teipen, Furman University*

GIVEN THE USUAL TIME constraints, it is easy to fall into essentializing, quasi-Orientalist modes of presentation when teaching a basic introductory course on Islam as a religious tradition. The situation is exacerbated at an institution where a sizable number of Christian students, with a literalist understanding of their own sacred scripture, expect no less literalism in other religious traditions. Add to this the common misconceptions with which many Americans approach Islam in the first place, and you have a recipe for potentially serious misunderstandings. Islam may be seen as a religious tradition whose adherents are all "Qur'an-thumbing villains" of the fundamentalist, anti-modern, extremist sort, bent on overthrowing "the Christian West."

Charles Kurzman's *Liberal Islam*, an anthology of 32 20th century Muslim voices hailing from a wide variety of geographical regions, serves as a very fine resource to counteract some of these misunderstandings. Kurzman categorizes different trends within Islam as "customary," "revivalist," and "liberal" Islam, arguing that the latter has been "generally ignored by Western scholars and members of the media." Kurzman's selection of different "liberal" voices is balanced; the thematic choices touch on many of the very significant areas of contestation, including

See **RESOURCES**, p.12

## Scholars of Islam Caution Against Simplistic Views of the Faith

### *Editor's Note:*

*Many readers unfamiliar with the Religion News Service will benefit by a visit to their very helpful website,* www.religionnews.com.

*By EricGorski*



DENVER — With the public's attention trained on their field of study, some of the nation's top scholars of Islam gathered at the American Academy of Religion's annual meeting Nov. 17-20 to debate how to best communicate the religious complexities of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and their aftermath.

The professors, speaking at a special session open to the public, said that discourse must go beyond the simplified explanation that "Islam is peace," that violence plays a part in many world religions and that focusing only on the forces behind Sept. 11 would diminish Islam's rich history and culture.

An estimated 7,000 people attended the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, an association of scholars and teachers of religion based at Emory University in Atlanta. The meetings mostly provide members a glimpse of the latest research in the field, with hundreds of papers being presented on a dizzying array of subjects — everything from new Asian religions and early Pentecostals in American culture to Harry Potter, religion on the Internet and spiritual imagery in contemporary film.

See **SCHOLARS**, p.10

**SCHOLARS** from p.9

The special session on Islam and Sept. 11 reflects something different: a push by the organization in the past decade to reach beyond academia's ivory towers.

"We've been very aware as an organization ever since at least the Waco incident that it's important to get out into the public square," said Barbara DeConcini, the academy's executive director.

The federal government's bloody standoff in 1993 with David Koresh's Branch Davidian sect in Waco, Texas, marked a turning point in how the academy views itself, DeConcini said. Two academy members — Lawrence Sullivan of Harvard University and Nancy Ammerman of Hartford Seminary — testified before a Department of Justice panel on Waco, which led to conversations between the FBI and the academy about how to peacefully negotiate conflicts with religious groups or leaders.

The FBI, in fact, was to stage a mock hostage scenario at this year's AAR conference but canceled after the Sept. 11 attacks. Since Waco, the academy has taken several steps to become more accessible, including starting an e-mail referral service connecting journalists to experts in particular fields.

After the Sept. 11 attacks, the academy's board of directors issued a statement urging its members to serve as resources in a "national conversation" on issues that include "suffering and evil, human rights and religious liberties, international order and justice, democracy and the common good." The academy's Study of Islam section also launched a Web page featuring statements from Islamic groups, documentation of hate crimes against Muslims and news articles (*http://groups.colgate.edu/ aarislam/response.htm*).

Regularly scheduled sessions in Denver on Muslim issues — including those on Sufi literature and how clothing reflects Islamic sentiment about women — drew larger than normal crowds.

The special session on Islam and Sept. 11 was led by Mark Juergensmeyer, a professor at the University of California at Santa Barbara and author of "Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence." The book includes an interview with Mahmud Abouhalima, who was convicted for his involvement in the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center.

Juergensmeyer said scholars were right in their response that religion had nothing to do with the attacks, since Islam literally means "peace" and does not allow suicide or the killing of innocents. Yet, he said, "we know religion had everything to do with it ... In a strange way, (the terrorists) were trying to bring a triumphant return of religion to the public stage. Religion was at the heart of this terrible vision."

Bruce Lawrence, chairman of Duke University's religion department and author of "Shattering the Myth: Islam Beyond Violence," said members of the academy are failing at reaching "Joe Six-Pack and Jane Wal-Mart," and he said he has little hope of changing that. One group the academy can reach are people who are "the professionally educated, globally literate and socially engaged," he said.

Lawrence said the greatest challenge in the post-Sept. 11 world is "the long-term prospect of political and economic restoration." Joining a public debate about Islam and Sept. 11 carries risks, however, said Ebrahim Moosa, a professor of Islamic studies at Duke University. The Bush administration's recently announced plans to convene military tribunals to prosecute overseas terrorists does not preclude the government from accusing someone who denounces U.S. foreign policy of being a terrorist, Moosa said. He also urged objectivity. "There's no such thing as a peaceful Islam, Christianity, Judaism or Buddhism," said Moosa, who narrowly escaped death after Muslim militants bombed his family's house in South Africa in 1998. "Every religious response comes within a context. There are contexts within Islam that are peaceful and not so peaceful."

The academy's members who teach Islam are facing an additional pressure: Their universities, colleges and seminaries are expecting a crush of student interest in courses on Islam next semester.

A Lilly Endowment-funded census last year of about 900 religion and theology departments found only about one-third of the institutions offered courses in Islam. Jonathan Brockopp, assistant professor of religion at Bard College and co-chair of the academy's section for the study of Islam, said he expects a "huge hiring binge" in Islamic studies as a result of Sept. 11 and the war in Afghanistan.





***This piece originally appeared in* Sightings *10/03/01. It is reprinted with permission.***

# An Extraordinary Discussion

*— Jean Bethke Elshtain*

Sightings *is published electronically by the Martin Marty Center at the University of Chicago Divinity School. Jean Bethke Elsthain is the Laura Spellman Rockefeller Professor of Social and Political Ethics at the University of Chicago Divinity School.*

ON THURSDAY, September 20, only hours before his speech before Congress, President George W. Bush spent over an hour talking and praying with a group of twenty some leaders of America's diverse religious communities. I was surprised and honored to be included in the meeting — this despite the fact that I can by no means be described as a leader of a particular religious community. I would like to give readers of *Sightings* a sense of how the event unfolded.

My hunch is that someone on the White House staff decided that they needed a representative from one of America's leading divinity schools, and chose me because I have in the past addressed the ethics of war and war-making. I did not know most of those included. I recognized Franklin Graham, son of Billy Graham, from media sightings. I greeted Cardinal Bernard Law of Boston by name because he was, in fact, the one person I had met in the past.

We gathered, as requested, at 12:15 p.m. at the northwest appointments gate of the White House. We cleared security, and were then ushered into the Eisenhower Executive Office Building across from the White House. There we gathered together, greeted one another, and shared expressions of peace and concern. I found it rather extraordinary that the single most ecumenical event I have ever attended had been put together by the White House. All Christian orientations were represented, as were members from the Orthodox, Jewish, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim communities.

We discussed a proposed statement — put together by a member of our group, not by the White House — for around forty minutes. A few of us made proposals for additions and corrections. These were accepted and the statement was signed by all of us. We offered up our prayers for the bereaved. We lifted up those who "selflessly gave their lives in an attempt to rescue others." We expressed our gratitude that "the President has spoken out early and clearly to denounce acts of bigotry and racism directed against Arabs, Muslims, and others in our midst. To yield to hate is to give victory to the terrorists." We called the attacks of September 11 acts against all of humanity — over sixty other countries lost citizens in the attacks — and we argued that there was a "grave obligation to do all we can to protect innocent human life" because "the common good has been threatened by these attacks...." We called for a response that was just and peaceful — understanding, as many of us do, that the claims of justice and of peace must guide any reaction.

After our deliberations concluded, we were ushered to the Roosevelt Room of the White House. Chairs were arranged in a circle. There was no table. When the President entered the room, he greeted people he knew by name and asked us to be seated. When he noticed that the chairs on either side of him were empty — people giving the President some room — he gestured and said, "Come on in here. I feel lonely down here." People scooted in. The President then offered twenty to twenty-five minutes of reflection on the situation, indicating the need to steer a careful course between calling for Americans to be attentive but doing so in a way that doesn't instill fear in hearts already bestirred and stunned by what had happened. He indicated that he would oppose anyone who singled out those of the Muslim faith or Arab background for acts of vigilantism and bigotry as Islam, he stated, is a "religion that preaches peace" and those who had hijacked Islam to murder nearly seven thousand people did not represent Islam.

The President discussed the terrible day, going over some of the events as he experienced them, doing what so many Americans are doing in trying to come to grips with what happened. He told us that it is clear the White House was a target; that it was an "old building made of plaster and brick" and that had it been struck it would have been demolished and many people killed, "including my wife." (He paused and choked up at that thought.) The overall sense the President conveyed was that of a man who is horrified, saddened, clear about his Constitutional responsibility to protect the country and her citizens, determined to build an international coalition and not to go it alone, equally determined to respond in a way that is measured and not unlimited.

Following this gripping presentation, the President asked us to share concerns and thoughts. Some among the group lifted up particular Scriptural passages they found apt for our tragic circumstance. Others — the representatives of the Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim communities — brought their support and thanked the President for his words against bigotry.

Deciding this might be my only opportunity to offer advice to a President of the United States face-to-face, I indicated that I taught "political ethics," to which the President responded jocularly (as do most people when I tell them this), "Is there such a thing?" I replied that "I like to think so and I believe you are attempting to exemplify such in operation through this crisis." I then said that a President's role as "civic educator" has never been more important. That he must explain things to the American people; teach patience to an impatient people; the need to sacrifice to a people unused to sacrifice. The President indicated he was aware of this important responsibility and it was clear that he had already given the civic education role some thought.

The entire meeting was unhurried, casual, thoughtful. As the President's aides began to gather in the room, it was clear the meeting — now well into its second hour — was about to end. One of our group asked, "Mr. President, what can we do for you?" He indicated that we could "pray for me, for our country, for my family." He believes in the efficacy of prayer and

See **ELSHTAIN**, p.23

*The column below originally appeared in Sightings 11/19/01, reprinted with permission*

# Numbers Games: Handle With Care

*— Martin E. Marty*

Sightings *is published electronically by the Martin Marty Center at the University of Chicago Divinity School.*

"HOW MANY MUSLIMS (or Jews or Mormons or Christians) live in the United States?" For decades the Census has not been allowed to count noses to determine who is what religiously. So observers of American religion are left to their own devices to assess the size of denominations, and of claimed affiliations and preferences.

Counting noses has come to depend on two sources. One source is poll-takers calling during the dinner hour to ask "What is your religious preference?" The other source is religious leaders, on both the local and the national scene. People who respond to telephone interviewers may have all kinds of motives for declaring themselves as part of this or that group, or no group at all. And people who report on the size of their congregations, denominations, and cohorts also have a variety of motives. These include, but are not limited to, claiming bragging rights, being able to throw weight around, or whining about decline in an unfriendly world. Congregations inflate numbers to show that they are successful. Then they trim them when their denominations start "assessing" on a per capita basis.

All this by way of background to the latest stir on the counting scene. Daniel Pipes, director of the Middle East Forum and no friend to most of organized Islam, addressed the question "How many Muslims live in the United States?" in the November second issue of *The Chicago Sun-Times*. He noted that in 1986 the Saudi embassy claimed 10 million. But "a large 1990 demographic survey counted 1.3 million." In 1998, a Pakistani paper put it at 12 million. Wildly: the "usually authoritative Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches" counted 527,000 American Muslims in 1996 and six times as many (3.3. million) in 1998. There can't have been that many immigrants or converts; there is something subjective here.

Muslim organizations came up with a "guesstimation" of six, now seven million. So often is this figure used that people count it as being reliable. Pipes argues, credibly, that most religions inflate numbers to gain more voice in the public sphere. So he welcomed the new American Religious Identification Survey 2001 from CUNY, which polled fifty thousand people, and figured that 1.8 million Americans are Muslim. Tom Smith at the University of Chicago reviewed all reviews and figures 1,886,000 to 2,814,000 Muslims, not six or eight million. Both polling agencies instantly became subjects of attack from angry Muslim leaders.

Pipes is correct. There are fewer Muslims than Muslim organizations claim. "How many Muslims live in the United States?" We don't know, any more than we know with precision how many Jews or Christians do. The question to ask of all statistical ventures on this front is, "In whose interest is it to inflate or deflate the figures?" There are plenty of interests these days. Handle with care.

*Sightings* comes from the Martin Marty Center at the University of Chicago Divinity School.

## *Sightings* Contact information

Please send all inquiries, comments, and submissions to Jonathan Ebel, managing editor of *Sightings,* at *jhebel@midway.uchicago.edu*.

# "Death is a Master from..."

*Amir Hussain, Department of Religious Studies, California State University, Northridge*

ON SEPTEMBER 11, as I watched the destruction of the World Trade Center on television, my first thoughts were about my friends in New York City. I spent part of the morning phoning and e-mailing, making sure my friends were alive. One of the people about whom I was most concerned was Sid Shiff, who publishes some of the most exquisite books in the world through his Limited Editions Club. A few weeks earlier, I had purchased an edition that Sid had done of Anna Akhmatova's *Requiem*, a poem about her experiences living under Soviet terror that we are reading in the death and dying class that I teach. The next book that Sid wants me to have is his edition of Paul Celan's *Todesfuge / Deathfugue*. Celan was a Romanian Jew who lived through the horrors of the Shoah.

I am a Muslim, and I am also an academic who studies Islam. Trained in Canada at the University of Toronto, I am also an immigrant, having taught for the past four years in the Religious Studies Department of California State University, Northridge. Since September 11, I have made numerous presentations about Islam and Muslims in the United States. A few weeks ago, I participated in an event sponsored by Chatswoth United Methodist Church, which has a large Japanese American congregation. Rev. Ruy Mizuki was one of the first religious leaders to contact me, expressing solidarity between Japanese American Christians and American Muslims. Rev. Mizuki also invited Rabbi Ilana Grinblat of the B'nai Ami Synagogue to participate in the event. It was so heartening to hear the voices of Jewish Americans and Christian Americans who have been the victims of hate and intolerance speak out in support of Muslim Americans.

Last weekend, thinking more and more about the atrocities that we perpetrate against each other, I bought a new translation of Celan's poems. A line from *Todesfuge* remains stuck in my mind: "der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland / Death is a master from Germany". Toronto, my hometown, has one of the largest populations of survivors of the Shoah. Like many people born twenty years after the end of World War Two, I struggle with how so many could have remained silent in the early days, when it was still possible to do something before so many others were killed. Last night, I had a disturbing vision.

While flipping through the TV channels, I came across Pat Robertson on the Christian Broadcasting Network, doing a segment on Christians in Pakistan. He spoke about Islam as a "dangerous religion," and revisited his comments from some years ago that there was something wrong with any American, particularly an African American, who would convert to Islam. He went on to speak about the superiority of Christianity, especially with regard to what he saw as violence in Islam and its contrast with peace in Christianity.

I thought back to the e-mails that I have received from colleagues who teach at Christian institutions across the country. Many of them have talked about the rise in anti-Muslim rhetoric from certain Christian groups. I have seen also glimpses of this in my talks. At the last church at which I spoke, one of the audience members asked me why I thought I worshipped the same god he worshipped. He mentioned to me that his minister had taught him that Muslims worshipped a different god than the one God worshipped by Jews and Christians. Having heard from his minister what Muslims believed, no argument from me, a believing Muslim, could persuade him otherwise.

My thoughts go back to one of my teachers, Professor Wilfred Cantwell Smith, the greatest North American scholar of Islam in the past century. Professor Smith died last year, and I have missed him more than ever in the last two months. Professor Smith and his wife Muriel spent six years as missionaries in Lahore before the partition of India and the creation of Pakistan. When we first met, he commented that he had lived in Lahore, my birthplace, longer than I had lived there: six years to four. But Professor and Mrs. Smith were no ordinary missionaries. I don't know that they ever converted one person, but they taught and influenced thousands. They were splendid representatives of the type of Christianity that I came to know and love in Canada. Years ago, on a television show in Canada, I had the honor of sitting on a panel with the Very Reverend Dr. Bruce McLeod, a former moderator of the United Church of Canada, the largest Protestant Church in Canada. Dr. McLeod told me a story about Professor Smith. Someone once asked him, "Professor Smith, are you a Christian?" After his characteristic pause, Professor Smith repeated the question "Am I a Christian?" Then he answered, "Well, maybe I was, last week, at lunch, for about an hour. But if you really want to know, ask my neighbor."

In the four years I have been in the USA, I have not found anything like the United Church of Canada. I miss very much my conversations with members of that church. I'd like to keep the illusion that Canada would not allow a Pat Robertson to have the kind of power that he has in the USA. Perhaps it is time that I go home. I have tried to do what I can here, to educate my students and those in my communities about Islam in particular and religion in general. But I'm tired. When a major Christian leader can say such incorrect and hateful things about my religion, perhaps the journey is a much harder one than I imagined. There is so much work to be done.

Perhaps I simply need to hear the other voices: the ones of love and support that I have received in much greater numbers than the voices of hatred and ignorance. Sid called me a few weeks after the attacks, and wants to do a book about Islam, to introduce Americans to the beauty that is also present in the Muslim world. I rejoice in his outreach and his friendship. A small number of us — Muslim scholars of Islam — have been in contact with each other about how we can help to change the voices of American Islam. In them, I find a reason to believe that my work here is not in vain.

## The Study of Islam

### Findings from the Census of Religion and Theology Programs.

**Did your department or program offer undergraduate course(s) in Islam in 1999-2000:**

**Programs Reporting**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| YES | 290 | 32.3% |
| NO | 607 | 67.7% |

**How many undergraduate courses in Islam were offered in this period?**

| Numbers of courses offered (including multiple sections) | Percentage of all departments in the Census responding |
|---|---|
| 1 | 14.5 |
| 2 | 5.7 |
| 3 | 1.7 |
| 4 | 1.4 |
| 5 | 0.3 |
| 6 | 0.2 |
| 8 | 0.1 |
| 10 | 0.1 |
| 11 | 0.1 |
| 12 | 0.1 |

**Is a course in Islam required for the major?**

| | No. of departments in the Census | Percentage of all departments in the Census |
|---|---|---|
| YES | 55 | 6.1 |
| NO | 187 | 20.8 |

**Do any of the courses in Islam fulfill a general education or disbursement requirement?**

| | No. of departments | Percent of all departments in the Census |
|---|---|---|
| YES | 140 | 15.6 |
| NO | 93 | 10.4 |

Note, Not all respondents completed all part of all questions.
Source: Census of Religion and Theology Programs, 2000

**RESOURCES**, from p.11

political governance, gender issues, and freedom of thought. Within my course, students read selections from Kurzman during the latter part of the term; the selections serve to counterbalance readings on the same overall theme from what Kurzman would call "revivalist" sources. They supplement student presentations on the same topic, thus exposing students to the variety of attitudes within Islam on any issue. While Kurzman cannot be used alone, it does provide a wealth of material to counteract one-sided, Orientalist misapprehensions about a monolithic Islam.

*Jon Armajani, St. Mary's College of Maryland*

R. STEPHEN HUMPHREYS' *Between Memory and Desire: The Middle East in a Troubled Age* is one of the most thorough and thoughtful books on the history of the Middle East in the twentieth century. It is directed toward a general readership that may have little or no background in Islam or Middle Eastern politics. Humphreys, Professor of History and Islamic Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, examines the relationships between history, Islam, economics, and political structures within various countries of the Middle East. He also explores the problems which many Middle Eastern nations have faced as they have attempted to modernize and combat the often negative influences of colonialism and post-colonialism. The book provides a close contextual analysis of the wide rifts between the rich and the poor, the role of dictatorships, the dynamics of gender relations, Islamic fundamentalism, and the connections between Islam and human rights. While *Between Memory and Desire* was written before September 11, it is one of the best new books analyzing the circumstances in the Middle East leading to the relative popularity (in some Muslim circles), of Islamic fundamentalism, Osama bin Laden, and the Taliban. Although Humphreys does not pay significant attention to Bin Laden or to the Taliban, he does offer a helpful assessment of the contexts from which they emerged.

*Nelly van Doorn-Harder, Valparaiso University*

MY UNDERGRADUATE classes on Islam comprise a mix of Muslims, Christians and students of other faiths. This combination makes the search for appropriate material challenging. Although each of the following books is useful and comprehensive by itself, I combine them in order to provide the students with as wide a spectrum of Islam as possible.

We start with Frederick Denny's *Introduction to Islam*, covering the religious and historic fundamentals of Islam. Denny provides a wealth of information laced with examples and anecdotes. Part one of the book places Islam in the frame of its two older sisters — Judaism and Christianity — and discusses the pre-Islamic context. This part makes the book especially useful in a class with students of mixed religious backgrounds. Part two deals with the history, and part three discusses the basic beliefs of Islam, including Muslim tradition and philosophy were constructed. The fourth part is about Sufism. Part five, on Islamic personal and communal life, and Islam in the Modern World, are equally useful. Even so, my students prefer to study Elias when discussing these topics.

Jamal Elias' *Islam* focuses primarily on the modern period. It starts with a lucid description of how Islam functions in real life. Especially his last two chapters, "Islamic Thought in the Modern World," and "Looking to the Future," provide students with a succinct account of trends and developments in contemporary Islam. I also find Elias' book very useful in classes on world religions where there is only limited time for a consideration of Islam.

John Esposito's *Oxford History of Islam* is beautifully made, with a wealth of articles and attractive photographs. It is too advanced for undergraduates who are still building their knowledge of Islam, however. They need a simpler introduction before they can appreciate superb articles such as Vincent Cornell's "Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge." Esposito's book is useful, however, for special topics such as Islam in the West, the interaction between Islam and Christianity, and Islam outside the lands of the Middle East.

*Jonathan E. Brockopp, Bard College*

IT IS A CURIOUS CONUNDRUM that in our courses on Islam we may help to establish the very stereotypes we seek to defeat. With our shorthand representations of the Islamic religion (five pillars; five daily prayers; Islamic "law"), we seem to suggest that only pious Muslims are "good" Muslims, and that religion is their primary (or only) identity. To help counteract these impressions, I turn to novels and films to supplement the more academic sections of my syllabus. These resources help to introduce Muslims as people, not merely as objects of study. Further, I stay away from documentaries that try to summarize the religion in 45 minutes, preferring complex portrayals of particular events.

One of my favorite novels is Tayib Saleh's *Season of Migration to the North.* Beautifully

See **RESOURCES II**, p.21

*Reprinted from the ALTA Newsletter*

# ISLAM Resources

## Suggested Resources for the Study of Islam

*By Jack Ammerman, Librarian and Director of Educational Technology Hartford Seminary and Steven Blackburn, Reference and Instructional Services Librarian Hartford Seminary*

In recent decades, we have learned that we are enriched when we include the voices of minorities in our conversations about faith. When women, African-Americans, and Hispanics, for example, are included in the conversations, our understanding of scripture is enhanced, and our theological understanding is expanded.

The seminary students that use our libraries will minister in contexts in which multiple faith communities are found. In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, it seems even more important to provide resources to enable them to learn more about the faith of those whom they and their parishioners will encounter. This bibliography is a starting point for those desiring to provide resources to assist in the study of Islam. For additional resources, visit the Hartford Seminary Library web site (*www.library.hartsem.edu*).

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The Arab World (Bill Moyers)
Living Islam
Women and Islam
Women in Islam

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*www.islamicity.org*
*www.al-sunnah.com*
*www.library.hartsem.edu*

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## SYLLABUS PROJECT

After many years at Winfried Lauier University the Syllabi Project has moved to the AAR website. **Please update the address** to *http://www.aarweb.org/syllabus/*.

The new Project Webmaster is Joe DeRose (*jderose@aarweb.org*), Director of Membership and Technology Services. He replaces Adrien Desjardins, who played an instrumental role in designing the site in 1997, and ably served as its Webmaster from Spring 1997 through Winter 2001.


fig. 1


fig. 2


fig. 3


fig. 4


fig. 5


fig. 6


fig. 8


fig. 7

FROM

# Salamalecun Malecunsala *to Amen:*

## SEEING SYNCRETISM IN CUBA

*Edna M. Rodríguez Mangual and S. Brent Plate*
*(All photographs by Edna M. Rodríguez Mangual)*

With the rise of cultural studies and concerns with colonialism and post-colonialism, the term *syncretism* may be poised to gain renewed status as a useful descriptive term for the study of religion in a globally-oriented, diasporic world. Yet having the opportunity to see syncretism in action on a trip to Cuba in 1999, we realized that "syncretism," with its etymological roots in *belief*, might not be adequate to account for the visual, aesthetic practices of such admixtures. Thus, we might even suggest that syncretism be supplemented with a term like "synopticism" as a way to talk about the visual, aesthetic relations across and between religions. In the syncretic practices of Santería we found that the merging of beliefs is due very much in part to "visible analogies" between the two dissimilar religious traditions (fig. 1). Here, as elsewhere, the image precedes the word.

In its simplest description, Santería arose from the enslavement of West Africans who were brought to the New World, mixing the religious traditions of their ancestors with the Roman Catholicism transported from the Old World by Spanish conquistadors. The result was a new, hybrid culture and set of religious practices. In part, the mixing worked because Yoruban and other West African religions share several translatable concepts and practices with Catholicism, most especially an interest in sacred personages. In the Yoruba tradition, such personages are worshipped as *orishas*, while in Catholicism they are called *saints* ("santería" itself derives from the Spanish santo, or "saint"). The mixture survived because each religion makes use of devotional images, and African slaves were able to hide images of their Orishas among Catholic shrines already flooded with Madonnas, crucifixes, and Christian saints. More than mere survival strategy, however, the fusion of these material forms displays the ongoing power of images in religious practice as they take on new forces and new beliefs.

September 8 in Cuba is the Day of the Patroness and celebrations begin in the Catholic Church with homages paid to the Virgin (fig. 2). The festivities end with the *Toque de tambores* (Playing of the Drums) three days later on September 11, the West African day of Ochún. During the ceremonies, some women wear their bridal gowns again in order for the Virgin to bless their marriages (figs. 3 & 4), while Santeros also wear their usual white clothes and necklaces the color of their Orisha (fig. 5).

While in Cuba we were able to attend a *despojo* (rite to exorcise the evil from a person's fate). As we entered the munanzo (sacred room where the deities reside; fig. 6) we noticed an image of Jesus at the top of the shrine alongside cauldrons (*ngangas*) where offerings are given to the *orisha*. When a person enters the room, the proper address is necessary: one must spit some rum on the shrine, blow smoke from a cigar on the icons and objects, and say, "*Salamalecun, Malecunsala*" (a salutation, from Arabic). The Santero, or *Babalocha*, draws a grid (*tablero*) on the floor (fig. 7) where cowerie shells (*caracoles*) are thrown in order to interpret the *diloggún* (oracle). After prayers in Spanish and Yoruban — including the Lord's Prayer (*Padre Nuestra*) — and after the person has been touched with the pertinent plants, the shells are thrown (fig. 8). When the shells fall in an upward position, all evil has left the room. The rite finishes with a final prayer which concludes with an "amen." So here, in this small room on this small island, we found linguistic and imagistic traces of Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and Yoruban traditions, all rearranged in a new way.

Cuba is and always has been situated among various confluences—between the Old World and the New, between North America and South America, between the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. Earlier oppositions between Roman Catholic and West African systems of belief now merge with oppositions between capitalism and communism, signaling Cuba's ongoing status at the junction of traditions. As Western-style tourism increases and the US dollar grows in influence, we must wait to find what new hybrid, syncretic traditions will emerge, and what visible form they may take.

*About the Authors: Edna Rodríguez is Assistant Professor of Spanish and Latin American Studies at Texas Christian University. She is currently completing a manuscript on Cuban writer Lydia Cabrera. Brent Plate is Assistant Professor of Religion at Texas Christian University. His book,* Religion, Art, and Visual Culture*, was published by Palgrave in January.*

# Acting Religious:

## Theatre as a Pedagogical Tool for Religious Studies

*By Victoria Rue*

***Victoria Rue, Ph.D.,*** *is a feminist theologian, playwright, director and teacher. Victoria's directing work has been seen at the New York Shakespeare Festival, The Women's Project (NYC), Manhattan Theatre Club, the Mark Taper Forum (LA), BRAVA! For Women in the Arts (San Francisco). Plays she has written include* Ecstasy in the Everyday *(co-authored with Letitia Bartlett; explores everyday mysticism),* CancerBodies: Women Speaking the Unspeakable, The Landscape of My Body *(an exploration of lesbian sexuality and spirituality), and* The Terry Project *(a look at the experience of schizophrenia). For ten years, she was a member of the faculty at the American Conservatory Theatre (SF). Her Ph.D. from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley focused on how feminist theatre enacts feminist theology. She is currently lecturing at St. Lawrence University in Canton, New York.*

*Instruction cannot begin with God but must connect to people's experience. And one of the central experiences is that the self's seclusion is broken open.*

*-Dorothee Soelle, The Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance*

AS CLASS BEGINS, students know to expect something new. They come hoping for it, actually. This is an introductory course to religious studies-Mystery and Meaning, at St. Lawrence University. There are some 30 students present. We meet once a week for three hours. I find that my approach demands more than the eighty minutes twice-weekly approach of most courses. The room is large and carpeted — easier to move around, work on the floor, create environments.

To begin, we push the desks aside and take off our shoes because we are on the "holy ground" of creativity. We immediately begin with exercises that energize the body, which allows all of us to concentrate more fully. These exercises include, walking to music/rhythms, walking in slow motion, and games that test listening and visual awareness. I remind the students that there are many ways of "knowing." We are beginning with our bodies.

Theatre is all about bodies. Because I am a theatre artist as well as a religious studies professor, teaching works best for me when it is an experience of the mind and body. In the l980's, when I discovered feminist theology, I was inspired by its commitment to the primacy of women's bodily experiences. It is through this lens that I connect my theatre-making to teaching religion.

During 2001, as a member of the Lilly Luce Teaching Workshop: Teaching in the Global Village, I had the opportunity to share my approaches with many gifted teachers. From them I heard the need for new techniques, for a theatre/bodied approach to teaching religious studies.

As a professor melding disparate disciplines, it has been my experience that when the arts are utilized within courses in the humanities and social sciences, students learn on both cognitive and experiential levels. Pedagogically, the arts are not only tools for communicating in the global arena, they are also models for cooperation, community building, and somatic learning. Thus, I bring to my theatre-related courses my training in social issues and theology, a perspective that makes theatre an ethical and social enterprise. In religious studies programs, on the other hand, I use a blend of teaching modes that include seminar-style student learning and dramatic enactment. Courses I have taught, such as Mystery and Meaning, Biblical Drama, Mysticism, Feminist Theologies, and Millennial Thinking have all utilized theatre as an embodied technique for learning.

The class is now AWAKE and ready to work together. As a way of modeling a subsequent exercise, I ask volunteers to create body sculptures. Students form improvised "photographs/sculptures" of one-word themes: earth, sky, family, mother, father, religion, and finally the word "God." As they join the exercise one at a time, I direct students to link physically to form the sculpture. To depict earth, some students are flat on the ground; another sits on their prostrate bodies holding a student representing a child. Others spread their limbs as trees connecting earth, sky and the forest. This exercise demands that students rely on one another physically to form an idea. At the end of all the sculptures, we begin to unpack the images. What do you find compelling about them? What felt untrue to you? Were any images similar to another? Why? They are often surprised by the similarity between the "father" and "God" sculptures — authoritative, commanding, suspicious and frequently angry. It's important to acknowledge all impressions of the sculptures. This exercise stirs up student responses. They see that multiple interpretations are possible for a simple image.

So far, these exercises have introduced students to the use of their bodies as a "way of knowing," which assumes the importance of bodily experience and that they can communicate in a classroom without words.

Following from this, we create an exercise that is a variant on the one above, but allows everyone in the class to "make their experience visible" and become a witness to their own stories. I divide the class into groups of 4 or 5 (six total groups). Each person in each group molds her peers like clay to create a "photograph" of her grandparents' notion of Mystery and Meaning; she then remolds her peers to show her parents' notion and then her own. There are lively discussions after each picture has been created. What was that image about? What was your mother doing in that image — I wasn't clear about it, what was going on? Afterwards, each group will select one person's images to share with the entire class. Once the images are shown to the whole group, I direct the discussion to the purpose of the class: what is religious experience? Did you see it depicted in any of these "pictures?" And off we go.

A week later in our class, after reading *Being Peace*, by Thich Nhat Hanh, I introduce vipassana, or mindfulness meditation, as an aspect of religious experience. Students have been instructed to memorize a "gatha" written by Thich Nhat Hanh. "Gathas" are small poems that when repeated with everyday actions usher in an awareness of the present moment and our connectedness to other human beings.

**Serving Food:**
In this food,
I see clearly the presence
of the entire universe
supporting my existence.

**Brushing Your Teeth:**
Brushing my teeth and rinsing my mouth,
I vow to speak purely and lovingly.
When my mouth is fragrant with right speech,
a flower blooms in the garden of my heart.

In another class I taught using this method, a woman student had chosen the gatha for washing feet and offered to share it with us in class. "Peace and joy in each toe — my own peace and joy." She sat on the floor, took her shoes off, and began to heartily rub the toes of her feet. Breathing steadily, fully engaged with the sight of her toes, she repeated her gatha over and over again. She began to cry, still focusing on her toes. And slowly she began to laugh. All the while, the words of the gatha floated like water lilies over her sea of emotions. Afterwards she told us that her feet, particularly her toes, had been broken, sprained, and cut many times in her life. During the gatha's repetition, she experienced the history of her toes. Specificity and universality were held in that present moment. Another student had chosen a gatha about regarding one's hand to feel the convergence of past and future in the present moment. But in the enactment, the student forgot to look at her hand when she recited the words. When I suggested this, she repeated the exercise, using her sight, her hand and the text. This time, the text came alive through the now fully engaged student.

Prior to this moment, students have worked in groups in front of the class. With this work, individual students enter into their own gathas in front of the class. This exercise introduces the power of using theater in an academic setting. First, simply being able to memorize a gatha is a new challenge. Second, using one's body to express and communicate opens up new levels of understanding of the text and its concepts. Third, students are encouraged to witness their own shyness or resistance as an act of being in the present moment, and fourth, through concentration and experience, students, for a moment, can enter into Hanh's world of "meaning." Following the enactment of the gathas, the class engages in a discussion of everyday mindfulness and how it connects to Hanh's ideas of interdependence with the past, present and future.

Later in the course, we begin our study of Christianity with an attempt to enter into the religious experience of mystics. My study of mysticism has led me once again to the necessity of using the theatre in teaching. The women mystics of the Middle Ages spoke of God as a sensory experience. "Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His mouth!" cries Teresa of Avila. Mechthild of Magdeburg expresses the anguish of desire when she says "God burning with His desire looks upon the soul as a stream in which to cool His ardor."

In this work, students read and discuss the writings of several mystics and scholarly articles providing context and interpretation. They choose a text by a mystic that "speaks" to them. I ask each student to write a biography of the mystic in the first person. Like actors, they explore the intentions of character they will enact. They memorize the text. I ask them to get inside the words, to discover what is not being said and what is being said beneath the spoken words. They are also to create an everyday action that will accompany the spoken text. One student who had memorized a text by Mechthild of Magdeburg was having trouble choosing an action. I asked her to polish her shoes and to let the action affect the words. This action, possibly something that Mechthild might have done, engaged her body and demanded that she be present with her shoes and with Mechthild's words. The student wrote me a note about her experience of enacting Mechthild and her poetry:

> The enactment of sacred texts changes us by giving us direct access to the mystical experience itself. Perhaps because this result has been more elusive, I have found it to be all the more transformative. What I am trying to convey are rare moments in which the sacred text ceases to be "the script" and becomes instead direct experience. In these moments, I am granted the exquisite privilege of sharing the mystic's insight, the intensity of his/her merging with the mystery.

I have worked in the theatre for some 15 years as a theatre director, playwright and teacher. In the course of teaching acting, I began to notice the power in the act of memorization. Words of another hold a piece of that person's identity. By memorizing another's words, a meeting of self and other takes place. An actor invites someone else's words into their being and allows her body to find movement from the words. With constant repetition, the actor both creates and surrenders to her character. The paradox is that the actor is wholly present to herself as well as inhabited by the energies and psyche of another. Grotowski has referred to this as a kind of possession. Perhaps this is too strong a word. There is a fusion, but not obliteration.

Students studying religious experience in the class I've described above have instead encountered themselves as well as the concepts of the class and tasted the lifetime quest for mystery and meaning.

Recently I have acted as a pedagogical consultant to several professors at St. Lawrence University in the Religious Studies Department. From this work, Kelley Raab utilized several theatre methods in her course on "Christian Heroines." Afterwards, she said

> I see this approach as a very feminist technique. Having mainly women in my course, I found these techniques gave women a voice and helped them feel comfortable in experiencing their opinions. They could act out a character, become emotionally involved in it, and really express themselves. These creative exercises balanced research and reading and helped to develop critical thinking skills as well.

Theatre is a tool, a journey, and a magnifying glass. Through it, students can reimagine their lives and their world.

# Research Briefing

## *A Conversation about Online Religion*

***With Brenda E. Brasher, Author of* Give Me That Online Religion *(2001) Jossey Bass Publishers.***

**RSN:** How did you initially become interested in online religion?'

**Brasher:** I cannot remember not being interested in religion. By the time I was nine years old, I had read every book on mythology and religion in the local branch library. Long before I entered college, I engaged in a fair amount of non-textual study of religion, too. For that, I owe thanks to my maternal grandmother. She lived quite near us while I was growing up. A very neighborly person, she accepted any invitation to a religious gathering that came her way. Perhaps for that reason, lots of people invited her; yet she never liked to go alone. Spurred by my interest in religion, I became her constant companion. As a result, I encountered more varieties of religious practice than many people experience in a lifetime.

My interest and involvement in the Internet has slightly different roots. I was and am a passionate science fiction fan. Asimov, Gibson, Card, LeGuinn, — they stirred my imagination. Their novels helped me think about life in a more open way, and encouraged me to develop a vibrant curiosity about the unknown. In this sense, I think science fiction literature primed me to be interested in computers, and in the Internet as it developed.

**RSN:** What inspired you to study online religion?

In my second year of graduate school at USC (1991-1992), I accepted a research contract with the university. Each week, I was required to document my findings in detailed field notes. Between that work and my graduate classes, I spent a lot of time on my computer. The geographic dispersion of the work and researchers made it convenient for some research discussions to take place via email. Not only was I on my computer a lot in the early 1990's, I was online almost daily. I quickly became curious about who else was online, and joined discussion groups in religion, participated in use-net groups. I also got involved with some of the earliest multi-user domains. It was a very heady thing to be involved with computer-mediated communication during that time. It felt slightly transgressive, and counter-cultural. Of course, that was before the huge commercialization of the web occurred. Now, the situation is quite different.

For me, tracking religion online developed rather naturally. At first, I considered it mainly a hobby — which brought my interests in religion and the Internet together. There were no articles, or books, or courses on the topic. I simply tracked interesting sites in my spare time, and kept an ongoing watch out for new computer-related events and activities that involved religion and spirituality.

**RSN:** 'What are some of the main challenges involved in studying online religion?'

Online religion is a slippery topic of study. Web sites that at first glance may appear to be exactly the same as they were the day before can be subtly changed. Web sites crucial for a particular project may be withdrawn from the web (as was the case with Heaven's Gate). Evaluating the significance of any particular component of online religion also presents a significant challenge. To what literary genre, if any, does a use-net group discussion of neo-paganism belong? Is it possible to determine whether a web site dedicated to the actor Keanu Reeves that presents him as a messiah is a serious endeavor of popular religion, a total spoof, or something in-between?

**RSN:** What is the significance of religious rituals and practices that occur in virtual settings?

**Brasher:** The results of one recent study of Internet use indicated that religious congregations that go online credit their congregational web site with strengthening community bonds; yet some theorists contend that Internet activity drains commitment to real life social relationships. Before we could even begin to ascertain the impact and value of online religion, we need more studies. We need studies evaluating the impact of online religion upon individuals and groups. We need long-term qualitative studies that trace religious practice on the Internet overtime. We need extensive, quantitative studies that assess the extent and character of online religion and spirituality. We need inter-media studies investigating the relationships among various types of media and real-life religious practice, et al. One of the most exciting aspects of studying online religion is that there is still so much to do, so many huge, challenging issues to be resolved.

**RSN:** What about teaching? How have you taught about this phenomenon?

**Brasher:** During the academic year of 1997-1998, I received the unusual offer to teach any course that interested me. Not one to hesitate at such a rare and delightful opportunity, I promptly designed and gave a course entitled "Religion in Cyberspace." For readings, I drew mainly upon the scientific and technological literature then available plus my own fledgling theoretical and empirical work. Each student was required to prepare a virtual ethnography of an online religious group. We were online in the classroom almost every day, investigating and discussing the phenomenon of online religion. On the last day of class, one of my students wondered aloud whether it was possible that we knew more about online religion at that point than anyone else in the world. I remember at that moment thinking that he may have been right.

**RSN:** Why is the Internet such a popular medium for religion?'

**Brasher:** The appeal of cyberspace for religious practice and expression is in part attributable to the emotional and psychological congruities between going online and entering a religious building. One of the main goals of religious architecture is to draw or thrust sensitive, interested people into an encounter with the transcendent through altering their sense of time and place. In the process, religious architecture makes the invisible, infinite meaning goods of religion more tangible, more real in the visible, finite world. Although largely unintentional, the Internet provides countless people with an experience of timelessness and even placelessness when they go online. Each semester, when I query my students about their Internet use, almost all indicate that they routinely log onto a computer only to look up and find out that an hour or two has passed. Online, people find it not only possible but easy to lose track of when and where they are. While other factors are important to the preponderance of online religion, the emotional, sensual similarities between religious architecture and computer communication contribute significantly to online religion's popularity.

### Online Religion: A snapshot

- Every major religious tradition now has an online presence (including the Amish), as well as innumerable new religious movements.
- People are building web sites that they call web altars in which they construct their own popular religion often featuring entertainment figures.
- Individual congregational web sites are the growing edge of online religion.
- A small group of people considers cyberspace a human-constructed technological heaven, and desires to upload their consciousness onto the web.
- Rich online religious textual and image resources are making informed lay leadership more possible.
- Online religion can be a gateway to in-real-life religious involvement for those marginalized from congregational-based religion, or involved in some form of spiritual quest.
- July 30, 2001 Google search results (good for party conversation):God-24,100,000 ; Satan-1,370,000; Prayer-4,320,000 ; Religion-10,000,000; Soul-7,280,000; Sex-60,200,000.

**A little Internet History:** The first computer network, ARPANET, was brought online in September, 1969, through a collaboration of USA university and military researchers. Electronic mail followed in 1972. TCP/IP protocols facilitating the interconnection of disparate computer networks standard in 1983. By 1985, the Internet was functioning and publicly available. The latest major component of computer mediated communication, the World Wide Web, came online half a decade later in late 1990, with web files available by late spring of 1991.

**MOURNING**, from p.8

like they used to. We have come so far apart, with our computers and technology. We need to go back to 'Love thy neighbor.'"

One way of diminishing the pain of a senseless tragedy is to infuse it with a sense of the sacred, which is what memorializing the dead can do, said Gail Rink, Director of Community Counseling and Education for Hospice Services of Santa Barbara.

"Placing mementos at the site where a person lived or died is a way of creating sacred space, and paying tribute is a form of healing," she said. "We know that a plane crash can happen to anybody, that violence in the school can happen to anybody, that death is universal and that it is going to happen. What people are touching in themselves when they grieve publicly is the profound realization of the value of life."

Public displays of grief help people bring closure to their grief and sorrow, said Dr. Charles Asher, a Jungian analyst and provost at Pacifica Graduate Institute in Carpinteria.

"Whether it is putting up a cross or making a heart in the sand, it allows the experience to have some ritual closure," Asher said. "Ritual at its best is protective in that it provides boundaries to our grief and our struggle. When people feel safe and protected, they can acknowledge their empathy and pain. And sometimes it is not enough to do it alone."

When a person weeps for the death of a stranger, it is certain that something deeper is going on, said professor Robert Romanyshyn of Pacifica Graduate Institute and the author of the book, "The Soul in Grief: Love, Death and Transformation." Romanyshyn's book chronicles his own journey with grief following the sudden death of his wife Janet after 25 years of marriage.

Grief, he believes, is a hunger for a return to the sacred.

"Grief is a form of prayer," he said. "And just like prayer, it is a hunger to be in connection with something other than the human, to connect with the divine. At some level we all know that we have lost our way home. We are disconnected from nature, from each other, and our own bodies. We have forgotten that the world is really a sacred place."

When people erect shrines for the dead — even for strangers — they are trying to reclaim the sacredness of the world, Romanyshyn said.

"We grieve for the world through our own personal losses," he said. "We really need a national day of mourning."

# In the Field

News of events and opportunities for scholars of religion published by the American Academy of Religion available online at *www.aarweb.org*.

*In the Field* is a members-only online publication available the first of each month (with a combined July/August issue). It includes *Calls, Grants,* and *Calendar* sections. *In the Field* accepts calls for papers, grant news, conference announcements, and other opportunities appropriate for scholars of religion of no more than 100 words.

Contributors must **submit text electronically by the 20th of the month** for the following issue to: *inthefield@aarweb.org*.

# In the Public Interest

## *Islam in the Public Eye*

***Mark Silk, director of the Leonard E. Greenberg Center for the Study of Religion in Public Life at Trinity College, Hartford***

IN THE DAYS following the September 11 attacks, the American news media took great pains to differentiate the faith and patriotism of American Muslims from the apparent religious convictions of the airplane hijackers. Newspapers large and small published local Muslims' condemnations of terrorism, and did stories on their fears of verbal abuse and physical violence. Cases of such abuse and violence were widely reported and universally condemned in editorials stressing the importance of tolerance and understanding. In the words of the Denver Post on September 18: "As Americans bristle with patriotism in the wake of terrorist assaults, we also must shoulder some shame over ignorant, vengeful attacks on Muslims and others who simply appear to be Muslims."

The journalism was of a piece with religious leaders' inclusion of Muslim clerics in ecumenical memorial services, and underscored repeated statements by politicians from the president on down that the War on Terrorism is not a War against Muslims. Voices declaring that Islam is "the problem" were eventually heard, but they were vastly outnumbered by those contending that Islam is, if not simply "a religion of peace," at least a complex religious tradition, most of whose adherents are in no way interested in launching terroristic attacks on the United States.

Before we become too complacent about the pluralistic sensibilities of the American people at the dawn of the 21st century, however, we must recall that the attack on Pearl Harbor 60 years ago initially elicited a similar reaction. In the first weeks after the attack, expressions of faith in the loyalty of resident Japanese came from political, religious, and educational leaders. In California, where most of the Nisei lived, the press all but unanimously proclaimed their loyalty and good citizenship. As the *Contra Costa Gazette* editorialized a week after Pearl Harbor, Japanese Americans "are as indignant as their fairer brothers over the cowardly assault of the Japanese warlords on American possessions."

Within a couple of months, however, fears of Japanese sabotage and espionage took hold. Western congressmen started beating the drums for removing the Nisei from the West Coast, and citizens berated US Attorney General Francis Biddle for opposing this measure. After a briefing from California attorney general Earl Warren, the dean of American newspaper columnists, Walter Lippmann, weighed in on the side of evacuation. More rabble-rousing scribblers like Westbrook Peger were soon echoing him. In California, newspaper editorials shifted 180 degrees. "Occasionally some misguided but well-intentioned individual will make the statement there are some loyal Japanese," opined the aforementioned *Gazette* after President Roosevelt's February 19, 1942 evacuation order, "But there are none such."

Could such a turnaround happen again? We are fortunate that American culture has been struggling to understand Islam, and those prepared to commit acts of violence in its name, for more than two decades now. After the US Embassy in Tehran was taken over by Iranian radicals in 1979, there was much fevered writing about the threat of "Muslim fundamentalism," and an "arc of crisis" stretching from North Africa to South Asia. Since then, the news media have come a long way toward accepting Islam as a normal and wholesome part of the American religious scene. Newspapers annually report on Ramadan the way they do on Christmas and Passover. There is not a religion reporter in the country who doesn't have a local imam or two in her Rolodex. In the late 1990's, in collaboration with the AAR regions, I conducted a series of workshops for journalists around the country. The subject about which journalists most wanted to learn — and about which academics most wanted them to learn — was Islam.

Well before September 11, American interfaith groups were making sure to have Muslim representatives on board, and imams were delivering prayers along with rabbis and Christian ministers in Congress and at national political conventions. Bush is not the first president to tell the American people that the United States is not on the warpath against Islam. President Clinton did the same when announcing US air strikes against supposed terrorist targets in the Sudan and Afghanistan (after American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania were bombed in 1998).

Since September 11, however, America's "project Islam" has moved forward at breakneck speed. Church and community groups across the country have signed up Muslim leaders to come and explain their religion. For those who only stay at home and watch TV, Oprah and others have been doing the same. The message has evidently been getting across. In a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, one of the more notable poll results showed that the proportion of Americans with a favorable view of US Muslims increased from 45% in March, to 59% in November. Among conservative Republicans the change was most dramatic, with a jump from 35% to 64%.

In short, there is little evidence that American society is, as many feared, going to treat its growing Islamic population as a community of pariahs and fifth columnists. The internment of the Nisei, now universally considered one of the dark moments of American history, has served not as a model but as a useful object lesson for what to avoid when the country feels threatened.

The cause for worry is not the wholesale rounding up of Muslims, but more targeted measures: indefinite detention of hundreds of foreign nationals; questioning of thousands of students from Islamic countries; presidential orders authorizing military tribunals to try suspected terrorists; permission for federal agents to monitor communications between federal prisoners and their lawyers; and new government the power to detain a foreigner even after an immigration judge has ordered his release. All this is reminiscent of an earlier episode in American history-the raids on political radicals mounted after World War I by US Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer.

That Red Scare, however, was a national panic attack that kept pace with the drumbeat of applause from the press. The administration's current law enforcement initiatives have, on the contrary, received a decidedly cool reception. Newspapers from the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* to the *Buffalo News*, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, and the *San Diego Union-Leader* have issued cries of alarm at the administration's readiness to suspend constitutional protections and due process. Polls show that the American people, while generally supportive of the government's efforts, are wary.

Although we have perhaps just entered the woods, several months into the War on Terrorism, some cautious optimism is in order.

# Member-at-Large

## An Interview with Steve Friesen, University of Missouri-Columbia.

*Steve Friesen is Associate Professor of Christian origins and chair of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Missouri-Columbia. He is the author of* Twice Neokoros: Ephesus, Asia, and the Cult of the Flavian Imperial Family *(E. J. Brill, 1993) and* Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John: Reading Revelation in the Ruins *(Oxford UP, 2001). He edited* Local Knowledge, Ancient Wisdom: Challenges in Contemporary Spirituality *(East-West Center, Honolulu, 1991).*

**RSN:** What's the history of this volume on ancestors? How did it get started?

**Friesen:** The volume developed out of a particular institutional context. During the early 1990's, I had a post-doctoral fellowship at the East-West Center in Honolulu.

**RSN:** That sounds like an awful assignment!

**Friesen:** Yeah, it was tough work but someone had to do it. Seriously, Laurence and Mary Rockefeller had provided a 3-year grant to the East-West Center to work on issues of contemporary spirituality with a special focus on the Pacific Basin. The overall program was called "A Dialogue of Civilizations" and Tu Weiming was the principal investigator. Weiming defined three projects that became focal points for inquiry in the program. One project was Cultural China, which promoted an unusual international discourse on China involving mainland scholars, diaspora scholars, and media specialists. A second project had a more traditional comparative religions focus.

During the time of the grant, we "adopted" Ewert Cousins's World Spirituality project by holding annual conferences in Honolulu. This gave us a chance to work on three volumes in his monumental series, *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedia of the Religious Quest* (Crossroad, 1985- ). The third project was a series of meetings on indigenous religions.

**RSN:** How were you involved in this program?

**Friesen:** I was a project fellow dealing especially with the indigenous religions meetings, but this involved me in the World Spirituality project as well. One reason Ewert and Weiming held World Spirituality conferences in Hawaii was that they wanted to integrate indigenous spiritualities and indigenous scholars into the discussions in a more systematic fashion. The rich traditions of Hawaii and the location of Hawaii as an intersection in the Pacific made it an ideal setting for this. But all sorts of difficult issues emerged as soon as we started talking about world religions and indigenous religions.

**RSN:** What kind of issues?

**Friesen:** The one that flared up immediately was the meaning of the term "indigenous religions." We had lots of arguments about that. No one wanted to go back to terms like "primitive religion" or "tribal religion," but there was no agreement about whether the term indigenous is any better. Is indigenous religion merely a residual category for everything that doesn't fit into modern western ideas about "world religions"? Is indigenous religion a stratum of spirituality that is found in all religions? Is it actually a cipher for colonized religions that allows the conquerors to ignore a history of oppression? Or is it perhaps a racist category? As you can see, these were not simply philological arguments about the meanings of words and phrases. The minute we began to take indigenous traditions seriously, many basic concepts in the study of religion seemed fundamentally flawed, including terms like world religion, myth, ritual, theology, and so on.

**RSN:** How did you deal with this issue?

**Friesen:** We didn't come up with a better term because the problems are deeper and more complicated than terminology. I think there was a fairly broad consensus among participants on one issue, though: our current categories for religion do not do justice to the phenomena under discussion. In fact, the categories appear to conceal some deeply disturbing facets of the history of our discipline, including imperialism, economic injustice, violence, and racism. I think we also had a good deal of consensus on how to proceed with the project. It was clear we would not solve the problem by simply authorizing a new category. Rather, we pursued three strategies. One strategy was to meet regularly to argue about these issues, and to do so in the context of detailed studies of particular religious traditions. Our second strategy was to broaden the range of participants in our conferences to involve more indigenous academicians in the discussions. Third, we invited participants who were experts in indigenous traditions but who are not usually validated by the academic community.

**RSN:** What do you mean by experts "who are not usually validated by the academic community"?

**Friesen:** We searched around for different kinds of authorities on indigenous religions: poets, chanters, dancers, traditional artisans. The conferences eventually included a Maori businessman, a native Hawaiian Christian pastor, a Shinto priest, a woodcarver, a hula master, and others.

**RSN:** How did you settle on the topic of ancestors?

**Friesen:** Our first conference was exploratory and the assignment was very general: participants could chose any topic related to native religions. As a result, the first program did not cohere very well. However, one theme kept coming up: the bones of the ancestors. This topic had not been high on my own list of priorities but it clearly needed to be addressed. So the second conference was devoted to the importance of ancestors and I was astonished at the passions that people brought to this topic. Looking back on it, I can see several reasons for this. One was that the topic is universal: we all have ancestors. Ancestry is part of our common heritage as humans. But there were other factors at work as well. I came to realize that I had been trained to think abstractly about the topic. If, instead of "ancestors," I thought about my own parents and grandparents, then the topic took on a completely different urgency. But there was still more. A crucial feature of European and American imperialism has been the desecration of the ancestors of native peoples. In native communities throughout the world there are very deep wounds because of the ways the colonizing forces have treated local ancestors. If we were going to discuss religion and ancestors, we would have to talk about exhumed corpses of relatives, massacres, alienated land, violent relocations of whole communities, disrupted relations between humans, flora, and fauna, and a host of other issues.

**RSN:** So you had a volatile topic and an unusual list of participants. What effect did that have on your conference?

**Friesen:** It made things difficult for everyone. Traditional academic conferences are regulated by academic values and by the authority of the written word, duly footnoted. In addition, we tend to cultivate a professional detachment from our subjects. That sort of format is inappropriate if the topic is your extended family, or if you involve participants who operate by different values and who often value oral communication above written communication. So we tried to develop a

See **FRIESEN**, p.19

*Editor's Note:*

*Friesen recently edited* Ancestors in Post-Contact Religion: Roots, Ruptures, and Modernity's Memory *(Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard, 2001).* RSN *asked Friesen to discuss the project and its origins.*

# From the Student Desk

## Presenting for the First Time at the Annual Meeting: A Graduate Student Shares Her Experiences

***Kathy Williams, Vanderbilt University***

"WHERE AM I GOING? What am I doing here?" These are two lovely existential questions, but this weekend I was not asking these questions to figure out the meaning of life. No, this weekend a much larger problem loomed on my consciousness: I was presenting at the Annual Meeting for the first time, and I had no idea what I was doing. I had submitted a proposal and it was accepted. With that acceptance, I had gained entry into quite an impressive panel of established scholars. I reminded myself of this at least daily, also remembering that I was the only graduate student on the panel — two reminders that never ceased to activate the butterflies in my stomach.

My obsessive-compulsive nature led me to the Convention Center soon after my arrival with my husband, who came to support me. I then proceeded to get my bearings, locating my presentation room and attempting to distract myself with the book exhibit.

Friday night was spent reading — and re-reading — my paper. My husband must have heard it fifty times! As a matter of fact, I am convinced that he could have taken over for me in the event of my incapacitation. Thanks to his help, I woke up Saturday morning refreshed and alert. The morning was a blur; after a brief stop for some much-needed nourishment of breakfast and coffee, I went back to the room and continued to practice my presentation.

There was no need to worry about lunch on Saturday, for I was too nervous even to consider eating. I arrived at the Convention Center about an hour early, and continued practicing my paper everywhere I went, whether walking down the hall or sitting at the food court tables. I encountered several friends before my session, and they served as a welcome cheering section, escorting me to the location of my presentation and sitting at various places around the room in order to encourage me to make good eye contact.

As I walked to the table at the front of the room, a wave of calm enveloped me. I was the third person to present, and once I began my paper, all was well. I had practiced to the point of knowing most of it by memory, so I was able to look around the room and attempt to interject emotion and humor with my voice and actions in order to enhance my presentation.

Then came that dreaded statement, the one that strikes terror into the hearts of graduate students everywhere: "We have a few minutes left for questions. Anyone?" I held my breath. The room was silent, and my confidence was at an all-time high. Several seconds ticked by, and just when I thought I was safe, I heard my advisor say, "Yes, Sara! Please." I was then asked a valid question about my argument, and even though we disagreed concerning the answer, what is more important is that I did have an answer.

I think the most significant lesson I took away from this experience is to prepare, prepare, prepare — and try to anticipate every possible question. Granted, there will always be something that you never could have seen coming, but in anticipating the more obvious questions and attempting to find the weaknesses in your argument, your research probably will have touched on most of the potential areas of disagreement. The question I was asked about my paper opened the door for multiple constructive conversations with that person throughout the weekend — a benefit I never could have foreseen.

Was it a good experience? Ultimately, yes. I presented at my first Annual Meeting, may have gained an opportunity for future publication, and made connections that would not have been possible without the valuable experience of making this presentation.

*Kathy Williams is a doctoral student of New Testament in the Graduate Department of Religion at Vanderbilt University. She can be contacted at* kathy.c.williams@vanderbilt.edu.

**FRIESEN**, from p.18

mixed format. Some of the "papers" were purely oral performances that could only be captured in memory. Some of the sessions began with chants or with personal statements. The modified format made all of us uncomfortable in one way or another. It took a lot of courage for the non-academic experts even to show up-let alone to participate — because there is a long history of academic institutions denigrating native knowledge. These conversation partners risked a lot. But the academic experts also showed courage because the secure boundaries we build into our conferences were no longer guaranteed. No one was allowed to assume a detached, disinterested stance. Everyone had to explain their relationships to the subjects, and that tends to make academics nervous.

**RSN:** So why bother?

**Friesen:** At times I wondered that myself, but in the end it was well worth the effort. The ancestors volume came from one of the conferences where the diversity of experiences really paid off. Many of the participants had already taken part in earlier meetings, so there was enough trust built up for people to challenge each other in new ways. As the discussions developed, we moved beyond the familiar dichotomy of insiders vs. outsiders. We had enough voices from within indigenous traditions-and especially from native Hawaiian traditions — to articulate ranges of native viewpoints, and enough outside perspectives for differences to emerge there as well. So instead of an etic/emic standoff, we had a constellation of perspectives, with people questioning and being questioned. That's why the book includes discussions at the end of every chapter. I tried to communicate in print the communal methodology that emerged in oral interactions. Reflecting later on this, I realized that it was very similar to Wilfred Cantwell Smith's call for the development of a critical corporate self-consciousness in a personalist mode. The intense human significance of these traditions was always close to the surface and never denied. But at the same time many different viewpoints were articulated in ways that were at least understandable — if not agreed upon — by various insiders and outsiders. What became clear was that none of us was simply an insider or an outsider, an indigenous person or an imperialist. We all have tangled histories. We all have many ancestors, some acknowledged and some hidden, for better and for worse.

**RSN:** What insights emerged out of this collaboration?

**Friesen:** I think the comparative approach of the conference allowed us to develop a good overview of the sophisticated roles played by ancestors in the ongoing life of many societies. The papers and discussions tended to stress the ways in which the dead are inextricably linked to ethics, to habitation of specific pieces of land, to social cohesion, and so on. In many contexts, community life is unthinkable without the presence of the deceased.

Another important result of the conference was a contribution to the long-delayed process of examining the so-called world religions on the basis of insights gained in the study of so-called indigenous traditions. The normal procedure in religious studies has been to impose categories from the study of western religions (and especially from the study of Christianity) on native religions. Why don't we ever develop questions from indigenous studies and use them on world religions? The answer is fairly obvious, but seldom stated openly: the modern study of religion is founded on the assumption that native religions are inferior to world religions and especially to Christianity. That era is coming to an end. To paraphrase a comment by Charles Long in the volume, it's time to have indigenous religions interrogate world religions. That interrogation might allow us to begin to reconfigure the study of religion for the future.

**RSN:** Give us an example of this interrogation process.

**Friesen:** Most of the chapters in the book deal with the importance of ancestors for cosmology, for family structures, or for relationships to land among indigenous peoples. Ewert Cousins and Jill Raitt, however, asked why there are almost no studies of the importance of ancestors in Christianity? Ancestry is a universal human experience. It should be a fundamental religious factor and yet it is seldom addressed in western religions. In the discussions, participants began to ask what's wrong with the west, especially in the period after the Enlightenment. Who are the real ancestors of modernity? Why does western modernity cut itself off from its ancestors? Is this a sustainable mode of human community?

**RSN:** So that's where the book's subtitle about modernity's memory comes in. What about the title? What do you mean by post-contact religion?

**Friesen:** That's another result of the conference. We found that we had something else in common besides ancestry. As the discussions developed, it became obvious that we all have been changed by the contact of western imperial powers with the rest of the world. We know about some of the disasters inflicted upon native peoples and their religious traditions by contact with the west. But what has contact done to the colonizing societies? How have they been affected? One of the main proposals of the book is that all known religions are now in their post-contact phase. Contact should become a fundamental category in the modern study of religion.

See **FRIESEN II**, p.22

# Beyond the Annual Meeting

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# CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

## Experienced members of search committees

Employment Information Services of the AAR and SBL seeks volunteers at the associate professor or professor rank to serve as c.v. consultants during the Annual Meeting in Toronto.

Consultants will review c.v.'s of registered candidates at the EIS Center and provide them with suggestions for changes based on their experience as a member of a job search committee. Consultations will be approximately 20 minutes and take place in person. Volunteers are asked to commit to at least two hours over the course of the Annual Meeting.

To volunteer or for more information contact Edward R. Gray, AAR Director of Academic Relations. See page two for contact information.

**RESOURCES II**, from p.12

rendered by Denys Johnson-Davies, this is a complex psychological novel from a Sudanese writer that touches on themes of colonialism, gender, and power. Set in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, it tells the story of a village boy who makes good, using his native intelligence to rise through the ranks and travel to London, and eventually return. It is at once disturbing and beautiful, working simlutaneously on several levels.

Not nearly so complex is the novella by Ghassan Kanafani, *Men in the Sun*. Kirkpatrick's translation does not do justice to the Arabic, but the narrative of this powerful tale comes through clearly. Written before there was a PLO or a PA, Men in the Sun is an important reminder that most Palestinians do not live in Palestine or in Israel, and that Muslims and Arabs do not always treat one another as brothers. The novella is printed together with a selection of Kanafani's short stories, making a nice complement to the main text.

The two films I mention here both center on Egypt, which is reasonable, given the importance of this African nation to the Islamic world and the fact that Egypt is the world's third-largest producer of feature-length films. *On Boys, Girls and the Veil* (in Arabic with English subtitles) is a quasi-documentary that follows a young Egyptian man through his daily routines of family, work and recreation. He and the director interview dozens of Egyptians, querying them about matters of dating, family and the importance of modest dress. The honesty of the candid responses is astonishing, and the result is an unusually clear picture of the many meanings of the headscarf within Egyptian society today.

Finally, *Umm Kulthum: a voice like Egypt* chronicles the life of the greatest singer of the Arab world in the twentieth century. Narrated by Omar Sharif, the documentary includes interviews with musicians and music critics, as well as wonderful footage of her concerts. Though the singer is rightfully the center of the film, important themes of gender roles, politics in the Nasr era, and the urban-rural divide are also addressed. In the Northeast, both films may be borrowed from New York University's Kevorkian center (*http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/program/neareast/7_video_catalogue.html*), and *Umm Kulthum* is available for purchase from Amazon.com.

As with most novels and films, religion is not the central issue in these sources. I argue that this is to the good. The more our students realize that Muslims can be singers, politicians and socialists, the better they can appreciate the variety of voices in the Muslim world.

## AAR
## Virtual Teaching & Learning Center

Over the past decade, the AAR has mounted nine year-long workshops for college and university faculty on teaching religion. Approximately 170 scholars benefited from the sustained and organized reflective work and practice that the workshop enabled. In turn, these scholars have contributed to better teaching in the field-one course at a time. The AAR, with continuing assistance from the Lilly Endowment, has established a new project to make these contribution more widely available. In this way, excellent teaching, and the scholarship behind it, can be made "public."

The Committee on Teaching and Learning invites all members, and most especially participants in the Lilly/Luce/NEH sponsored Teaching Workshops to submit their projects to the new *AAR Virtual Teaching and Learning Center*.

When completed, this rich new online resource will include: the current AAR Syllabus Project (which has recently moved to *http://www.aarweb.org/syllabus/default.asp*); the entire series of our periodical, *Spotlight on Teaching*; information about evaluating teaching and learning in religion and assessing *departmental* teaching and learning, and links to other online teaching and learning resources.

To participate, please send an electronic or print version of course syllabi, bibliographies, revised assignments, classroom exercises, assessment techniques, or other materials. The *AAR Virtual Teaching and Learning Center* will make scholarly contributions to teaching available to the entire field and be a resource on which to build for many, many years.

**The CTL is seeking an editor for the site. Visit *www.aarweb.org* for more information.**

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**CADY**, from p.7

This means, then, that the academic study of religion is a central focus at approximately 40% of the institutions, making up the broader universe of higher education. In othe words, 60% of the relevant institutions of higher education do not offer programs in which the academic study of religion is a central focus. This is a very high percentage.

It would be useful to know more about this group, particularly how they break down by institutional type and size. This is especially important if we are interested in getting a handle on the institutionalization of the study of religion in public higher education. One might well suspect that a very high percentage of religiously affiliated institutions have programs offering a central focus on the study of religion, leaving a higher percentage of the public and private non sectarian universities without a religious studies presence. This is significant, particularly with respect to the scope or potential impact of the field vis-à-vis the entire cohort of students enrolled in higher education. According to the Department of Education's statistics for Fall l998 — the most recent data published - 58% of all degree-granting institutions of higher education in the US are private, and 42% are public.[3] Although constituting only 42% of the total number of institutions, public colleges and universities enroll approximately 77% of all students, with the remaining 23% attending private institutions. Consider, further, that in the Fall 1998, 40% of US institutions enrolled fewer than 1,000 students, and they accounted for only 4% of the total college/university enrollment; 10% of the institutions enrolled 10,000 or more students, and they accounted for 49% of the total enrollment.

What does this all mean? In considering the institutional embodiment of religious studies in contemporary higher education, it is essential to keep in mind the large number of institutions in which we are not a real presence. Moreover, when institutional size is factored in, our very limited disciplinary presence for the aggregate North American student body within higher education becomes clear. Although this information is revealing about the institutional strength and scope of our field, I have to admit I am not sure how I feel about it. From one angle, we have the proverbial glass not even half full; on the other hand, if we compare ourselves to where we were several decades ago, we can see considerable growth and transformation in the academic study of religion.

Among the more revealing aspects of the Census, in my judgment, is the large percentage of programs — 55% of them — indicating that the institution requires course work explicitly in religion for graduation. As Edward Gray puts it, "programs and departments ... benefit strongly from institutional policies requiring students to take religion courses."[4] This is clearly the case. The academic study of religion would not have a major programmatic presence at even 40% of accredited institutions of higher education unless such degree requirements were in place. It is a vital factor in sustaining the field as currently configured. It also points, however, to the hybridity of this field, to the diversity of motives that sustain it, and to the competing visions that it harbors, often uneasily. Indeed, talking about "the field" as I have done can be questioned insofar as it glosses over the deep divisions that mark who "we" are.

We have to be careful here: we cannot conclude anything about the agenda of particular faculty and courses by virtue of institutional affiliation, nor by whether or not the course is required for graduation. The information indicates something about the structural conditions within which individuals and units operate — conditions that admittedly exert a considerable influence. They do not necessarily determine what takes place within any given classroom, however. The information nevertheless does underscore the composite nature of our enterprise, as reflected in the very title of the Census: undergraduate programs in religion **and** theology.

The data on curricular offerings underscores our differences as well. What stands out most prominently is the extent to which the study of Christianity dominates the curriculum, with courses in the Bible taught at the highest percentage of responding programs. The centrality of Christianity in the curriculum is, of course, not all that surprising given the roots of the field in the seminary model, the dominance of Christianity among the North American student body as a whole, and the Christian affiliation of over half of the responding institutions. As expressed in the highlights of the findings, "While curricular offerings are decidedly focused on the Christian traditions at most responding departments, almost half of all departments (46%) offer comparative courses as well."[5] Is this statistic to be interpreted as **almost** half, or **not even** half? A breakdown by institutional type sharpens the picture, revealing how much the field varies across the institutional spectrum. Protestant institutions are least likely to include courses in traditions other than Christianity, and public institutions are most likely. This is hardly surprising, given constitutional constraints of the separation of church and state. This is not to say that public institutions have untethered themselves completely from the seminary curricular model. Consider: only two-thirds of public institutions report offering a course in Judaism, with Buddhism offered by 57%, Islam and Hinduism by only half of the institutions, and indigenous religions by slightly over a third.

The data does suggest that the field of religious studies is distinguished from other disciplines within the liberal arts by the fact that it houses quite varied forms and agendas. Although this diversity is sometimes touted as a strength, it is also clear that it is a liability for securing a place within the arts and sciences at non-sectarian and public institutions. The problem is captured rather well in a short piece recently published in The Chronicle of Higher Education. Grant Greene, a graduate student just completing his Ph.D. in religious studies pseudonymously authored "On the Market in Religious Studies." He writes:

> Just imagine. You are a historian entering the job market. You specialize in ancient religion, Christianity, and Judaism, to be precise. You are trained in classical philology, fluent in all manner of Near Eastern languages, and conversant in historiography from Gibbon to Foucault.
>
> Then upon finishing your dissertation, you find that, while jobs are not lacking, many jobs in your field are open only to members of certain religious groups. Employers, for instance, restrict consideration to those candidates who have a "personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior," or demand a fourth letter of recommendation specifically detailing the candidate's devotion to the Baptist Church."[6]

Greene is more than a little troubled by the fact that "jobs are cordoned off by faith" and candidates are asked to demonstrate religious qualification. He finds it "offensive," and "contrary to my whole idea of academic freedom." To illustrate just how different the academic study of religion is from classics or history, he reports that, in a recent edition of *Openings*, "out of 28 faculty positions listed, 20 make explicit demands on the religiosity of the candidate."

The Census certainly provides a measure of empirical support to this portrait of our field, even though it remains at a very general level. The undergraduate study of religion reflects a broad range of missions that span the religious and secular divide. The mix continues to make it difficult for religious studies to establish an identity that locates it squarely and unambiguously within the context of the liberal arts and sciences. Establishing more firmly such an academic identity, in my judgment, remains our primary challenge as a field. This has become even more urgent given the demographic shifts in higher education that today result in almost four out of every five students attending a public institution. If we are concerned about the long term flourishing of the field, we need to remain attentive to that broader universe of higher education where we do not yet have a presence.

[1] Edward R. Gray, "What We Have Learned from the Census of Religion and Theology Programs," *Religious Studies News*, (Fall 2001), i.

[2] The above figures are taken from the "Quality Profile for the 2000 AAR Census of Religion and Theology Programs," prepared for the American Academy of Religion by the National Opinion Research Center, May, 2001. The figures for the United States are based upon the l997-98 academic year.

[3] These figures are taken from the National Center of Education Statistics' Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), also used by NORC. See *http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/data.html*.

[4] Gray, "What We Have Learned," i.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Grant Greene, "On the Market in Religious Studies," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, (Friday, September 28, 2001).

# A Jefferson Day Conversation with John Hammer, National Humanities Alliance

*Editor's Note:*

*March 22-23 is Jefferson Day. Jefferson Day is an advocacy event organized by the National Humanities Alliance and co-sponsored by the AAR and more than twenty organizations to promote support for the National Endowment for the Humanities. For more information, see* www.nhalliance.org/jd

**RSN:** What is the purpose of Jefferson Day?

**Hammer:** Jefferson Day was created two years ago to bring together scholars and other members of the humanities community to advocate for NEH to members of Congress and staff. In a sense, Jefferson Day was created because the 15 year old Humanities on the Hill (HOH) was so successful. HoH was begun by the Federation of State Humanities Councils (FSHC) in the mid-1980's, and has been growing ever since. The National Humanities Alliance has been a co-sponsor of HoH for several years and will continue to be. It was decided, however, that a second advocacy day was needed to highlight the scholarly end of NEH, just as HoH has emphasized public humanities and the work of state humanities councils. Feedback from Capitol Hill is that the increased advocacy is appreciated. The two advocacy days are compatible and the FSHC was among the original co-sponsors of Jefferson Day — a role they continue to play.

**RSN:** It may be obvious to some, but why "Jefferson?"

**Hammer:** The name "Jefferson Day" was selected to associate the event with attendance at the NEH's annual Jefferson Lecture. More broadly, Jefferson stands out among the founding fathers as an individual actively interested in the world of ideas, and one who brought the political philosophy of the Enlightenment to the emerging nation. It was Jefferson who articulated the importance of an educated public for democracy. In a letter to George Wythe, Jefferson wrote "I think by far the most important bill in our whole code is that for the diffusion of knowledge among the people..."

**RSN:** When did Jefferson Day start, and how has it changed since then?

**Hammer:** The first Jefferson Day was in 2000. For this year's event, scheduled for March 21-22, 2002, we will have more than 20 co-sponsoring organizations and will hold a reception in honor of Bruce Cole, an art history and comparative literature scholar, who was recently selected by President Bush to became the eighth chairman of the NEH.

**RSN:** How do these activities fit with the rest of the mission of the Alliance?

**Hammer:** The centerpiece of NHA's mission is to advocate for improved appropriations and other legislative and administrative policies for the NEH. Jefferson Day is evolving as an important vehicle for raising the profile of NEH on Capitol Hill while at the same time acquainting legislators and staff with important work in the humanities.

**RSN:** What makes it important for scholarly societies to become involved in advocacy?

**Hammer:** Legislation to establish NEH was in the pipeline for some time, but was actually enacted in the flood of Great Society legislation in 1964-66. It did not result from the humanities community rising up and demanding such legislation. For several years thereafter, the agency enjoyed growth without major advocacy efforts. Since 1980, however, it has been important and necessary to demonstrate public support for the agency — to make the case that — work supported by NEH is valuable for the general public, and that the scholars and others carrying out the work help to preserve the nations cultural and historical legacy. Learned societies and related groups established NHA in 1981 to coordinate and focus advocacy for the NEH, which is the lead agency supporting scholarship and other humanities work.

In the coming months and years, the NHA will be turning to the scholarly societies and other member of the NHA to intensify and make clearer grass roots support for NEH. By grass roots, we mean individuals who advocate for NEH to their members of Congress as constituents. My point here is that our community gained an incredibly valuable resource in 1965 with very little effort by the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) and a few other organizations. Scholarly societies have an ongoing need to articulate the value of their disciplines to the public. Federal support for research will not continue without advocacy directed to Congress. Finally, it should be noted that NEH itself plays an important role in making the public aware of the fruits of scholarship.

**RSN:** What are you worried about in terms of the new administration's approach to the humanities?

**Hammer:** My worry is that the new administration may not see the importance of the humanities in preserving our historical and cultural heritage and will, therefore, seek reductions in future appropriations. Since some of the federal cultural agencies received draconian cuts in 1995, from which the agency has not fully recovered, a new round of cuts would be especially damaging.

**RSN:** What are you excited about in terms of the new administration's approach to the humanities?

**Hammer:** For more than two decades, the proportion of NEH funding for scholarship has been declining. While all parts of the NEH grant-making programs suffered in the 1995 cuts, the relative decline of research and fellowships funding has been especially severe. The new administration at NEH may be able to secure new resources for scholarship. Given the overall constraints brought on by the war on terrorism, a weakened economy, and the massive tax cuts of last year, a dramatic improvement in funding is not likely. At the same time, we do see an opportunity to re-articulate the importance of the humanities in everyday lives. In the wake of September 11, there seems to be an openness on the part of average citizens to re-examine priorities, as well as increased need for the types of activities offered by the humanities — from documenting personal reactions, to developing a better understanding of world cultures and religions.

**CHING**, from p.8

In telling her story, Professor Ching provides glimpses into the worlds of Christianity, Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Islam, and indigenous religions. It is a suitable book for someone interested in teaching a course on world religions using an inductive method. My colleagues and I have used sections of the book in several of our undergraduate courses such as world religions, eastern traditions, religious autobiography, and religion and literature.

With her characteristic candor, Professor Ching addresses the difficult questions of racism and discrimination, both in the academy and the broader society. She tells her story, and the stories of others who are not retained, tenured, or promoted by their institutions because they are not white. It is as simple and insidious as this: in universities where the student body may be diverse, the teaching body is largely white. Less than 10% (10%!) of tenured faculty in North America are "of color."

It is the poetry that keeps drawing me back: the actual poems that Professor Ching intersperses throughout the book, and the poetry of her prose. This is one of the finest books that I have ever read on Chinese culture, a splendid answer to the question, "What is China?" (p. 19). It is recommended reading for all of us interested in what it means to be human.

**FRIESEN II**, from p.19

**RSN:** One last question. Your training is in Christian origins. Isn't it a little unusual for you to deal with indigenous religions in the contemporary world?

**Friesen:** Yes, it is unusual, but I think we'll see more of this kind of crossover work in the future. One reason is that New Testament studies is entering a new phase. During the last 2-3 centuries, modern New Testament research has taken place mostly in theological institutions, separated from the study of other religions as a case unto itself. During the last decade, however, we're seeing more research on the New Testament and on earliest Christianity that operates in a religious studies framework rather than a theological one. Early Christianity is beginning to be studied as an emergent religion, and so the theories and methods of religious studies are becoming more relevant for biblical scholars.

There's another reason why I think we'll see more crossover work in the future. People who work on historical topics in any discipline can no longer ignore the present. Anyone who works on history also has to work on their own historical location and ask why their topic is considered important at their particular point in time. As an example of this, I noticed that the Society of Biblical Literature recently established a program unit for the Annual Meeting dedicated to the Social History of Biblical Scholarship. The unit looks not simply at the history of interpretation, but also at the social, political, and economic contexts in which those interpretations were considered credible. There's a growing willingness to look at our own disciplinary ancestors as a way of understanding our lineage, our identity, and our possibilities for the future.

**SMITH**, from p.7

to question A3, as being other than "free-standing departments". While we have the gross categories — combined department, program that borrows faculty from a number of departments, humanities or social science department or division — as with students who minor (or double major) in religion, we have no sense of any patterns in the partners to these cooperative ventures. Similarly, by focusing largely on full time positions in the archetypal free-standing departments, we have no good feel for patterns of joint appointments, efforts at inter-departmental team teaching, and so forth, many of which carry neither appointment nor budgetary consequences for the religion department while enhancing its program. Certainly, the majority of "topics" courses listed, as well as many of the "traditions" courses, are scarcely the exclusive foci of religious studies on many campuses.

Although it was another kind of survey, I sorely miss, here, the sort of interests represented in Ray Hart's "pilot study" by questions III.6 and IV.1 (which would need adjustment to the NORC protocol):

Does your 'peer group' (those with whom you discuss your scholarly work) Include faculty in other humanistic or social scientific disciplines? If yes, which disciplines?

Do you 'team-teach' with colleagues in other departments or fields? (Hart: 815-17)

This is to ask whether, in its effort to demonstrate that "the study of religion counts" (an admirably clever double-entendre), the *Census* may present too isolated a portrait of the role of religious studies in collegiate education. I would have thought that one of the distinctive elements in many programs of religious studies in North America is their extraordinary comfort with their location within the wider human sciences, and the curricular and intellectual advantages both faculties and students derive from conversations and collaborations across fields that are enabled by their wider institutional settings.

This brings me to what I found to be the most significant and thought provoking finding of the *Census*. Let me quote Edward Gray's summary, altering, slightly, his order:

> Programs and departments, the Census indicates, benefit strongly from institutional policies requiring students to take religion courses. Fifty-five percent of all institutions have such policies for the bachelor's degree.

(Note the implications: despite our sometimes rhetoric, as a 'business', we depend not on public institutions, but on church related or formerly church related colleges and universities).

> The general introduction to religion course meets institutional distribution requirements at nearly three out of four institutions where it is offered (74%).
>
> The introduction to world religion(s) course does so at 67% of institutions that offer such a course. Introduction to the Bible courses fulfill such requirements at 72% of all institutions.

(Let me add that these introductory courses may also serve to fulfill major requirements, or as prerequisites for departmental offerings). To continue Gray's summary:

> Fifty-six percent (of all institutions responding) offer what the *Census* Described as a 'general introduction to religion'. A world religions
>
> Introductory course is offered by 68% of respondents. (39% offer separate Introduction to Eastern, 36% to Western traditions). Sixty nine percent offers an introductory course in sacred texts.

Leaving aside public and research institutions, where the percentages are lower (23-29%, even when sections are counted as courses), introductory courses typically constitute more than a third of the program's total offerings, a stunning 45.3% in private, non-sectarian colleges. Unfortunately, we have been given no figures as to what percentage such courses represent of total departmental student enrollments.

I would draw several conclusions from these *Census* data. Despite the cornucopia of "traditions" and "topics" courses exhibited by the *Census* report, in the majority of our institutions, the primary introducing is our profession, our expertise. The enumerated "traditions" and "topics", it would seem, take on a more than limited importance only if they find their place within the department's introducing enterprise. (I shall reserve, for another time, the question of how we train, or fail to train, prospective teachers for the vocation of introducing).

These introductory courses are privileged economic as well as central intellectual components of departmental offerings. (On either ground, it is time we ceased derogating them as 'service courses'). As the *Census* makes plain, substantial numbers of them fulfill college-wide requirements. As Gray suggests, these requirements are of two types (represented on the Census as questions A4a and B4). One is the older form, largely associated with institutions presently or formerly related to particular religious groups, a category which makes up some 55% of respondents to the Census. It specifically requires courses in Bible or religion. The second type is that in which courses in religion fulfill college-wide general education goals, most frequently expressed in the form of distribution requirements. These may be organized either by broad topics reflecting institutional interests (for example, x number of courses in the humanities; more recently, courses fulfilling diversity criteria), or by the acquisition of claimed subject-independent, transferable skills such as writing (under rubrics ranging from 'writing intensive courses' to 'freshman seminars'). Either way, this privileged category of requirement-fulfilling courses guarantees substantial enrollments, the coin of the realm with administrations in justifying appointments and in conferring status. For this reason, regardless of criteria, such courses remain the chief political concern of any department, and, often, the topic of long-lasting battles as to 'turf' - for example, with English departments over teaching the Bible.

While this would be a subject for another forum, I should note that the two types of general requirements have two very different policies. The older Bible/religion requirement is normally under departmental control. The listing of a religion offering as fulfilling a college-wide general education requirement is usually certified by an extra-departmental authority asking questions aimed less at subject matter than at educational goals. I would like to know more about how programs in religion answer such questions. I would ask, as well, whether the widespread use, in introductory courses, of published textbooks and anthologies requires adjustment when the agenda of such works fail to reflect institutionally specific general education goals.

As already noted, it would have been of some considerable interest to learn what proportion of the total enrollment was represented by these introductory courses (as well as, for that matter, other types of courses which chairs struggle mightily to have listed as meeting college-wide requirements). As is the case with most programs in the humanities - indeed, most programs, with the exception of economics, in the human sciences - it is my clear impression that religious studies exhibits a pattern of having relatively high numbers of course enrollments (not only in introductory courses) and relatively low numbers of majors. This has the curricular consequence that upper-level courses must often be taught as if they were introductions. Hence, in the case of the non-introductory courses, it would have been useful to learn what percentage of their enrollment consists of religion majors, what percentage of students are taking these courses as electives, what percentage of students take these courses because they fulfill another program's requirements; what percentage of these courses carry prerequisites.

The *Census* summary notes, quite reasonably, that it "could not capture every kind of introductory course". But, this leaves me unsatisfied. For example, I cannot discern whether the "general introduction to religion course" focuses more on religious traditions and topics, or on issues in the study of religion. It is my sense, although the Census does not allow me to substantiate it, that sustained attention to the latter is often delayed, becoming the focus of a senior seminar. This raises, in turn, the question of the number of students who go on to graduate or professional post-baccalaureate studies in religion. Faculty perceptions - or cloning fantasies - of such student intentions often influence both the content (e.g. focus on methodological issues) and the format of the senior seminar or final exercise, as, for example, in the requirements of senior theses or comprehensive examinations in something like a third of the responding programs.

As a counter-weight to the traditional senior seminar, I would like to know the degree of programmatic experimentation in "capstone courses", "student portfolios", and the like - part of a national curricular trend, brought to our attention in 1990 by an AAR Task Force in its *Report to the Profession: Liberal Learning and the Religion Major*. Census questions C6c and d asked for information (lumping senior seminars and capstone courses together), however these figures have not yet been reported.

But enough...I have come, this afternoon, to praise this *Census* without equivocation. I repeat what I said at the outset of my remarks, the *Census* has "gone a long way towards answering a pressing need in thinking about any educational enterprise: the replacement of anecdotes by data". The questions I have raised are an expression of impatient greed. I have learned so much that I want to learn more. I found the *Census's* data provocative at every turn, data we have never had before in so total and so reliable a form. Thanks to the *Census*, we have begun to come to know ourselves. I would join in the hope that this year's summary report of the *Census's* findings will serve as an opening moment in a sustained, informed discourse devoted to educational matters, both within our Academy and on our campuses. I know full well that a good bit of my hunger is centered on knowing things a census instrument is not calibrated to elicit. But with the *Census's* "total universe" in view, it should be possible to determine a small sample of statistically representative programs in each Carnegie category, which could be feasibly and economically re-surveyed or interviewed on a set of more qualitative educational concerns. For now, for those of us who hold out for the 2001 marker, this *Census* stands, appropriately, as our Academy's millennial celebration. We are enormously indebted to everyone who participated in this corporate enterprise.

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**ELSHTAIN**, from p.10

needs wisdom and guidance and grace, he said. A Greek orthodox Archbishop was invited to lead us in prayer. We all joined hands in a prayer circle, including the president. It was a powerful and moving moment. As the prayer ended and we began to rise, one among us began, haltingly, to sing "God Bless America," a distinctly unchauvinistic song that Americans have turned to over the past few weeks. We all began to join in, including the President. He then mingled, shook hands, and thanked us as we left.

All of us were aware we had participated in an extraordinary event. People shared addresses and business cards. We departed the White House to face a bank of cameras — always set up on the lawn. It began to rain softly. I stood next to my Sikh colleague and found myself gently patting him on the shoulder. I said, "I hope you don't mind my doing that." He said, "No, of course not. Please. I find it reassuring, very reassuring."

As I got into a taxi for the long ride to Baltimore-Washington International Airport, I realized that I had no desire to "spin" the event; to analyze it to bits; to engage in some sort of tight exegesis. Sometimes events just stand. They are what they are. If the President had simply wanted a public relations event, he would have done a quick photo-op (preferably the prayer circle scene, no doubt); cameras would have been whirring; we would have had a few well-timed and choreographed minutes. None of that happened. It was clear that the President wanted counsel; that he sought prayer; that he also hoped to reassure us that he understood the issues involved.

It was an afternoon I will not soon forget. I am grateful that I was able to join a group of my fellow citizens and members of our diverse religious communities, for an extraordinary discussion with the President of the United States.

***Sightings* Contact information**
Please send all inquiries, comments, and submissions to Jonathan Ebel, managing editor of Sightings, at *jhebel@midway.uchicago.edu.*