

Religious Studies

Fall 2011, Vol. 2, Issue 2

Religion & Public Life Fellow: Dan Gilgoff, Religion Editor for CNN



To highlight its commitment to Atlanta, the Department has launched a new position, the "Religion and Public Life Fellow." The Religion and Public Life Fellow is an Atlanta-based high-profile professional who joins the Department for one academic year. This professional -- who works in the media, politics, the corporate world, the arts, or a non-profit organization --

will explore with us how religion plays a role in his/her profession. The Fellow will present a public lecture; meet with Department alumni, faculty and friends for a private dinner; and work with undergraduate and graduate students throughout the academic year.

Since January 2009, Dan Gilgoff has overseen all religion coverage for CNN. He launched and manages CNN's Belief Blog, which receives over 6 million hits per month. He has written for The New York Times, The Washington Post, USA Today, The Los Angeles Times, Politico, Boston Globe, Chicago Tribune, Denver Post, and U.S. News & World Report. He is the recipient of several awards, including the 2010 Templeton-Cambridge Fellow award for science and religion journalism.

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New Department Website

Check out the Department's new website at www.gsu.edu/religion! We've got a new format, spotlights on religion in the news, and photos of favorite faculty, students, staff, and department friends. And as always, you'll find all the information you need about our academic programs, special events, and alumni. See you on the home page!



We are on Facebook. Search: "Religious Studies at Georgia State University"

Tenure Track Position Available

The Department of Religious Studies invites applicants for a position in Religion and Conflict with an area focus in the Middle East and/or South Asia. Outstanding candidates with research interests in the relationship between religion and intercommunal violence, nationalism, and/or conflict prevention are encouraged to apply. The successful candidate should have a distinguished publication record, demonstrated experience with grant acquisition, and an advanced research portfolio. GSU's Department of Religious Studies is a dynamic and growing program which offers B.A. and M.A. degrees and serves a talented and diverse student body in downtown Atlanta. All applications should include a letter of interest, a vita that documents a nationally visible, funded research program, evidence of teaching effectiveness, and three letters of recommendation. Candidates with language proficiency in the region will be preferred for all positions. Materials should be sent to Louis A. Ruprecht, Jr., Department of Religious Studies, Georgia State University, Box 4089, Atlanta GA 30302-4089. Applicants should indicate whether they will attend the AAR or MESA annual meetings in the fall. GSU is a unit of the University System of Georgia, and an AA/EO employer. An offer of employment will be contingent on background verification. Review of applications will begin October 1, 2011 and remain open until positions are filled.

FACULTY UPDATE

Molly Bassett co-authored “Coloring the Sacred in Sixteenth-century Mexico” with Jeanette Favrot Peterson (History of Art & Architecture, UC Santa Barbara), which will appear in *Material Culture of Color* edited by Beth Fowkes Tobin and Andrea Fesser. In May, she presented ethnohistorical research at the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association’s national conference. This summer she participated in the first of three workshops for Pre-Tenure Religion Faculty at Colleges and Universities hosted by the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion.

Kathryn McClymond published the entry “Violence and Sacrifice” in *The Blackwell Companion to Religion and Violence* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2011) and a chapter, “Don’t Cry Over Spilled Blood: Ritual Correction in the Mishnah,” in *What the Gods Demand* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). She will present a paper at the Society for Biblical Literature conference this November based on her current book project, *Ritual Gone Wrong: Case Studies in Ritual Disruption* (Oxford University Press).

Tim Renick continues to serve as Georgia State’s Associate Provost. His most recent articles in *Christian Century* include pieces on the death of innocents in times of war, Christian progressivism from Rauschenbusch to Dorrien, and a cover story on new philosophical research into the nature of happiness. He currently serves as principle investigator on three research grants: a Teagle Foundation grant in conjunction with the American Academy of Religion

to develop and to implement the first-ever national survey of graduates of religious studies bachelor’s program, a National Science Foundation grant to improve the retention of underrepresented students in STEM fields, and a Board of Regents grant to pilot programs to support student completion rates. This spring, he made presentations at the national meetings of the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities in Dallas and the Association of Education Finance and Policy in Seattle, and he will discuss job issues in religion at the upcoming AAR Annual Meeting in San Francisco.

Lou Ruprecht returned to the Vatican’s Apostolic Library and the Vatican Library’s Secret Archives in June - July 2011 as a Visiting Research Fellow. Ruprecht’s most recent publications are: “What is the Matter in a Polytheist America?” a review of Gary Laderman’s *Sacred Matters: Celebrity Worship, Sexual Ecstasies, the Living Dead, and Other Signs of Religious Life in the United States* (New York: The New Press, 2009); “The Whole Story: On Narrative Philosophy and Religious Moral,” *Comparative and Continental Philosophy*; “Winckelmann and Casanova in Rome: A Case Study in Religion and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth Century Rome,” *Journal of Religious Ethics*; as well as regular contributions to *Religion Dispatches* and *Religion Nerd*.

New Faculty Member

The Department welcomes **Wesley Barker** as our new Visiting Instructor for 2011-2012. Wesley completed her B.A. in Women’s Studies and Political Science at Emory University and her M.T.S. at Duke University. She is currently finishing her Ph.D. at

Emory University, writing a dissertation entitled “Sexual Ethics Beyond Sexual Difference: Towards a Theology of Women’s Writing.” This year she will be teaching eight classes for us, including “Jesus Inside/Outside the Gospels,” “Christianity and Democracy,” “Modern Christian Thought,” and “World Religions.”



Welcome Wesley!

Gilgoff continued

Dan writes, “Georgia State’s religion department is boldly expanding the conversation around religion’s role in society, which is a big part of what CNN.com has been doing over the last year. I’m excited to help shape that increasingly relevant discussion at a moment when there’s growing recognition of religion’s role in the headlines.

I’m honored to be stepping into this fellowship at a university that is helping to lead a global discussion that few would have predicted we’d be having in 2011, about religion’s huge and growing influence in world events.

I’m planning to bring Georgia State students to CNN to provide an insider’s look at how a major news organization covers religion and to facilitate conversations on campus that critically examine that news coverage and explore its implications.”

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



This Fall semester brings a lot of “firsts” to our Department. Dan Gilgoff, our first Religion and Public Life Fellow, will join us throughout the year to explore how religion plays a role in his world as Religion Editor for CNN.com. This Fall we are also hiring our first faculty member as part of the University “Second Century Initiative” program, an initiative designed to foster collaborative interdisciplinary research focused on issues of particular concern in the world today. We are also launching our Alumni Board, whose activities include establishing internships for our students in Atlanta and inaugurating a fundraising

campaign to establish a student scholarship. Finally, this fall we welcome a new Visiting Instructor, Wesley Barker, who will help us continue to offer a wide range of exciting courses to our students.

Some things, however, remain the same. As I write this, I am listening to the excited voices of new graduate students gathered in the department for orientation. Earlier, our Graduate Teaching Assistants came together to prepare to teach multiple sections of “Introduction to World Religions,” the Department’s core course, which reaches over 400 students. Over the next few days faculty will return from their summer research to share what they’ve learned with students and colleagues. GSU anticipates welcoming over 32,000 students this year, many of whom will encounter Religious Studies through their coursework, through the Religious Studies Student Forum, through faculty presentations on campus, and throughout the community. As always, we invite you to join us!

Kathryn McClymond

Professor & Chair, Department of Religious Studies

SAVE THE DATE

Annual Department Potluck

Saturday, September 17, 6:00 pm

at the home of Heather Abraham Sagisman, MA '09

For more information, contact hsagisman@gmail.com

AAR Annual Meeting

November 19-22, 2011 in San Francisco, CA

For more information visit, www.aarweb.org

FACULTY LISTING

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DEPARTMENT NEWS

Study Abroad in France and Scotland, May 2011

This past May, Dr. David Bell led a group of students on the Department's first Maymester study abroad trip. Below are some of masters student Cathye Schmidt's thoughts from that experience:

"We traveled to Paris and Lourdes, France as well as Iona and Edinburgh, Scotland...During the Parade of Candles in Lourdes, a group pilgrimage ritual, I understood the power some pilgrims felt while thousands prayed at the same time, in various different languages, but that did not matter. They were all there for a specific person and for the short time they spent together, they were friends and equals.

When we reached the island of Iona (after almost two full days of traveling!), some of the group decided to do the pilgrimage walk on the island that meant walking from one end of the island to another (a 3 mile walk long and about 1/2 mile across one way). On the last mile of the walk, we were able to see what the island looked like before St. Columba ever arrived on the island in the late 500s. The pilgrimage walk ends at St. Columba Bay and the pilgrim is to take a rock from the beach, think about something in their life they want to be free from, and throw that rock out into the ocean. The pilgrim is to then take another rock with them that represents the good things they will focus on instead of the negative things they threw out into the ocean....This study abroad trip was a great experience and I am very grateful that I took the trip. I have grown as a student and as a person (which coincidentally is a goal of a pilgrimage!) and I will take the experiences I had back to my future studies. I would highly recommend the trip to anyone who is thinking of participating in the future!"



"View of what St. Columba would have seen as he landed." Photo courtesy of Cathye Schmidt



Edinburgh Castle. Photo courtesy of Cathye Schmidt

Remembering Katherine Moore, long-time friend of Religious Studies

-Dr. Tim Renick



The department was saddened to learn of the passing on August 6th of Katherine Moore. Katherine was a great friend and supporter of Georgia State and the Department of Religious Studies. Born in 1925, she for decades enjoyed a distinguished career as a journalist for several Atlanta papers. For many of you who took classes in the 2000s, you will remember her enthusiasm, support and joy as she took classes in the department. She graduated with her B.A. in Religious Studies--at the age of 80! For those of you who did not have the pleasure of knowing Katherine personally, you doubtlessly know of and have benefitted from her many gifts to the University and the department. After her son, Troy, died tragically just weeks before he was scheduled to graduate from Georgia State, Katherine established the Troy Moore Library in his honor. With the support of her other son Larry, who also is a graduate of Georgia State, she donated the endowments to establish the Troy Moore Essay in Ethics, the Robert Arrington Undergraduate Award in Religious Studies, and the Timothy Renick Graduate Award in Religious Studies. We will miss Katherine, but her positive impact on the study of religion at Georgia State will continue for decades to come. In lieu of flowers, the family has asked that donations be made to the Troy Moore fund at Georgia State University.

GRAD STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Kelly O’Riley successfully defended her master’s thesis titled “Hagiography, Teratology, and the ‘History’ of Michael Jackson.”

The Religious Studies faculty welcome a new cohort of MA candidates! Please introduce yourself to your new colleagues when you see them around the department.

“Introduction to World Religions” Writing Lab

The Religious Studies Writing Lab is designed to help RELS 2001 students write successful papers and essays for the course. Do you need help structuring your paper? Making sure you’ve communicated your argument effectively? Or even a second pair of eyes to help you edit?

Writing Lab consultant and former RELS 2001 instructor Sarah Levine is available for assistance. Contact her at slevine2@student.gsu.edu

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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