As a college student, I loved the day the course schedule posted. Seeing the list of new classes in my humanities department alongside interesting courses in other programs made my heart sing. With paper, pencil, and highlighters in hand, I drew a week’s calendar and plotted my options: required courses wedged between Honors seminars and everything else I was dying to take. It was a little bit of heaven.

As an undergrad, I was in a relatively small program in a large state university that seemed to offer up magic each semester. My major had few prerequisites. That’s university-speak for the fact that I had a lot of freedom as a student.

Our Department of Religious Studies reminds me of my undergrad program. Both have faculty who know their students’ names, both host interesting programs with free food (!!!), and both offer curious students a space to examine pressing questions about life, meaning, big ideas, and the future.

I could go on and on about our classes, our research, our internships, our Fellowships, our study abroad courses, our digital projects, our alumni board, and our Pizza Tuesdays. They are some of the best you’ll find—anywhere!

Instead, I’ll welcome you:

Whoever you are, and whatever questions bring you to the Department of Religious Studies, you are welcome. Make our department your home at Georgia State. In your time here, major in what matters, and then use your degree to make a difference.
Dr. Moultrie will present her work at the University of Missouri’s Black Studies conference in St. Louis (October 2017) and at the American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting in Boston (November 2017). She is on the faith planning team for the Let’s Talk about Sex conference in New Orleans (October 2017) and is on the Scholarly Advisory Group for the Rolling the Stone Away conference honoring LGBTQ religious leaders in St. Louis (October 2017).

Monique Moultrie
Associate Professor
mmoultrie@gsu.edu

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Join our Listserv!

For updates on talks, conferences, events, and other information, join our listserv. To subscribe, email Dr. Molly Bassett at mbassett@gsu.edu.
# Calendar of Events

## September

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Labor Day Holiday  &lt;br&gt;University Closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Pizza Tuesday - 12:20 PM  &lt;br&gt;Guest speaker:  &lt;br&gt;Yasmeen Salaam  &lt;br&gt;Carver’s Produce</td>
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## October

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Pizza Tuesday - 12:20 PM  &lt;br&gt;Guest speaker: MA student,  &lt;br&gt;Jonathan Clayton  &lt;br&gt;“Coming Out of the  &lt;br&gt;(Broom) Closet: An Intro to Modern Paganism”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>World Religions Carnival  &lt;br&gt;Co-sponsored by RSSF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Spring 2018 Course Registration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Pizza Tuesday - 12:20 PM  &lt;br&gt;Guest speakers: Graduate  &lt;br&gt;Student Panel  &lt;br&gt;Jonathan Clayton  &lt;br&gt;Mallory Reed  &lt;br&gt;Stefani Sarabia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Pizza Tuesday - 12:20 PM</td>
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## November

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-21</td>
<td>AAR 2017 Annual Meeting  &lt;br&gt;Boston, MA  &lt;br&gt;www.aarweb.org</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Break  &lt;br&gt;(University Closed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Pizza Tuesday - 12:20 PM  &lt;br&gt;Guest speaker:  &lt;br&gt;Jason Lesandrini, GSU Alum  &lt;br&gt;Executive Director of Wellstar Medical &amp; Organizational Ethics</td>
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## December

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Fall Semester Ends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-12</td>
<td>Final Exams Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>FALL 2017 COMMENCEMENT  &lt;br&gt;Location: McCamish Pavilion at Georgia Tech  &lt;br&gt;For more info, go to commencement.gsu.edu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-31</td>
<td>Winter Break  &lt;br&gt;(University Closed)</td>
</tr>
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Spring 2018 Semester begins Monday, January 8, 2018
Johnathan Clayton

My name is Johnathan D. Clayton, I’m originally from Memphis, TN, I’m a first year MA student in Religious Studies at Georgia State University, and come to GSU from The University of Tennessee, Knoxville with a BFA in 2D Studio Art (Photography Concentration) and Religious Studies with a minor in American Studies. I’m most interested in researching religion in the US South, modern Paganism, and especially the ways in which modern Pagan functions in the US South.

While I was finishing my BFA, Dr. Kathryn McClymond came to UTK to give a lecture for the Religious Studies department there. Due to inclement weather, the talk was cancelled, but I had the opportunity to meet with her one-on-one in a coffee shop just off campus. I talked to her about my interests and about the program here at GSU. Georgia State appealed to me because it is situated in Atlanta – the de facto capital of the South. Living in Atlanta would give me an advantage when trying to establish relationships with many different types of Pagans given that they make up such a relatively small percentage of the population. Atlanta has all the diversity and conveniences of a large metropolitan city, while retaining so many elements that make it distinctly Southern. Dr. McClymond also mentioned the funding GSU had available for MA students, which is relatively unheard of in the humanities. This opportunity only increased my interest in the program.

GSU’s Religious Studies department and Atlanta’s Pagan population have already begun to prove just how right this choice was for me. I have access to Religious Studies scholars from a wide variety of backgrounds and I’ve been able to make contact with several local Pagan groups and organizations of various types, attend Pagan Pride Day as a part of my research, and talk to local practitioners. These types of experiences are invaluable, especially in such a wide variety of religious traditions, and will only further reinforce the foundations of my aspirations for the future.

After completing my Masters degree, I plan to pursue a PhD in Religious Studies, and these experiences will be incredibly valuable in continuing and deepening my understanding of Paganism in the South. Along with the formal education GSU provides and individualized support from faculty and staff, the combination of these experiences allowing me to see a more solid path ahead of me in my fields of interest that has seemed inaccessible before. I’m so glad I chose GSU and know this was the right choice to make.

Mallory Reed

My name is Mallory Reed, and I am from Milton, Pennsylvania. I completed my undergrad education at Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where I double majored in Biology and Middle Eastern Studies. I entered college as a Biology major, with the goal of going to medical school and becoming a doctor. In my second year of college, I took an introductory Arabic class to fulfill a graduation requirement. I loved the class and the language and decided to continue both with Arabic and with classes about the broader Middle East. I was drawn to classes in the departments of International Studies, History, and Religious Studies.

I discovered the Master’s degree program at Georgia State University through a flier that was circulated to students in Religious Studies courses at F&M. I was initially attracted to the program because it offered an opportunity to obtain a broad education of religion in general. During my time as an undergraduate, I focused solely on Islam. While I was able to gain an in-depth and thorough understanding of Islam, my interest in the field of religion was strong enough that I wanted to continue in a Master’s program. The program at GSU seemed perfect for me. I would be able to study all of the major world religions in a new city, with funding provided by the GSU Religious Studies Department.

My time at GSU has been even more rewarding than I initially thought. I came into the program with a strong interest in Islam. However, the expansive knowledge of the Religious Studies faculty and the many different courses offered spiked my interest in a field very different from my initial interest. Last spring, I took a course with Dr. Bassett entitled “Animals & Religion.” Throughout the course of that class, we looked at different religious traditions and how individuals within those traditions relate to the natural world. For many cultures, things have animacy that the Western perspective does not generally recognize. For example, in some indigenous cultures, the pelt of a jaguar is believed to endow the individual who wears it with the strength and speed of a jaguar. My interest was sparked by the idea of objects – like an animal pelt - having agency and being more than simply objects.

I am currently working on a thesis project with Dr. Bassett that is focused on the animacy and agency of things, specifically artificial intelligence. I am interested in technological advances and the idea that they have or will have agency and how that alters our understanding of the world around us.
The Religious Studies Student Forum (RSSF) is a student run organization that aims to be a bridge between the Religious Studies department and Georgia State’s students. RSSF fosters this connection through events that present scholarly perspectives on interesting topics related to religion. Additionally, RSSF is interested in creating fun and new events that will attract new students into thinking about and working with religion. Having a variety of voices helps us create diverse, interesting programming and events. If you would like to join or find out more about RSSF, contact us or find us on OrgSync, https://orgsyn.com/23830/chapter.

Nancy Ramirez
RSSF President
nramirez5@student.gsu.edu

Ayan Omar
RSSF Vice President
aomar10@student.gsu.edu

Vacant
RSSF Secretary

Avery Glover
RSSF Treasurer
ahennigan1@student.gsu.edu

If you’re interested in filling the vacancy of Secretary, please email Nancy.

Monique Barlow successfully defended her thesis “I am Fearfully and Wonderfully Made: A History of Transgender Identity and What It Means For Progressive Christianity.” Dr. Monique Moultrie directed the thesis committee, and Dr. Brett Esaki and Dr. Louis Ruprecht served as committee members. She is currently enrolled in the Political Science PhD program at Georgia State.

Cassandra Velasco (MA ‘17) is the 2017 recipient of the Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant award. This recognizes a graduate teaching assistant for providing excellent instruction to our undergraduates. Cassie is accepted the Part-time Instructor position here in the Department for the 2017-18 academic year. She is teaching Perspectives 2001 and Rels 2001 online.

Joshua Hilton is the 2017 recipient of the Alumni Undergraduate Scholarship for scholarly achievement and service to the Department.

LaValla Wilson, MA+NPM candidate, received a Student Innovation Fellowship to support her final project, the development of an app to assist homeless youth. LaValla’s project draws on her professional experience in higher education to reach one of the goals she set for herself in our program: helping homeless youth gain access to educational opportunities.

The Fellowship “allows students to develop expertise and share ideas around emerging technologies and instructional innovations, with particular attention to enhancing learning and research at Georgia State University through the innovative use of technology.”

Brandon Render (MA ’17) is the 2017 recipient of the Outstanding Graduate Student Award for scholarly achievement and service to the Department.
WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Lauren Cooper (MA ’16) accepted the full-time position of Administrative Specialist, Administrative supporting both the Departments of Religious Studies and Philosophy at GSU.

Erika Dorland (MA ’10) is a Business Development Executive for the company Brilliant Data. In June 2017, Erika was interviewed on a popular, international data science podcast called Super Data Science. In the interview, Erika discussed the strange overlap of religion and data science, stating many data science tools use religious terminology.

Scott Grubman (BA ’05) is partner with the law firm of Chilivis Cochran Larkins & Bever, LLP in Atlanta.

Sahar Farooqui (MA ’17) accepted a position as Senior Editor at the American Academy of Religion’s national office. She is working directly with the AAR Director of Meetings in order to produce the AAR’s annual conference program.

Calling all Alumni! We want to hear from you! Send your updates to Felicia Thomas at fthomas@gsu.edu

Congratulations to our Spring and Summer 2017 graduates!

Pictured from L to R: Sahar Farooqui, Jenny Nunn-Stanley, Brandon Render, Ryan Mixson, Sarah Fitoussi, Tami Kennedy.

ALUMNI ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

Heather Abraham  
(BA ’07, MA ’08)

Greene Baranco  
(BA ’04)

Suzanne Degnats  
(MA ’13)

David Dreyer  
(BA ’01)

Justin Howell  
(BA ’97, MEd ’03)

Derek Jackson  
(BA ’97)

Ndola Owuo-Hagood  
(BA ’05, ’08, MA ’10)

Amna Shirazi  
(BA ’97, JD ’00)

Email Dr. Bassett if you would like to join the Alumni board at mbassett@gsu.edu

BACHELOR OF ARTS

Taylor Gilliam  
Jonathan Harkey  
Joshua Hilton  
Alyssa Huenniger  
Christopher McCaskill  
Shea Murdock  
Katelyn Murphy  
Madeline Oppenheim  
Rachel Ponce de Leon  
Alexis Robinson  
Vera Washington  
Makaila Wills  
Tiara Wimbush

MASTER OF ARTS

Monique Barlow  
Sahar Farooqui  
Sarah Fitoussi  
Ryan Mixson  
Cecelia Nathan  
Jenny Nunn-Stanley  
Brandon Render  
Cassandra Velasco
FINANCIAL GIFTS:

- Increase our undergraduate scholarship award amount
- Enhance public programming
- Make unique educational experiences possible, such as student research opportunities, the Religion and Public Life Fellow Program, etc.
- Support faculty research and public presentations of their scholarship

For more information and ways to give, please visit our website and click on Alumni and Friends.

religiousstudies.gsu.edu
404.413.6100