

# Religious Studies

**SUMMER 2013**

## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR SPRING 2013 GRADUATES

### Undergraduate Students

Weston Hopkins  
Sabina Mally (with Honors)  
Sahrish Panjwani (with Honors)  
Meredith Peterson  
Nicole Shirley  
Yolanda Williams



### Masters Students

Bishal Karna successfully defended his thesis titled "Contemplative Studies in Context." In the Fall, Bishal will attend Ohio State in the Department of Comparative Studies' PhD program to study religion and folklore.

Sherri Hill completed her MA and is now teaching in Myanmar.

Nick Newell successfully defended his thesis, "A Reception History of Gilgamesh as Myth."

Angela Stogsdill completed her MA and is preparing applications for further graduate work.

Kathryn Yates successfully defended her thesis titled "Flesh as Text[ile]: How Toci's Embodiment in Ochpaniztli Provides an Alternative Reading of Aztec Gender."

Travis Webb successfully defended his thesis titled "How to Weaponize a Philosopher: Hobbes's Deadly Arsenal."

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## Annual Student Symposium - April 2013

The Department's annual student symposium was, once again, a huge success. Students presented on various topics such as gender and religious truth; public school prayer; and Islam and experimental pedagogy just to name a few.

Sabina Mally was awarded the Robert Arrington Outstanding Undergraduate Award; Bishal Karna received the Timothy Renick Outstanding Graduate Student Award; and lastly, Sherri Hill received the Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant Award.

## FACULTY SUMMER ACTIVITY



**Dr. Molly Bassett** welcomed her daughter Jennings Katherine on May 11th and is delighted to be spending the summer with family.

**Dr. David Bell** is teaching three courses including one studying American death rituals, which included a field trip to Oakland Cemetery. Using his own research background in religious identity, Dr. Bell is also involved in a research project with Dr. McClymond in which they are studying religious life stories and moral injury.

**Dr. Nadia Latif** finished an article for publication on gender, new media, and consumption in a Palestinian refugee camp. Dr. Latif is currently working on a book proposal based on her doctoral dissertation on the sense of belonging Palestinian camp refugees in Lebanon hold towards their villages of origin in Palestine.

**Dr. Kathryn McClymond** is recording lectures for The Teaching Company, a 60-part series on "Great Mythologies." She is also collaborating with Dr. Bell and a research team of MA students and staff to study moral injury.

**Dr. Monique Moultrie** was selected to participate in the Oral History Institute at Kenyon College in Gambier, OH in June. While there, she consulted with Institute faculty about using oral histories in her teaching, and discussed her proposed book on oral histories of black LGBT religious leaders.



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## SERVICE DAY WITH REP. KATHY ASHE

In April 2013, Rep. Kathy Ashe invited our majors to volunteer with Central Outreach and Advocacy Center (COAC) in order to learn about Atlanta's homeless population. COAC is an independent non-profit organization that assists with the poor and homeless population of Atlanta. Their full-time staff and volunteers provide services such as helping people obtain identification cards, serving meals, and offering minor medical services.



Director Kimberly Parker gave the students a brief history of COAC and the services they offer. Next Sharon Damelio and Devo'n Williams, Special Project Coordinators, conducted a unique version of the popular board game Life to give examples of

why and how people often find themselves facing homelessness. The game was not only fun but a real eye-opener. At the end of the game, the students were divided into two groups: group one prepared sandwiches for lunch while group two played several rounds of Bingo with the COAC's clients.

Our students had a great experience--many thanks to Rep. Ashe and to COAC.



## BARZEGAR'S STUDENT "THINK TANK"

As student debt burdens increase and traditional degrees seem distanced from the workforce, student cynicism and classroom apathy have become common place problems in universities across the country. However, the college experience continues to be one of the most memorable and valuable periods in life for an entire swath of American society.



Facing this paradox, Dr. Abbas Barzegar has introduced the

idea of turning the classroom into a think tank where students analyze real-world problems and develop tools for the general public and educators alike. He trains students to produce websites focused



on the given subject of his course. All student assignments generate content for the site. By working in small teams, students engage collaboratively with one another, learning and applying critical thinking skills to contemporary problems and subjects.

Dr. Barzegar's innovative approach has been a hit with his students.



## COMING IN OUR FALL '13 ISSUE:

- Undergraduate Scholarship campaign: update on our progress--we're almost there!
- Tenure-track job opening
- Save the Date!: October 3rd event with Steve Oney, author of *And the Dead Shall Rise: The Murder of Mary Phagan and the Lynching of Leo Frank*

## ALUMNI BOARD MEMBERS

Heather Abraham - BA '07, MA '09  
Grené Baranco - BA '04  
David Dreyer - BA '01  
Lori Feig-Sandoval - BA '82  
Derek Jackson - BA '97  
Amna Shirazi - BA '97, JD '00  
Betty Woodman - MA '03



To find out about joining our alumni board, contact Kathryn McClymond at [kmcclymond@gsu.edu](mailto:kmcclymond@gsu.edu)

*Many thanks to former Alumni Board member Leslie Andrews, who is now serving with the Peace Corps in Mongolia. We wish her the best!*