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RELIGIOUS STUDIES NEWS

March 2007

Published by the American Academy of Religion

Vol. 22, No. 2



AAR President Jeffrey Stout discusses the job market, the independent meeting, and the transition to a new executive director. See his interview on page 22.

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*Forming the Theological Imagination:
Strategies of Integration in
Theological Education*

2007

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Religious Studies News (USPS 841-720) is published quarterly by the American Academy of Religion in January, March, April, and October. Letters to the editor and features examining professional issues in the field are welcome from all readers. Please send editorial pieces in electronic uncompressed file format only (MS Word is preferred) to: rsneditor@aarweb.org.

Subscriptions for individuals and institutions are available. See www.aarweb.org/publications/rsn for more information.

Deadlines for submissions:

January	October 15
March	December 15
April	February 15
October	July 15

Advertising
For information on advertising, please see www.aarweb.org/publications/rsn.

Publisher:
American Academy of Religion
825 Houston Mill Road NE, Suite 300
Atlanta, GA 30329 USA

Executive Editor
Kyle Cole

Editor
Shelly C. Roberts

© AAR, 2007

POSTMASTER:
Send address changes to *Religious Studies News*
825 Houston Mill Road, Suite 300
Atlanta, GA 30329.
Periodicals postage paid at Atlanta, GA.

2007 Member Calendar

Dates are subject to change. Check www.aarweb.org for the latest information.

March

Religious Studies News March issue.
Spotlight on Theological Education.

Journal of the American Academy of Religion March 2007 issue. For more information on AAR publications, see www.aarweb.org/publications or go directly to the JAAR home page hosted by Oxford University Press, <http://jaar.oxfordjournals.org>.

March 1. 2007 Annual Meeting proposals due to program unit chairs.

March 1–2. Mid-Atlantic regional meeting, Baltimore, MD.

March 3. Religion in the Schools Task Force conference call.

March 3–4. Southwest regional meeting, Dallas, TX.

March 16–18. Southeast regional meeting, Nashville, TN.

March 17. Publications Committee meeting, New York, NY.

March 20. Nominations due for Awards for Excellence in the Study of Religion book awards. For details, see www.aarweb.org/awards/book/rules.asp.

March 23–24. Rocky Mountain–Great Plains regional meeting, Omaha, NE.

March 24–26. Western regional meeting, Berkeley, CA.

March 27. Humanities Advocacy Day, an event organized by the National Humanities Alliance and co-sponsored by the AAR and more than 20 organizations to promote support for the National Endowment for the Humanities. For more information, see www.nhalliance.org.

March 30–31. Midwest regional meeting, River Forest, IL.

(For more information on regional meetings, see www.aarweb.org/regions/meetings.asp.)

April

April 1. Notification of acceptance of Annual Meeting paper proposals by program unit chairs.

April 13–14. Upper Midwest regional meeting, St. Paul, MN.

April 27. Executive Committee meeting, San Diego, CA.

April 27. Regionally Elected Directors meeting, San Diego, CA.

April 28–29. Spring Board of Directors meeting, San Diego, CA.

(For more information on regional meetings, see www.aarweb.org/regions/meetings.asp.)

May

Religious Studies News May issue.
Spotlight on Teaching Spring issue.

Annual Meeting registration materials mailed with RSN.

May 1. Nominations (including self-nominations) for committee appointments requested.

May 4–5. Eastern International regional meeting, Waterloo, ON, Canada.

May 4–6. Pacific Northwest regional meeting, Lethbridge, AB, Canada.

May 15. Annual Meeting registration & housing opens for 2007 Annual Meeting.

May 15. Registration for the Employment Information Services Center opens.

May 30. Annual Meeting Additional Meeting requests due for priority consideration.

(For more Annual Meeting information, see www.aarweb.org/annualmeet/2007/default.asp.)

June

Journal of the American Academy of Religion June issue.

June 15. Membership renewal deadline for 2007 Annual Meeting participants.

July

July 1. New fiscal year begins.

July 15. Submission deadline for the October issue of *Religious Studies News*. For more information, see www.aarweb.org/publications/rsn.

July 31. Deadline for participants to request audiovisual equipment at the Annual Meeting.

August

Annual Meeting program goes online.

August 1. Change of address due for priority receipt of the Annual Meeting *Program Book*.

August 1. Research Grant Applications due. For more information, see www.aarweb.org/grants.

August 1. Regional development grant applications due to regional secretaries.

August 15. Membership renewal period for 2008 begins.

September

Journal of the American Academy of Religion September issue.

Annual Meeting *Program Books* mailed to members.

September 7. Program Committee meeting, Atlanta, GA.

September 8. Executive Committee meeting, Atlanta, GA.

October

Religious Studies News October issue.

Spotlight on Teaching Fall issue.

October 1–31. AAR officer election period. Candidate profiles will be published in the October RSN.

October 15. January 2008 *Religious Studies News* submission deadline.

October 15. Excellence in Teaching award nominations due. For more information, see www.aarweb.org/awards/teaching.asp.

October 21. EIS preregistration closes.

November

November 1. Research grant awards announced.

November 15. Executive Committee meeting, San Diego, CA.

November 16. Fall Board of Directors meeting, San Diego, CA.

November 16. Chairs Workshop at the Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA.

November 17–20. Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA. Held concurrently with the Society of Biblical Literature, comprising some 11,000 registrants, 200 publishers, and 150 hiring departments.

TBA. Annual Business Meeting at the Annual Meeting. See the *Program Book* for day and time.

December

Journal of the American Academy of Religion December issue.

December 1. New program unit proposals due.

December 8–9. Program Committee meeting, Atlanta, GA.


December 15. Submissions for the March 2008 issue of *Religious Studies News* due. For more information, see www.aarweb.org/publications/rsn.

December 31. Membership renewal for 2008 due. Renew online at www.aarweb.org/dues.

And keep in mind throughout the year...

Regional organizations have various deadlines throughout the fall for their Calls for Papers. See www.aarweb.org/regions/default.asp.

In the Field. News of events and opportunities for scholars of religion. *In the Field* is a members-only online publication that accepts brief announcements, including calls for papers, grant news, conference announcements, and other opportunities appropriate for scholars of religion. Submit text online at www.aarweb.org/publications/inthefield/submit.asp.

Openings: Employment Opportunities for Scholars of Religion. *Openings* is a members-only online publication listing job announcements in areas of interest to members; issues are viewable online from the first through the last day of each month. Submit announcements online, and review policies and pricing, at www.aarweb.org/openings/submit.asp. 


RELIGIOUS STUDIES NEWS

Religious Studies News is the newspaper of record for the field especially designed to serve the professional needs of persons involved in teaching and scholarship in religion (broadly construed to include religious studies, theology, and sacred texts). Published quarterly by the American Academy of Religion, RSN is received by some 11,000 scholars and by libraries at colleges and universities across North America and abroad. *Religious Studies News* communicates the important events of the field and related areas. It provides a forum for members and others to examine critical issues in education, pedagogy (especially through the biannual *Spotlight on Teaching*), research, publishing, and the public understanding of religion. It also publishes news about the services and programs of the AAR and other organizations, including employment services and registration information for the AAR Annual Meeting.

For writing and advertising guidelines, please see www.aarweb.org/publications/rsn.asp.

FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

It is always a pleasure to publish an interview with the AAR president, and in this issue of *Religious Studies News*, Jeffrey Stout openly discusses several provocative topics: AAR governance, the decision to hold meetings independent of the SBL, and job placement of recent (and not-so-recent) graduates. You should enjoy and appreciate his candor, beginning on page 22; let the conversations begin.

In our Focus section, where we examine important issues confronting religion/theology academe, we discuss academic publishing. We've asked several authors to give advice for scholars wanting to publish their research, and informally surveyed department chairs about how publishing influences tenure and promotion decisions.

Paul Alexander, who has worked in academic publishing for more than 20 years and now conducts workshops on writing and publishing with John Kutsko, discusses the shift in academic book markets, and what it means to the author. He gives important tips on marketing your book — and yourself.

Dedi Felman, executive editor at Oxford University Press, debunks some of the myths of “what editors are looking for” and gives insight into the inner workings of a major academic publisher. Felman then builds a list of essential “first steps” for writers as they begin their journey.


We then switch to journal article writing and *JAAR* editor Charles Mathewes. His analysis posits the importance of journal publishing for both the writer and the field, followed by timely advice for those wanting to publish in academic journals generally and in *JAAR* specifically.

Chronicle of Higher Education staff reporter Jennifer Howard reports on the phenomenon of tenure committees relying on editors of university presses as an arbiter of excellence in research. The recent Modern Language Association's Task Force on Evaluating Scholarship for Tenure and Promotion questioned this misuse, particularly pointing to the changing dynamics of such presses — to be more market conscious — while scholars are faced with ever-increasing pressure to publish.

The section concludes with an informal survey of department chairs regarding publishing and tenure decisions. We asked four questions: 1) How does your department value publishing in academic journals in regard to tenure/promotion decisions? 2) What about publishing academic books for tenure/promotion decisions? 3) Which does your department or program value more in tenure/promotion decisions: book or journal publications? and 4) What about nonacademic books? How are they considered for tenure/promotion decisions?

With marketing decisions forcing cuts in monographs and influencing book publishing like never before, and with more pressure to publish for tenure and promotion, this conversation promises to be dynamic, and one of importance for religious/theological studies.

Also in this issue is a first *Spotlight on Theological Education*. Guest editor Lawrence Golemon, Alban Institute, has put together a series of articles on “Forming the Theological Imagination: Strategies of Integration in Theological Education.” The Theological Education Steering Committee sponsors this 12-page special *Spotlight*.

A lot to digest in this issue of *Religious Studies News*; as always, we invite you to submit any thoughts, letters to the editor, comments, and criticisms to me at kcole@aarweb.org. We will publish feedback from readers in subsequent issues. 

Kyle Cole

Executive Editor, *Religious Studies News*

AAR Statement on Academic Freedom and the Teaching of Religion

THE AAR has long been committed to the fundamental principles of academic freedom articulated by the American Association of University Professors in its 1940 Statement on Academic Freedom and Tenure. In its 1995 mission statement, the AAR affirmed that “within a context of free inquiry and critical examination, the Academy welcomes all disciplined reflection on religion — both from within and outside of communities of belief and practice.” The AAR promotes excellence in scholarship and teaching in the field because “there is a critical need for ongoing reflection upon and understanding of religious traditions, issues, questions, and values.” That such a pursuit of understanding might sometimes prove unsettling or challenging to students or teachers is to be expected, especially when students are unaccustomed to analytical reflection on their own religious practices and beliefs or to historical and sociological reflection on their own traditions and communities.

The AAR fully supports the position that free inquiry about religion and critical examination of its multiple dimensions


should be guided by the teacher's best judgment as a participant in his or her own discipline and by recognition of the need, in all academic inquiry, to consider — and to examine critically — diverse points of view.

Teaching about religion, in any educational context, essentially involves critical inquiry: questioning of assumptions, some of them long taken for granted; attending to multiple points of view, some of them disturbing; and engaging with the methods and findings of other scholars, some of whom are themselves religious, whereas others are not.

Teachers are obliged to show respect to their students, their colleagues, and the human beings they study. They are also obliged to pursue their own work and to judge the work of their students in light of shared scholarly norms. To fulfill the latter obligation, teachers need to be free from intimidation and free to make pedagogical decisions on the basis of shared scholarly norms, as understood by qualified peers. This is the core of academic freedom. Without it, there can be no such thing as academic responsibility.

Editor's Note:

This statement was approved by the Board of Directors at its November 2006 meeting in Washington, D.C. At the November 2005 board meeting, a draft was crafted and given to the members for review. Revisions from the members resulted in the statement adopted and printed here. In the October 2006 RSN, the issue of academic freedom was the topic of the Focus section.

While complaints about pedagogy and scholarship should of course receive due consideration, it is vitally important for institutions of higher learning to preserve an atmosphere of free inquiry and instruction — not least of all in the study of religion, where the nature of the subject matter guarantees that passions will often run strong and disagreements sometimes go deep. 

THE COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING SEEKS NOMINATIONS FOR THE AAR AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING.

Nominations of winners of campus awards, or any other awards, are encouraged.

Procedures for the nomination process are outlined on the AAR Web site at www.aarweb.org/awards/teaching.asp.

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Annual Meeting Sets Record for Attendance, Sessions



OVER 11,000 PEOPLE converged on Washington, D.C., last November for the 2006 AAR Annual Meeting. Attendance and session numbers set new records. Total registration for the meeting was 11,011. This number reflects a 10 percent increase from the previous record set at the 2005 Annual Meeting (Philadelphia: 9,982). Washington, D.C.'s location in the mid-Atlantic, its travel accessibility, and its appeal as our nation's capital made it an inviting destination.

The 2006 Annual Meeting was also the largest in terms of programming. Over 1,100 AAR, SBL, or Additional Meetings sessions occurred during the five-day time period from Thursday, November 16 to Tuesday, November 21. AAR continued to

expand its program and hosted 427 sessions, 52 more than at the Philadelphia meeting (2005: 375). Much of this expansion can be attributed to the new program units and the introduction of the 90-minute time slots on Sunday, which increased the total number of session slots from 10 to 11.

Responses to the post-Annual Meeting survey reflect positive experiences by the members in attendance. Survey results are posted online at www.aarweb.org/annualmeet/2006/surveys/AM/results/.

An overwhelming 94 percent of survey respondents thought the 2006 Annual Meeting was a satisfactory or very satisfactory experience. Satisfaction with this year's sessions was high; 93 percent of survey respondents said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the quality. The opportunity to network with other colleagues also received high marks; 95 percent reported satisfaction. Respondents rated the Washington Annual Meeting location very favorably, giving positive feedback about its exhibit facilities (92 percent), hotel facilities (74 percent), and meeting-room space (92 percent).


The Annual Meeting attracted attendees from 63 countries, from Argentina to Zimbabwe. Canadians made up the largest international group with 496, followed by the United Kingdom (343), Germany (97), Israel (65), and the Netherlands

(61). AAR's 2006 international focus was on Africa, and the Annual Meeting hosted 53 attendees from African countries, including 16 AAR travel subsidy recipients. Consequently, the 2007 international focus on China and Chinese scholarship should encourage participants from that region. California was the best-represented state in 2006 with 932 attendees, followed closely by New York (706), Pennsylvania (589), Massachusetts (572), and Illinois (534).

Once again, Annual Meeting registration and housing was handled by Experient (formerly Conferon). Satisfaction with the registration and housing process was very high; 97 percent of respondents rated the process positively. Experient introduced a new upgraded online system in 2006 that was easier to navigate, and as a result 72 percent of registrants used it this year. The peak hotel night was Saturday, November 18, with over 4,800 hotel rooms in use. Overall more than 19,000 room nights were occupied during the meeting.

The comments from survey respondents were generally positive. The most frequent complaint was about the decision to no longer publish the meeting room locations in the *Program Book*. The Annual Meeting management teams of AAR and SBL decided to remove the room names in 2005. Due to the length of time between the *Program Book's* publication in early August and the meeting in November,

quite a few schedule and room location changes occur, making the *Program Book* inaccurate and out of date by the meeting. The room locations are made available on both the AAR and SBL Web sites and then in the onsite Program Book At-A-Glance. This is the practice of most other ACLS organizations that host large meetings, as it provides attendees with the most accurate information possible. We do plan to revisit this decision in 2007 and 2008.

The Annual Meeting Satisfaction Survey is sent via e-mail to all AAR members (over 11,223) at the conclusion of each meeting and is offered online at the AAR Web site. The number of responses this year was 1,162, which represents about 10 percent of the membership. Respondents did not answer each question, so the values were measured from the number of respondents who did. The survey is voluntary and open to all members. The executive office staff would like to thank everyone who participated in the post-Annual Meeting survey. It continues to be valuable to the Annual Meeting process, for it provides the AAR's Program Committee, Board of Directors, and executive office staff with an important measure of member satisfaction. We value this opportunity to hear your comments and suggestions on how we can continue to meet your needs and to offer an excellent Annual Meeting experience. 

American Academy of Religion 2006 Annual Business Meeting Minutes

Renaissance Washington – Grand Ballroom North
Washington, D.C.
Monday, November 20, 2006
6:00–7:00 PM

Present: 24 members

1. Call to Order: Diana Eck.
The president called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM.
2. Approval of the 2005 Business Meeting Minutes.
A request was made to change the spelling of Diane to Diana under #7: 2005 Election Results.
A motion was made to: Approve the amended 2005 Business Meeting Minutes. The motion passed unanimously.
3. Memorial List.
The president read the Memorial List of members who died since November 1, 2005, and a moment of silence was observed.
4. President's Report: Diana Eck.
President Eck reported on the successful search for the new Executive Director, Dr. Jack Fitzmier, and the extraordinarily successful transition. She provided a summary of the state of the ACLU lawsuit regarding the ideological exclusion of Tariq Ramadan which prevented him from appearing at the AAR Annual

Meeting last year and this year. Dr. Eck explained the process of revising the AAR Statement on Academic Freedom which was distributed to those present. She reported the revisions have been made and approved by the Board of Directors and will appear on the Web site.

5. Executive Director and Treasurer's Report: Jack Fitzmier.
Dr. Fitzmier recognized Barbara DeConcini's 15-year tenure as Executive Director and thanked her for her service. He reported his transition to the executive offices went extremely well and he thanked Barbara DeConcini, Hans Hillerbrand, and the AAR executive office staff for their excellent assistance.
Dr. Fitzmier reported that AAR is in extremely good health. Membership exceeded 11,200 in November, and Annual Meeting registration, which topped 11,000, is up over 1,000 from last year. He also noted that we have 309 program unit sessions, up from 268 last year, and that EIS recorded the largest number of candidates ever. The finances of the

Academy are excellent as was verified by a recent audit. Dr. Fitzmier spoke of the executive office's best practices recommendations, including separation of the office of Executive Director from that of Treasurer. He reported that the Board of Directors passed a bylaws change for the separation of these two roles, which will come before the membership for vote next year. Other recommendations include adopting business practices of nonprofits, assessing and reducing committee and task force meeting costs, examining how the undergraduate religion major promotes the goal of liberal education, and seeking foundation money for Religionsource and other AAR initiatives.

Questions and discussion followed on the Ramadan case, membership, and the independent Annual Meeting.

6. 2006 Election Results.
Diana Eck announced election results for 2007.
President - Jeffrey Stout
President-Elect - Emilie Townes
Vice President - Mark Juergensmeyer


Dr. Eck turned the gavel over to the new President, Jeffrey Stout.

President Stout thanked Dr. Eck for her service and wisdom. He also extended thanks to Dr. Hillerbrand for chairing the search committee and to Dr. DeConcini for the grace with which she facilitated the transition. He then welcomed Dr. Fitzmier to the Executive Director position. President Stout expressed his belief that his election is affirmation of the issues he raised in his statement for candidacy, including creating a more democratic AAR culture, improving the EIS interview process, and improving the manner in which our field reports job placement statistics.

Diana Eck made a motion for adjournment.

Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 6:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Micheline Pesantubbee,
Secretary 

Chairs Workshop Processes Personnel Issues

FORTY-ONE DEPARTMENT chairs and faculty members participated in the Chairs Workshop at the Annual Meeting in Washington, making it the largest such workshop for the AAR. Fred Glennon, chair of the Academic Relations Committee, which sponsors the workshop, praised the success of this year's event: "The topic was timely, the leadership was excellent, and the breakout format enabled participants to contextualize the ideas and suggestions into their institutional settings."

The Friday workshop, "Personnel Issues: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly," was led by Betty DeBerg of the University of Northern Iowa, and Chester Gillis of Georgetown University, also a member of the Academic Relations Committee.

DeBerg and Gillis opened the workshop with an overview of their stories of "war and peace" when facing personnel challenges. Then the workshop quickly divided into small groups for an icebreaker session. Breaking into small groups was a continued occurrence at the workshop, as the Academic Relations Committee wanted as much participation and networking among participants as possible.

"The leaders of the workshop are facilitators for the participants; it is the participants' experiences and stories that provide significant content," Gillis said. "Chairs benefit from the consolation of knowing that others face similar challenges and from learning how others handle difficult personnel situations."

Following the icebreaker, Gillis introduced Georgetown attorney Lisa Krim to discuss specific legal issues that arise when dealing with personnel matters. Her session was highly popular; Krim graciously stayed for the rest of the morning session as a stream of participants met with her individually to discuss specific situations.

When Krim's session ended, Gillis and DeBerg discussed personnel issues vis-à-vis individual challenges and opportunities. Another breakout followed, allowing group members to share personal personnel stories. The breakout groups were organized according to institutional similarities.

"Dividing the group up into round tables that corresponded with the size of their institution seemed to make sense to everyone, and I believe that participants had conversation partners that matched up pretty well," DeBerg said. "There

was also an almost immediate level of trust in the room that permitted people to be honest about their own experiences, and to offer bits of advice based on their experience without sounding like know-it-alls."

Following lunch, DeBerg and Gillis opened discussion on personnel issues vis-à-vis departmental issues, which led to more small-group time. "I loved the conversations at the table," one participant said in a post-workshop questionnaire.

Following a brief break, Daniel Aleshire, executive director of the Association of Theological Schools, led a session on personnel issues with regard to higher education administration, with another small-group breakout session.

Gillis and DeBerg wrapped up the workshop with stories of success, offering advice and encouragement on dealing with tough issues. "I thoroughly enjoyed working with Chester and the rest of the committee on this project," DeBerg said. "And I came away with new interest in and enthusiasm for my work as a department head. My position at Northern Iowa has unique challenges and rewards, and I was reminded again how many opportunities I have on a daily basis — whatever I manage to do with them — to improve the experience of students and faculty here. So I found leading this workshop to be an occasion for my own vocational reflection and renewal."

It was the third straight year that the workshop set an attendance record. ARC chair Glennon said the value of these workshops has become well known in the Academy.

"Year after year, the participants tell us how invaluable these workshops are to their role as department chairs and about the many ways they contribute to the work and well-being of their departments and their institutions," he said.

DeBerg agreed. "I know from my nine years as a department head that there is no more important source of personal support and professional growth than other department heads and chairs," she said. "And, as a new department head, I attended a workshop a bit like this one and benefited enormously; I needed a perspective and some basic strategies for my new job.

"As an experienced department head now, I find that I need a safe venue in which to discuss ongoing frustrations and failures. Also, it's important for me to have a sense that I am


'giving back' to the community of department heads and chairs, since veterans were so generous with their time when I was a newbie. I like to share what I believe I've learned and how I've been successful."

Participants ranged from former and current department chairs to faculty members, from large and small public and private institutions. This year, as in past workshops, the participants learned they aren't the only ones facing difficult issues.

"I am so glad I decided to come to this!" wrote one. "As a new chair, I really needed the affirmation and support — as well as the information."

This workshop is the latest in a series of Annual Meeting Chairs Workshops that the Academy's Academic Relations Committee has developed. In past years the workshop topics have been:

- Enlarging the Pie: Strategies for Managing and Growing Departmental Resources (Philadelphia, 2005)
- Being a Chair in Today's Consumer Culture: Navigating in the Knowledge Factory (San Antonio, 2004)
- Scholarship, Service, and Stress: The Tensions of Being a Chair (Atlanta, 2003)
- The Entrepreneurial Chair: Building & Managing Your Department in an Era of Shrinking Resources and Increasing Demands (Georgetown, Summer 2003)
- Running a Successful Faculty Search in the Religious Studies Department (Toronto, 2002)
- Evaluating and Advancing Teaching in the Religious Studies Department (Denver, 2001)
- Assessing and Advancing the Religious Studies Department (Nashville, 2000).

"This workshop affords one of the few opportunities for chairs to convene together in an informative and confidential setting," Chester Gillis said. "While everyone's particulars are different, in the end we all face similar problems. Everyone needs to know that he or she is not alone or unique in the job. It is an invaluable experience — especially for anyone assuming the position for the first time." 

AAR would like to thank the following outgoing program unit chairs whose terms ended in 2006.

Nikki Bado-Fralick, Iowa State University (Ritual Studies Group)

Gayle R. Baldwin, University of North Dakota (Lesbian-Feminist Issues and Religion Group)

Lee Barrett, Lancaster Theological Seminary (Kierkegaard, Religion, and Culture Group)

Thomas Beaudoin, Santa Clara University (Foucault Consultation)

Donald L. Boisvert, Concordia University (Gay Men's Issues in Religion Group)

Francis X. Clooney, Harvard University (Comparative Theology Group)

John Corrigan, Florida State University (North American Religions Section)

Amy DeRogatis, Michigan State University (History of Christianity Section)

Neil Douglas-Klotz, Edinburgh Institute for Advanced Learning (Mysticism Group)

Cynthia Hoehler-Fatton, University of Virginia (African Religions Group)

Stewart M. Hoover, University of Colorado, Boulder (Religion, Media, and Culture Group)

Jay E. Johnson, Pacific School of Religion (Gay Men's Issues in Religion Group)

Paul Johnson, D'Youville College (Bioethics and Religion Group)

Laurel Kearns, Drew University (Religion and Ecology Group)

Gereon Kopf, Luther College (Zen Buddhism Seminar)

Jeffrey Marlett, College of Saint Rose (Roman Catholic Studies Group)

Sushil Mittal, James Madison University (Hinduism Group)

Rachel Muers, University of Exeter (Scriptural Reasoning Group)

Jacob K. Olupona, Harvard University (Indigenous Religious Traditions Group)

Jin Y. Park, American University (Zen Buddhism Seminar)

Balagangadhara Rao, Ghent University (Hinduism Group)

Michele Rosenthal, University of Haifa (Religion, Media, and Culture Group)

James Skedros, Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology (Eastern Orthodox Studies Group)

Mary Ann Stenger, University of Louisville (Tillich: Issues in Theology, Religion, and Culture Group)

Sthaneshwar Timalsina, San Diego State University (Tantric Studies Group)

Susan Windley-Daoust, Saint Mary's University of Minnesota (Religion, Social Conflict, and Peace Group)

Diane Winston, University of Southern California (North American Religions Section)

Chung-Fang Yu, Columbia University (Chinese Religions Group) 

Two Leadership Workshops for 2007

The Academic Relations Committee will co-sponsor two workshops on Friday, November 16, at the Annual Meeting in San Diego.

The Religion Major and Liberal Education

CO-SPONSOR:
Teagle Working Group (as part of the two-year project examining the major and its role in liberal education, funded by a grant from the Teagle Foundation)

Racial and Ethnic Minority Faculty Recruitment and Retention

CO-SPONSOR:
Committee on the Status of Racial & Ethnic Minorities in the Profession
Mark your calendar to attend these workshops. More information will be published in the May *Religious Studies News* and online when registration opens.

Members Go to Capitol Hill to Advocate for Humanities

ON MONDAY MORNING, November 20, 2006, in Washington, D.C., the AAR mounted its largest advocacy effort ever. Sixty-five attendees of the AAR and SBL Annual Meetings went to Capitol Hill, where they advocated increasing federal funding for the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Fulbright Program. Delegations from 16 states — California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia — held a total of 35 meetings with congressional staff.

The delegation members were recruited from those who responded to calls for participants in Religious Studies News or in the online Annual Meeting registration form. On the evening before their meetings with congressional staff, they attend-

ed an orientation and planning session, where they reviewed talking points and meeting protocol, and organized their delegations.

This Capitol Hill Advocacy initiative was part of a larger humanities advocacy effort that the AAR participates in as a member organization of the National Humanities Alliance. The NHA is a coalition of more than 80 scholarly and other associations dedicated to the advancement of humanities education, research, preservation, and public programs. Interested AAR members can participate in this effort in an ongoing way by signing up at www.humanitiesadvocacy.org to receive NHA e-mail alerts, which provide updates on congressional legislation affecting the humanities as well as guidance on how to e-mail Congress to encourage humanities support. RSN

AAR Webcasts Show Library of Congress Sessions

ON NOVEMBER 20, 2006, the AAR co-sponsored with the Library of Congress two panels on religion and public life. Held at the library, both panels were free and open to the public. A free webcast of the panels is available at www.loc.gov/today/cybercl/index.php.

The first panel, “Writing the Story of America’s Religious Origins,” additionally co-sponsored by the National History Center, drew more than 100 attendees. The participants were Susan Jacoby, author of *Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism*; Mark Noll, University of Notre Dame, author of *America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*; Steve R. Prothero, Boston University, author of *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon*; and Jonathan D. Sarna, Brandeis University, author of *American Judaism: A History*. The presider was Catherine L. Albanese, University of California at Santa Barbara, and author of *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion*.

The second panel, “Legislating International Religious Freedom,” additionally co-sponsored by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, drew more than 80 attendees. The participants were Thomas F. Farr, first director of the U.S. State Department Office of International Religious Freedom; Allen D. Hertzke, University of Oklahoma, author of *Freeing God’s Children: The Unlikely Alliance for Human Rights*; Elizabeth H. Prodromou, Boston University, a commissioner on the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (though her panel presentation was as an academic, not as a spokesperson for the commission); and Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, University of Buffalo Law School, State University of New York, author of *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom*. Timothy S. Shah, senior fellow in religion and world affairs, Pew Forum, presided. A free transcript of the forum is available online at pewforum.org/events/index.php?EventID=133. RSN

Media Attend Annual Meeting

MORE THAN 60 journalists, the largest number ever, attended the 2006 Annual Meeting, including journalists from the Associated Press, BBC World Service, Beliefnet, *Christian Century*, *Christianity Today*, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Inside Higher Ed*, Minnesota Public Radio’s *Speaking of Faith*, *Ottawa Citizen*, *Publishers Weekly*, PBS’s *Religion & Ethics Newsweekly*, Thirteen (PBS’s WNET New York), *Reader’s Digest Canada*, Religion News Service, *Time*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Washington Post*. RSN

EIS Center Sees Surge in Candidate Registrations

A TOTAL OF 747 candidates registered for the 2006 Employment Information Services Center (EIS), far surpassing the previous year’s 513. Although job registrations rose 18 percent from the previous year to 175, there were still more than four candidates to each position. Explanations for the candidate surge include the convenient location of Washington, D.C., increased publicity of EIS, and an easier registration process. Still, it is unlikely that those factors alone explain the 46 percent increase.

The EIS Center is jointly hosted by the AAR and the SBL at each Annual Meeting. The center is designed to ease the communication process between candidates for academic positions and employers seeking to fill available positions. EIS features job postings, candidate credentials for review, a message center, and an interview facility.

Each year, EIS gathers data about job positions and candidates registered for the center. Each position and candidate is required to choose a primary classification from among a provided list. They may also select additional classifications (candidates are limited to a total of three). The “primary” columns at right indicate the number of times each classification was chosen as a primary choice (see chart page 7).

When drawing conclusions from this data, it is important to think of the motivations that guide employers’ and candidates’ choices. Employers tend to choose more broad classifications that correspond to the classes needing to be taught. They likely are willing to consider candidates from an array of specializations, as long as each person can teach the general courses. In contrast, a candidate’s primary choice is usually his or her area of research; they can teach more broadly. Take World Religions or History of Religion as examples. One need not specialize in these areas to teach such courses. So despite the fact that both classifications had a 1:1 pri-

mary ratio in 2006, candidates who chose these classifications did not have a 100 percent chance of getting a job.

Another example is Asian Religions. From looking at the number of times this classification was chosen as primary in 2006, it seems that there were not enough candidates to fill the positions. However, many candidates who chose Hinduism or Buddhism as their specialty have the ability to teach Asian religions. So employers needing an Asian religions teacher are not limited only to those candidates who consider it to be their specialty.

This is where the “all” columns come into play. These columns indicate the total number of times a classification was chosen as either primary or “additional.” These columns often give better indication of the ratio of positions to candidates within a particular subfield. Take the example from above. Many of the candidates who chose Hinduism or Buddhism as their primary classification likely chose Asian Religions as an additional choice. Therefore, the position-to-candidate ratio of 20:34 (or 1:1.7) is a better indicator of how many candidates might have sought a particular position.

Still, because of the different motivations guiding choices, and because many of the classifications are interrelated, the candidate to job ratios shown at right cannot give a clear indication of a candidate’s chances of getting a job. Rather, they serve mainly to identify trends in position openings and candidate specializations.

The AAR has been compiling EIS registration data since 1990. However, we changed the method of collection in 2003, meaning the information shown here is not particularly comparable to pre-2003 data.

Additional data is available upon request from Shelly Roberts at sroberts@aarweb.org. RSN

EIS Center Registration 2004–2006

Employers	2004	2005	2006
Positions Registered	140	148	175
Total Institutions Registered	115	126	140
Preregistered	89	133	156
Registered On-site	26	15	19
Ratio of Positions to Candidates	1:3.16	1:3.47	1:4.27

Candidates	2004	2005	2006
Total Registered	442	513	747
Preregistered	368	419	722
Registered On-site	74	94	25
Female Participants	145	142	224
Male Participants	237	217	461
Did Not Report Gender	60	154	62
Ratio of Female to Male	1:1.6	1:1.5	1:2.1

Job Classifications	2006			
	Employers		Candidates	
	Primary	All	Primary	All
Administration (e.g., President, Dean, Director, Program Director, Coordinator)	2	6	1	11
Ancient Near Eastern Languages	0	4	1	21
Archaeology — Ancient Near East	0	3	1	9
Archaeology — Greco-Roman	0	2	1	3
Arts, Literature & Religion	0	9	13	47
Asian Religions (general or not listed separately)	9	20	8	34
Biblical Languages	1	13	5	78
Buddhism	6	16	21	33
Catholic Studies	2	6	2	30
Catholic Theology (all areas)	9	14	18	46
Central and South American and Caribbean Religions	0	3	0	3
Christian Ethics	11	18	38	80
Christian Studies	3	7	1	31
Christian Theology (general or not listed separately)	7	15	35	106
Christian Theology: Practical/Praxis	1	9	12	27
Christian Theology: Systematic/Constructive	2	9	65	113
Classics	0	0	0	16
Comparative Religions	2	18	6	49
Critical Studies/Theory/Methods in Religion	0	11	7	37
Early Christianity/Church History	1	10	38	94
Early Judaism	0	4	1	24
East Asian Religions (general or not listed separately)	14	22	13	26
Editorial	0	2	1	4
Epigraphy	0	0	0	0
Gay/Lesbian Studies in Religion	0	0	0	8
Hebrew Bible/Old Testament	11	28	91	133
Hinduism	1	9	7	19
History of Christianity/Church History	5	15	39	94
History of Religion (general)	4	16	4	34
Indigenous/Native/Traditional Religions	1	2	4	7
Introduction to Religion	0	12	0	14
Islam	14	29	26	42
Judaism	9	16	7	20
Library	0	1	0	2
Missiology	0	1	3	10
New Religious Movements	0	2	2	10
New Testament	24	39	96	148
North American Religions	2	12	29	43
Pastoral Care	2	5	5	12
Philosophy of Religion	2	10	22	72
Preaching/Ministry	0	2	0	12
Rabbinic Judaism	2	7	3	9
Racial/Ethnic Minority Studies in Religion	1	11	3	21
Religion/Theology: Two or More Subfields	3	8	18	49
Religions of Africa/Oceania	1	6	0	7
Religious Ethics	3	13	9	34
Second Temple Judaism	0	5	7	39
Septuagint	0	1	1	2
Social Sciences and Religion (e.g., Religion & Society, Anthropology, Economics, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology)	1	14	16	58
South Asian Religions (general or not listed separately)	3	15	11	23
Women's Studies in Religion	1	11	7	46
World Religions	4	22	4	57
Other	10	10	13	78
Not Reporting	0	0	32	N/A
Total	174	543	747	2057

Job Classifications	2005			
	Employers		Candidates	
	Primary	All	Primary	All
Administration (e.g., President, Dean, Director, Program Director, Coordinator)	1	2	0	1
Ancient Near Eastern Languages	0	3	2	14
Archaeology — Ancient Near East	0	4	1	8
Archaeology — Greco-Roman	0	1	0	0
Arts, Literature & Religion	0	5	7	28
Asian Religions (general or not listed separately)	4	12	5	27
Biblical Languages	0	12	1	56
Buddhism	0	7	15	20
Catholic Studies	4	6	2	15
Catholic Theology (all areas)	7	16	19	34
Central and South American and Caribbean Religions	0	2	0	0
Christian Ethics	6	12	26	44
Christian Studies	3	6	0	15
Christian Theology (general or not listed separately)	3	12	17	51
Christian Theology: Practical/Praxis	0	2	5	16
Christian Theology: Systematic/Constructive	5	7	44	69
Classics	0	2	1	13
Comparative Religions	4	14	8	45
Critical Studies/Theory/Methods in Religion	0	5	4	29
Early Christianity/Church History	3	11	25	58
Early Judaism	0	6	0	12
East Asian Religions (general or not listed separately)	7	11	4	10
Editorial	1	0	0	0
Epigraphy	0	0	0	1
Gay/Lesbian Studies in Religion	0	0	0	6
Hebrew Bible/Old Testament	12	28	69	106
Hinduism	0	4	4	10
History of Christianity/Church History	7	18	21	67
History of Religion (general)	3	15	4	29
Indigenous/Native/Traditional Religions	0	2	3	5
Introduction to Religion	1	17	0	9
Islam	13	24	25	32
Judaism	9	15	4	13
Library	0	0	0	0
Missiology	0	0	0	6
New Religious Movements	0	1	0	12
New Testament	13	29	71	107
North American Religions	7	10	23	33
Pastoral Care	0	0	5	8
Philosophy of Religion	1	6	10	38
Preaching/Ministry	0	0	1	9
Rabbinic Judaism	1	8	0	1
Racial/Ethnic Minority Studies in Religion	0	6	2	10
Religion/Theology: Two or More Subfields	4	7	11	40
Religions of Africa/Oceania	1	1	0	4
Religious Ethics	3	15	8	26
Second Temple Judaism	0	8	5	30
Septuagint	0	1	1	2
Social Sciences and Religion (e.g., Religion & Society, Anthropology, Economics, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology)	0	7	8	36
South Asian Religions (general or not listed separately)	4	6	8	22
Women's Studies in Religion	1	11	6	51
World Religions	5	29	3	38
Other	15	15	7	54
Not Reporting	0	N/A	28	N/A
Total	148	441	485	1370

Job Classifications	2004			
	Employers		Candidates	
	Primary	All	Primary	All
Administration (e.g., President, Dean, Director, Program Director, Coordinator)	1	2	0	5
Ancient Near Eastern Languages	0	1	0	12
Archaeology — Ancient Near East	0	1	1	4
Archaeology — Greco-Roman	0	2	0	1
Arts, Literature & Religion	0	6	3	19
Asian Religions (general or not listed separately)	10	22	7	22
Biblical Languages	1	7	1	28
Buddhism	2	18	11	17
Catholic Studies	3	13	0	7
Catholic Theology (all areas)	8	17	15	32
Central and South American and Caribbean Religions	1	6	0	4
Christian Ethics	5	15	28	42
Christian Studies	1	11	2	11
Christian Theology (general or not listed separately)	5	17	23	52
Christian Theology: Practical/Praxis	0	6	8	16
Christian Theology: Systematic/Constructive	5	15	26	54
Classics	0	4	0	5
Comparative Religions	2	24	7	34
Critical Studies/Theory/Methods in Religion	0	8	5	29
Early Christianity/Church History	0	12	12	47
Early Judaism	0	6	2	4
East Asian Religions (general or not listed separately)	3	17	5	15
Editorial	0	0	0	1
Epigraphy	0	0	0	1
Gay/Lesbian Studies in Religion	0	1	1	7
Hebrew Bible/Old Testament	10	22	65	91
Hinduism	0	17	6	14
History of Christianity/Church History	7	18	30	65
History of Religion (general)	4	21	5	23
Indigenous/Native/Traditional Religions	4	12	4	9
Introduction to Religion	0	18	1	11
Islam	9	28	7	11
Judaism	2	12	2	9
Library	0	0	0	0
Missiology	0	1	2	5
New Religious Movements	0	5	0	9
New Testament	12	23	56	86
North American Religions	4	16	21	32
Pastoral Care	2	3	1	4
Philosophy of Religion	1	9	11	36
Preaching/Ministry	3	7	0	10
Rabbinic Judaism	0	5	1	3
Racial/Ethnic Minority Studies in Religion	1	7	5	26
Religion/Theology: Two or More Subfields	3	15	13	35
Religions of Africa/Oceania	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Religious Ethics	3	7	14	39
Second Temple Judaism	2	8	4	23
Septuagint	0	1	0	1
Social Sciences and Religion (e.g., Religion & Society, Anthropology, Economics, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology)	1	13	8	43
South Asian Religions (general or not listed separately)	10	24	14	27
Women's Studies in Religion	0	10	1	40
World Religions	6	26	4	34
Other	9	17	5	34
Not Reporting	0	N/A	5	N/A
Total	140	576	442	1189

2005–2006 Employment Survey Highlights

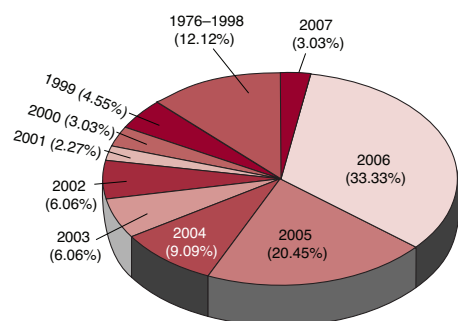
TO GET A MORE accurate picture of employment trends in the field, the AAR and the SBL have expanded their data collection efforts. Employment Information Services (EIS) created a Web-based, anonymous survey to track hirings by specialization and to collect demographic information on job candidates.

In spring 2006, surveys were sent to all candidates who had registered for the 2005 EIS Center and to all employers who had advertised a position in *Openings* in 2005. Presented here are highlights of the data received. Complete results can be found at www.aarweb.org/eis. This ongoing project will provide longitudinal data.

Employer Data

Out of 385 employer solicitations, 234 responses were received (61% response rate). Eighty-two percent of those who responded filled the position which they had advertised in *Openings*. Of the 193 positions filled, 86% of the employers report interviewing the appointee at the EIS Center. The majority of the positions filled were at the assistant professor level (66%), followed by associate professor (10%), and instructor and full professor (both 6%). Sixty-seven percent of the positions were tenure-track, 22% were non-tenure-track, 10% were tenured, and 1% was limited. None were reported as adjunct. Sixty-four percent of the appointees were male; 36% were female. The racial/ethnic distribution of the appointees was as follows: 75.5% Caucasian or Euro-American, 7.5% Asian or Pacific Islander, 6% Latino/a or Hispanic, 3% African-American or black, 1% multiracial, and 7% reported "other."

Figure 1: Year of appointee's degree



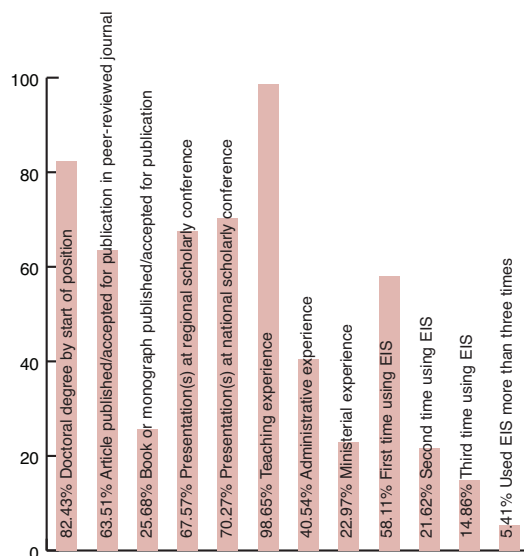
Candidate Data

Out of 497 candidate solicitations, 237 responses were received (47.69% response rate). When asked to indicate employment status during the search, 42% reported being a graduate student, 30% reported part-time/adjunct faculty, and 18% reported full-time/non-tenure-track faculty [candidates could select more than one response]. Seventy-three percent held a PhD or planned to have completed theirs by August 2006, while 9% would be ABD going into fall 2006.

Job Offers

Of the 237 candidates who responded, 74 (31%) received one or more job offers. Of those, 82% received one offer, 14% received two offers, 1.5% received three offers, and 2.5% received more than three offers.

Figure 2: Data on candidates who received one or more job offers



Of those candidates who did not receive or accept a new position, 59.5% planned to continue in the same employment status, the top four of which were: graduate student (38%), part-time/adjunct faculty (35%), full-time/non-tenure-track faculty (17%), and teaching assistant (13%) [candidates could select more than one response]. Nineteen percent did not know at the time of the survey what they would do the following academic year.

Position Data

Of the 73 candidates who accepted an offer, 41% will work in a private college/university, 25% will work in a church-related college, 20% will work in a public college/university, 11% will work in a free-standing seminary, and 3% will work in a university-related divinity school. Sixty-seven percent will work as full-time/tenure-track faculty, 23% as full-time/non-tenure-track faculty, 4% as part-time/adjunct faculty, 3% in administration (e.g., dean, chair), and 3% reported "other."

Sixty-four percent of the hires report being thrilled with the new position, 33% report feeling satisfied with the position, and 3% report feeling unsatisfied. None reported feeling deeply unhappy about the position.

Figure 3: Salary of appointment

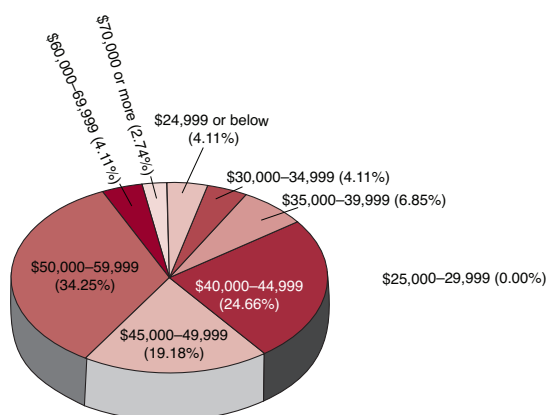
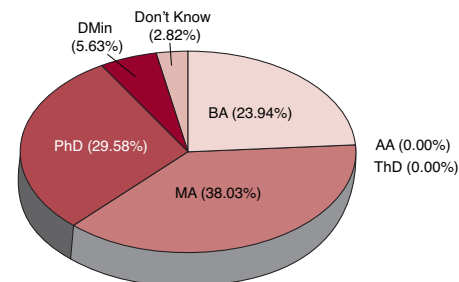


Figure 4: Highest degree offered by hiring institution



Candidate Demographics

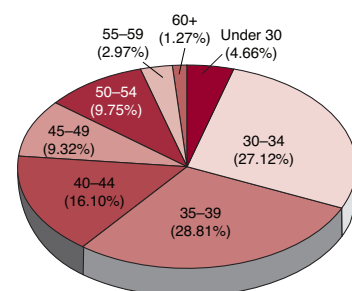
Sixty-five percent of the candidates who registered for the 2004 EIS Center were male; 35% were female. Regarding race/ethnicity, 86.27% of the registrants reported their race/ethnicity as Caucasian or Euro-American, 6.44% Asian or Pacific Islander, 2.15% African-American or black, 1.72% Latino/a or Hispanic, 1.72% multiracial, and 1.72% chose "other." In terms of citizenship, 81.5% were United States citizens, 7% were Canadian citizens, 6% were noncitizen residents of the United States, 0.5% were noncitizen residents of Canada, and 5% reported their citizenship as "other."

Job Search Experience

Ninety percent of responding candidates reported that interviewers did not exhibit unprofessional or inappropriate behavior. Those that did encounter such behavior reported offensive remarks, offensive actions, and use of a hotel bedroom for interviews.

Seventy-nine percent of candidates report that interviewers did not ask questions or broach topics of an inappropriate nature. Of those who did encounter such questions/topics, the three most common were in regards to religious beliefs, political views, and partner's willingness to relocate. Fifty-three percent reported that the interviewer directly asked an inappropriate question. Forty-seven percent stated the interviewer indirectly broached an inappropriate topic. Seventy-eight percent of the respondents answered the question truthfully, while 18% changed the topic in order to avoid the question. Forty-seven percent are not sure whether their response was to their advantage or disadvantage. Thirty-nine percent believe their answer was to their disadvantage and 14% believe it was to their advantage. [RSN]

Figure 5: Age distribution of registered candidates



Teagle Grants \$75,000 for AAR Study on Liberal Education

THE TEAGLE FOUNDATION has approved a \$75,000 grant to the American Academy of Religion for a 23-month project on “The Religion Major and Liberal Education.” Timothy Renick, chair of the Department of Religious Studies at Georgia State University, is the principal investigator for the project.

Teagle awarded grants to six disciplinary associations interested in reassessing the relationship between the goals and objectives of undergraduate concentrations in their discipline and those of liberal education. The other groups are the American Economic Association, the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, the Center for Hellenic Studies, the Modern Language Association, and the National History Center.

“I think there’s something very important to be gained by bringing the diverse AAR membership together to engage in an extended discussion about what it means to major in religion, what our field contributes to the education of our students, and how we can be better at what we do.”

TIMOTHY RENICK, GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY

The grant extends from January 2007 through November 2008. The AAR project is designed, Renick said, to encourage a broad conversation with all the members of the AAR.

“I think there’s something very important to be gained by bringing the diverse AAR membership together to engage in an extended discussion about what it means to major in religion, what our field contributes to the education of our students, and how we can be better at what we do,” he said. “Religion is an age-old topic, but the academic field of religion is, in many ways, still emerging. Some departments like my own at Georgia State are quite new, and many more established programs are actively rethinking their missions in light of recent world events.”

During the 23-month project, a working group of ten people, eight of whom are AAR members, will meet twice in Atlanta to plan and, ultimately, create a White Paper designed to help departments reassess the structure of their majors. The White Paper will be posted on the AAR Web site, the Teagle Foundation Web site, and printed and distributed to all AAR members. Additionally, a session at the 2008 Annual Meeting will discuss the entire project.

The members of the working group are:

- Lynn Schofield Clark, Assistant Professor of Mass Communication and Director of the Estlow International Center for Journalism and New Media, Denver University, author of *From Angels to Aliens: Teenagers, the Media, and the Supernatural* (2005), co-author of *Media, Home, and Family* (2004), editor of *Religion, Media, and the Marketplace* (2007), and co-editor of *Practicing Religion in the Age of the Media* (2002).
- Kyle Cole, Director of College Programs, American Academy of Religion
- Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, ordained American Baptist minister, Associate Professor of Religious Education, Claremont School of Theology, author of *Hispanic Bible Institutes*, and co-author of *A Many Colored Kingdom: Multicultural Dynamics for Spiritual Formation*
- Eugene V. Gallagher, Rosemary Park Professor of Religious Studies at Connecticut College, and Chair of the Teaching and Learning Committee of the AAR
- Mitch Leopard, CNN correspondent on international issues and current MA student in religion
- Eugene Y. Lowe Jr., ordained Episcopal priest, Assistant to the President of Northwestern University and Senior Lecturer in Religion
- Darby Ray, Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Millsaps College and Director of the Faith and Work Initiative, author of *Deceiving the Devil: Atonement, Abuse, and Ransom* (1998) and *Christic Imagination: An Ethic of Incarnation and Ingenuity* (forthcoming), and editor of *Theology That Matters: Ecology, Economy, and God* (2006)
- Timothy Renick (Principal Investigator), Chair and founder of the Department of Religious Studies at Georgia State University and recipient of the 2002 Outstanding University Teacher Award for the State of Georgia and the 2004 AAR Award for Teaching Excellence
- Amna Shirazi, senior partner in the Shirazi Law Group, a law firm specializing in immigration and nationality law, and a former undergraduate major in religious studies
- Chava Weissler, Philip and Muriel Berman Professor of Jewish Civilization in the Department of Religion Studies, Lehigh University, author of *Voices of the Matriarchs: Listening to the Prayers of Early Modern Jewish Women* (1999), and a teacher at Lafayette College, DeSales University, and Moravian College

The group will be soliciting advice from AAR members and departments throughout the process, including awarding ten seed grants to departments to encourage a structured dialogue about the religion major in the local context, sponsoring a wildcard session of paper presentations at the 2007 Annual Meeting, hosting a leadership conference at the 2007 Annual Meeting, and holding individual conversations with members throughout the process.

“The Teagle grant will allow us to come together and share our challenges, failures, and successes in a more structured fashion,” Renick said. “I’m neither expecting nor hoping for a widespread consensus about how to conceive of the major to emerge from these discussions. But all of us can learn something from each other and perhaps bring some new ideas back to our classrooms and to our home institutions.”

The Teagle Foundation outlined goals for the initiative in its “Request for Proposals”:

1. To encourage fresh thinking and clarity about the goals and objectives of majors in disciplines of the arts and sciences.
2. To strengthen undergraduate liberal education by developing more systemic relationships between the undergraduate major and liberal education.
3. To invigorate student learning in the fields in which they concentrate.
4. To provide models that may be of use to other disciplinary and interdisciplinary groups that may wish to rethink their relationship to undergraduate liberal education.

Additionally, the foundation expects to announce later this year an RFP for grants to individual departments that wish to examine the patterns of concentration they provide in relation to the liberal education goals of their institutions. The seed grants in the AAR’s project hopefully will encourage departments to submit proposals to the foundation for this RFP.


AAR Executive Director Jack Fitzmier applauded the Teagle Foundation for stimulating these necessary conversations, and for specifically funding the AAR project to examine how the religion major fits within liberal education.

“Like the American Academy of Religion, the Teagle Foundation has a keen and longstanding interest in the goals and outcomes of liberal education,” Fitzmier said. “This grant provides the AAR with a wonderful opportunity to explore the ways that an undergraduate religion major functions within the larger curriculum. It also gives the Academy an occasion to reflect on how the religion major functions within very different teaching and learning environments — from small, private, liberal arts colleges to large state universities.”

The diversity of the field and the recent growth of religious studies encouraged Renick to work as principal investigator for the project.

“In conceiving of and proposing our new Department of Religious Studies at Georgia State, we encountered a number of emerging and promising models for how to imagine the discipline and the major,” he said. “I was struck by how diverse our field is and by how rapidly it is changing. Programs that once conceived of their mission primarily as to educate students in a single faith tradition are broadening their curricula to include other religions; secular programs are grappling with questions about how to conceive of the subfields of theology and ethics; programs are adding course experiences in service and community learning. The list goes on.

“It’s an exciting time to be involved in our field, and I hope this project can play some small role in shaping the discipline for the better.”

Renick and Cole will attend a meeting in March with the Teagle Foundation and members of working groups from the five other grantees in order to coordinate the projects by comparing issues and procedures and learning from one another. The AAR working group will convene in May in Atlanta for its first meeting. 

“The Religion Major and Liberal Education”

Opportunities for Departments and Programs

SEED GRANTS

The American Academy of Religion is soliciting proposals from individual departments and programs to consider the religion major in their local contexts. The intent is to award a total of 10 grants at \$500 each. The AAR would like to learn about the challenges faced by your faculty with regard to the religion major and specific ideas your faculty has for meeting these challenges. Successful proposals will set out, in no more than two pages, a plan for bringing religion faculty members on your campus together to discuss the religion major, its role in contributing to liberal education, specific issues faced, and best practices for addressing these issues.

For questions about the project or the proposal, contact Timothy Renick, Georgia State University, at 404-651-0723 or trenick@gsu.edu.
Deadline is April 15.

New Program Units

AAR'S PROGRAM COMMITTEE approved the following new program units for the 2007 Annual Meeting:

- Buddhism in the West Consultation
- Mormon Studies Consultation
- North American Hinduism Consultation
- Pentecostal Charismatic-Movements Consultation
- Qur'an Group
- Religion and Cities Consultation
- Religion and Migration Consultation
- Space, Place, and Religious Meaning Consultation. 

IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF *SPOTLIGHT ON TEACHING:* Using the News to Teach Religion



SMU PERKINS
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January 28–30, 2008

Albert Outler and the Wesleyan Spirit

A scholarly conference on the occasion
of the centennial of the birth of
Albert Cook Outler

This conference for scholars, pastors, church and academic professionals, and laity will bring scholars from throughout the globe to Southern Methodist University where Albert C. Outler (1908-1989) studied and taught generations of clergy and academicians. Outler was among the most important figures in Wesley scholarship and a leading theologian of the Methodist tradition and the ecumenical movement. This conference will critically examine Outler's work and assess his contributions to Wesley studies, Christian history, Protestant theology, ecumenism, and the church.

*A Call for Papers is available at perkins.smu.edu
Proposals are due March 16, 2007.*



For more information contact:
Gary MacDonald, director of Advanced Ministerial Studies
Southern Methodist University
Perkins School of Theology
P.O. Box 750133
Dallas, TX 75275
gmacdona@smu.edu 214.768.3161

Boston University Plans Masters Program Focusing on Religion and Healing

THE BOSTON UNIVERSITY School of Medicine (BUSM) is in the process of establishing a Masters of Arts program in Medical Anthropology and Cross-Cultural Practice, with a primary track in the study of comparative religion and healing. Offered through the Division of Graduate Medical Sciences, the program is expected to be in place for fall 2007, and should begin accepting students on a rolling admissions basis beginning in spring 2007.

Combining and integrating religious studies, critical theory, anthropological and qualitative research methods, practical experience, and the skills related to professional development, the program will prepare students either for doctoral-level training and eventual academic positions, or for leadership roles in the health professions. There is a growing need for personnel trained in cross-cultural perspectives, methods, and skills, said Linda L. Barnes, BUSM associate professor of family medicine and pediatrics, who will direct the program. The assistant director will be Lance D. Laird.

The Study of Religion and Healing

The study of religion and healing is a growing subdiscipline within religious studies that draws on scholarship in the humanities, social sciences and medical sciences, and other interdisciplinary approaches. As a broad area of inquiry, this subdiscipline incorporates diverse theoretical orientations and methodological strategies in order to develop theories and methods specific to the study of illness, health, healing, and associated social relations from religious studies perspectives.

Although religious texts serve as important resources in this endeavor, so do the many approaches to the study of lived religion, religious embodiment and material culture, and popular expressions of religiosity. Finally, like its sister field medical anthropology, this subdiscipline also encourages examination of how affliction and healing affect social bodies, through fractured identities, political divides, structural violence, and colonialism. The program unit supports the work of graduate students, religion scholars, scholar activists, and scholars in allied fields, and promotes collaboration with other interdisciplinary program units, and units focused on particular traditions and/or regions.

What Is Medical Anthropology?

Human experiences of affliction, suffering, and sickness are deeply influenced by the historical and cultural contexts in which they arise. Medical anthropology is the interdisciplinary branch of anthropology that addresses all such aspects of health, illness, and disease. Medical anthropology formulates and addresses both theoretical and applied problems, with the goal of conducting research that will contribute to the social sciences, and to the different domains of healthcare.

Drawing on the various methods and types of data from the different branches of anthropology and other disciplines, medical anthropology examines relationships between biological and cultural factors that contribute

to the epidemiology of disease. It explores the meanings that cultural groups assign to these experiences, along with the different healing traditions, healers, and healthcare practices and systems in different cultures that have arisen in response. Common analytical frameworks include social, cultural, political, economic, gendered, racial/ethnic, and other analytical strategies, particularly in relation to the effects of globalization.

The Nature of the Program

"We are extremely excited about this programmatic development," Barnes said. "Students will have access not only to the program's faculty and course offerings, but also to faculty and courses in the College of Arts and Science, the School of Public Health, and the different programs in Graduate Medical Sciences."


The combination of a core curriculum and elective courses will allow students to design a program tailored to their specific needs and career plans. Moreover, the program will be only one of three in the United States and Canada to be based at a medical school.

With an emphasis on applied scholarship, it will foster the development of an activist model parallel to, but distinct from, programs in ministerial studies. Applied anthropology, the inspiration for this approach, is defined by the Society for Applied Anthropology as aspiring "to promote the integration of anthropological perspectives and methods in solving human problems throughout the world; to advocate for fair and just public policy based upon sound research."

"No other medical anthropology program provides a focus on religious pluralism or on the study of religion and healing," Barnes said. "However, in a world where religion plays so central a role in social, political, and economic events, as well as in the lives of communities and individuals, there is a critical need for ongoing reflection upon and understanding of religious traditions, issues, questions, and values. For clinicians, this is all the more the case in treating patients, for whom religious worldviews may prove central in patient understandings of suffering, illness, related interventions, and efficacy." The program will also offer the option of a concentration in anthropology and history.

Students may enter the program from an undergraduate major in the humanities (including but not limited to religious studies or history), or the social sciences (including but not limited to anthropology). The program directors anticipate that some students will also come from health fields such as medicine, nursing, public health, social work, or counseling.

"Given the interdisciplinary nature of both religious studies and medical anthropology," Barnes said, "the intellectual value of dialogue between anthropology students and persons trained in the health sciences will be one of the program's strengths. We expect that the emphasis on the application of research and knowledge to contemporary issues and problems will foster a rich exchange, broadening the perspectives of the different participants."

For more information about this program, contact Barnes at linda.barnes@bmc.org. 

BRIEFS

AAUP releases new numbers on non-tenure-track faculty

A report released in November by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) provides new data to document the increasing predominance of non-tenure-track faculty in America's colleges and universities. The AAUP Contingent Faculty Index 2006 provides data specific to individual college and university campuses on the number of full-time faculty with and without tenure, the number of part-time faculty, and the number of graduate student employees.

Together, the categories of contingent faculty — both full- and part-time faculty whose positions are not on the tenure track — comprised 65 percent of all faculty in 2003, and their numbers continue to grow. Because academic freedom for contingent faculty members is not assured, and because contingent instructors are generally not provided with the level of institutional support required to deliver a quality education, the emergence of a contingent faculty represents a fundamental change in the nature of higher education.

The new report draws on figures submitted by institutions to the U.S. Department of Education's IPEDS database for fall 2005, and makes those data easily accessible at the campus level for the first time. The index is divided into three sections: the article "Consequences: An Increasingly Contingent Faculty," by John W. Curtis and Monica F. Jacobe, details the working situations contingent faculty face under various employment conditions, and the consequences for the quality of higher education of an increasingly contingent faculty; aggregate tables provide a breakdown on the use of both full- and part-time faculty by institutional category at the national level; and four appendices provide institution-specific data on over 2,600 colleges and universities.

The objective of the report is to provide comparable data at the campus level, enabling faculty, students, administrators, governing board members, and the general public to participate in local discussions about the impact of contingent faculty employment on the quality of higher education.

The report is available for download at no cost from the AAUP Web site at www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/research/conind2006.htm.

Noll receives Humanities Medal

AAR member Mark Noll, Francis A. McAnaney Professor of History at the University of Notre Dame, received the National Humanities Medal in November at an Oval Office ceremony hosted by President George W. Bush.

The National Humanities Medal, inaugurated in 1997, honors individuals or groups whose work has deepened the nation's understanding of the humanities, broadened our citizens' engagement with the humanities, or helped preserve and expand Americans' access to important resources in the humanities. Up to 12 medals can be awarded each year.

One of the nation's foremost scholars of American religious and cultural history, Noll is the co-author of *The Search for Christian America*, which he wrote with Nathan Hatch, a professor of history and former provost at Notre Dame, and George Marsden, also a McAnaney Professor of History at the university.

New religion journal receives honor

Material Religion: The Journal of Objects, Art, and Belief was named runner-up for the 2006 Best New Scholarly Journal Award from the Council of Editors of Learned Journals. AAR member S. Brent Plate, Texas Christian University, is the managing editor, and AAR member David Morgan, Valparaiso University, is an editor. Birgit Meyer, Free University, Amsterdam, and Crispin Paine, University College, Chichester, are also editors.

The annual CELJ awards competition recognizes outstanding achievement in scholarly journal publication, in categories such as "Best Journal Design," "Best Special Issue," "Distinguished Editor," and "Best New Journal." There are almost 500 member journals of the CELJ. The announcement was made at the CELJ awards ceremony on December 28, 2006, at the Modern Language Association conference in Philadelphia.

The journal is deeply interdisciplinary, and continues to publish works by anthropologists and art historians, sociologists and sinologists, religionists and regional scholars across the globe. Plate said that the journal examines "material religion" not only as great works of art and temples, but also all the things believers do with them.

NEH names AAR member to council

Jean Bethke Elshtain, University of Chicago, was recently named to the National Council on the Humanities. The 26-member advisory council of the National Endowment to the Humanities meets four times a year to review applications submitted for NEH awards and also advises the NEH chairman.

Elshtain, an AAR member since 1992, will serve on the council until 2010. She is the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Professor of Social and Political Ethics at the University of Chicago-Divinity School.

She and nine others were nominated by President George W. Bush and confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

Trinity Prize goes to AAR member

The Trinity Press International (TPI) Foundation recently presented its Trinity Prize Award to AAR member Jacqueline Bussie, a professor of religion and philosophy at Capital University. Bussie received a \$10,000 writing award and the opportunity to have her book, *The Laughter of the Oppressed*, published by Continuum International Publishing.

The award was created to acknowledge a promising writer or scholar in the pivotal stages of his or her career whose work offers new perspectives on biblical, cultural, ethical, theological, or religious issues and has broad applications for a general audience.

In her writing, Bussie tackles the heretofore unanswered questions: what is the theological and ethical significance of the laughter of the oppressed; and what does it mean to laugh at the horrible — to laugh while one suffers? Her book is expected to be available through Continuum International Publishing in September.

Theologos Awards honor academic religious books

The Association of Theological Booksellers gave five awards at its annual Theologos Awards Dinner in November in Washington, D.C. The awards represent the unique, professional evaluations of people who sell and recommend academic religious books.

The 2006 winners in the five categories are:

Best General Interest Book

Leaving Church: A Memoir of Faith
Barbara Brown Taylor
HarperCollins

Best Academic Book

*The New Faces of Christianity:
Believing the Bible in the Global South*
Philip Jenkins
Oxford University Press

Best Children's Book

To Everything There Is a Season
Jude Daly
Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Book of the Year 2006

Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense
N. T. Wright
HarperCollins

Publisher of the Year 2006

Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 

Future AAR Annual Meeting Dates and Sites

2007

November 17–20
San Diego, CA

2008

November 1–4
Chicago, IL

2009

November 7–10
Montreal, QC

2010

October 30–
November 2
Atlanta, GA

2011

November 19–22
San Francisco, CA

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Please see the membership page,
www.aarweb.org/membership.

With Gratitude!

The AAR would like to thank the following co-sponsors of these African scholars at the 2006 Annual Meeting. To co-sponsor a Chinese scholar this year, contact Kyle Cole, Director of College Programs, at kcole@aarweb.org.

Lafayette College – Bolaji Bateye, Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria

Grinnell College – Edwin Gimode, Kenyatta University, Kenya

Kalamazoo College – Tinyiko Maluleke, University of South Africa, South Africa

Temple University – Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Trinity Theological Seminary, Ghana

Drew University – Tabona Shoko, University of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe

Catholics for Free Choice – Oyeronke Olajubu, University of Ilorin, Nigeria and Isabel Apawo Phiri, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

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*** indicates newly appointed or elected. Photo, if available, at right.**



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Steve Young


CALL FOR COMMITTEE NOMINATIONS

Each year members of the American Academy of Religion are invited to nominate persons to fill open positions on AAR standing committees, task forces, and juries. This year there are openings in the following groups:

- * Academic Relations Committee
- * Employment Information Services Advisory
- * Graduate Student Committee
- * History of Religions Jury
- * International Connections Committee
- * Nominations Committee
- * Program Committee
- * Public Understanding of Religion Committee
- * Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities in the Profession Committee
- * Status of Women in the Profession Committee
- * Teaching and Learning Committee
- * Theological Education Steering Committee

Nominations for positions on these groups must be made in writing, and must include 1) a description of the nominee's academic and professional interests; 2) a summary of the nominee's participation in the AAR; 3) a statement describing the nominee's interest or promise for a particular assignment; and 4) a current copy of the nominee's curriculum vitae. Members may nominate themselves. All nominees must be members in good standing of the AAR. Nominations must be received by May 1, 2007, and may be e-mailed, faxed, or posted to:

John Fitzmier
Executive Director
American Academy of Religion
Suite 300
825 Houston Mill Road NE
Atlanta, GA 30329, USA
FAX: 404-727-7959
nominations@aarweb.org

Jeffrey Stout, president of the AAR, will review nominations and make selections during August and September 2007. Nominees will be notified of their status soon thereafter. If you have questions about particular assignments, please feel free to contact the AAR's executive staff, board members, or committee/task force chairs. Committee descriptions and rosters are available on the Web at www.aarweb.org/meetings/meetings.asp. 

The AAR Thanks the Following Outgoing Committee, Task Force, and Jury Members

Carol S. Anderson, Kalamazoo College
(Membership, Midwest Regionally
Elected Director)

Michael Barkun, Syracuse University
(Public Understanding of Religion)

Linda L. Barnes, Boston University
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Chun-Fang Yu, Columbia University
(Academic Relations) 

New Award in Religion and the Arts

The AAR is pleased to announce a new award in Religion and the Arts. The annual award is for an artist, performer, critic, curator, or scholar who has made a recent significant contribution to the understanding of the relations among the arts and religions, both for the academy and for a broader public.

The initial task force for the Religion and the Arts Award includes Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, Norman Girardot, Sally M. Promey, and is chaired by S. Brent Plate.

We will be accepting nominations from AAR members, though nominees need not be AAR members.

Nominations must include a supporting letter (no more than 1,000 words), and any relevant supporting materials (images, DVDs, books, catalogs, etc.). Please, no self-nominations.

To be considered for the 2007 award, nominations must be made by 30 April, 2007, and sent to Brent Plate, Dept of Religion, Box 298100, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, TX 76129. Electronic submissions can be sent to b.plate@tcu.edu.

Student Liaison Group Spring 2007

Student Liaisons serve as advisors on student issues and concerns to the student director and Graduate Student Committee. They also keep graduate students at their institutions up to date on AAR programs and services. If you would like more information about your PhD program being represented contact Myesha D. Jenkins at mjenkins@aarweb.org.

Baylor University, Cameron Jorgenson

Boston College, Bede Bidlack

Catholic University of America, Jay Carney

Chicago Theological Seminary, Adam Kotsko

Claremont Graduate University, Brent Smith

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Harvard University, Ryan Overbey

Illiff School of Theology, Stephanie Yuhas

Jewish Theological Seminary, Emily Katz

McMaster University, Sherry A. Smith

Northwestern University, Matthew Rogers

Pacifica Graduate Institute, Anais Spitzer

Princeton Theological Seminary,
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ON

Getting Published

Finding Water on the Sun: Improving the Marketability of Your Academic Book

Patrick H. Alexander



Patrick H. Alexander has been involved in academic publishing for more than 20 years, having worked for Hendrickson Publishers, Brill Academic Publishers, and Walter de Gruyter, Inc. (New York). Together with John Kutsko, James Ernest, and Shirley Decker-Lucke, he is the editor of the *SBL Handbook of Style* (1999). For more than 15 years he, along with Kutsko, has conducted workshops on writing and publishing, most recently with the Fund for Theological Education, and also with Providence College's Center for Teaching Excellence, and the Hispanic Theological Initiative.

AS LONG AS professors need tenure and promotion, books will survive. Even though the form books will take — e-book, downloadable pdf, xml, or podcast — is another story, their content is here to stay. Because of technological and market shifts, publishers — and academics — have had to face the changing role of scholarly communication and the general decline in sales of monographs and highly technical works. As sales dropped in their traditional markets (institutions, libraries), scholarly publishers often responded by raising prices — and by looking for other, broader markets. A potential author wanting to write a marketable academic book today might profit from: 1) knowing the kinds of challenges and opportunities publishers face; 2) appreciating what's happening to the market for academic books; and 3) taking a cue from those two circumstances in order to make her own manuscript more marketable.

Publishers, Libraries, and Booksellers: Under Pressure

Unfortunately, the market for — or purchasers of — highly technical, printed scholarly publications in religious studies has diminished. But ironically, the definition of “scholarly” has simultaneously broadened and the number of publications — and competition — has increased. Fifteen years ago Fortress Press could print 3,000 copies of E. P. Sanders's *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (1977), expect libraries to purchase 500 to 600 copies, and feel confident that they could sell the rest within three years. Today many publishers cannot afford to publish monographs at all, and those that do are more likely to print 300 copies than 3,000.

“Whether you specialize in Caribbean religions, Rumi's poetry, or Immanuel Kant, identify publishers specializing in your area. Tailor your proposal for them. Know your audience. The more clearly you identify your reader, the more likely a publisher will be interested.”

So, what happened? Five factors were behind the shift: 1) Library print budgets were slashed (at the same time that publication costs rose), and major portions of remaining budgets were sacrificed to the e-gods of databases, aggregated collections, and other digital resources; 2) Libraries began to run out of space; 3) The cost of cataloging and shelving books became prohibitive; 4) To address

cost and space pressures, libraries formed consortia — alliances that allow them to share resources more effectively and widely. But for publishers, the rise of consortia meant a decrease in the number of customers because fewer books could serve a larger audience; and 5) Most importantly, end-user behavior has changed — and will only change further with time. Ultimately, this may be the most radical development, especially as the generation that has never known life without computers enters graduate school in religious studies and library science and shapes research practices. These five factors forced publishers to respond with new models and with new strategies for reaching the marketplace.

The Nature of the Academic Book Market

The scholarly book market is evolving in terms of what publishers are looking for and how content is delivered. For this article the former is central, though with time the latter will dominate the discussion. When traditional academic publishers could not rely on sales levels of the past, they turned to “trade” titles, and the lines between “trade” (Harper, Random House, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, Penguin) and “academic” or “scholarly” (University of Chicago Press, Oxford University Press, Blackwell) began to blur. Presses sought books for a wider reading public. Books like Stephen Pinker's *Blank Slate* (Penguin), Robin Lane Fox's *History of the Classical World* (Basic), or Bart Ehrman's *Misquoting Jesus* (OUP) bear witness to this new targeting of a wide market. Now you can find the University of Georgia Press's *Southern Cooking* alongside its *Fate of the Wild: Endangered Species Act and the Future of Biodiversity*.

In the future, most houses — and perhaps nowhere is this more evident than in university presses — will gauge success in the pages of the top trade-oriented *Publishers Weekly* rather than in *Library Journal*, a key

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What Are Book Editors Looking For?

For all the authors who continue to ask that question, here's what you need to know
Dedi Felman, Oxford University Press

Dedi Felman is an executive editor at Oxford University Press in New York. This article was originally published in the July 21, 2006, issue of the Chronicle of Higher Education. Reprinted with permission.

AS AN EDITOR for a major publishing company, I am occasionally asked to give talks on what editors are “looking for” in books. It’s always struck me as a curious question. It presumes that we know what we are looking for; that blessed with foresight, we anticipate the Next Big Thing and then instigate a full-bore search for the perfect prepackaged book and author.

Not unheard of, I suppose. But much more often we wander, slightly dazed, through campus visits or a steady stream of summer submissions, hoping that good ideas and even better writers will find us — and that we will find them. Then, once we’ve located the creative kernel or thinker that sets us popping, an even-longer negotiation usually ensues over how exactly to get from idea to book.

Despite the latest headlines about Google Print or the e-book, our mission remains remarkably stable. We’re looking for the same thing we’ve always looked for — solid, readable, provocative, and important works of scholarship with clear ideas at their core. And if you know some of the basics of good writing, you have already improved your starting score.

What do you need to know when approaching a publisher? The first thing to remember is that all editors are different: We work in various divisions of different-sized companies with different mandates. We come from different backgrounds (some with advanced degrees, some without); we’ve set up different series and carved out different niches in the field. Our tastes vary widely. Some of us go wild over a rich and textured narrative. Some of us prostrate ourselves before the altar of “the big idea.” Some of us live to hoist yet another plaque onto the house’s prize-lined walls, some of us simply want a paycheck, and some of us want it all. So find the editor most likely to get enthusiastic about your work. Then listen to that editor’s advice.

To get you started, here are some basic first steps.

Identify the question driving your book. What is it about? Before you got lost trying to track every bit of information that exists on your topic, you had a question. Reclaim it.

Are you wondering what social conditions led hundreds to die in a heat wave? (See Eric Klinenberg’s *Heat Wave*.) Are you wondering whether the media stereotypes about black men — their morality, their civility, or lack thereof — truly hold up? (See Mitchell Duneier’s *Slim’s Table*.)

The central question that you started with could become the beginning of a narrative that documents change, one that contradicts conventional wisdom, or one that merely explains. But rediscover your starting point and write it down, using no more than a few sentences to explain what motivated you, and now your book.

Identify why that question matters. The next key to your success lies in that well-oiled mantra from elementary school: Who cares? If you can’t tell your reader why they should care, you probably don’t have a question that motivates an entire book.

That’s easier to do in some cases than in others. We know why we should care about global warming or suicide bombing. Even if we’re not historians, we can see why gaining a clear understanding of the aftermath of the Civil War matters. It’s a lot harder to show why people should care about what Spinoza said (although Matthew Stewart in his recent work *The Courtier and the Heretic* did just that).

“*The best books are the ones where writers seized control and told the story they wanted to tell. It’s hard to do that in your first book.*”

Still, you know why you cared. And if you can sniff out what interests people when you explain your project to them and build on that to tell us why it all matters, you’ve got a question that can sustain a reader’s interest for 300 pages.

Create a narrative structure. Or, how to think like an architect. First and foremost, your book needs a logical architecture or frame. And that frame must actually support the house.

Is your story an academic mystery in which the answer, through a steady accumulation of evidence, will gradually be revealed? Or perhaps it’s a dramatic conflict with two plausible storylines (yours and the conventional wisdom?) battling it out until a *deus ex machina* comes onstage to resolve all? Or a chronological narrative where we come to grasp a shift that has played out over time?

Prepare an annotated outline of the entire book, including the introduction (how will you grab the reader’s interest?) and the conclusion (where do we go from here?). Then be prepared to justify your building plan. Does Chapter 4 naturally follow from Chapter 3? Perhaps Chapters 5 and 6 should be combined? Are we hearing the same point over and over? If it’s a complicated story, break the book down into three or four basic parts (often, “the what,” “the so-what,” and the “now-what”), and try organizing the chapters from there.

Don’t cling to your first outline. Put it away for a week, and then re-ask yourself the same questions. Outline it to friends over a few drinks, and see if they get it. If not, it could be their inebriation, but more likely, you need to try again.

Make the story your own. The best books are the ones where writers seized control and told the story they wanted to tell. It’s hard to do that in your first book. Finding your own point of view is a lifelong

process, and spelling it out with a distinctive voice and verve often takes a second or third book. But hold the despair. There are four steps you can take to hurry the process along:

- Throw out all traces of the literature review. Yes, you painstakingly put together a comprehensive overview for your committee, but now is the time to find your own voice. Like it or not, a book is an act of ego. Do not quote or explain others’ philosophies at length, or you will put your reader to sleep. Don’t let others grab your center stage.
- Eliminate those endless block quotes. Never use someone else’s words to make a crucial point for your argument. Quote others when their rhetoric is powerful and you absolutely, positively couldn’t say it better yourself. But in most cases paraphrase.
- Avoid jargon at all costs. You have probably heard that one before. But doesn’t jargon make me sound smarter? The answer is no. Jargon just makes your prose mushy and obscures your points. Ask yourself if your reader will understand how you are using a word. Then ask yourself if you truly understand how you are using that word. Then get rid of it.
- Use examples. It’s not just the novelists who know that it’s more effective to show people what you would otherwise tell them. Follow flamboyant or intriguing characters through your narrative. Choose striking metaphors to express your central ideas. Once you’ve alighted on an indelible image or character, remember that your carefully chosen example isn’t superfluous to your argument, it *is* your argument. Show your reader something they won’t forget. Startle them.

Avoid abstraction. I know, I know, you can’t avoid abstraction. But make an effort to unearth the reality that underlies your theory, and return to it as often as you can. Share with your reader the real-life problem that makes your abstract argument concrete. For just two great examples of that, see Michael Walzer’s *Just and Unjust Wars* or Robert H. Frank and Philip J. Cook’s *The Winner-Take-All Society*.

Understand the true beginning of your story. When it comes to the opening of the book, you must fight the temptation to begin in the middle. Think back to what you knew before you knew any of what you now know, and then back up even further. Don’t start the story where you would if you were talking to the six other people in your workshop who already know the disciplinary questions by heart.

Begin by asking your overarching question. Then allow the reader a sneak peek of what’s to come. Finally, lead the reader quickly through the introductory information that they need in order to understand why the question matters and what’s at stake. Then and only then, after they’ve been properly prepped, are you ready to let loose.

Understand the end of your story. After all the hard work of plowing through a book, there’s no greater disappointment than to have it drift off, either repeating the themes stated in the introduction or veering into irrelevant tangents.


Seize the opportunity to point the way forward for the rest of us. If it’s a chronological tale, find the natural ending for the era that you have been describing and an anecdote that expresses the spirit of that point in time. If it’s a policy-oriented work, avoid ending with pie-in-the-sky proposals; tie your suggestions to the actual discussions in the book. If you’ve introduced characters in the book, return to them and wrap up their stories. The best works of both fiction and nonfiction open up worlds and ideas even as they tell a story that has a definite end.

Be fair. We live in a time when bestsellers engage in shouting matches and have titles like *Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them*. But I’m a respectable scholar, you protest. I’m nothing like those pop polemicists. You may not think you are, but are you examining the unquestioned and thickly encrusted crevices of your thought? Just because all your friends accept that unions are a force for good doesn’t mean that perspective is unquestioningly right. And if you reflect that point of view rather than truly argue it in your book, you aren’t being fair.

You don’t need to submerge your argument in mights, perhaps, and could, until the book flounders in equivocation. But you do need to be fair to all sides. Give your book to someone who you know disagrees with you, and ask him or her if you have presented that person’s views fairly. And take the person’s critique seriously. The best arguments engage with and demonstrate the pitfalls in the other side’s logic. Be fair, and the reviewers will be fair to you.

Give your book a pithy title. You might think that is industry folly, but it’s a premium exercise for conveying (and selling) your argument. *The Republic*. *Bowling Alone*. *The Lonely Crowd*. *The Time Bind*. *Streetwise*. *Gideon’s Trumpet*. *The View from Nowhere*. What do all those titles have in common? They illustrate an idea with an image. They don’t use jargon. And they express the author’s thesis in five words or less.

Finally, remember: You’re not Tom Friedman (or David McCullough). And no one expects you to be. Yours is a narrative with a thought-provoking thesis, not a journalistic account. And though the more journalistic techniques that you can incorporate, the better your writing will read, don’t overworry this. Especially for a first book.

Internalize Strunk and White and maybe even William Zinsser. But don’t twist yourself into a New York pretzel trying to write for Punch Sulzberger. You are bringing the rigor of logic, the surprises of great empirical inquiry, and the revelations of hard-won research to others. That’s a large-enough task. 

JAAR Editor Gives Advice on Writing for Academic Journals

Charles Mathewes, University of Virginia
Editor, Journal of the American Academy of Religion



Charles T. Mathewes is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia. Educated at Georgetown University and the University of Chicago, he specializes in Christian theology and ethics, comparative religious ethics, and religion, politics, and society. His first book, *Evil and the Augustinian Tradition*, published by Cambridge University Press, explores the challenge of tragedy and the Augustinian tradition. His second book, *A Theology of Public Life*, also with Cambridge, explores the promise and peril of public engagement for religious believers in modern democracies. He has edited several books, and is Associate Editor of the forthcoming third edition of the Westminster Dictionary of Christian Ethics. He is currently working on two books: one on comparative religious ethics, and one detailing an Augustinian interpretation of life after 9/11.

IT IS SURPRISING how little there is written about the curious act of writing academic articles. There are books and articles about writing academic books, nonacademic books, and dissertations — but oddly, nothing much about writing academic articles.

This is especially disappointing because of the genuine usefulness of writing academic articles. Even in religious studies, a field fundamentally organized around books, articles are very valuable things. Indeed, in coming years I think their value will only increase: Speaking pragmatically, as financial pressures on academic publishers grow, and their willingness to publish scholarly monographs shrinks, articles are likely to become an ever more important means of disseminating ideas, advancing conversations, and gaining the kind of academic recognition necessary for tenure and promotion in the field. Furthermore they are intrinsically valuable, for the size and scope of an article has a certain coherence and integrity that is often missing in books. Books can bluster and bloviate, and they always have slack; articles must be taut. Besides, many academic books are really a couple of articles stitched together (or one article, immensely bloated), and scholars, especially younger scholars seeking tenure, spend irretrievable time “packaging” articles into books, when they could have published the worthwhile articles and gone on to do further work of real value for the field.

Don't get me wrong — I am a big, *big* believer in books, and for some questions they're indispensable; but some of the best, most specialized work in our research field(s) is best presented in the form of articles.

My task in this article is to help readers who are interested in getting their articles published by providing “tips” on how to do it. Unfortunately, I know of no special magic tricks. The first and always the best advice for those interested in writing is reading — reading many, many articles. You may not be an Aristotelian, but we can all agree on this: the best way to learn a craft is by copying a master, and the first step in copying a master is to see what the masters are doing. Once you've read a number of articles, you begin to get a sense of the “rhythm” of the pieces, how they identify a problem or topic of debate, quickly sketch the main approaches to the issue, and then offer their own core arguments as a contribution to that debate. That's what I mean by rhythm: An article should move from general to particular and back to general again, so

that the article “frames” the topic it treats for the context of a particular journal, with comments that connect up that central topic with 1) areas of study and debate where that topic has direct implications, and 2) issues of analogous concern in other areas of the field.

“The Field”: A Useful Metaphor

Let me pause for a minute on that word “field.” It helps to think of one's discipline in spatial terms — as a field, a space on which a game is played, like a chessboard. To carry that metaphor further, it helps to think of a particular article as a move on that chessboard, a move that has immediate effects in itself — opening up one space and filling another — but also a move that potentially has implications across the whole scope of the field. This normally happens in one of two ways: either its immediate implications ramify and become more visible (or less avoidable) to other people in the field; or an article may model a kind of argument, or pioneer a certain style of treating a particular subject, that becomes attractive in other parts of the field, and produces imitators. Some of the best articles seem modest in their immediate effects, but lead to immense tectonic changes in the overall shape of a field, because of these kinds of long-term effects. So when you think about an article, think about it strategically, about how it may reshape the contours of your field as a whole.

Thinking of a discipline (or a subdiscipline) as a field or a game board is useful not only for thinking strategically about composing articles, but also for understanding journals. For journals are records of the previous moves made in these games, ongoing discussions and arguments across years. Because of this, it is important to familiarize yourself with the journal to which you're submitting your work, and to gain a sense for the ongoing conversations within it — that is, to know how the debates are framed and the positions that previous authors have staked out on the subject at hand. In doing so, you answer the “so what” and “who has talked about this until now” questions for your readers, both of which help them to understand and care about your argument. Basically 80 percent of almost any publishable essay can go into any number of places; it's the 20 percent of framing matter that determines whether it fits in this journal, or another, or needs more work before it goes anywhere. Not properly framing a paper is a common failing for younger scholars: When you submit something on a topic of interest to the journal (and hence to its readers), you must know the range of arguments presented by your predecessors, and either address those arguments or show how your work renders them otiose. Insofar as you can shape your paper as an intervention into (or contribution to) those discussions — to return to the “game” metaphor one last time, insofar as you can give your paper the form of an intelligible move in whatever game is being played — your argument will be more immediately intelligible to your audience — first editors, then paper reviewers, then, hopefully, the journal readership itself.

The Thesis: A Good Thing to Have

Once you've gained some perspicuous understanding of a field into which your work will intervene, you need to take a stand on something. It is not enough to summarize a “conversation”; journals have book review essays for that. No, you must now hunt down and catch that (apparently) most evasive of animals, a thesis; and it should be — to use current AAR President Jeffrey Stout's favorite word — “robust.” That is, you must have what four out of five dentists agree is called “a point,” lucidly and hopefully unavoidably visible.

Those last two words matter, more than most of us seem to know. Having a thesis seems to strike many people as a bonus, something to add to their paper if they are feeling especially generous. Others seem to think that a paper should have a thesis, but it should be hidden from view — for example, buried in the 34th footnote, as an aside to another point.

The point about the visibility of your thesis can be generalized: “Signposting” is important. Do your best to avoid what one reviewer once happily called “a fundamental disregard for the reader's welfare.” Treat your readers well. They are nice, kind people; and no one is paying them to read your article. Don't sneak up on them from behind, throw the black hood of impenetrable jargon over their heads, truss up their hands with the cords of obscurely referring pronouns and drag them, stumbling, tripping, and falling over the rocky terrain of your hastily stitched-together rough draft. Instead, walk up to them from the front, and let them know where you are taking them; lead them, gently, by the hand down an easily graded path you have smoothed out for them, pointing out interesting views along the way, and always respecting their own independence by acknowledging, in your prose, that yours is not the only way to see things.

One Big Idea: No More, But Please, No Less

The discipline of a thesis is useful not only for clarity's sake, but for the matter of your paper. That is to say, it's generally a good idea to organize an article around one big idea. You can be alert to the idea's implications, you can develop a good peripheral vision for how that idea may shape debates in fields nearby or far away; but please do not turn your article into a shopping list of (apparently) random thoughts, or a chronicle in which you say a lot of things, loosely related. If your article seems to have more than one big idea, it's either because it's several articles, each with their own big idea, or it is not an article at all, and what you think are big ideas really aren't big ideas, yet. Either way, there's more work to do.

Avoid “Arguments That Dare Not Speak Their Name”

Having one big idea helps with a second issue, namely, having an argument, and not being ashamed of it. Arguments are harder to construct than we think — so hard, in fact, that most of the time we don't successfully construct them. That's why many papers seem more like alchemical events, wherein collections of citations from other scholars' works are brought into proximity to one another, apparently in the hope that they will spontaneously transmute themselves into prose with argumentative force. It's your job to know the difference between the gold standard and fool's gold.

Nor is it a matter of wanting to have an argument. Some attempts at argument give the appearance of this by using argumentative language, but the language actually bears no structural weight in the paper. My favorite example here is the promiscuous use of the words “thus” and “hence.” These are important words, but much of the time, in my drafts, I do not actually have a logical connection I want to signify at the points that I use these words; instead, what I have is a desire to have such a logical connection.

Of course, being the paradoxical creatures we are, at other times we want to give the appearance of argument but without being forced to stand behind our arguments and defend them. In such situations we typically resort to what I call “weasel words.” Weasel words are those words we all use to simultaneously make a claim and protect ourselves from counter-charges by also framing our statements so we are also, magically, not making it. So if I read that “*one may say* that Descartes' twisted Augustinianism is at least in part responsible for *what many see* as the technocratic necrophilia of late modernity,” I don't know whether the author is one of those people who may say that, how much responsibility should be placed on Descartes, or whether the author sees modernity as technocratic necrophilia.

MATHEWES, from p.17

This one especially hits home for me. Some of my favorite such words or phrases are “involves,” “addresses” (*how* does it involve or address?), “in a sense,” (in *what* sense?), “is connected with” (precisely *how* connected?), “one might say” (but do *you*?) — I use these ones so much, that I now keep a list of them (and others) and do a word-search to eliminate them when I’ve completed a draft. Much of the time weasel words are devices we use to insinuate connections or associations or claims, when we don’t want to be held responsible for defending those connections or associations or claims. As such, weasel words are fundamentally cowardly, most of the time. (At other times they may be signs of a writer’s recognition that the case he or she is making is not uncontroversially visible in the evidence offered. In that case the use of “seems” can highlight for readers the fact that this is how the author sees things. That’s not weaselly, that’s just being honest.)

Finally, for scholars building an argument based on empirical evidence, the old sociological adage remains pertinent: the plural of “anecdote” is not “data.” Be very clear about the connections between the finite data you have and the general claims you want to support or endorse therewith. Many scholars think that they have shown or proven something by a relatively small amount of evidence. But the only thing

they have shown is that they do not know what makes a solid argument. Don’t be eager to show that; let people discover it on their own. If your career is anything like my own, don’t worry; they’ll do so.

On the Journal of the American Academy of Religion in Particular

All the above is generic advice. But it’s useful to have a concrete model of how one journal works. The journal I’m best acquainted with these days is the journal I edit, the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. What follows is pitched to authors interested in publishing in this journal. Still, even these more particular suggestions might be illuminating for scholars working on articles for journals across the field.

The primary task of the *JAAR* is to publish the most insightful, profound, provocative, and groundbreaking scholarship concerning the study of all things that go under the capacious conceptual category of “religion.” The *JAAR* publishes scholarly research of exceptional merit, addressing important issues and demonstrating the highest standards of excellence in conceptualization, exposition, methodology, and craftsmanship. Because the journal reaches such a diverse scholarly audience, authors must demonstrate how their analysis illuminates a significant

research problem or answers an important research question, of broad and fundamental interest in religious studies.

The words “broad and fundamental” are important. In writing for the *JAAR* you are writing for the field of religious studies as a whole. We are not asking authors to speak to the “lowest common denominator” interests of the *JAAR* audience; that would result in platitudinous essays. But papers should reach beyond the subspecialty out of which they are written. This does not mean you cannot draw on and speak to your particular subfield — indeed, work solidly grounded in particular specialties is a prerequisite of *JAAR* pieces — but the piece must be able to speak, at least indirectly (though it is usually the case that the more direct you can make it, the better) to people outside of that subfield.

“Finally, for scholars building an argument based on empirical evidence, the old sociological adage remains pertinent: the plural of ‘anecdote’ is not ‘data.’”

Think about the *JAAR*’s audience — it involves scholars of modern Native American religions, historians of the European Reformation of the sixteenth century, scholars of Tibetan religions, Post-Lacanian deconstructionist theorists of religion, and dogmatic Christian theologians, among others. While no piece can speak to everyone, you should try to speak to some others, or about some things that are of interest outside your specialty. Therefore, apart from fundamental scholarly competence in the direct object of analysis, the journal seeks insight into matters beyond the focused field, of interest to others in the field.


The criteria we use in evaluating papers — and the criteria we ask our paper reviewers to keep in their minds as they read submissions — are the following:

- **Worthwhile topic.** A topic is worthwhile either because it is already of considerable interest today, or because its significance is underappreciated. If underappreciated, the paper must make the case as to why it is underappreciated, rather than appropriately unappreciated.
- **Theoretical contribution.** A paper makes a theoretical contribution if it offers some new theoretical insight or approach to interpreting or applying the issue under study, particularly if this insight or approach will be of interest beyond the paper’s “native” subfield.
- **Analytical soundness.** A paper is analytically sound when it asks pertinent questions and when it recognizes, acknowledges, and (where appropriate) reflects upon its own critical assumptions and those of its interlocutors and objects of study.

- **Proper use of sources.** A paper properly uses sources when it exhibits a firm understanding of the relevant literature for its topic; a paper is exceptional in its use of sources when it demonstrates the fruitfulness of bringing new resources to a discussion.
- **Structure and organization of argument.** A paper is well structured and organized when its thesis is lucidly stated, its overall structure crisp and elegant, its introduction expertly focuses the reader’s attention on the pith of the matter at hand, and its conclusion judiciously assesses the arc of the argument and suggests routes of possible further research on the topic under discussion.
- **Audience.** Finally — though perhaps most importantly — does this paper belong in a journal read by a broad audience across the field of religious studies?

Here is a simple hint that may substantially increase the likelihood of a paper being suitably “framed” for the *JAAR*: Look over the past few years’ pieces in the *JAAR* and see what you can find that would relate to your paper. Insofar as you can identify and then locate your paper as a move within (or challenging the terms of) a conversation ongoing in the journal, you will find a much more friendly reception.

It is not (just) because I am an editor that I think journal articles should remain a primary means for evaluating scholars’ work as scholars. It is because I believe that the journal article is an exemplary site for displaying the scholarly virtues crucial for the health of our field. Books are important; but the real skills of scholarship are at least as often visible in the exquisitely close confines of the 8,000- to 10,000-word journal piece. So much is done therein, in so little space.

The agility and deftness with which one handles the matter making up the nugatory core of the piece, as a great chef or surgeon wields her tools; the ability to handle the relevant scholarly literature with respect, but not supine idolatry; the rapidity with which the main concern is brought into view, avoiding all throat-clearing, yet without accelerating so quickly from the first word that the reader is pinned against his armchair by the g-forces of the prose; the ability to move gracefully between the main first-order matter that the piece investigates, and the relevant secondary literature about it, exhibiting effortless mastery of both background and foreground; the elegance with which the manifold ramifications of the piece as a whole are brought to our attention in the conclusion — these skills, and many others that papers can exhibit, are real skills, real exercises of scholarly virtue, indeed of virtue tout court. While we may begin blind to them as novices, the deeper one enters into this vocation, the more one comes to appreciate how rare, how difficult to acquire, and how intrinsically valuable they are — indeed, how they constitute some large proportion of the intrinsic goods of the discipline we call scholarship. They are skills we all should pursue throughout our career. I certainly want to, and I trust I am not wrong in believing that you do as well; for I, and people like me, will be waiting for you, in journal offices across the nation and around the world, hoping that you do. 

THE CONTEMPORARY TORAH

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Revising Editor, David E.S. Stein

Consulting editors: Carol L. Meyers, Adele Berlin, and Ellen Frankel

Offers readers new perspectives on the role gender plays in Bible translation

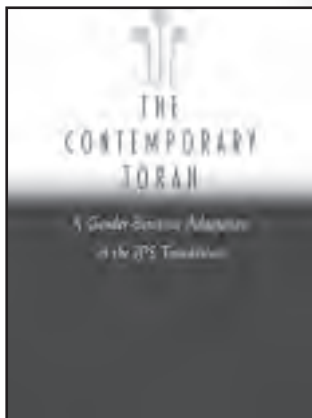
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“The new ‘gender-sensitive’ translation is based on original and responsible scholarship ... It is an important and exciting work that should engage anyone interested in the Torah, Jew or Gentile, female or male, English reader or Hebrew reader.”

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This adaptation of the JPS translation of the *Torah* (1962) will appeal to readers who are interested in a historically based picture of social gender roles in the Bible as well as those who have become accustomed to gender-sensitive English in other aspects of their lives.



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Are Editors Out of the Tenure Process?

University-press officials give a passing grade to the work of an MLA panel on evaluating scholarship
Jennifer Howard, Chronicle of Higher Education

This article was originally published in the January 5, 2007, issue of the Chronicle of Higher Education. Reprinted with permission.

WHEN THE MODERN Language Association's Task Force on Evaluating Scholarship for Tenure and Promotion released its long-awaited report (www.mla.org/tenure_promotion) in early December, faculty members involved in the tenure process weren't the only ones eager to read its conclusions. University-press directors and editors have also been curious, to say the least, about what the report would have to offer them in the way of reassurance and relief.

University presses have complained for years that tenure committees unfairly expect their editors to be arbiters of what counts as tenure-worthy work. At the same time, the presses have been caught in a business-side squeeze between dwindling sales (and shrinking subsidies) and the ever-greater pressure on scholars to publish.

"Any serious attempt to understand the issues," the report says, "must first take into account the shifting nature of academic work over the past decades; the changes in the resources for disseminating scholarship, including the role of university presses; and the significant changes in educational policies — all of which have increased pressure on the tenure system. Because of factors identified in our report, this conjuncture may well represent a threshold moment with large effects and consequences in the future."

So are academic publishers pleased with the panel's assessment of the role they play at this "threshold moment"?

Released on the eve of the holiday season, the report is nearly 80 pages long. "People are still digesting it," says Peter J. Givler, executive director of the Association of American University Presses. (Lynne Withey, director of the University of California Press and a past president of the association, also told the *Chronicle* that she was still reading the report.) But early reactions from those who have absorbed it include relief, cautious optimism, and a sense of vindication.

"In a word, 'Amen!,'" writes Sanford G. Thatcher, director of the Penn State University Press, in an e-mail message to Michael Bérubé, a professor of English at Penn State who is a member of the panel. "I can speak for many press directors (and other colleagues like Lindsay Waters) by saying that the messages we've been conveying for about 20 years now have finally found their voice in this report, and none too soon, because our backs really are up against the proverbial wall." Mr. Thatcher will take over as president of the press association in mid-2007.

"It's a breath of fresh air," Penelope J. Kaiserlian, director of the University of Virginia Press and current president of the association, says in an interview. "They've linked the fate of university presses with the way the system of scholarly communi-

cation is working in universities. . . . It was really encouraging for us to hear how much they want to collaborate with university presses instead of just treating us as part of the problem."

Mr. Waters, executive editor for the humanities at Harvard University Press, describes himself as feeling "personally vindicated" when he read the MLA panel's breakdown of the situation: "It's like I was a whistle-blower at Three Mile Island and the commission came along and said, 'There's a problem at Three Mile Island.'"

Who Reviews?

Mr. Waters is, in a sense, the spirit that guided the report, at least those sections of it that deal with publishing and "the tyranny of the monograph," a now-familiar phrase he used in a 2001 essay published in the *Chronicle*. His 2004 broadside, *Enemies of Promise: Publishing, Perishing, and the Eclipse of Scholarship* (University of Chicago/Prickly Paradigm), has become a rallying cry for many in academic publishing and the larger scholarly community.

The MLA report invokes those arguments in a section titled "Who Does the Reviewing — Academic Presses or Internal and External Referees?"

"Lindsay Waters has observed that in the current system of tenure and promotion at research universities, humanities departments 'outsource' the substantive review of the scholarly work of their junior colleagues to university press readers," says the report. "As he points out, this process of external review serves to obviate the process of internal review: departmental committees behave as if they cannot or should not determine the value of their junior colleagues' work unless university presses deemed sufficiently prestigious have determined the value of that scholarship for them."

The report continues, "In fact, this practice of relying on university press readers continues today as if there were no systemic problems in scholarly publishing, even in fields . . . in which there are fewer venues for monograph publication and in which university presses have been scaling back production."

"I felt uneasy about some of the things I said in *Enemies of Promise* because I didn't know to what extent I was going on anecdotal evidence," says Mr. Waters. But the panel, he goes on, has backed up his sense of the situation with hard data from its survey of 1,339 departments in the spring of 2005; 51 percent of them responded.

"They were very successful in terms of reaching people with questionnaires," says the Harvard editor.

The press association's Ms. Kaiserlian says, "There have been some reports that have tended to blame university presses for not being more responsive to the needs of young scholars. But this report recognizes that this is a systemic problem, and that university presses are as much suffering from this current dilemma as the scholars themselves."

Pressing Ahead

The MLA report offers 20 recommendations, five of which caught Ms. Kaiserlian's eye as being relevant to university presses. Foremost is its call for "a more capacious conception of scholarship" — that is, for overthrowing "the tyranny of the monograph." That "particularly has implications for publication," she says. "We agree that too much emphasis is put on monographs."

“At academic presses, he says, ‘we make our decisions based more and more on market criteria. Therefore it makes no sense for university tenure and promotion committees to rely on our decisions. . . . We use different criteria.’”

Recommendation No. 10, which states that "presses or outside referees should not be the main arbitrators in tenure cases," strikes a chord with her as well. "We've always felt that it wasn't right that university presses should have such an important role in who gets tenured," says Ms. Kaiserlian. "We should be much more concerned about what makes a publishing list."

Mr. Thatcher, of Penn State's press, echoes that sentiment. At academic presses, he says, "we make our decisions based more and more on market criteria. Therefore it makes no sense for university tenure and promotion committees to rely on our decisions. . . . We use different criteria."

Ms. Kaiserlian and Mr. Thatcher agree that, as the panel notes in recommendation No. 15, it would be helpful to have a firmer grasp of the numbers of books published by university presses from 1999 to 2005. One statistic that information might yield is how much work by junior scholars is represented.

There, Ms. Kaiserlian says, the university-press association might be able to lend a hand, perhaps through a grant-supported study of its own. "The thing that makes it difficult," she says, "is that there's no agreed way of classifying the different subjects. So the first task would be to agree on what subfields should be counted — and it would be quite a job to do that. . . . It would be very hard for the presses to do."

"Of course," she adds, "I like recommendation 16, which is to establish concrete measures to support university presses. Right on!"

The report does not describe what form such measures should take, but Ms. Kaiserlian says publication subsidies provided by universities to young scholars have been particularly effective. "I'm not talking about huge amounts of support," she explains. "A few thousand dollars might make the difference. We generally publish first books and monographs at a loss."

"What would be very useful to us," she says, "would be to have some systematic survey of which universities are offering such support and to encourage those who are not to do so."


Mr. Waters, responding to the report's broad call for increased support for university presses, says, "That sounds a little bit like hand-waving. But I also know that if you care about publications by your junior faculty, one thing you might do at your university is make available \$5,000 to support a junior faculty member's book, and it will make a difference."

Dissertations and Dissent

As for recommendation No. 19, which calls for a general conversation about what form a dissertation should take, everyone seems to agree that such a conversation is long overdue. Ms. Kaiserlian, for example, points out that many universities now require their PhD students to put their dissertations in electronic form. That, she says, "is really making it difficult for young scholars to get their dissertations published" by university presses. The electronic versions often make it more unlikely that university libraries will want to buy the same thing in print format.

In Mr. Thatcher's view, the report fails to address fully just how much power those libraries wield over presses and scholars. "It all goes back to librarians and their preferences," he says. "We're all held hostage to the way those librarians operate."

The publishers all worry that, like many reports, this one will be filed away rather than acted upon. "A lot of these reports sink into the mists of academia," says Mr. Thatcher.

Harvard's Mr. Waters wishes that the panel had made one recommendation rather than 20. "It should be more focused," he says. The report "makes beautiful noises about a number of things," he says, but it could have gone further. "There's a bit of a failure to see things in terms of the larger systemic issues," says Mr. Waters. "I'm impressed, but I'm not satisfied." To put it simply, he argues, the focus should be on the quality, not the quantity, of what's published. "We need to lower the ante. Otherwise we can't do our jobs." 

The Importance of Publishing

RSN: How does your department value publishing in academic journals in regard to tenure/promotion decisions?

Catherine L. Albanese, University of California, Santa Barbara: “Highly valued — several are necessary (in addition to a book) for promotion to the next rank. In California’s ladder-step system, we also expect them for moving up the ladder within ranks.”

David Weddle, Colorado College: “As very important. Under new tenure guidelines adopted last spring, candidates for tenure at Colorado College must present at least one publication in a peer-reviewed journal or book. For promotion to full professor we require ‘sustained involvement in scholarship, demonstrated by several pieces of peer-reviewed published work.’”

Michel Desjardins, Wilfrid Laurier University, Ontario, Canada: “We consider it a natural part of a scholar’s portfolio. Typically we expect three to five refereed articles in the package for tenure decisions.”

Rachel McDermott, Barnard College, Columbia University: “It is important, but if candidates have a lot of essays in edited volumes, that, too, is fine. But what is most important are the two required books.”

Pat Lynch, Canisius College: “Publication in peer-reviewed academic journals of high national or international reputation is the easiest way to establish your case for tenure/promotion at Canisius. This type of publication appears to receive more weight than book publication.”

Mozella Mitchell, University of South Florida: “Publishing in academic journals is valued very highly by our department in the tenure and promotion process. To achieve tenure, we expect that several refereed articles should have been published, as well as at least one book.”

David Brakke, University of Indiana: “We value publication in academic journals very highly in tenure and promotion decisions. Publication in locations that maintain high standards and use procedures of anonymous peer review is an important indication of the quality of a scholar’s research. Especially in a department like ours, in which individual faculty members specialize in quite diverse fields, articles in academic journals can show that specialists in the candidate’s area find the work valuable.”

Glen H. Stassen, Fuller Theological Seminary: “Our Faculty Development Committee values these highly in tenure and promotion decisions. We do deny faculty who don’t. We are a publishing faculty.”

Marc Mullinax, Mars Hill College: “Such are a big bonus, but not a big part. With a teaching load of 4/4, we value teaching abilities and collegiality above publishing.”

Christine Gudorf, Florida International University: “Our minimum requirement for tenure/promotion to associate is for one published monograph with a respected academic press, one article per year (6) published in a peer-reviewed academic journal, and substantial progress toward a

second book. We must submit letters from the editor giving the acceptance rates for all journals in which we publish articles, and from publishers on acceptance rates for manuscripts.”

Terrence Tilley, Fordham University: “If one is a good teacher that is the first step. But someone without a successful research program will not get tenure or promotion. Publishing in refereed journals is one very good way to show that one has a good program.”

Phyllis H. Kaminski, Saint Mary’s College (Indiana): “We are a collegiate institution with first priority given to excellence in teaching. Scholarship is second in importance, but publication in academic journals is a factor in tenure and promotion.”

Richard F. Wilson, Mercer University: “We primarily are a teaching institution, but we do value publications. Tenure and promotion candidates must present a dossier that demonstrates excellence in teaching and adequate-to-excellent record and promise in scholarship and service.”

Bruce Ellis Benson, Wheaton College: “It’s a sine qua non for us. There must be a significant number of articles in academic journals for both tenure and promotion.”

RSN: What about publishing academic books for tenure/promotion decisions?

Catherine L. Albanese, UCSB: “Necessary for advancement a full rank and for a tenure case.”

David Weddle, Colorado College: “While a book is not formally required for either tenure or promotion, there is increasing expectation (especially among younger faculty) that an active scholarly life will have produced at least one book by the time of consideration for promotion to full professor.”

Michel Desjardins, Wilfrid Laurier: “Typically a scholar applying for tenure will have one, sometimes two books. We do not, however, consider it imperative that a scholar has a book.”

Richard Kieckhefer, Northwestern University: “This is unquestionably the main criterion. It is not simply the fact of having published a book, but the assessment of that book by specialists in the field.”

Rachel McDermott, Barnard: “Two is recommended. Some get by with one, or with a second book half-finished, and a contract in hand for it.”

William Harman, University of Tennessee–Chattanooga: “People with books are at a real advantage in both areas (tenure and promotion), though articles alone are also considered a real advantage.”

Pat Lynch, Canisius: “Books published by ‘commercial or academic presses of undisputed standing establish a presumption of successful scholarship’ (faculty handbook). If there is question about the standing of a press, scholars in the field outside of Canisius are asked for their evaluation.”

Mozella Mitchell, South Florida: “For tenure, we would expect at least one book

Editor’s Note:

RSN sent an e-mail to 568 chairs and program directors requesting information on publishing and tenure/promotion decisions. This informal survey asked four questions; some of their responses were selected for publication here.

along with several academic articles. For promotion to full professor, we would expect that the same would be doubled at least, since there is a four-year span between the tenure and promotion to associate professor and the promotion to full professor here.”

Stephen Heine, Florida International: “Of course, book publishing is the number one requirement for tenure — a monograph in print with a university press or equivalent, plus significant progress on a second book project, which could be an edited volume.”

Terrence Tilley, Fordham: “Almost all faculty tenured and/or promoted here in the last 20 years have books published.”

Phyllis Kaminski, Saint Mary’s: “It is possible to get tenure and promotion without a book if one has other substantial scholarly accomplishments, e.g., articles of substance in journals, chapters in anthologies, etc.”

Bruce Ellis Benson, Wheaton: “Publishing academic books is just as important. A book for tenure doesn’t hurt, though isn’t absolutely required. A minimum of a book is required for full professor.”

George Randels, University of the Pacific: “Publishing in journals and/or books is weighted at 30-40 percent, with teaching at 50-60 percent and service at 10-20 percent.”

RSN: Which does your department program value more in tenure/promotion decisions: book publishing or journal publications?

Catherine Albanese, UCSB: “Book publishing — this represents a major and sustained effort regarding one topic/theme, and generally signals greater immersion in it, longer consideration and reflection, and more interpretive depth.”

David Weddle, Colorado College: “The emphasis at this time is on journal publications, largely because the college does not have the resources to provide sufficient release time to all junior faculty to produce books.”

Michel Desjardins, Wilfrid Laurier: “Both are important, and in both cases we examine quality and place of publication.”

Richard Kieckhefer, Northwestern: “Book publishing, because a) books make a clearer and more discernible impact (being advertised, reviewed, and generally noted more than articles), and b) a book allowed the opportunity for full articulation, substantiation, and exploration of a complex argument.”

Mozella Mitchell, South Florida: “We tend to value both of these equally since they point to the continual intellectual development and scholarly productivity of the faculty, as well as being indicative of the regard that colleagues and other scholars have toward that person and her or his work and contributions to the profession and field of work. They are also excellent pointers as to the person’s mastery of the subject matter of the field of study and

teaching, as well as the teacher’s tendency to keep abreast of the development of knowledge in the study area in which one is engaged in teaching and research.”

David Brakke, Indiana: “We normally expect that a scholar’s research will result in both journal articles and academic books over the course of a career and that a younger scholar will carry out at least one project that culminates in a monograph. But we recognize that some forms of research lend themselves to one form of publication or another. Thus, a series of important articles in outstanding journals may represent a contribution as significant as a specialized monograph. We evaluate each case on its own merits.”

Willem B. Drees, Leiden University, Netherlands: “Though the tendency in the Netherlands with respect to research assessments and the like is to follow the model of the natural sciences and thus to value scholarly journals more than books or chapters in books, the practice is still different in the humanities, and certainly in my own Faculty of Theology of Leiden University. We consider scholarly books the most valuable type of output, especially if with respected publishers and in an internationally accessible language (e.g., English or German), followed by academic journals and in third place contributions to coherent, edited volumes.”

Lance Nelson, University of San Diego: “We do not have a written standard. We expect ‘significant publications.’ A book published by a good academic press would count more than a single peer-reviewed article, but we would like to see it accompanied by some respected journal publications.”

Pat Lynch, Canisius: “Journal publication appears to have greater value because of the peer-reviewed nature of journals, and the unlikelihood of a person applying for tenure having published a book yet. Canisius, as a teaching institution, places greater emphasis on article publication than book publication.”

Glen Stassen, Fuller Theological: “Equal. We value highly both academic leadership and also serving churches and people.”

S. Brian Stratton, Alma College: “A book is considered of higher value since it requires greater commitment on part of the research to a significant contribution.”

Christine Gudorf, Florida International: “Hard to say, as we require both. But many feel it is more difficult to publish articles in peer-reviewed journals than to publish books in academic presses, especially if your subject is popular.”

Phyllis Kaminski, Saint Mary’s: “We value both. It is perhaps more important that the person be an excellent collegiate teacher.”

Richard F. Wilson, Mercer: “We recognize that journal contributions reflect active scholarship, while book publications reflect a more nearly focused sort of active scholarship. A book is more impressive than an article, but both are valued.”

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IMPORTANCE, from p.20

Peter Haas, Case Western Reserve University: “On a practical level, we tend to value books or monographs more than articles because of the depth of research required for a longer manuscript and the ability to present a sustained argument that a longer publication represents.”

Bruce Ellis Benson, Wheaton: “My own view is that neither is more important. Generally, we look for a mixed profile. At least one of my colleagues thinks that journals are more important.”

RSN: What about nonacademic books? How are they considered for tenure/promotion decisions?

Catherine Albanese, UCSB: “They may count as public scholarship — contributing to the public understanding of religion (if they do), but they are not weighted as strongly.”

David Weddle, Colorado College: “Publications for general audiences (including books, magazine and newspa-

per articles, pamphlets, etc.) are more likely to be considered evidence of community service rather than contributions to scholarship and thus of less relative value than work in peer-reviewed professional publications.”

Michel Desjardins, Wilfrid Laurier: “Yes. Everything is considered. One of our three categories for consideration is ‘community,’ which includes internal and external engagement (to the university); nonacademic books are considered part of the external community work. [The other two categories are publications and teaching.]”

Richard Kieckhefer, Northwestern: “I cannot recall a case in which nonacademic books have been submitted for tenure/promotion. At least one colleague of mine writes fiction. I cannot think of any who write devotional, inspirational, or strictly denominational books — but works of that sort would be unlikely to count for tenure or promotion.”

Rachel McDermott, Barnard: “Fluff!”

David Brakke, Indiana: “Much depends on the kind of ‘nonacademic book.’ For

example, we would consider a textbook as part of the teaching portion of a tenure/promotion dossier, and such a book may contribute to demonstrating extraordinary excellence in teaching. A book aimed at a general audience may nonetheless reflect original and even technical research, sometimes presented previously to scholars in fora such as journals, and certainly the communication of scholarly work to a broader audience is something we value.”

Pat Lynch, Canisius: “These books would generally not be considered.”

Glen Stassen, Fuller Theological: “They are also valued significantly. We do have the mission of serving the people as well as the academics.”

Christine Gudorf, Florida International: “Nonacademic books do not count, and edited books do not count except as second books — they do not substitute for the monograph.”

Phyllis Kaminski, Saint Mary’s: “They fall into a third category under scholarship: 1) books and articles in refereed

journals; 2) papers and panel presentations at scholarly meetings; and 3) nonacademic publishing.”

Richard F. Wilson, Mercer: “Given our history and identity as ‘a university with commitments to the Baptist tradition,’ members of our department are likely contributors to nonacademic publications, including books, articles, church school lessons, and e-zines. Depending upon the compositions of the tenure and promotion committees in a given year, such publications may be regarded as ‘scholarly’ or ‘service.’ As chair I think that there is a false distinction. Scholarship — even popular scholarship — that informs and shapes the parish is as valuable as that which engages the academy.”

Peter Haas, Case Western Reserve: “We do include in consideration books that are designed for a more popular, educated audience as long as the work itself is making an academic argument or point.”

Bruce Ellis Benson, Wheaton: “They are taken into account, but do not have the weight of an academic book.” RSN

ALEXANDER, from p.15

magazine for library industry professionals. A glance at Oxford University Press’s Web site reveals why they may win the prize for the broadest publishing program. True, a few hardnosed publishers will persevere with old models, but they risk becoming so specialized that they may find themselves working alongside blacksmiths at Williamsburg showing tourists reference works that were once printed in multiple volumes kept on library shelves.

So, any strategy to develop a marketable book must begin by coming to grips with these trends: the institutional market has weakened; the market for highly technical print works is shrinking (although demand for e-books and a trend toward on-demand printing is rising and may save the monograph); and the trade market — where the action is growing — is crowded because publishers are shifting their focus from institutions to the broader markets.

How to Have a More Marketable Book

I recently had dinner with a scholar who was in New York promoting his latest volume with a six-city tour of the United States. I have also, however, dried the tears of professors who had developed carpal tunnel syndrome searching for their book on Amazon.com. What’s the deal? Why does one academic book sell in the tens of thousands and others in the tens? What makes a “marketable” academic book? Any author who is hoping to publish a money-making book should realize that the odds of writing a booming academic bestseller are like finding water on the sun. The odds of writing a volume that sells 2,000 to 3,000 copies are better, but only with the right publisher, topic, and plan.

Many scholars — excluding those writing monographs — fall in the second camp and can enhance their chances for success. Three planets must align:

- (1) A market for the book should already exist, and you must match your work to the publisher that best knows that market. Have a realistic expectation for the size and nature of your audience. No matter how mesmerizing, your 600-page monograph on the hermetic diet of Simeon the New Theologian will not sell thousands of copies — maybe not hundreds. Whether you specialize in Caribbean religions, Rumi’s poetry, or Immanuel Kant, identify publishers specializing in your area. Tailor your proposal for them. Know your audience. The more clearly you identify your reader, the more likely a publisher will be interested. Avoid claiming “my book’s for scholars, graduate seminars, upper-level college courses, professionals, EMTs, and the general reader.” Once you identify your audience, write for that audience.

- (2) A well-written book has higher probability of success than a poorly written or overly academic work. Match your style to the audience. Because academics working in the humanities and social sciences share the same foundational information — often static texts (Shakespeare, the Talmud, the Bible, the Baghavad-Gita) — many scholars write about similar, competing topics. If you can write clearly and with style, you will beat out your competition.
- (3) Get a sense of how publishers market books and cooperate with them to promote yours effectively. In the process of scheduling, planning, and advertising, publishers do plenty. Sometimes it seems like they’re not marketing anything. But results-producing marketing rarely comes from conference program spreads and journal ads. In addition to the more effective direct contact with customers (catalogues, RSS feeds, e-mails, direct mail campaigns), what a publisher does to market your book that really matters includes the underappreciated tasks of: keeping you on schedule, making sure your book is abstracted and indexed appropriately, getting good reviewers for the back cover, sending advance information electronically to buyers and to the major datastreams (e.g., Books In Print).

Moreover, in today’s economy, when publishers send electronic title information to Amazon (www.Amazon.com) or to Barnes & Noble (www.barnesandnoble.com), and when they participate in programs such as Google BookSearch (books.google.com) or Amazon’s Search Inside the Book (www.amazon.com/Search-Inside-Book-Books/b?ie=UTF8&node=10197021), they are exposing your book to millions of potential readers. Sending books out for reviews, which nowadays may come years later, props up sales down the road. Most publishers execute these tasks with neither the appreciation nor the understanding of authors. It’s no six-city book tour, but these actions sell books. And I have room here only to tip my hat to the irreplaceable sales reps, vendors, and bookstore owners. That being said, sometimes you the author hold the key to your own success.

Let’s say you have a book contract; your publisher plans to print 2,000 copies. Sweet. Besides the practical steps above, how can you maximize your odds of success? Beyond anything else, *turn the manuscript in on time*. Publishers schedule promotional materials at least 6 to 14 months ahead of time, planning for catalogs, promotion, and — most crucially — for their budgets. If you let your book fall out of schedule you disrupt the timing of the marketing plans and kick your book to the back of the line.

Also, market yourself. Turn in a fully completed author questionnaire. Inform your publisher about your speaking

schedule outside your university. Put your volume’s cover image on your faculty page. Find out if your local or college bookstore will host a book signing (publishers often make this risk-free by offering consignment terms or a higher than normal discount). Notify your university public relations office about your writing; area newspapers might both write a column and later enlist you as an expert in religious studies. Write an op-ed piece for your local paper. Work with your publisher to exploit AmazonConnect, which profiles an author, for example, www.amazon.com/gp/pdp/profile/A3JHVC2LC8VD/ref=cm_ad_36/104-9442380-5705532. Such resources will connect you with peers, colleagues, students, and the world at large.

Sure, publishers can fail to market a book. Most, however, investing between \$5,000 and \$20,000 for a single project, want it to succeed as much as — if not more than — you do. You possess more control and power to produce a marketable book than you realize, but start by finding the right publisher, by writing well for a specific audience, by turning in your materials on time, and by doing a little self-promotion. You might just find a drop of water out there. RSN

Next in

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Sustainability
Issues for
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A Conversation with AAR President Jeffrey Stout



After graduating from Brown University in 1972, Jeffrey Stout entered the doctoral program in religion at Princeton, and joined the Princeton faculty in 1975. He became Andrew Mellon Professor in the Humanities in 1989, and served as Chair of the Department of Religion throughout most of the 1990s. His scholarly interests include theories of religion, religious ethics, pragmatic philosophy, political theory, and film. His articles and reviews have appeared in such journals as the Monist, New Literary History, Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal, and the Journal of Religion. He is a contributing editor of the Journal of Religious Ethics, and was once a co-editor of the Cambridge Series on Religion and Critical Thought. His books include Ethics after Babel (Princeton, 2001) and Democracy and Tradition (Princeton, 2004), both of which explore connections among religious, ethical, and political aspects of culture, and both of which received the "Award for Excellence" from the AAR. He is also co-editor of Grammar and Grace: Reformulations of Aquinas and Wittgenstein (SCM, 2004). His recent courses include "Religion in Modern Thought and Film," "Perspectives on Religious Ethics," "Christianity and Democracy in America," and "Philosophy and the Study of Religion."

RSN: At what point did you decide you wanted to become a scholar of religion?

Stout: I was involved in the religious left as a teenager, and went to college hoping to major in a field that would prove relevant to those concerns. At first I thought I might major in political science, but the two courses I took in that field as a freshman at Brown seemed to drain the life out of the subject matter. I was intensely interested in philosophy, but there was a lot more ethics being taught in the Religious Studies Department in those days than anywhere else. In the spring of my sophomore year, Don Colenback invited me into his graduate seminar on Christian ethics, and I took Wendell Dietrich's lecture course on Kant, Schleiermacher, Hegel, Feuerbach, Marx, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche. That combination clinched the deal.

RSN: What year are we talking about?

Stout: The spring term of 1970. When Nixon invaded Cambodia, I led a student strike. The Brown faculty suspended classes and permitted students to hand in their term papers the following September. I split the summer between political organizing and writing a long paper on Hegel that became my first real academic accomplishment. I have been thinking ever since about Hegel's contrast between master-

slave relationships and relationships of mutual recognition. That contrast sums up the concerns that brought me to academic pursuits in the first place.

RSN: Describe the period of your doctoral study. With whom did you study?

Stout: I did my doctoral work at Princeton, working mainly with Vic Preller, Mal Diamond, and Gene Outka in the Religion Department and with Gil Harman and David Hoy in the Philosophy Department.

RSN: What was your dissertation about?

Stout: The famous passage in Hume's *Treatise* on the impossibility of inferring "ought" judgments from beliefs about the facts, which was still widely thought to discredit both theological and natural-law ethics in a single stroke. I tried to show that the same moves philosophers of science had used to dissolve Hume's problem of induction could be used to dissolve his "is"—"ought" problem. Much too high-tech for most religion departments to take an interest in. It's amazing that I got a job.

RSN: Did you interview at the AAR?

Stout: What a disaster! There was only one advertised position in my field. Two of my buddies and I got interviews, which in those days were held in the hotel rooms of the interviewers. My beard was about double the volume of Allen Ginsberg's, and I could feel the interviewers recoil as I walked into the room. There was no intellectual substance to the interview at all. The last question was about Barbara Walters — some kind of in-joke I didn't get. The whole convention seemed like a club for good old boys. I wanted a job, but I didn't know the secret handshake and didn't really want to learn it.

RSN: But you ended up at Princeton.

Stout: That's right. About six months later I was chosen as Gene Outka's replacement when he decided to move to Yale. Very lucky. There weren't many religion departments in those days that were willing to hire a nonbeliever to teach religious ethics. It was a wonderful time to be a young faculty member at Princeton. Paul Ramsey and Vic Preller held court for hours every day in our departmental lounge. Hempel and Kuhn co-taught the philosophy of science course. Davidson, Lewis, Kripke, and Harman debated the philosophy of language. Sheldon Wolin was teaching political theory. Cornel West was writing a dissertation on Marx. And Dick Rorty was circulating drafts of *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. People like Jerry Schneewind, Annette Baier, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Hans Frei, Alasdair MacIntyre, Ian Hacking, and Mary Douglas were always passing through town.

RSN: In what ways has the AAR changed since those days?

Stout: In a lot of ways. It no longer operates like an exclusive club. Women, blacks, Latinos, and gays play central roles. Religions like Buddhism and Islam have equal standing with Christianity as objects of study. It's no longer weird for someone like me to be teaching courses on normative topics or for someone like John Gager to be teaching early Christianity. And in the last 15 years or

so, the AAR has matured into a full-fledged professional and scholarly organization. These are big changes.

RSN: You have said on several occasions that there are still problems with the job-placement process.

Stout: As far as the Annual Meeting goes, we no longer hold the interviews in somebody's bedroom, but the alternative feels like a cattle call. I don't know what can be done about the alienation people experience as they move through the process, but I have asked the appropriate committee to look into the possibilities. I'm more concerned, though, about problems that turned up in our survey of job candidates who used the Employment Information Service in 2005. More than 20 percent implied that at some point during their time on the job market they encountered prospective employers who raised inappropriate questions or topics during interviews. That's twice the percentage making the same complaint the previous year. Even making allowances for some margin of error and some degree of misperception on the part of anxious job candidates, this is a very high number, and every member of the profession should be outraged by it. Of course, we don't know where the problems occurred: at the Annual Meeting, in phone interviews, or during on-campus interviews. The AAR sends clear signals to interviewers about how they should be conducting themselves. But the bottom line is that colleagues within each department around the country need to hold each other accountable.

RSN: And the other problems?

Stout: Here's one: almost 69 percent of our respondents said that they did not receive a job offer. This figure might turn out to be a *bit* misleading, given that not everybody responds to the survey, but something is clearly out of whack in the ratio of new PhD's to available jobs in some of our subfields. On the one hand, we are clearly failing to meet the demand for new PhD's in fields like Islam. On the other hand, there appears to be a glut of job seekers in some other fields. The AAR will need to look at these numbers closely and push the major graduate programs into re-examining their admissions policies, their curricula, and the ways in which they make public their placement records.

RSN: What should they be doing about admissions?

Stout: It's simple: increase the flow of PhD's in subfields likely to have a high demand, decrease the flow in subfields where the opposite holds.

RSN: What about the curriculum?

Stout: There seems to be a mismatch between the manifold curricular divisions of the average graduate program and the much simpler structure of the average hiring department. Suppose a religion department with five to eight historians has one opening. They have decent coverage of various traditions and periods, but they're looking for somebody working in biomedical ethics, comparative ethics, systematic or historical theology, modern Western religious thought, the philosophy of religion, or approaches to the study of religion. Whomever they hire

will need to cover all of this territory. Yet many graduate programs are still training PhD's as if every department could afford to have one of each, the model being the 35-member divinity school. Small departments have no idea what to make of this. It would be helpful if all this material could be gathered under a single heading, like "Religion and Critical Thought," which is the designation Brown has settled on. A doctorate in this area would of course involve writing a dissertation that falls under one of the narrower rubrics, but it should also involve learning how to teach this entire wing of the religious studies curriculum at the introductory level.

"I hear a lot of people referring to a divorce between the two organizations. The AAR and the SBL were never married."

RSN: With respect to graduate programs, you have also expressed concerns about the ways in which schools and departments report their placement records. Say a bit more about that.

Stout: The reporting methods are insufficiently transparent to students who are trying to decide whether to go to graduate school and which fields or schools they ought to be considering. The placement statistics reported by the graduate programs don't fit very well with the data we gather from the job candidates. The former are as rosy as the latter are grim. It is in the interest of some graduate programs to be less than fully transparent in reporting their placement records, so there are grounds for suspicion.

RSN: The old saying is "Lies, damn lies, and statistics."

Stout: Right. Some departments in neighboring disciplines wisely decided a few years ago to eliminate the statistics. The departmental homepage gives a complete breakdown of what has happened to each person who has received a doctorate from the department in the last ten years. The person's name isn't always given, but the dissertation title and the subfield are. Every job the person has held is listed along with an indication of its rank and whether it was tenure track, non-tenure track, or tenured. If the person left the profession, the Web site says so. This reporting method allows prospective applicants to see exactly what has happened to all of the students graduating from a given program in their own subfield, which is what they need to know. My hope is that all of the graduate programs in religion will adopt either this method or an even better one.

RSN: What are your thoughts on the board's decision to hold some of the AAR's future Annual Meetings independently of the SBL?

See **STOUT** p.23

STOUT, from p.22

Stout: I hear a lot of people referring to a divorce between the two organizations. The AAR and the SBL were never married. The situation is more like two families that have been renting a beach house together every July. Then one family decides that they were getting too cramped to continue the arrangement, and various members of both families get upset. It's a very delicate situation at this point, with a lot of healing to be done and perhaps a need for some compromise and negotiation to serve the interests of all concerned. But it's not a divorce. And there are still a lot of decisions to be made.

RSN: What decisions?

Stout: Think of it this way. Two families decide not to share a beach house. They still need to decide how often to vacation in the same town at roughly the same time and what the arrangements ought to look like.

RSN: What decisions have already been made?

Stout: The AAR and the SBL have agreed to meet independently but simultaneously in San Francisco in November of 2011. From 2007 to 2010 and again in 2012, both organizations have contracts committing them to meet at different times and would face six-figure fines if they broke the contracts.

RSN: What decisions remain?

Stout: The AAR has signed no contracts beyond 2012. We need to decide how often we want to meet simultaneously with the SBL. We need to find out which other organizations, if any, might want to coordinate their meetings with ours. But there are countless other decisions to be made about future Annual Meetings. When you start looking at all of the considerations that are relevant to putting a meeting together, things get surprisingly complicated.

RSN: What sorts of considerations?

Stout: The dates for one. Some October dates create conflicts with academic calendars or with Halloween. Early November dates make it hard for our politically active members to participate fully in the concluding days of electoral campaigns. Moving to any time other than our traditional meeting time, the weekend before Thanksgiving, has significant disadvantages. In most years after 2012, any meeting date other than the weekend before Thanksgiving will probably entail higher hotel costs for our members. I'm concerned about the burden this will place on the more liminal members of the profession. I don't want graduate students, adjuncts, assistant professors, and retirees to be excluded from the Annual Meeting.

RSN: Why is the weekend before Thanksgiving less expensive?

Stout: Hotels are mainly vacant during that weekend, so they offer low rates as an inducement for conventions to be held at that time. There's no such inducement to meet at other times. When the AAR and SBL negotiated jointly, we also had more leverage because of our combined size.

RSN: What issues are there besides dates and rates?

Stout: We need to figure out how to handle our employment services and departmental receptions when meeting independently. We're quite worried about the burdens that meeting independently will place on exhibitors. These issues were brought up when the independent Annual Meeting decision was being made, but they haven't gone away.

RSN: Where does all of this leave us?

Stout: The big yes-or-no question about meeting independently has now splintered into lots of more specific questions about our future meetings. How should those meetings be run? When? In cooperation with whom? What's the maximum that members should be asked to pay for hotel rooms? If we're going to meet simultaneously with the SBL in some years, just how often is that going to be? If issues concerning dates and hotel rates push us back in the direction of the weekend before Thanksgiving, then what should we do, given that the SBL has decided to stay with the traditional date?

RSN: You're a member of the Program Committee. Wasn't one rationale for the independent meeting the concern that concurrent meetings left too little space for expanding the AAR program?

Stout: It was a crucial rationale. But there now seem to be several ways of addressing the space issue. As it turns out, we have been able to add a lot of new sessions to our program over the last two years while still meeting jointly. Some members of the Executive Committee have asked the AAR staff to investigate what the space implications would be if we met only in the cities with the most capacious facilities.

RSN: That's a lot to think about: rates, dates, space, convenience, the benefits of conversation with members of other organizations, exhibitors, employment services, and so on. How will all of these considerations be factored into the decision making?

Stout: The board doesn't really know how AAR members feel about the various considerations, so it's not clear how much weight each consideration should be given. We need some way of finding out how the members feel. On the other hand, we can't drag our feet. Contracts for 2013 will have to be signed before long.

RSN: Are you planning a referendum?

Stout: It's no accident that political theorists distinguish between government-by-plebiscite and representative democracy. In this case, a referendum would be too clumsy an instrument because it would require boiling everything down to one simple question again. The AAR's elected representatives need to find out how our members feel about the full range of considerations, assemble all of the relevant facts, and then make responsible decisions about how to move forward. If we design a questionnaire prudently and most of our members take the time to respond to it thoughtfully, we should be able to get a much clearer understanding of which considerations matter to our members and how much weight each of those considerations ought to have when decisions about future Annual Meetings are being made.

RSN: Would issuing a questionnaire of the kind you have in mind be interpreted as a retreat from the board's commitment to an independent Annual Meeting?

Stout: I have no control over what symbolic significance various people might attribute to whatever the board decides to do next. My job is to preside justly and wisely over the process. The AAR makes clear what it stands for each year by deciding on upcoming Annual Meetings and by adopting policies on other matters. I'm much less concerned about where we come down on this or that particular question than I am about how democratically the AAR behaves. The board and its officers need to earn the entitlement to represent our members.

RSN: The candidate's statement you issued in the October 2004 RSN (www.aarwb.org/publications/REN/2004-10OCT.pdf, p. 4) when you were nominated for the presidency expressed concerns about the extent to which the AAR reflects its members' commitment to democracy. Do you still have those concerns?

Stout: I do. A lot of the discontent over the independent meeting issue had to do with how the decision seemed to have been reached and with whether the board is a sufficiently representative body to perform its functions. We need now to ask whether the board is properly structured and whether our members have adequate opportunities to express themselves on major decisions. The by-laws that worked when we had a few thousand members, most of whom were white males, aren't necessarily well-suited to an organization with a diverse membership of more than 11,000.

RSN: Are you saying that the Annual Meeting issue was decided improperly?


Stout: I'd prefer to frame the governance issue in a forward-looking way. Now that we're a large organization, we need to ask whether our rank-and-file members have sufficient opportunity to influence and contest decisions. It's obvious that the business meeting is no longer an adequate forum for discussing important issues. And it's reasonable to ask whether the board has enough members who are elected at-large, whether it has all of the forms of expertise it needs to have, whether it has become unwieldy, and so on. I'm planning to appoint a task force to investigate how the AAR measures up, in democratic terms, when compared with other organizations affiliated with the American


Council of Learned Societies. I'm hoping that all of our members will be able to see this as a good-faith effort to respond to the questions that have been raised.

RSN: You joined the board after the Annual Meeting decision was already in place. But in your two years on the board, what, if anything, has transpired that will leave a lasting mark on the organization?

Stout: The transition from one executive director to another. The departing director, Barbara DeConcini, gets more credit than any other ten individuals for guiding the AAR to its current condition as a mature, professionally run organization capable of supplying its members with the full range of appropriate services. She stamped out the remaining vestiges of the old-boys' club. Every future AAR member will forever be in her debt.

RSN: And the new director?

Stout: Jack Fitzmier has fresh thoughts about how to make the most of the excellent staff we have in Atlanta. He is doing a great job of helping us get a handle on the financial implications of the Annual Meeting decision and the issue of governance. It's a great plus that he has intimate familiarity with the study of religion in both a great secular university and in the theological schools. I have known Jack for a long time. He might well be the most skillful conciliator I have come across in the academy. We're at a point where even a little of that will go a long way. But I have also seen him behave with considerable courage in difficult circumstances. It's rare to find both of those virtues in the same person. We're very lucky to have him joining us. 



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In the Public Interest

The Pentacle Quest: Religious Freedom and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Sarah M. Pike, California State University, Chico



Sarah M. Pike is Professor of Religious Studies at California State University, Chico, where she teaches courses on American religions. She chairs the Committee for the Public Understanding of Religion and is a member of the AAR's Board of Directors. Pike is the author of *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves: Contemporary Pagans and the Search for Community* (2001) and *New Age and Neopagan Religions in America* (2004).

ON DECEMBER 2, 2006, Roberta Stewart, the widow of Sgt. Patrick Stewart, helped dedicate the first government-issued memorial plaque with a Wiccan pentacle (an interlaced five-pointed star) on the Wall of Heroes in the Northern Nevada Veterans Cemetery in Fernley, Nevada. She was joined at the cemetery by more than 75 friends, relatives, Wiccan leaders, and other supporters. On a YouTube video of the memorial, men and women in military uniforms mixed with Wiccans in long cloaks. The Associated Press and the *Washington Post*, among others, have covered the struggle to acquire the plaque and the memorial. The news media's interest was a result of Stewart's well-publicized fight to get the pentacle recognized by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Although the Department of Veterans Affairs recognizes more than 30 symbols, including over a dozen kinds of Christian crosses, the pentacle is not on the list and has not been added despite at least six different requests over the past nine years. Because of the intervention of Nevada governor Kenny Guinn, the state's VA office, which maintains the state cemetery, declared its jurisdiction over the cemetery and allowed the plaque to be placed in December. Meanwhile, in November 2006, the watchdog group Americans United for Separation of Church and State sued the VA.

The pentacle is an important religious symbol for contemporary Pagans and Wiccans. According to Selena Fox, founder of Circle Sanctuary, one of the oldest Wiccan churches in the United States, "The Pentacle is the symbol of the Wiccan religion throughout the United States and worldwide. . . . The top point of the five-pointed star of the Pentacle represents Spirit, or Soul, and the spiritual essence that is the foundation of human life. The other points represent the four other sacred Elements of Nature and aspects of human existence — Earth and the physical realm; Air and the mental realm; Fire and the behavioral realm; and

Water and the emotional realm." Churches like Circle are one of the diverse kinds of contemporary Pagan organizations that provide leadership for this decentralized movement of practitioners of earth religions. Although there are many different forms of contemporary Paganism, Wicca is one of the main forms. In the United States today, the population of contemporary Pagans, including Wiccans, is probably somewhere between 250,000–500,000, though numbers are hard to come by because many contemporary Pagans and Wiccans practice alone or participate in loosely organized circles rather than in recognized Wiccan or Pagan churches. Although their religion is sometimes confused by outsiders with Satanism, Satanism and Wicca have little in common. Wiccans have revived and adapted pre-Christian nature religions. Among their main tenets is the Wiccan Rede, which instructs its adherents to "harm none."

Wicca is recognized as a religion by many U.S. government agencies, including the Internal Revenue Service and the Department of Justice. In 2005, the Supreme Court heard a case brought by Wiccans and others on the constitutionality of the Religious Land Use Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA) and ruled in their favor. But Wiccans have received uneven treatment in the military, in some cases experiencing discrimination and in others, tolerance and support. In 1999 Congressman Bob Barr (R-GA) tried to shut down a Wiccan circle that met on a military base in Fort Hood, Texas. He was supported in his efforts by Senator Strom Thurmond (R-SC), the American Family Association, and the Traditional Values Coalition.

But the pentacle quest has received widespread support from religious leaders of all faiths, including Christians. In *Christianity Today*, John Whitehead, founder of the Rutherford Institute, wrote, "Whatever one's opinion might be about the Wiccan faith, there should be no doubt in anyone's mind that the First Amendment to our U.S. Constitution provides for religious freedom for all individuals of all faiths." The Nevada State government took a similar stance in support of Roberta Stewart when Nevada politicians contacted the VA on Stewart's behalf and the Nevada Office of Veterans Services circumvented the VA. Members of other faiths have offered their support to Wiccans involved with the pentacle quest. This was particularly evident at the interfaith memorial service in December, where a Jewish Wiccan recited a Jewish prayer of remembrance, a Comanche-Irish pipe-carrier and sun-dancer offered a Native American blessing, and a Congregational minister and military chaplain also offered a blessing. Lady Liberty League Chaplaincy Coordinator and High Priest of Our Lady of the Wells Church Rev. Patrick McCollum spoke for many people of all faiths who attended the service when he observed that "Sergeant Patrick Stewart gave his life for his country and for the principles which

he and all of us hold most dear: liberty, justice, and equality for all. Yet the very agencies created by our forbears to protect the sanctity and honor of those who've served their country with dignity have forsaken both Sergeant Stewart and the very principles for which those agencies stand." Like McCollum, many supporters of the pentacle quest emphasize the sacrifices made by Wiccans serving in the armed forces and the need for rites of passage and memorials appropriate to their religious beliefs.

“Wiccans have received uneven treatment in the military, in some cases experiencing discrimination and in others, tolerance and support.”

Wiccans have participated in the armed forces for many years. According to a December 3, 2006, Associated Press story by Martin Griffith, "About 1,800 active-duty service members identify themselves as Wiccans, according to 2005 Defense Department statistics." In November 1998, Rev. Drake Spaeth of Circle Sanctuary became the first Wiccan-trained minister to be put forth as a candidate for chaplain in the U.S. armed forces, and Circle Sanctuary became the first Wiccan church to apply for Department of Defense Ecclesiastical Endorsing Organization status.

The quest of Wiccans to have the pentacle added to the VA's list began over nine years ago. In 1997, the Aquarian Tabernacle Church sent the first request to the VA to add the pentacle to its list; it did not receive a response until 2001 (the response was that the VA was revising its requirements for adding emblems to the list). This initial request was followed by several others over the years, including a request from the Isis Invicta Military Mission in 1998 on behalf of members of the mission who were on active duty in the military. In 2005, Circle Sanctuary submitted an application to the VA because increasing numbers of its church members were being sent to Iraq or Afghanistan or were aging veterans. Circle also received a response that stated the procedures were undergoing revision and reapplied under the new procedures. Circle requested expedited processing because one of its members, who was a Korean War veteran, had recently died and his widow wanted a memorial marker for his gravesite. Again, the VA delayed issuing a decision. When Roberta Stewart's husband was shot down in Afghanistan in 2005, Circle appended her

request for a memorial plaque with a pentacle to the application. Stewart's husband Patrick had been a chief flight engineer for a helicopter in the Army National Guard and was involved in transporting government officials, including Nevada Senator Harry Reid and then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.


Over the past few years, Wiccans have repeatedly contacted VA officials and called on their congressional representatives to put pressure on the VA. Selena Fox, Circle's founder, met with Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs William F. Tuerk in Washington in order to convey the urgency of three widows across the nation who wanted pentacles for their deceased veteran husbands, and again the VA refused to expedite their requests or to provide a timeline for Circle's application. Americans United for Separation of Church and State (AU), a nonprofit educational organization founded in 1947 and currently based in Washington, D.C., also joined the cause. In June 2006, Aram Schvey, an attorney representing AU, wrote to R. James Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and Under Secretary Tuerk about the failure to approve the Wiccan pentacle. Schvey argued that the National Cemetery's refusal to add the pentacle to its list violated the establishment clause of the First Amendment. Schvey also pointed out that "The Administration recognizes the emblems of numerous religions with far fewer adherents in the United States than Wicca," including Eckankar, Baha'I, and Sikhism. In fact, he contrasts the nine-year struggle of Wiccans to have the pentacle added with a recent case where a request to have the Sikh Khanda symbol added to the list took less than three months. Because the VA did not comply with these various requests, the AU and some of the Wiccans involved decided that a lawsuit was their only course. On November 13, 2006, Americans United for Separation of Church and State sued the Veterans Administration on behalf of the Isis Invicta Military Mission, Circle Sanctuary, and two of Circle's members, Roberta Stewart and Karen DePolito, both widows of Wiccan veterans.

A December 11, 2006, press release on the Wiccan Covenant of the Goddess's Web site described the December memorial celebration as "bittersweet." As several of the speakers at the service reminded those gathered, their "quest for the pentacle" has not ended.

Resources:

Circle Sanctuary's Web site includes numerous links and articles about the pentacle quest (www.circlesanctuary.org/liberty/veteranpentacle/).

Covenant of the Goddess (www.cog.org)

Americans United for Separation of Church and State (www.au.org) 

From the Student Desk

Learning the Ropes through Networking

Rachel A. R. Bundang



Rachel A. R. Bundang is Bannan Fellow at Santa Clara University's Bannan Institute for Jesuit Educational Mission and the Department of Religious Studies. Trained in Christian ethics, she teaches, writes, and consults on feminist ethics and theologies, Catholic moral theology, and Asian Pacific American (APA) religiosity. She has had essays published recently in the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, *Semeia*, and several anthologies. Her current project proposes disruptive personhood as a necessary corrective for APA feminist theo-ethics. She can be reached at rbundang@scu.edu.

FOR THE FIRST TIME in what feels like a million years, I sit on the other side of the desk. The default outfit of yoga pants and sweatshirt for dissertation-writing is retired and kept from view; instead, I don clothes that I hope make me look sufficiently polished yet approachable. I watch my words and silences, praying that I communicate exactly what I mean with minimal embarrassment. No longer a student or a teaching assistant, I am the new professor in the department.

Reflecting as a first-generation college student who went on to pursue a PhD and then actual work teaching for food, not just glory, there is so much I could never have foreseen — and so much I wish I had even known to ask, even as I was plucked out of the pack for mentoring. I had naïvely assumed that, like my previous studies, doctoral work would be studded with happy accidents of learning, except with the expectation of producing a suitably heavy, original, and dazzlingly brilliant doorstep. No one had made clear how long the process might take, how much debt might pile up, how cherished relationships would be affected, or how to dodge burnout plus the ever-nagging fear that I would never be able to get my life back. The recurring nightmare of running, falling, and not being able to get up captured the stress perfectly.

An intellectual life has bloomed, almost in spite of my settings and own worst habits. But the point of doctoral work, I found, was more professional development rather than intellectual formation, which proved a more personal pursuit. For me, the most vital part of that development came through the formal and informal networks I encountered and cultivated; they, in turn, nurtured me. The extreme state of flux in my own graduate program, coupled with its inadequate patchwork of services and facilities, sent me searching elsewhere for support and resources.

In my first real-world jobs, networking seemed a terrifying, unfair, even repulsive tactic because it smacked of insincerity and manipulation. But through research and teaching, networking came to feel more an organic result of sharing questions, concerns, and ideas passionately. By entering into a community of scholars — peers and senior figures alike — I began learning how to navigate things such as conference etiquette, the publishing maze, collaborative versus individual projects, the hidden politics of relationships, the joys and woes of teaching, financial anxieties, the life/work balance, and more. We all share survival strategies like trade secrets. We serve as each other's conversation partners when those closer to home cannot afford the time or imagination to help us complete our thoughts. These outside networks have become a professional lifeline, providing a space for socialization into the field and an anthropological eye upon it.

Acknowledging this collegiality does not discount the extra-academic communities that have sustained me: church folks, yoga buddies, and music partners; friends and family, certainly; even neighborhood regulars. They remind me that I do have a life waiting outside the gates. But these professional networks — composed of colleagues and mentors from my graduate and undergraduate days, all met through conferences, classes, or correspondence, and also drawing from the academy more broadly — have been critical to my continued growth and survival as an emerging scholar.

The networks have proven invaluable especially in the unique purgatory of the job search. My seminary did not offer the career placement assistance probably more readily available to those in research universities, so I relied upon the "six degrees of separation" theory of relationships to gather needed information from all points in this web. I rarely had to venture terribly far for answers to questions such as: What do you know about this department or that postdoc? Does the search committee have enough of a sense of what they want? Are there any potentially sticky situations to keep in mind? What might it mean for me to live in a community where specific con-

cerns, needs, or commitments might not be so readily served? The sample class or research presentation I could prepare on my own, but insightful answers to such questions were helpful for applications and interviews, especially in gauging potential fit with the institution.

Every person we encounter in our formation — even under far-from-ideal circumstances — is a potential partner in making the academy a stimulating and inviting place to work. So it is actually worthwhile to learn how to listen (if you are an extrovert) or make small talk (if you are an introvert), or to invite someone for coffee at a conference to follow up on a compelling presentation. In the job search and on the job itself, of course we need to bring the intellectual goods. But assertive graciousness, the social intelligence for give and take with colleagues, and a sense of one's evolving identity as a teaching scholar in conversation with others are just as important. Those things keep "network" from becoming a dirty word. [RSN](#)

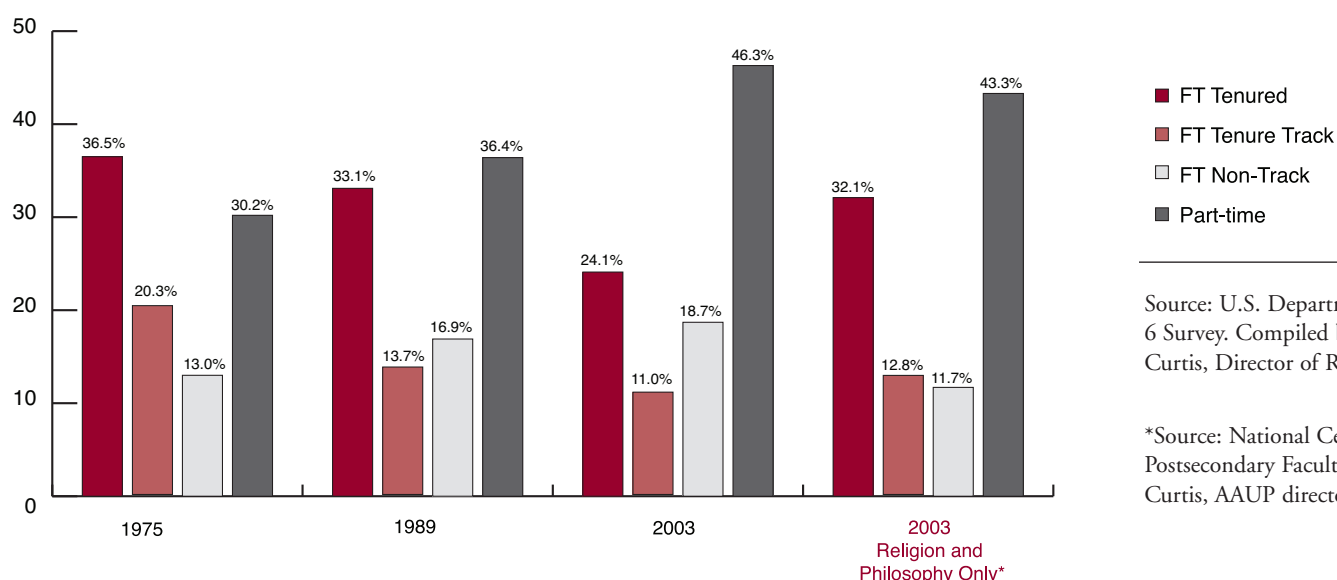
Student Editor Announced



AR Student Director Davina Lopez is pleased to announce the appointment of Whitney A. Bauman, PhD candidate in philosophical and systematic theology at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, as the 2007–08 *From the Student Desk* Editor. We also express deep gratitude to Matthew Cadwell, John Strachan Junior Fellow at Trinity College, University of Toronto, for his service as the 2005–06 Editor. [RSN](#)

Trends in Faculty Status, 1975–2003

All degree-granting institutions, national totals



Source: U.S. Department of Education, IPEDS Fall Staff Survey; EEOC, EEO-6 Survey. Compiled by AAUP Research Office, Washington, DC; John W. Curtis, Director of Research (5/05)

*Source: National Center for Education Statistics, National Study of Postsecondary Faculty: 2004, Data Analysis System. Tabulation by John W. Curtis, AAUP director of research and public policy. [RSN](#)

Michael Penn received an AAR Individual Research Grant in 2005. A report on his research is below.

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Research Briefing

Grant Led to Research Texts in Paris, London

Michael Penn, Mount Holyoke College



Michael Penn completed his undergraduate studies at Princeton University, his PhD from Duke University, and a post-doctoral fellowship at Brandeis University. He currently is an assistant professor of religion at Mount Holyoke College. His first book, *Kissing Christians: Ritual, Community, and the Late Ancient Church* was published by the University of Pennsylvania Press in 2005. His current work explores how seventh- through ninth-century Syriac Christians reacted to the rise of Islam.

simply too many texts to read and too few people to read them.

My own research focuses on Syriac Christian reactions to the rise of Islam. For when Muslims first encountered Christians, they did not meet Latin-speaking Christians from the Western Mediterranean, or Greek-speaking Christians from Constantinople, but rather Syriac Christians from Northern Mesopotamia. Living under direct Muslim rule from the seventh century up to the present day, Syriac Christians wrote about a complicated set of interactions that cannot be reduced to the solely antagonistic. Both as a means to document these earliest encounters between what would eventually become the modern world's two largest religious traditions, and as a way to counter an overly reductionistic "clash of civilization" model of interreligious encounter, I have begun my second book, *Imaging Islam*. This work analyzes dozens of seventh- through ninth-century Syriac letters, apocalypses, historical chronicles, legends, polemical essays, theological tracts, and collections of canon law that speak of Islam. In particular, I focus on how Syriac discussions of Islam, Muslims, and the Arab victory over Byzantine and Persian forces helped forge a new Christian identity during an age of increasing religious pluralism.

One of the main challenges in writing such a book is that, unlike work in Greek and Latin Christianity where almost all the texts are edited, translated, and on CD-ROM, research in Syriac Christianity usually requires hunting through the ancient manuscripts themselves. Although time consuming, such archival research is also extremely rewarding; you never know what you are going to find.

Thanks to a combination of funds from the AAR, the NEH, and Mount Holyoke, I was able to spend two months last summer examining the Syriac collections of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris and the British Library in London. Here I discovered several texts relevant for my studies that had never before been analyzed (or in several cases I suspect even read) by modern scholars. These include a series of four related texts that preserve a ritual to reconsecrate a church that has been defiled by non-Christians, two versions of a late seventh-century work arguing why Christianity is the oldest and best of the world's religions, an extensive discussion of Christian inheritance law, a series of biblical proof texts against those who deny Christ's incarnation, and two different Syriac prayers on behalf of newly appointed Muslim rulers. I also had the opportunity to examine a series of scribal changes to Syriac manuscripts motivated by the rise of Islam including the erasure of the term *rasul* ("messenger") of God from a Syriac description of Muhammad. In the coming months I am planning to publish editions and translations of these works to add to our growing corpus of Syriac materials on early Islam and to incorporate these newly found texts into my *Imaging Islam* project.

MY DOCTORAL TRAINING at Duke University, my first book (*Kissing Christians: Ritual and Community in the Late Ancient Church*, University of Pennsylvania Press), and most of my teaching at Mount Holyoke College focuses on Greek- and Latin-speaking Christians in the Roman Empire. This is not surprising. About 90 percent of modern research on early Christianity does the same. Although my early research and my classes are very representative of the field of early Christian studies, they are not very representative of the early Christians themselves. For early Christians did not live solely in the Roman Empire or write only in Greek and Latin.

In recent years, my research has thus moved further east to look at Christians who lived in Northern Mesopotamia (modern-day Iran, Iraq, and eastern Turkey). In antiquity some of these Christians lived in the Roman Empire, some in the Persian Empire, and many lived in disputed territory in between. These eastern Christians usually did not write in Greek or Latin but rather in a dialect of Aramaic called Syriac, and they have left us over 10,000 Syriac manuscripts. Yet because so few scholars read Syriac, the majority of these manuscripts remain unanalyzed and in many cases unread.

I was first introduced to Syriac and Syriac Christianity in graduate school, but only afterward, thanks to a Kraft-Hiatt post-doctoral fellowship at Brandeis University, an NEH faculty seminar, and Mount Holyoke funding several research trips to the British Library, was I able to more fully appreciate how numerous, how rich, and how relatively unexplored are the texts that Syriac Christians have written. At times it feels like the scholarly equivalent to the Dead Sea Scrolls being found and no one bothering to read them. In recent years this has begun to change as additional scholars enter the subfield of Syriac studies. But even today, there are

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Passages: Life in Retirement

Sallie McFague, Vancouver School of Theology

Sallie McFague is presently Distinguished Theologian in Residence at the Vancouver School of Theology in British Columbia. She taught theology for 30 years at the Vanderbilt University Divinity School in Nashville, Tennessee, before moving to Canada. She received her BA in English literature from Smith College and her subsequent theological degrees from Yale.

Throughout her career she has been interested in the ways that religious language influences ethical positions. Her early work was in the area of the feminist critique of Christian patriarchal language with its subsequent effects on oppressed people and the environment (Metaphorical Theology and Models of God). Her subsequent three books have focused on reconstructing metaphors and models in the Christian tradition which will contribute to a more just and sustainable planet (The Body of God; Super, Natural Christians; and Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril). Thus, issues of anthropology (who are human beings in the scheme of things?), creation (what is the relation between God and the world?), and ethics (what should we be doing in the world?), as they are understood within a Christian context, have been her central concerns. This particular religious tradition, central to public life in the United States, is a critical one to deconstruct and reconstruct along lines that are good for humanity and for the planet.

RSN: Tell us about the types of activities that you have been involved in since you retired.

McFague: I have not actually retired. I am teaching half-time at the Vancouver School of Theology and function as a regular faculty member, serving on committees, advising theses, etc. I moved to Canada shortly after retiring from Vanderbilt Divinity School in 2000 to be with my partner, Janet Cawley, who is a minister in the United Church of Canada. We were married as soon as it became legal to do so in British Columbia.

RSN: Could you give us some examples of your most enjoyable activities?

McFague: Some of my most enjoyable activities involve continuing to walk and hike. We visit the Canadian Rockies yearly and I walk a few miles every morning in a small park on the ocean with mountains (sometimes snow-capped) in the distance. It is a great privilege and joy to do this each day.

RSN: Who has been your role model during your retirement?

McFague: My role model continues to be my longtime though now dead mentor, Virginia Corwin, professor of New Testament at Smith College. I went into theological studies because of her encouragement in college, was able to continue in a difficult job market in part due to her continued support, and am following in her footsteps during retirement. When Virginia died at the age of 94 she was planning a new course on Luke's Gospel for the elderly students in her retirement home. She was also blind; hence, she had

to prepare her lessons with the help of a reader. It is hard to imagine a more inspiring role model.

RSN: What has given you the greatest satisfaction in your retirement?

McFague: The greatest satisfaction I have had during the five years since leaving Vanderbilt is the continuation of work and love. According to Freud, after one's basic needs are satisfied, the greatest fulfillment comes from good work and good love. I agree. I feel blessed that I have both. About the work: I suspect that many people of my generation and even more so of the upcoming ones will want to continue work after retirement. A job, perhaps not, but useful, meaningful work, yes. To encourage this development both for persons and for society is probably one of the great challenges of our time. The new 65 is the old 45 for many individuals, and as much reflection needs to be given to the years after 65 as one gives to other major life passages.

RSN: What types of reading or research are you doing in retirement?

McFague: I continue to do research in the areas of ecology, economics, and Christianity, and for two years I was a member of a working group sponsored by the University of Chicago entitled "Without Nature: A New Condition for Theology." The group, consisting of geographers, ecologists, anthropologists, biologists, and theologians, held a public conference in Chicago last October, and will be publishing its papers. According to its literature, the project is aimed at examining "the significance of ecological decline, biotechnological innovation, and social change for the meaning of the human condition . . . and possible consequences for theological practice." I have found it very engaging.

My present project is focused on climate change, especially the anthropology that we must move toward, if we are to address this drastic situation effectively. The ancient question "How should we live?" is the critical one: who do we think we are in the scheme of things, and therefore, what should we do? I believe that this is now the central theological issue facing all religions. Our individualistic, consumer anthropology is ruining the planet; an anthropology highlighting our radical interrelationship and interdependence with all other human beings and life-forms is the paradigm shift we deeply need.

I have also been reading a lot of Canadian literature. Canada is a treasure trove of fine novelists these days and I can scarcely keep up with the wonderful offerings coming off the presses. This has also helped me renew my Canadian roots — my grandparents were from Nova Scotia and our family owned a cottage on the Bay of Fundy for many years. So, moving to Canada has been a returning "home" in some ways, and I have enjoyed learning about the literature, history, and politics of the country.

RSN: Do you do any teaching?

McFague: I have taught regularly since leaving Vanderbilt — two courses a year during the regular term (one of which is the required introduction to Constructive Theology) — as well as some teaching in the summer school, in continuing education courses, and at various conferences. I love to teach and feel privileged to be able to continue to do so.

RSN: If you could design your perfect retirement, what would it look like?

McFague: If I could design my perfect retirement, it would be more of the same! I don't want to retire-retire; I just want to keep on doing what I am doing. I realize this will eventually not be possible and I hope I know when that time comes and can accept it graciously (but I am not sure I will!).

RSN: Knowing what you know now, what might you have done differently during your academic career?

McFague: At the time I was preparing for my academic career, it seemed like a muddle. However, in retrospect, I think I did the right things: get through my education early and hang in there until openings came. I realize, though, that as with most life journeys, coincidence and luck play as much if not more a part than planning. As has always been the case, women's careers then and now are seldom straight trajectories. While it may have appeared that my generation "had it all" (career and personal life), as many women are now discovering, balancing both of these important components is often very difficult, if not impossible. While the academic life gives more flexibility than some other professions, many women discover that geography, time limitations, and the brief maternal window put severe strains on career development. In significant ways, it is still "a man's world" in academia as elsewhere, and I have no particular wisdom to pass on to others, except not to give up, to do the best you can in the situation you are in, and then be willing to take a risk when an opening appears.

RSN: What has been the most significant change in your life since you retired?

McFague: The most significant change in my life since retiring has been moving to Canada. I don't know what retirement "in place" would be like, but I imagine it could be quite difficult. When I moved to Vancouver and started teaching at VST, I was a new kid on the block — something I had not been for a long time! It felt good — somewhat disorienting, but retirement is by its nature disorienting. At least this seemed like positive disorientation.

In some significant ways, Canada is a different country from the United States, although many Americans seem unaware of this. In part, the difference is due to a greater allegiance to community values in this country, epitomized by its universal medical system and its fine public schools. Most Canadians feel that the best way to protect public medical and educational benefits for everyone is to have one track, one queue, one system. If a person wants

good medical and educational services for themselves, then they must work for them for everyone. And finally, moving to Canada has allowed another significant change for me, being able to marry my partner, Janet Cawley — something I never thought possible and which makes me very happy.

RSN: If you could give advice to your younger colleagues who are still teaching, what would it be?

McFague: My advice to younger colleagues is "Love your work." Being a teacher of religion at the college, seminary, or graduate level is surely one of the best jobs in the world. From the time I was in kindergarten I knew I wanted to be a teacher (!), and I have never regretted the decision. As others have said before me: "I get paid to do what I love to do." My mentor, Virginia Corwin, once said, "If they didn't pay me to teach, I would pay to do it." Perhaps that is a bit extreme, but it is in the right direction. And to teach theology, to spend one's days thinking about God and the world, is a privilege beyond all others. As an earlier theologian, Mechthild of Magdeburg wrote, "The day of my spiritual awakening was the day I saw — and knew I saw — all things in God and God in all things." RSN

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