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New! spotlight on
Theological Education
Forming the Theological Imagination: Strategies of Integration in Theological Education
2007 Member Calendar

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

March
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 and go directly to the AAR home page hosted by Oxford University Press.
March 1, 2007 Annual Meeting proposals due for 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/bookrules.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.nhalla.org.
March 30–31, Midwest regional meeting, River Forest, IL.

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.

May
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/journals/2007/07/default.asp.)

June
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/issue.
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 Programs 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
Annual Meeting Programs Book 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, Excellence in Teaching award nomination due. For more information, see www.aarweb.org/awards/teaching.
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
December 1, New program unit proposals due.
December 8–9, Program Committee meeting, Atlanta, GA.
December 31, Membership renewal for 2008 due. Renew online at www.aarweb.org/dues.

And keep in mind throughout the year...
Regional organizations have several deadlines throughout the year for their Calls for Papers. See www.aarweb.org/regionaldefault.asp.

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

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Religious Studies News (USPS 841-720) is published 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 unformatted text only (MS Word is preferred). E-mail editor@aarweb.org
Subscriptions for individuals and institutions are available. See www.aarweb.org/publications/rsn for more information.

Deadlines for submissions:
January 15
March 1
April 1
October 15

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

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POSTMASTER:
Send address changes to Religious Studies News
825 Houston Mill Road, Suite 300
Atlanta, GA 30329
Periodicals postage paid at Atlanta, GA.
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 asked to analyze and reflect 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.
Annual Meeting Sets Record for Attendance, Sessions

VER 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/annualmeeting/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.

   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 the transition of the executive office 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 305 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.
   Diane Eck made a motion for adjournment.
   Motion passed unanimously.
   The meeting adjourned at 6:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Micheline Pesantubbee,
Secretary
Forty-five 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 Glenannon, 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 in the participants’ experiences and stories that provide significant content,” Gillis said. “Chairs benefit from the consolidation 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 high-ly popular; Krim graciously stayed for the rest of the morning 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 participants’ experiences and stories made 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 Gillen noted 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.”

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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.

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

Nikki Bade-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 Beaulieu, Santa Clara University (Youcault 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 Religion Section)
Amy DeRegate, 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 Group)
Jeffrey Marlett, College of Saint Rose (Roman Catholic Studies Group)
Sushil Mittal, James Madison University (Hinduism Group)
Rachel Muens, 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)
Shanmugam Talmi, 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)
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 (NEH) 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.

The first panel, “Writing the Story of America’s Secularism: A National Icon,” presided by Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, University of Oklahoma, author of God’s Children: The Unlikely Alliance for Religious Freedom, was co-sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, both panels were free and open to the public. A free webcast of the panels is available at www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/index.php?EventID=133

The second panel, “Legislating International Religious Freedom,” additionally co-sponsored by the National History Center, 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. Priddis, 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=135.

EIS Center Sees Surge in Candidate Registrations

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 for 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 are likely willing to consider candidates from an array of specialties, 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 primary 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 primary classification likely chose Asian Religions as an additional choice.

Therefore, the position-to-candidate ratio of 20.34 (or 1:1.77) 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.

EIS Center Registration 2004–2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employers</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positions Registered</td>
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<td>148</td>
<td>175</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Institutions Registered</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>140</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preregistered</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered On-site</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio of Positions to Candidates</td>
<td>1:3.16</td>
<td>1:3.47</td>
<td>1:4.27</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>2004</th>
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<th>2006</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male Participants</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>513</td>
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<tr>
<td>Registered</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preregistered</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered On-site</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Participants</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Report Gender</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio of Female to Male</td>
<td>1:1.5</td>
<td>1:1.5</td>
<td>1:1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Media Attend Annual Meeting

|---------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|

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 hires 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 were filled 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; 56% 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.”

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.

Seven-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.

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, 56% received one offer, 20% received two offers, 15% received three offers, and 9% received more than three offers.

Figure 1: Year of appointee’s degree

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

Figure 3: Salary of appointment

Figure 4: Highest degree offered by hiring institution

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 reviewing 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 the New Media, Drew 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 Leopold, 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 Devouring 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 Teacher 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 Weisler, Philip and Muriel Berman Professor of Jewish Civilization in the Department of Religion Studies, Lehig 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 various ten seed grants to departments to encourage a structured dialogue about the religion major in the local context, sponsoring a wild card session of paper presentations at the 2007 Annual Meeting, hosting a lead- ership 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 a RFP for grants to individual departments that wish to examine the patterns of concentration they perceive 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.

“At this exciting time to be involved in our field, and I hope this project will offer 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

AR’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.

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 health-care 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 Lane J. Laier.

The Study of Religion and Healing

This conference on the occasion of the centennial of the birth of Albert Cook Outler his 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 academicians. Outler was among the most important

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.

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 minireligious studies. Applied anthropo-logists, 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 views of communities and individuals, there is a criti-cal 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 and religious studies 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@busm.org.

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

SMU PERKINS SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
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

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
gmacdonal@smu.edu 214.768.3161

For more information contact:
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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. Jacob, 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’ understanding of the humanities, and made 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. Jacob, 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.

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

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 Place, 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 Bookdealers 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.

- Publisher of the Year 2006
  Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

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@aaup.org.

- Lafayette College – Bolaji Bateye, Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria
- Grinnell College – Edwin Glimode, Kenyatta University, Kenya
- Kalamazoo College – Tinko Mafeleke, University of South Africa, South Africa
- Temple University – Mercy Amna Odugoyi, Trinity Theological Seminary, Ghana
- Drew University – Tabona Shoko, University of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe
- Catholic for Free Choice – Oyekunle Olajubu, University of Ilorin, Nigeria and Isabel Apawo Phiri, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

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Richard Heyduck, Northeast Texas Community College

Status of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Persons in the Profession Task Force
Jennifer Harvey, Drake University
*Mark D. Jordan, Emory University
Laurel C. Schneider, Chicago Theological Seminary
Melissa M. Wilcox, Whittman College
D. Mark Wilson, Pacific School of Religion
Joe DeRose, Staff Liaison, American Academy of Religion

Theological Education Steering Committee
John Thatamani, Chair, Vanderbilt University
Daniel O. Aleshire, Association of Theological Schools
Larry Golenson, The Albanian
David H. Kelsey, Yale University
Paul Sim, Vanderbilt University
Glenn Stassen, Fuller Theological Seminary
Eileen T. Armour, Rhodes College
John Berthrong, Boston University
Kathleen M. Ertelt, Florida State University
R. Marie Griffith, Princeton University
Patricia O’Connell Killen, Pacific Lutheran University
John R. Fitzmier, Staff Liaison, American Academy of Religion

* indicates newly appointed or elected.
Photo, if available, at right.
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 (Membership and Regions)  
Elias Kifon Bengbu, Rice University (International Connections)  
Mary C. Churchill, University of Colorado, Boulder (Status of Women in the Profession)  
Francis X. Clooney, Harvard University (Membership)  
Laura E. Donaldson, Cornell University (Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities in the Profession)  
Diana L. Eck, Harvard University (Program)  
Eugene V. Gallagher, Connecticut College (Executive)  
Margaret Healy, Rosemont College (Finance)  
Hans J. Hillerbrand, Duke University (Executive and Program)  
Daisy L. Machado, Lexington Theological Seminary (Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities in the Profession and Theological Education)  
Sheila E. McGinn, John Carroll University (Teaching and Learning)  
Linda A. Moody, Mount St. Mary’s College (Finance, Western Regionally Elected Director)  
Corrie Norman, independent (Regions, Southeast Regionally Elected Director)  
Wade Clark Roof, University of California, Santa Barbara (Employment Information Services Advisory)  
James Wetzel, Villanova University (Publications)  
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. Fromey, 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.

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The Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion

congratulates our

2007 Study Leave Grant Recipients

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza
Harvard University
"Teaching for Transformation: Collaborative Teaching and Learning in Biblical Studies"

Faith Hawkins
Candler School of Theology
"Teaching the Bible: Toward Responsible Interpretation"

Shane Kirkpatrick
Anderson University
"Introducing Whom to What? Purposes and Practices of Teaching Introductory Bible Courses as a Non-Major Requirement at Select CCCU Schools"

www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu

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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
Columbia University, Rosemary Hicks
Concordia University, Laurie Lamoureux Scholes
Duke University, Susanna L. Drake
Emory University, Matthew Bergsagel Braley
Florida State University, Elizabeth Barre
Fordham University, Ann M. Michael
Fuller Theological Seminary, Kirsten Oh
General Theological Seminary, Ronald Young
Graduate Theological Union, Whitney Bauman
Harvard University, Ryan Overbey
Iliff School of Theology, Stephanie Yuhas
Jewish Theological Seminary, Emily Katz
McMaster University, Sherry A. Smith
Northwestern University, Matthew Rogers
Pacific Graduate Institute, Anais Spitzer
Princeton Theological Seminary, Elias Ortega-Aponte
Princeton University, Abigail L. Long
Southern Methodist University, Tammerie Day
Stanford University, Josh Pekin
Syracuse University, Holly White
Temple University, Kathryn Light
Union Theological Seminary & Presbyterian School of Christian Education, Angela Sims
University of Calgary, Jennifer Hall
University of Chicago, Bernard Dorsey
University of Dayton, Coleman Fannin
University of Florida, Samuel Snyder
University of Iowa, Nathan Eric Dickman
University of Missouri, Day Lane
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Annie Blakeney-Glazer
University of Notre Dame, Damon McGraw
University of Oxford, J. Patrick Hornbeck
University of Pennsylvania, Grant H. Fotts
University of Pittsburgh, Adrienne Spillar
University of Toronto, Christina Reimer
University of Virginia, Laura Hartman
University of Waterloo, Mandy Furney
Vanderbilt University, Nichole Phillips
Wheaton College, Michael Allen
Finding Water on the Sun: Improving the Marketability of Your Academic Book

Patrick H. Alexander

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.

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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Comments from Department Chairs

S LONG AS professors need tenure and promotion, books will survive. Even though the form books will take — e-book, downloadable pdf, xrl, 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 high-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 mark-etable 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.

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.

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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 you've alighted on an indelible image or intriguing characters through your narrative where we come to grasp a shift 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 on stage 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 you 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.

Never use someone else’s words to incorporate, the better your writing will be. 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 theme 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.

The Winner-Take-All Society

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 not like those polemicists. You may not think you are, but are you examining the unquestioned and thinly 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 myths, perhaps, and coulds, 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 criticism 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 this is trite today, but it’s a premium exercise for conveying (and selling) your argument. The Republic. Bowling Alone. The Lonely Crowd. The Time Bomb. Streetwise. Kidnaps, Traitors, The View from Nowhere. What do all these 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 nothing to your work but a lack of control. And that’s worse than ever in a book. You know what’s coming. You’ve made up your mind. You know where you’re going. And you’re already there. You know what’s going to happen. You’re in control. But you’ve already been prepared, you are ready to let loose.
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) in the years immediately following, 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, even mundane, 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 strategi-cally, 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 as it were. 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 — whether the author is one of those people who may say “The Thesis: A Good Thing to Have” or “The Field: A Useful Metaphor” or “The Discipline: A Good Thing to Have.”

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 your article around one big idea. You can be alerted 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 Don’t 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 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 promissory 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 “weaseled words.” Weaseled 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’ twisting 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 Augustinianism as at least in part responsible for what many see as the technocratic necrophilia.
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” (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. The primary task of the JAAR is to publish the most insightful, profound, provocative, and groundbreaking scholarship concerning the study of all things 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 when they read submissions — are the following:

• Worthwhile topic. A topic is worthwhile even if it seems unappreciated. 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 approximating the issue under study, particularly if this insight or approach will be of interest beyond the paper’s “naïve” subfield. 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?

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 critical 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 on its topic, is a precise and exceptional in its use of sources when it demonstrates the fruitfulness of bringing new resources to a discussion.

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 subcategory 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.

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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

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.”

Pressing Ahead

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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.”

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Disputes and Disent

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 mist 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.”

March 2007 RSN • 19
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 —yes, there are necessary conditions (e.g., 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: “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 or 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 edited volumes, that, too, is fine. But publication in refereed journals is the easiest way to establish your case for what is most important.”

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 also 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.”

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 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: “Publication and field of work. They are also excellent for manuscripts.”

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, more discernible and more durable impact (being advertised, reviewed, and generally noted more than articles), and b) books allowed the opportunity for full articulation, substantiation, and exploration of a complex argument.”

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

Catherine Albanese, UCSB: “We do not have a written standard. We expect ‘significant publications.’ A book in my own Faculty of Theology of Leiden University, as a specialized monograph. We evaluate important 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 Kaminski, Saint Mary’s College: “Two is almost necessary for tenure. It is the easiest way to demonstrate excellence in teaching and adequate-to-excellent record and promise in scholarship.”

Bruce Ellis Benson, Wheaton: “Publishing academic books is just as important. A book for tenure doesn’t hurt, though it 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 publication?

Catherine Albanese, UCSB: “Publishing in an 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 one complete book.”

David Brakke, Indiana University: “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 such as 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.”

Glenn 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 Mullinas, 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 respect- ed academic press, one article per year (6) published in a peer-reviewed academic journal, and substantial progress toward a book.”

Stephen Heine, Florida International: “If you don’t have a book, you must have one, sometimes two books.”

David Weddle, Colorado College: “We normally expect three to five refereed articles in peer-reviewed journals, one article per year (6) published in a peer-reviewed academic press, one article per year (6) published in a peer-reviewed academic press.”

Richard F. Wilson, Mercer University: “We recognize that some forms of research lend themselves to one form of publication or another. Thus, a series of articles may be published in refereed academic journals, one article per year (6) published in a peer-reviewed academic press, one article per year (6) published in a peer-reviewed academic press.”

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: “Journal publication appears to have greater value because of the peer-reviewed nature of journals, and the likelihood of a person applying for tenure having published a book yet. Canisius does not have a written standard, 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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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.
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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.)

David Weddle, Colorado College: “Publications for general audiences (including books, magazine and newspaper 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 writer who devote[s] them to the production of thought and reflection, in a way that is irreplaceable sales reps, vendors, and bookstore owners. That being said, sometimes you the author hold the key to kick your book to the back of the line.

Also, market yourself. Turn in a fully completed author promotional materials at least 6 to 14 months ahead of the publication date. Sometimes [a publisher does] the leg work to make sure the book is available online, and the more likely a publisher will be interested. Avoid writing a book that is not marketable. (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 public 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.”

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many scholars — excluding those writing monographs — plan. Are better, but only with the right publisher, topic, and book should realize that the odds of writing a booming book? Any author who is hoping to publish a money-making 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 public is as valuable as that which engages the academy.”

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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, pragmatist philosophy, political theory, and film. His articles and reviews have appeared in such journals as the Monist, New Literary History, Sounding: 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, political, and cultural aspects of life, and both of which received the Award for Excellence in Research from the AAR. He is also a 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 hop- ing 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 intellectual substance to the interview at all. My beard was about one advertised position in my field. Two of my buddies and I got interviews, in which 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 intel- lectual relevance 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 O'Keeffe's replacement when he decided to move to Yale. I knew some people in the reli- gion departments in those days that were willing to hire a nonbeliever to teach reli- gious ethics. It was a wonderful time to be a young faculty member at Princeton. Paul Ramsey and Vic Peller 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.

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

Stout: In a lot of ways. It no longer opens Gall's excluding works in black, blues, 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 organi- zation. 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 "Whale" 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 prob- lems 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 this process 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 I'm not sure the profession should be outraged by it. Of course, we don't know where the problems occurred: at the Annual Meeting, in phone inter- views, or during on-campus interviews. The AER sends clear signals to interview- ers about how they should be conducting themselves. But the bottom line is that some employers are going to seek some kind of in-joke I didn't get. I don't know what the problems occurred: at the Annual Meeting, in phone inter- views, or during on-campus interviews. The AER sends clear signals to interview- ers about how they should be conducting themselves. But the bottom line is that some employers are going to seek

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 offers in some other fields. The AAR will need to look at all these numbers closely and push the major graduate programs into re-examining their admissions poli- cies, 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 open- ing. They have deep 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 gath- ered under a single heading, like "Religion and Critical Thought," which is the designa- tion Brown has settled on. A doctorate in this area would of course involve writing a dissertation that falls under one of the nar- rower rubrics, but it should also involve learning how to teach this entire wing of the religious studies curriculum at the introduc- tory level.

RSN: With respect to graduate pro- grams, 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 insuffi- ciently transparent to students who are trying to decide whether to go gradu- ate school and which fields or schools they ought to be considering. The place- ment statistics reported by the graduate programs don't fit very well with the data we gather from the job candidates. The former is an ugly, dry target, as the latter are grim. It is in the interest of some graduate pro- grams 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 com- plete 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 program in the Web site, the record stops. 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 sub- field, which is what they need to know. My hope is that all of the graduate pro- grams 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 independ- ently of the SBL?

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RSN: What decisions?
Stout: Think of it this way. Two families decided 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 simultaneously but separately 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 losses 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 put 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 from 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? How do we obtain the best service? 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 six years, 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 for the first 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 theology distinguishes between government-bred and prescriptive 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 a number of 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 deciding about future Annual Meetings 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 what 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.
The Pentacle Quest: Religious Freedom and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Sarah M. Pike, California State University, Chico

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; 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 diverse and broad movement of practitioners of earth religions. Although there are many different forms of contemporary Paganism, Wicca is one of the predominant 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 with Satanism, Satanism and Wicca have little in common. Wiccans have revived and adapted pre-Church 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 one unmet treatment in the military, in some cases experiencing discrimination and in others, tolerance and support. In 1999, Congressman Bob Barr (R-Georgia) 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-South Carolina), 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 had 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 Catholic 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 McCallum 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 McCallum, many supported the pentacle quest emphasizing 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 participated in the armed forces for many years. According to a December 3, 2006, Associated Press story by Martin Griffin, “About 1,800 active-duty service members identify themselves as Wiccans, according to 2005 Defense Department statistics.” In November 1998, Rev. Drake Sparth of Circle Sanctuary became the first Wiccan-trainer 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 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 grave site. Again, the VA delayed issuing a response. 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 non-profit 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 wrote, “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/library/veteranpentacle/).
Covenant of the Goddess (www.cov.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

An intellectual life has bloomed, almost in spite of my set-tings 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 field. 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.

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.

Trends in Faculty Status, 1975–2003

All degree-granting institutions, national totals

March 2007 RSN • 25
Editor's Note:
Michael Penn received an AAR Individual Research Grant in 2005. A report on his research is below.

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.

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-Huett post-doctoral fellowship at Brandeis University, an NEH faculty seminar, and Mount Holyoke funding several research trips to 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 reconnect a church that has been defiled by non-Christs, 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 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 manuscripts 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 reconnect a church that has been defiled by non-Christs, 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 etymology of the term rasul (“messenger”) of God from a late seventh-century work arguing why Christianity is the oldest and best of the world’s religions, an extensive discussion of Christian identity during an age of increasing religious pluralism.

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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 50 years at the Vanderbilt University Divinity School in Nashville, Tennessee, before moving to Canada. She received her theological education 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 key ideas focused on metaphorizing 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 Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril). Thus, issues of anthropomorphism (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 have retired as a couple and I have the same 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 theology partly 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 question of extinction 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 to 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 return 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 introductory course, 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 continue 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, how 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 open-ings 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 material 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 that 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, seminar, 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, spend one’s days thinking about God and the world, is a privilege beyond all others. As an earlier theologian, Mechtild 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.”

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