

Religious Studies

Spring 2012, Vol. 3, Issue 3

Annual Student Symposium & Graduation Celebration

Each year the department holds the Annual Religious Studies Student Symposium, a fun and intellectually stimulating forum where students present their work to an audience of their peers, professors, friends, and family. This is also the time we recognize student award winners, our graduating undergraduate and masters students, and highlights from the past year.

This year's symposium will be held on **Thursday, March 29, at 3:00 p.m.** in the Troy Moore Library located in the General Classroom Building room 939. All are invited to come and hear our students' work, honor our graduating students, enjoy stimulating conversation, reunite with old classmates and professors, and look back on a great year.

Atlanta Colloquium on Religion in America

Dr. Isaac Weiner is pleased to announce the formation of a new Atlanta Colloquium on Religion in America. Dr. Weiner worked closely with Dr. Gary Laderman of Emory University to create this exciting new inter-institutional and inter-departmental initiative. Our goal is to bring together scholars representing an array of local institutions and academic disciplines whose work touches on the study of religion in the United States. We plan to meet regularly, perhaps once or twice a semester, to foster conversation and collaboration. We are delighted that the American Academy of Religion has agreed to host these meetings at their Luce Center offices.

Over thirty scholars gathered for the Colloquium's first meeting in September, including faculty and graduate students from Georgia State and Emory. Scholars came from the fields of Religious Studies, History, English, Communication, Anthropology, and Liberal Arts. We spent the evening becoming acquainted with each other and learning about each other's work. We gathered for a second time in November. At that session, we sponsored a roundtable discussion on the value of the "religious marketplace" as a model for studying American religions.

We are in the process of planning our spring sessions. If you would like to join us, please contact Dr. Weiner (see info, p. 3). All are welcome!

Religion & Public Life Fellow Public Lecture



The Department is pleased to invite everyone to the inaugural Religion and Public Life Fellow public lecture on Tuesday, March 13, at 6 pm at the Rialto. This year's Fellow, Dan Gilgoff, Religion Editor for CNN.com, will be speaking on "What Media and Academia

Can Teach Each Other About Religion." Dan was recently awarded one of three American Academy of Religion Awards for Best In-Depth Newswriting on Religion. He is the author of *The Jesus Machine: How James Dobson, Focus on the Family, and Evangelical America are Winning the Culture War* (St. Martin's Press, March 2007), and his writing has appeared in *USA Today*, *The Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Congressional Quarterly*, *Washington City Paper*, and *Wine Enthusiast*. He has appeared on CNN, FOX News Channel, MSNBC, CNN Headline News, and Court TV. Save the date for this exciting event -- more info to follow!

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

Faculty Updates

Molly Bassett presented “The Skin(ny) on Aztec God-Bodies” at “The Racial Saint: Marked Flesh, Holy Flesh,” workshop hosted at Syracuse University in December 2011, and she recently gave a lecture on religion in Mesoamerica to the docents of Emory’s Michael C. Carlos Museum. Also, she has accepted an invitation to join the Teaching Religion Section Steering Committee of the American Academy of Religion.

Kate Daley is currently working as a part-time instructor here at Georgia State as well as Georgia Perimeter College (Dunwoody Campus), and GPC online. She recently published “The Sacred and the Strange: Transvestite Nuns?” and “The Sacred and the Strange: An Aryan Jesus?” for *Religion Nerd*. In addition, she published “Hitler’s Mythographer,” *Bulletin for the Study of Religion* (October 2011) and “The Curious Case of Gerhard Kittel,” *Bulletin for the Study of Religion* (November 2011).

Jonathan Herman presented “Civil Discourse or Simple Discord? Competing Visions for Religion in the Public Schools” at the Conference on Ethics, Religion, and Civil Discourse in Fresno, CA. He also completed his term as a member of the American Academy of Religion Committee on the Public Understanding of Religion.

Kathryn McClymond published several pieces this fall: “Sacrifice and Violence” in *Blackwell Companion to Religion and Violence* (eds. Andrew R. Murphy. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); “Don’t Cry Over Spilled Blood: Ritual Correction in the Mishnah” in *Ancient Mediterranean Sacrifice* (eds., Zsuzsa Varhelyi and Jennifer Knust. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); and “Negotiating Ritual

Repair: The *prayascitta* Material in the Baudhayana Sruta Sutra” in *Negotiating Rites*, (eds. Frank Neubert and Ute Husken, Oxford University Press, 2011). In addition, she presented a paper at the Society for Biblical Literature conference in San Francisco, “Space and Sacrifice in Leviticus: Implications for Sacrificial Theory.” She also helped to establish a 3-year Seminar on stand-alone M.A. programs through the American Academy of Religion, which held its initial meeting at the November 2011 AAR meeting in San Francisco.

Tim Renick’s most recent essay, “The Death of Others: The Fate of Civilians in America’s Wars,” appeared in the *The Christian Century* in October. Since September, he has made presentations or conducted reviews at the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities, Kenyon College, Missouri State University, East Carolina University, the Council of Graduate Schools, and the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion. He continues to serve as principal investigator on the AAR/Teagle project to study the religious studies major nationwide. He requests that you be sure to fill out the survey that will be sent to graduates of GSU’s undergraduate major via e-mail in December. More recently, he was awarded major grants from the Lumina Foundation and the Goizueta Foundation, the latter of which is funded at \$5 million to support the success of Georgia State students.

Louis Ruprecht’s new book, *Winckelmann and the Vatican’s First Profane Museum* (Palgrave MacMillan) was released November 2011. In addition, he gave several lectures: “Muted Strains of Emersonian Perfectionism” for “Cornel West’s Genealogy of American Pragmatism” at the American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting in November 2011 and “Jeffrey Stout’s analysis of the relation between democracy and

grass roots organizing” at Florida State University’s Graduate Seminar in October 2011. Finally, Ruprecht presented “Translating Sexual Transgression in the KJV” for “An Anglo-American History of the KJV” at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC in October 2011.

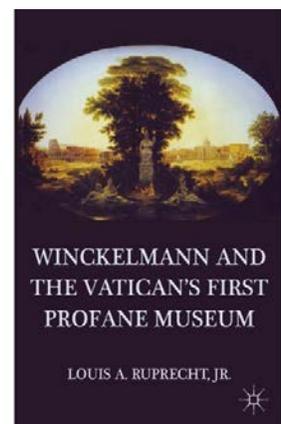
Isaac Weiner presented a paper at a conference on “Sensational Religion: Sense and Contention in Material” sponsored by the Yale University Initiative for the Study of Material and Visual Cultures of Religion in November 2011. The paper will be published in the future as part of an edited volume.

Pizza Fridays!

Join the Religious Studies faculty and students for pizza on the following Fridays at noon in the Department.

January 13
February 10
March 16
April 20

Good food, better conversation!



Letter from the Chair



Spring is always a busy time for the Department. This year we are in the midst of hiring, and we hope to welcome two new faculty members in Fall '12. We are also looking forward to our annual Spring Student Symposium scheduled for Thursday, March 29th - please join us! Every spring we enjoy listening to our students present their research, and we recognize our graduating undergraduate and masters level students in front of family and friends. This year we will also have a special presentation from our newly-formed Alumni Board, and we invite everyone to attend.

Another highlight this spring will be the inaugural public lecture for our Religion and Public Life Fellow. Please join us at the Rialto on Tuesday, March 13 at 6 p.m. for remarks from Dan Gilgoff, Religion Editor for CNN.com. Dan recently received one of three 2011 American Academy of Religion Awards presented for Best In-Depth Newswriting on Religion. At the November 11 American Academy of Religion conference, he participated in a panel discussion, "Inside the Media: What Journalists Want Religion Scholars to Know About the Media." Dan has spent time with both our undergraduate and graduate students throughout this year, and the public lecture will be the culmination of his year with us. Don't miss this special event!

Finally, be sure to check out our website regularly (www.gsu.edu/religion). There you will find current news on religion in the world, as well as updates on our faculty, students, and alumni.

Kathryn McClymond

Professor & Chair, Department of Religious Studies

FACULTY LISTING

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Front row: David Bell, Wesley Barker, Kathryn McClymond, Tim Renick, Isaac Weiner **Back row:** Molly Bassett, Lou Ruprecht, Jon Herman, Abbas Barzegar
*Not pictured: Kate Daley

Department News & Events:

Save the Date

Employment Workshop for Religious Studies Majors

Thursday, April 5
2:30 - 3:45 pm
Aderhold 333

Religious Studies graduates pursue careers in law, the media, public service, education, and business - do YOU know how to make your Religious Studies degree work for you? Attend this workshop with GSU Career Services Director Kevin Gaw and learn what you bring to the table for a wide variety of employers!

Study Abroad Course: Pilgrimage Sites in Europe May 7-25, 2012

Our department will be offering its second study abroad program this May! Dr. David Bell will be teaching Pilgrimage (RELS 4290/6290, 3 hours credit) on location at two pilgrimage sites in Europe: Lourdes in southern France and the island of Iona in northwestern Scotland. The trip also includes short stays in Edinburgh and Paris.



Drawing over a million pilgrims a year, Lourdes is located in the south of France along the Pyrenees Mountains and draws millions of pilgrims each year. From here, students will be able to study the real world experience of pilgrimage, as well as explore the centuries old sites in this historic town. Student will then travel to the remote island of Iona on the western coast of Scotland. A stunning location for a pilgrimage site, Iona is home to a 1400-year-old monastery with a spiritual community that focuses on both contemplative practice and social justice issues.

We would love for you to come on this trip! Last year's trip went very well and this year promises to be even better. How can you go? First send Dr. Bell an email stating your interest (davidbell@gsu.edu), and take one of the brochures in the department or digitally on the department website. See you in Europe!

Mark your calendars!

March 2 - 4, 2012

SECSOR

The 2012 Southeastern Commission for the Study of Religion meeting will be held at the Atlanta Marriott Center. For more information, please visit <http://groups.wfu.edu/secsor>

Look for the department at
SECSOR!

We'll be hosting an event featuring
our graduate program.

March 29, 2012

Spring Symposium

Troy Moore Library
General Classroom
Building
Room 939
3:00 pm

Family and friends welcomed!
Please join us!

Student News



Ilani Blake will present her paper “Birds of Prey: Exploitation, Consumption, and Sacrifice in Suddenly Last Summer” at GSU’s New Voices Conference. It will take place Friday, January 13 at 10:15am in the Troy Moore library. The theme of the conference is ‘Bodies of Influence.’



Cathye Schmidt will be presenting “The Most Successful ‘Mud-Slinging Job’: Mary Magdalene continues to be a fame hooker, prostitute, and wench” at the PCA/ACA (Popular Culture Associate/ American Culture Association) national conference in April in Boston.



Suzanne Tryon successfully defended her master’s thesis titled “Sacrilege and the Sanctuary” with distinction, December 2011. Congratulations, Suzanne!

Alumni Updates

Gavin Cooper, MA ‘11, and his wife Aubrey, welcomed a baby girl named Annabelle Natalie Cooper, November 2011.

Heather Abraham, BA ‘07, MA ‘09, recently finished a personal manuscript. She anticipates publication in early spring. Heather’s blog, *Religion Nerd*, is growing continuously--attracting readers and contributors.

Attention Alumni

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 ftthomas@gsu.edu.

Spotlight: Religious Studies Student Forum

The Religious Studies Student Forum offers fun, enriching events in Spring 2012! Look out for a chance to meet and compete with new and old friends on the first week of classes! Join us for several engaging Brown Bag Wednesdays, connecting students with each other and the community! Watch and discuss films in the dorms at the end of each month! Join us for field trips, trivia night, and more! Please contact Nick Newell at nnewell1@student.gsu.edu or Alex Johnson at jjohnson166@student.gsu.edu for more information about Student Forum events. Like talking to people? Sign up to let people know that this will be the best semester for RELS Student Forum during the first week of classes.



Alumni Board Members

- Grené Baranco - BA ‘04
- David Dreyer - BA ‘01
- Lori Feig-Sandoval - BA ‘82
- Derek Jackson - BA ‘97
- Heather Abraham - BA ‘07, MA ‘09
- Betty Woodman - MA ‘03

To find out about joining our alumni board, contact Kathryn McClymond at kmcclymond@gsu.edu.

Major at Work!

Jason Baumunk is a Religious Studies major currently working on an Honors thesis with Dr. Ruprecht. His project involves writing original poetry, and the Department is pleased to include one of Jason's poems here in recognition of this innovative project and in recognition of all our students who explore religion and the arts. Jason anticipates graduating in Spring 2012.

Fishers of Men

For Troy Davis

It was a custom among the Leucadians each year at the festival of Apollo that some criminal be thrown from the look-out for the sake of averting evil: all kinds of wings and birds were fastened to him in an effort to break his fall by their fluttering, and many people in small fishing-boats waited in a circle below and did what they could to rescue the man and take him to safety beyond the borders. -Strabo, "Geography" (On Leucas)

My son is talking so excitedly
about the Festival
that he keeps missing spots in the nets he's mending.
Feigning irritation, I keep telling him to pay attention.
But my mind is on the Festival too.

~~*

As a boy, I was cut by the beak of a panicking
pelican, its feet tied to the criminal's legs,
as I struggled to haul him into my father's boat.
How strong the bird was, giant wings battering my head,
deafening in their frightened frenzy,
and how weak the man.

Once, I recall thinking we should split the man in half,
my friend and I: each trying, laughin, to pull into our respective
boats
the body between us.

So many men I've seen plummet from that look-out above us,
perhaps
half to meet their deaths below.

Many times my father and I were the ones to reach him,
to earn the right to ferry the man out of Leucas.
We would return triumphant,
the blessing of a god our day's catch.

Most of these men were a chaos of howls and screams-
man and bird flapping falling howling crying out in the
broken morning
down through the sea air, our air, towards us below.

I recall thinking, the arrogance of my youth, that if it were
me up there, I'd do
better. I, who'd fished these shores my whole life, would
be the criminal who knew
the morning as his own, who relaxed in descent, who held
out his arms in the way
the cliffs dictated...who let the birds take me, triumphant,
to some brighter
elsewhere as my astonished village looked on.

Then, in my sixteenth year, I saw the criminal I'd imagined
myself to be.
He did not struggle. Silently, he spread his arms and legs
just as I'd pictured.
He would've soared majestically, king of the seabirds,
except that he fell as quickly as any of them.

In my enthusiasm, I had placed our boat very near shore.
I looked up at
the single moment of his silent, sculpted hanging
and I was afraid
that he would land on our boat,
would shatter it and sink us all.

He landed a mere toss of the net from where I stood.
I saw his impact, his face striking the waves.
His head snapped back onto his spine,
and he sank for a moment
before the surfacing of the frantic birds
dragged him up, resurrected but for being dead.

Head now facing the other way, as a head never should,
his emergent eyes pointed toward
me as I stood, stricken, on my father's boat.

~~*

"Father, do you think it will be a large man this year?
I hope not. I think the smaller men do better
because the landing is lighter. Don't you think?"

"Look," I say. "You've missed another spot.