

# Religious Studies

Fall 2008 Vol. 1 Iss. 1

## A Home Away from Home



With the onset of a new academic year comes a monumental and exciting change for the department of Religious Studies. For the first time in 22 years, Dr. Tim Renick will not be in the classroom. In August 2008 Dr. Renick accepted the position of Associate Provost for Academic Programs and has been succeeded as Department Chair by Dr. Kathryn McClymond. Such a prestigious position comes with great responsibilities, but he is no stranger to hard work. Over the last 3 years, Dr. Renick has been instrumental in building the department of Religious Studies by developing the bachelor's and master's degree programs, the core curriculum, and the department promotion and tenure guidelines. This wide range of responsibilities, along with years of college and university service, has prepared Renick for his new role. As Associate Provost, Dr. Renick now supervises approximately 200 employees within the departments of Admissions, Financial Aid, Advisement, Undergraduate Studies, and the Office of International Student and Scholar Services. He is also responsible for the operation of Enrollment Services. Dr. Renick hopes to utilize his position to advocate a multitude of new initiatives for enrollment and growth of the university's academic programs.

In addition to settling in as Associate Provost, Dr. Renick recently completed research funded by a Teagle grant. The Teagle Foundation's aim is to advocate liberal arts education by providing the necessary financial resources to institutions for research. Renick presided over the AAR meeting regarding the Teagle grant held in Chicago, IL on November 1-3. He is also the primary author of "The Religious Studies Major in Transition: New Challenges, New Opportunities." This 20 page white paper outlines key parameters for religious studies majors nationwide and appears in the Fall 2008 edition of *Religious Studies News* which is published by AAR.

In spite of a demanding schedule as Associate Provost, Dr. Renick will remain an active faculty member of the department. He will continue to advise graduate students, serve on student committees, and guest lecture.

## Religious Studies enters the Core Curriculum

Every year brings new course offerings from the Religious Studies department, but this year we will be expanding in a more significant way. Last year the department received approval to begin offering a course in the university's core curriculum. Beginning Spring 2009 the department will offer RelS 2001, "Introduction to World Religions," an introductory course for undergraduates. This course exposes students to different religions around the world by asking very specific questions. We will ask: How do different traditions describe the origins of the world? What rituals have been developed to mark major life cycle events? What do different religions say about evil and suffering in the world? How do we think about religions when we study how they have characterized and treated women? In addition, students will be exposed to dominant approaches to the study of religion. We hope that all of these students, particularly those who pursue careers outside of academia, will come to see how religion influences the way that humans understand themselves, their interactions with one another, and their place in the cosmos.

# Letter from the Chair



It is with great delight that I invite you to linger over this issue of the Religious Studies department newsletter. As many of you are already aware, there have been lots of changes in the department over the last few months.

First, we are pleased to welcome four new faculty members to our department. Please take time to read the extended interviews with Fareeha Khan, Vincent Lloyd, David Bell, and Kate Daley Bailey. We hope you will see—as we did—just how much these young scholars bring to the program. In addition, the graduate program is booming. This year we admitted 16 new graduate students, a record number for us. Student interests range from new religious movements to the divine feminine to Christian ethics to East Asian religions. These students follow in the footsteps of our most recent graduates, who were admitted last year to doctoral programs at Boston University, Emory University, New York University, and the University of California Santa Barbara. We look forward to all that our former and current graduate students will bring to the study of religion.

Finally, the biggest change of all is somewhat bittersweet. Tim Renick, founding member of this department and long-term chair, accepted a position at the university level as the Associate Provost for Academic Programs. While we all recognize the extraordinary gifts he will bring to this position, it meant that Tim had to step down as chair. He continues to work with graduate students, and he is working with several of us to develop Religious Studies 2001, “Introduction to World Religions,” our new Core course, but we miss having his constant presence in the department. For my part, I am thrilled to be stepping into the position of chair at this time in our department’s history. I look forward to continuing our recent efforts to establish a top quality graduate program and to develop a strong Core course curriculum. I am committed to supporting our new and returning faculty in their research and teaching – we continue to be recognized for our high quality in both areas. I also look forward to this year’s tenure track hire and to the training we’ll offer in Spring ’09 to our graduate students to prepare them to teach “Introduction to World Religions” at Georgia State University.

As you can see, the department as a whole is growing, vibrant, and active, much like the larger Georgia State University community. We hope this newsletter gives you a small taste of the exciting life on the 11th floor at 34 Peachtree Street!

***Kathryn McClymond, Ph.D.***

Chair, Department of Religious Studies

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# Department News

## New Faculty Members



**Kate Daley-Bailey**, visiting instructor, is a specialist in Religion and Literature and Americanist faiths. She recently co-authored a chapter in the book *From Plantation to Prison* with Dr. Medine of the University of Georgia. The chapter focuses on issues of confinement with particular attention to Earnest Gaines' *A Lesson before Dying*. Her research focuses greatly on right of passage stories and pop culture ties such as *Harry Potter* and *In Cold Blood*. Kate comes to the department with both her BA and MA in Religious Studies from the University of Georgia.

**Vincent Lloyd**, Ph.D., assistant professor, is a specialist in Philosophy of Religion and Religion in Politics and Race. He has a book coming out this December called *Law and Transcendence*, which discusses the dialogue between Philosophy and Religious Studies and will be published by Palgrave MacMillan. He also represented Georgia State at the AAR conference this November with his presentation on "Christian Perceptions of Sha'ria of Muslim Law." Vincent received his BA in Religion from Princeton University and both his MA and Ph.D. in Rhetoric from University of California at Berkeley.



**David Bell**, Ph.D., lecturer, is a specialist in Psychology and Religion with a focus on neuroscience and religious behavior. He recently authored a chapter in *Religion and the Individual: Belief, Practice, Identity* published by Ashgate Press. One of his main objectives here at Georgia State is to connect the department of Religious Studies to the Neuroscience Institute. Dr. Bell comes to the department with his BA from Samford University, his M. Div. from Princeton University, and his Ph.D. from Emory University.

**Fareeha Khan**, Ph.D., assistant professor, is a specialist in Islamic Law as well as Gender and Ethics. Her research focuses on traditionalist Muslim opposition to Sha'ria reform concerning issues such as a woman's right to divorce. In the future she plans to teach courses on Islamic law and the life of Muhammad as well as others. Dr. Khan comes to the department with her BA from Loyola, her MA from the University of Chicago, and her Ph.D. from University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.



## New Tenure Search Announced

The department has secured initial approval from the university to create a new position for a specialist in American Religions. The opening will be for a tenure-track Assistant Professor beginning August 2009. A Ph.D. at the time of appointment is required and while a specialization in American Religions is preferred, applications are also encouraged from candidates with expertise that complements the department's existing strengths in Chinese religions, ancient and classical Hinduism, Islam, Biblical Judaism, contemporary Christian thought, Christian ethics, and religions of the ancient Mediterranean. The ideal candidate has a strong interest in the comparative or interdisciplinary study of religion. The review of applicants began October 1, 2008 and will continue until the position has been filled. Candidates should send a letter of application, curriculum vitae, evidence of teaching effectiveness, copy of graduate transcript, and three letters of recommendation to: Search Committee, Department of Religious Studies, Georgia State University, Box 4089, Atlanta, GA 30302-4089. For more information, please see our website: [www.gsu.edu/religion](http://www.gsu.edu/religion) or contact search committee chair Dr. Louis Ruprecht, Jr.

## Faculty Member Tours Italy for Research

Thanks to a generous scholarly support grant from Georgia State, Dr. Ruprecht returned to the Secret Archives of the Vatican Library this summer. He also spent considerable time in other archives--such as the State Archives of Rome and the French School housed in the Farnese Palace. After much work, he managed finally to locate a manuscript documenting Johann Joachim Winckelmann's (1717-1768) first formal appointment at the Vatican Library and completed his review of several hundred volumes of Vatican papal receipts spanning 1760-1769. Dr. Ruprecht also took several related trips to visit material housed in Naples, Umbria, and Trieste. This enabled him to complete a draft of the first of a two-book project on Modern Public Art Museums in which he has been involved for the past four years. The manuscript, tentatively entitled *Winckelmann's Secret History*, is now being examined by several university and popular presses.

If you would like to receive your copy of the Department of Religious Studies Newsletter electronically, please email [fthomas@gsu.edu](mailto:fthomas@gsu.edu).

## Attention Alumni!

Are you a graduate of the Department of Religious Studies? Have you been recently promoted, accepted a new position, or worked on an interesting project either personally or professionally? We want to hear all about it!

Send your news to: [fthomas@gsu.edu](mailto:fthomas@gsu.edu) or mail to Felicia Thomas, Department of Religious Studies, Georgia State University, P.O. Box 4089, Atlanta, GA 30302-4089

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