AAR President Emilie Townes discusses her thoughts on her journey and her goals for the Academy as its new president. See her interview on page 9.

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2008 Member Calendar

March
- 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.nhbiaction.org.
- March 7–9, Southeast regional meeting, Atlanta, GA.
- March 14–16, Southwest regional meeting, Dallas, TX.
- March 15, Publications Committee meeting, New York, NY.
- March 20, Nominations due for Awards in Excellence in the Study of Religion book awards. For details, see www.aarweb.org/Programs/Awards/Book_Awards/index.effexcellence.asp.
- March 27–28, Mid–Atlantic regional meeting, New Brunswick, NJ.
- March 28–29, Rocky Mountains–Great Plains regional meeting, Denver, CO.
- March 28–29, Upper Midwest regional meeting, St. Paul, MN.
- March 29–30, Governance Task Force meeting, Atlanta, GA.
- March 29–31, Western regional meeting, Pasadena, CA.
(For more information on regional meetings, see www.aarweb.org/Meetings/regions.asp).

April
- April 1, Notification of acceptance of Annual Meeting paper proposals by program unit chair.
- April 4–5, Midwest regional meeting, River Forest, IL.
- April 11, Regionally Elected Directors meeting, Atlanta, GA.
- April 11, Executive Committee meeting, Atlanta, GA.
- April 12–13, Spring Board of Directors meeting, Atlanta, GA.
- April 21, Annual Meeting registration and housing opens for 2008 Annual Meeting.
- April 21, Registration for the Annual Meeting job Center opens.
- April 25–26, History of Religions Jury meeting, Atlanta, GA.
(For more information on regional meetings, see www.aarweb.org/Meetings/regions.asp).

May
- May 1, Nominations (including self-nominations) for committee appointments requested.
- May 1, Annual Meeting Additional Meeting requests due for priority consideration.
- May 2–4, Pacific Northwest regional meeting, Newberg, OR.
- May 2–3, Eastern International regional meeting, Montreal, Quebec.
- May 15, Change of address due for priority receipt of the Annual Meeting Program Planner. Program Planners will be mailed to members in late May.
(For more Annual Meeting information, see www.aarweb.org/Meetings/Annual_Meeting/Current_Meeting/).

June
- June 15, Membership renewal deadline for 2008 Annual Meeting participants.
- June 15, Submission deadline for the October issue of Religious Studies News. For more information, see www.aarweb.org/Publications/RSN/.

July
- Annual Meeting program goes online.
- July 1, New fiscal year begins.
- July 31, Deadline for participants to request audiovisual equipment at the Annual Meeting.

August
- August 1, Research Grant applications due. For more information, see www.aarweb.org/Programs/Grants/.
- August 1, Regional development grant applications due to regionally elected directors.
- August 15, Membership renewal period for 2009 begins.

September
- September 5, Program Committee meeting, New Haven, CT.
- September 6, Executive Committee meeting, New Haven, CT.
- September 22–October 20, AAR officer election period. Candidate profiles will be published in the October RSN.

October
- Religious Studies News October issue. Spotlight on Teaching Fall issue.
- October 13, Annual Meeting Job Center pre-registration closes.
- October 15, Submissions for the January 2009 issue of Religious Studies News due. For more information, see www.aarweb.org/Publications/RSN/.
- October 30, Regionally Elected Directors meeting, Chicago, IL.
- October 30, Executive Committee meeting, Chicago, IL.
- October 31, Full Board of Directors meeting, Chicago, IL.
- October 31, Chairs Workshop at the Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL.

November
- November 1, Research Grant Awards announced.
- November 1–3, Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL.
- The AAR Annual Meeting, the world’s largest gathering of scholars of religion, anticipates some 5,000 registrants, 200 publishers, and 125 hiring departments.
- November 3, Annual Business Meeting at the Annual Meeting. See the Program Planner for day and time.
- November 14, New program unit proposals due.

December
- December 12–13, Program Committee meeting, Atlanta, GA.
- December 1, Membership renewal for 2009 due. Renew online at www.aarweb.org/Members/Dues/.

And keep in mind throughout the year…

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

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

Job Postings, A members-only publication, Job Postings lists job announcements in areas of interest to members. Issues are available online from the first through the last day of the month. Submit announcements online, and review policies and pricing, at www.aarweb.org/jobs/jobpostings/.

Religious Studies News is the newspaper of record for the field especially designed to serve the professional needs of persons involved in teaching and scholarship in religion (broadly construed to include religious studies, theology, and sacred texts). Published quarterly by the American Academy of Religion, RSN is received by some 11,000 individuals by libraries at colleges and universities across North America and abroad. Religious Studies News communicates the important events of the field and related areas. It provides a forum for members and others to examine critical issues in education, pedagogy (especially through the biannual Spotlight on Teaching), theological education (through the annual Spotlight on Theological Education), research, publishing, and the public understanding of religion. It also publishes news about journal and programs of the AAR and other organizations, including employment services and registration information for the AAR Annual Meeting. For writing and advertising guidelines, please see www.aarweb.org/publications/rsn.asp.
Dear Readers:

Beginning with the January issue of RSN, there has been a change to the editorial leadership of the Academy’s quarterly newspaper. I will now be the executive editor and Stephanie Gray will be the editor. Stephanie joined the executive office in 2005 as our office manager. Her exceptional organizational skills and her MTS from Boston University will help her with these new responsibilities. For me this is a return to the newspaper that I edited from 2002 to 2005. This editorial change was precipitated by a realignment of the executive office staff last fall, which will be discussed in Jack Fitzmier’s article.

One of the ways in which the Academy’s president communicates with the membership is through the annual “Conversation with the President” article in RSN. This month we are happy to have Emilie Townes’s thoughts on her journey and her goals for the Academy as its new president.

The Focus section, “The Work of the Academy,” includes two exciting topics: the results of our Member Survey regarding the Annual Meeting, and the announcement of our receipt of a planning grant from the Henry Luce Foundation. The purpose of the survey was to provide a forum for members to express their opinions about several features of the upcoming independent Annual Meeting. The Luce planning grant will allow us to begin preparation for summer seminars on comparative theology.

This issue also includes the second Spotlight on Theological Education, published under the supervision of the Theological Education Steering Committee. Editor Larry Golomon (Alban Institute) has assembled 12 impressive articles around the theme “Teaching Critical Thinking and Praxis.”

Attendance at the Annual Meetings of the AAR and the SBL in San Diego was over 10,000. We surveyed you to see how satisfied you were with the meeting and the results show a very high level of satisfaction. In this issue you will begin to see information about the upcoming Annual Meeting in Chicago, November 1–3, 2008.

Also in this issue are some impressive figures for the number of employees and candidates who were assisted by the Employment Information Services Center. The work of the Academy cannot be accomplished without the help of our 11,000 members. In this issue we have recognized our outgoing Annual Meeting Program Unit members, and new and outgoing committee members.

Another way in which you serve the Academy is by means of your generous contributions to the Academy Fund. Margaret Jenkins, our new director of development, is proud to list all those who contributed to the Fund last year.

As always, if you have suggestions regarding the newspaper, please do contact me at cgifford@aarweb.org.

Carey J. Gifford
Executive Editor

American Academy of Religion

MEMBERSHIP FORM

2008 Calendar Year
A calendar year is January 1–December 31.

You may also establish your membership online at www.aarweb.org/membership.

Complete/update your contact information.

[ ] Dr.  [ ] Prof.  [ ] Ms.  [ ] Mr.  [ ] Other

Name:

ID Number (for renewals):

Office Phone:

Home Phone:

Cell Phone:

E-Mail:

City:

State/Province:

Postal Code:

Country:

Institution/Organization:

Department/School:

][ ] I am the department chair

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Select the appropriate dues category. See below for information on available discounts.

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<th>Annual Income (in U.S. Dollars)</th>
<th>AAR Standard</th>
<th>AAR Retired</th>
<th>SBL Standard</th>
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</table>

DISCOUNTS AVAILABLE

Student: [ ] I am including a copy of my current student ID and I have not already been a student member for 10 or more years.

Retired: [ ] I am retired from full-time employment.

SBL: [ ] I am also a current member of the SBL.

Int'l: [ ] My annual income is below $15,000 and I am a non-U.S. citizen living outside the U.S.

Signature:

DONATE TO THE ACADEMY FUND

Please consider a gift to the Academy Fund. We depend on your support to continue to provide a high level of programs and services.

Amount: [ ] $250 [ ] $150 [ ] $100 [ ] $50 [ ]

All gifts to the Academy Fund are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

PAYMENT DUE

Circle the appropriate dues category in the chart to the left and enter the amount owed in the space provided below. [ ] Non-U.S. residents must include an additional $10 for postage.

Calendar Year (Jan. 1–Dec. 31) 2008

Membership Dues $ __________

Non-U.S. Postage (add $10) $ __________

Academy Fund Donation $ __________

TOTAL DUE $ __________

METHOD OF PAYMENT

Payment in full, drawn on a U.S. bank or Canadian bank (if on a U.S. dollar account) is required.

[ ] Check or Money Order (payable to American Academy of Religion)

[ ] Visa, MasterCard, Discover, or American Express

Credit Card Number: ____________________________

Exp. Date (mm/yy): ____________________________

CID*: ____________________________

Cardholder Name (Printed): ____________________________

Cardholder Signature: ____________________________

* Card Identification Number (required for all cards) – 4 digits on front of American Express, 3 digits on back of other cards

Return via postal mail:
American Academy of Religion
825 Houston Mill Road NE Suite 300
Atlanta, GA 30339-2405

March 2008 RSN • 3

Questions?

Contact us at membership@aarweb.org or via phone at 404-727-3049.

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Please consider a gift to the Academy Fund. We depend on your support to continue to provide a high level of programs and services.

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Non-U.S. Postage (add $10) $ __________

Academy Fund Donation $ __________

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825 Houston Mill Road NE Suite 300
Atlanta, GA 30339-2405

March 2008 RSN • 3

Questions?

Contact us at membership@aarweb.org or via phone at 404-727-3049.
**Annual Meeting 2008: Chicago**

Jazz it up in Chicago this November at the 2008 AAR Annual Meeting. Chicago is world renowned for its culture and architecture. The Chicago Hilton Towers Hotel and Palmer House Hilton Hotel are the headquarters. As the host of the first independent AAR meeting in more than 35 years, the location returns a homecoming; Chicago was home to some of the earliest meetings of the newly minted American Academy of Religion in the 1960s. Chicago's vibrant cityscape of the arts, architecture, cuisine, shopping, and more provide the perfect backdrop for the 2008 AAR Annual Meeting.

**Registration and housing opens Monday, April 21, 2008, at 9:00 am EDT!**

Mark your calendars!

**FAX:** 330-963-0319  
**WEB:** www.aarweb.org/Meetings/Annual_Meeting  
**MAIL:** AAR Annual Meeting Registration & Housing  
  c/o Experient Registration and Housing Bureau  
  2451 Edison Boulevard  
  Twinsburg, OH 44087  
**Questions:**  
**TEL:** 1-800-575-7185 (U.S. & Canada)  
+1-330-425-9330 (outside U.S. & Canada)  
**E-MAIL:** aarreg@experient-inc.com

**Membership**

Don't forget to renew your membership dues before you register or else you won't be able to get the lower member registration rates. If you are not certain about your current 2008 membership status, please see www.aarweb.org/members or call 404-727-3049.

**Getting Around**

Sessions will be held at the Chicago Hilton Towers Hotel and Palmer House Hilton Hotel. The hotels are five city blocks apart. Limited shuttle service will run between the hotels. Chicago has excellent public transportation to get to other areas of the city.

Check online at www.aarweb.org/Meetings/Annual_Meeting for more travel information including maps and travel discount opportunities!

**Additional Meetings**

Requests for Additional Meeting space are being accepted through the new online Additional Meeting system at www.aarweb.org/Meetings/Annual_Meeting. All requests are handled on a space and time-slot available basis. The Additional Meetings program, held in conjunction with the AAR Annual Meeting, is an important service to AAR members. Additional Meetings must have an AAR member listed as the primary contact. All Additional Meeting participants are expected to register for the Annual Meeting. Be sure to read the instructions carefully before completing and submitting your space request. The deadline for priority scheduling is May 1, 2008. For more information about the Additional Meetings, please see www.aarweb.org/Meetings/Annual_Meeting. Questions should be directed to: Robert Puckett  
**E-MAIL:** rpuckett@aarweb.org

**AAR Annual Meeting Job Center**

The 2008 AAR Annual Meeting Job Center will be located in the Chicago Hilton Towers Hotel. Candidates and employers who wish to participate should visit the AAR website, www.aarweb.org/Meetings/Annual_Meeting. Registration opens on April 21, 2008, along with Annual Meeting registration and housing.

**Childcare**

AAR is proud to provide childcare service at the Annual Meeting for the convenience of our members. Childcare is available at an hourly or daily rate. It will be located in the Chicago Hilton Towers Hotel.

**Disability Accessibility**

AAR members with disabilities or who may have difficulty getting around the meeting are encouraged to note this during registration and housing. AAR will make every reasonable attempt to accommodate you, whether by arranging special services such as sign language interpreters, assigning accessible hotel room space, or through the AAR’s taxi reimbursement policy. More information can be found at www.aarweb.org/Meetings/Annual_Meeting.

**Find A Friend**

Please note the box on the registration form that gives permission for your name, institution, and hotel (if any) to be posted on a list of attendees available online at www.aarweb.org/Meetings/Annual_Meeting and onsite on the Find A Friend board. If you do not check the box, your information will not be listed.

**International Attendees**

It is necessary for those entering the United States to clear customs and immigration. International visitors, including those coming from Canada and Mexico, must present a passport in order to enter the United States. Please note that Chicago O’Hare Airport is participating in a test program that requires all international visitors to be fingerprinted upon arrival. Non-U.S. citizens should inquire about possible visa requirements from their own country. Official letters of invitation to the Annual Meetings to support visa applications are available. E-mail annualmeeting@aarweb.org with your name, address, and the full contact information of the consulate of your country.

**AAR Annual Meeting Online Services**

At www.aarweb.org/Meetings/Annual_Meeting you can:

- Register for the Annual Meeting
- Reserve your hotel room
- Find a roommate
- Request Additional Meeting space
- Register for the AAR Annual Meeting Job Center
- View the complete AAR program
- Discover more about Chicago including tours, museums, houses of worship, restaurants, and much more!
Introducing the Program Planner

K EEP AN EYE on your mailbox in early June for the all-new Annual Meeting Program Planner! The Annual Meeting Program Planner features:

- Program Highlights — full descriptions of special speakers and sessions.
- A thematic listing of all AAR and Additional Meetings sessions by date and time.
- A program participant index.
- Information on new and forthcoming publications from the leading publishers in the field.

The Annual Meeting Program Planner will let you get a look at the program earlier than ever — months earlier than the September mailing in previous years! It will be mailed to all 2007 and 2008 AAR members. Please remember that receipt of the Program Planner is separate from Annual Meeting registration.

For full session details including session descriptions, room listings, individual paper titles, and abstracts, check the online Annual Meeting Program Book at www.aarweb.org/Meetings/Annual_Meeting any time after July 1. The online Program Book allows you to receive the most complete and up-to-date information in a searchable format right up to the meeting.

At the Annual Meeting, you will be able to pick up the familiar printed Annual Meeting Program Book. The Annual Meeting Program Book will be the comprehensive program guide with the complete session details, room locations, and more.

It is our hope that these innovations will make navigating the Annual Meeting program easier than ever. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Annual Meeting Team at annualmeeting@aarweb.org.

Annual Meeting 2008 Important Dates

April 21
Registration and Housing opens for the 2008 Annual Meeting. You must be registered to secure housing!
AAR Annual Meeting Job Center registration opens. Register for the meeting and then register for the Job Center!

Early June
Annual Meeting Program Planner mailed to all 2007–08 AAR members. Please allow 3–4 weeks for delivery.

June 15
All AAR Annual Meeting participants must be current members and registered for the Annual Meeting or else their names will be dropped from the program.

July 1
Online Program Book is available at www.aarweb.org/Meetings/Annual_Meeting. The online Program Book will list the full session description and room locations for all Annual Meeting sessions.

September 16
Second-tier premeeting registration rates go into effect.

October 13
Annual Meeting Job Center preregistration deadline. CVs due for inclusion in binders.

October 15
Special housing rates end (continue to contact Experient for housing throughout the meeting).

October 25
Pre-registration refund request deadline. Contact Experient for refunds (see pre-registration registration form for details). All further registrations received after this date will be processed and the materials will be available in Chicago at the Chicago Hilton Towers Hotel.

November 1-3
AAR Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL.

Where to Stay in Chicago

A FTER A LONG DAY of attending sessions at the Annual Meeting, it is good to have a haven to relax and recharge for the next day. AAR has negotiated special conference rates at a number of luxurious and convenient hotels for the convenience of meeting attendees. Hotel room rates do not include the 15.4 percent hotel room tax. Please note that the single/double/triple/quadruple room designation denotes the number of room occupants, not the number of beds. A triple-room means three people are sharing two double beds unless a rollaway bed is requested at an extra charge.

Palmer House Hilton
17 East Monroe Street
Ideally located in the heart of the Chicago Loop, the Palmer House Hilton offers modern conveniences combined with over one hundred years of elegance. For the demanding traveler, the Palmer Hilton 40 provides a fitness center and indoor pool. Although standard in name, the interior design and appointments of the standard bedroom are equal to what other hotels refer to as deluxe. Each room has Hilton’s new Serenity Dreams bed providing a plush-top mattress to give plenty of support and luxury. Fine European-style, 250 thread-count linens adorn the beds. It is easy to set the alarm clock with pre-set radio stations and MP3 connectivity. High-speed Internet access is available in all rooms.

$149/$175/$195/$200

Essex Inn
800 South Michigan Avenue
The Essex Inn’s 254 guest rooms and suites offer all the comforts of home. Many of them offer spectacular views of the lakefront and of the sparkling city below. Rooms are tastefully decorated with an Art Deco flair and framed art posters, many of them from the Art Institute’s finest reproductions. Accommodations come with some extra touches like a personal free shuttle to the Magnificent Mile, free coffee in the room, fitness center with state-of-the-art equipment, free wireless Internet connection, and more.

$156/$156/$166/$176

New Program Units

A R’S PROGRAM Committee approved the following new program units for the 2008 Annual Meeting:

- Cognitive Science of Religion Consultation
- Comparative Philosophy and Religion Seminary Consultation
- Liberation Theologies Consultation
- Martin Luther and Global Lutheran Traditions Consultation
- Music and Religion Consultation
- Religion and Humanism Consultation
- Religion Education in Public Schools: International Perspectives Consultation
- Religion in Southeast Asia Consultation
- Religion in the American West Seminar
- Religion, Food, and Eating Seminar
- Sex, Gender, and Sexuality in Premodern Christianity Consultation
- Sikh Studies Consultation
- Theology and the Political Consultation
- Transformative Scholarship and Pedagogy Consultation
- Transhumanism and Religion Consultation
Annual Meeting Eating, Drinking, and Entertainment

For more Chicago visitor information, guidebooks, and maps, contact the Chicago Convention and Visitor’s Bureau or see their website at www.meetincicago.com.

EATING

Price Guide (for average entree):
$ = up to $10
$ $ = $11–$20
$ $$ = $21–$30
$ $$$ = $31 and over

Atwood Cafe
1 West Washington Street
312-368-1900
Atwood Cafe serves all-American comfort foods and cafe cuisine prepared in a traditional style. Specialties include pot pie with a flaky buttermilk crust and a maple-glazed grilled pork chop. $$$

Billy Goat Tavern
430 North Michigan Avenue
312-222-1525
Ever hear of the “Curse of the Billy Goat,” also known as the Cubs Curse? Do you recall the Saturday Night Live sketch in which a short order cook would yell out to incoming patrons: “Cheezborger! Cheezborger!” which a short order cook would yell out to incoming patrons: “Cheezborger! Cheezborger!” which a short order cook would yell out to incoming patrons: “Cheezborger! Cheezborger!” which a short order cook would yell out to incoming patrons: “Cheezborger! Cheezborger!” which a short order cook would yell out to incoming patrons: “Cheezborger! Cheezborger!”

Chicago Grill
230 North Michigan Avenue
312-345-1000
Chicago Grill provides a culinary adventure in a spectacular setting. Asian flavors and techniques are an influence; the menu is labeled as world cuisine. Portions are generous and meant to be shared. $$$

Custom House
500 South Dearborn Street
312-523-0200
The frequently changing menu may include appetizer choices like roasted quail, charted sashimi-style sirloin, and marinated shrimp. Entrees may include diver sea scallops, beef short ribs, and bone-in filet of beef. Lunch features a mix of fancy salads, hearty main courses like prime sirloin, organic chicken, steak sandwich, risotto, an artisanal cheese selection, and more. $$

Emerald Loop Bar & Grill
216 North Wabash Avenue
312-263-0200
Serving breakfast, lunch, dinner, and late-night menus featuring bar and grill favorites as well as Irish specialties. Carvery at lunch, TV’s, and lively bar at night. $$

Exchequer Restaurant and Pub
226 South Wabash Avenue
312-939-5633
The atmosphere is casual and you’re surrounded by more than 500 pieces of Chicago memorabilia to view. Four-star ribs and pizza are a must. Enjoy sports on one of our many satellite TV’s. $$

Exposure Taps Restaurant
1345 South Wabash Avenue
312-662-1082
Exposure features a lineup of sharable hot and cold plates, plus a raw bar roster. Menu highlights include Moroccan Lamb Lollipops with feta cheese, green beans, and olives; pork ribs with peach barbecue sauce, crispy onions, and slab and crab-stuffed jumbo shrimp with Israeli couscous and shallot cream sauce. $$

Fornetto and Me’s Kitchen
1108 South Michigan Avenue
312-294-2488
Fornetto is set up for food court-style with a variety of stations like rotisserie, pasta, panini, Asian, and wood-fired thin crust pizza. Staffers give you a “credit” card; move from station to station, pay at the end, and staffers will bring the food to your table. The decor is as global as the menu; each station is themed to match the cuisine. There is a showy floor-to-ceiling walk-in wine tower; grab a glass at the 40-foot wine bar or take a bottle to go. $$

Giordano’s
130 East Randolph Street
312-616-1200
Way back before we had the dizzying array of options like wood-fired, organic, and gourmet pies, there were the heftier stuffed pizzas at Giordano’s (which opened in the early 1970s). The belly-busting pies come loaded with the usual suspects (like sausage or Canadian bacon). But if you’re looking for upscale items like rapini or truffles, you’re out of luck. If extreme carb-loading isn’t in the forecast, go for a thin crust pizza, instead. Potbelly can opt for choices like lasagna, baked mostaccioli, or an Italian beef sandwich. $–$$

Ma & I
1234 South Michigan Avenue
312-663-1234
South Loop Thai spot featuring Thai classics such as satay, crab Rangoon, curry dishes (red, green, massaman), and noodle choices like pad Thai and lad nar. House specialties include “rumbly ocean”, seafood stix-fried with Thai chili paste, and “milennium duck,” boneless duck sauteed in a red wine sauce. $$

Max’s Take Out
20 East Adams Street
312-553-0170
Max’s is the quintessential Loop hole in the wall. It’s a narrow room with just a row of stools along one wall; in back, a sweltering kitchen churns out fast food. Breakfast is popular, with egg combos and French toast for just a couple of dollars. $$

Nick’s Fishmarket Grill
51 South Clark Street
312-621-0200
The owners of Nick’s Fishmarket remodelled the upstairs bar into this more laid-back spot. The Grill offers a more casual (and affordable) menu than the upscale, seafood-heavy Fishmarket, with choices like a burger with blue cheese, tequila chicken flatbread, and pecan-crusted tilapia. The Grill offers daily drink specials and a “bar bites” menu of cheap eats after 5 pm. $$–$$$
**Changes to AAR’s Career Services**

On April 1, 2008, the AAR will open its new AAR Career Services where members can find job postings, upload CVs, plan for interviewing at the annual meeting, and find timely expert opinions to help in the increasingly competitive academic job market.

The new service will replace the current Openings and EIS Center Services that AAR members have come to count on for locating future employment or their next faculty member. Members and departments will feel comfortable with the streamlined new services: AAR Job Posting will replace Openings and the AAR Annual Meeting Job Center will replace the EIS Center.

Within the AAR Career Services, Job Postings will include easier advertisement submission processes and enhancementsto organization and content, “I think our members will find it easier to post a job on the new website,” said Jack Fitzmier, AAR executive director. “Our staff has worked hard to improve the process.”

Also within the Career Services will be the new AAR Annual Meeting Job Center. It will operate much the same as the joint EIS Center did. The Job Center will be offered every year at the Annual Meeting and is designed to ease the communication process between candidates looking for jobs in the field of religion and employers who have jobs to offer. To accomplish this, we offer services such as advertisement listings, candidates’ credentials both online and in hardcopy, an interview facility, and a message center through which employers and candidates communicate.

The 2008 Job Center will be located in the Chicago Hilton Towers Hotel, a headquarters hotel of the Annual Meeting. From 7-9 pm, Friday night, October 31, we will be open with the exception of the interview hall. Come review CVs or ad listings and use the message center. We will be fully operational all day Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, November 1-3.

To take advantage of the earlier Annual Meeting dates this year (November 1-3), Job Center preregistration opens on April 21, 2008, and closes on October 13, 2008. Candidate CVs are also due the October 13.

(continued from previous page)

**Weather Mark Tavern**

1503 South Michigan Avenue
312-588-0230

Set sail for a night of food and drink at this South Loop spot decked out in a nautical theme. Real sails hang floor to ceiling to create semi-private seating areas of couches and cocktail tables. Go tropical and sip from a large selection of rums and tequilas, and sample fare from a menu of upscale bar food with a Southwestern flair.

**Future Jazz**

81 South Michigan Avenue
312-943-3600

Baz Luhrmann’s dance party descends on Chicago with ‘Jazz After Dark’. This modern twist on the late-night jazz club experience features live jazz performances, an extensive bar menu, and an inviting atmosphere.

**Chicago Cultural Center**

78 East Washington Street
312-744-6630

Chicago’s acclaimed landmark home of the arts. Daily programs and exhibitions covering a wide range of the performing, visual, and literary arts are presented by the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs. See the world’s largest Tiffany stained-glass dome. Open Monday–Thursday 10 AM–7 PM; Friday 10 AM–6 PM; Saturday 10 AM–5 PM; and Sunday 11 AM–5 PM. Free admission. For weekly updated event listings dial F-I-N-E-A-R-T (312-946-3278) or log onto www.cityofchicago.org/CulturalCenter.

**DuSable Museum of African American History**

740 East 6th Place
773-947-0600

Celebrating 45 years of sharing history, DuSable Museum is the nation’s first and oldest independent museum dedicated to the collection, preservation, and study of the history and culture of African and American and African descent. Exhibits, concerts, films, children’s events, and literary discussions are just a few of the institutions various programs offered. Open Tuesday–Saturday 10 AM–5 PM.

**Field Museum**

1400 South Lake Shore Drive
312-665-7600

Discover Sue, the largest and most complete T. rex ever found! At the Field Museum, you can get a bug’s-eye view in Underground Adventure, descend into an Egyptian tomb, watch a glowing lava flow, be dazzled in our Halls of Gems and Jades, come nose-to-nose with the man-eating lions of Tivoo, and walk among dinosaurs in our new, renovated dinosaur hall Evolving Planet. Open daily 9 AM–5 PM, last admission at 4 PM. Adults $12, students and seniors $7, children (3–12) $3. Some exhibits require an additional ticket.

**McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum**

445 North Michigan Avenue
312-222-4800

Dedicated to America’s freedoms and focusing on First Amendment rights, the McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum inspires generations to understand, value, and protect freedom through interactive experiences. Open Wednesday–Monday 10 AM–6 PM. Closed Tuesday. Free Admission.

**Notebaert Nature Museum**

2430 North Cannon Drive
773-755-5100

Located in Lincoln Park, the Nature Museum engages visitors, especially urban dwellers, in new ways to connect with and preserve the natural world through a unique indoor/outdoor experience. Open weekdays 9 AM–4:30 PM; and weekends 10 AM–5 PM. Cost: $ 9 adults, $7 seniors (60+), $7 students (13–22), $6 children (3–12). Free on Thursdays. Chicago residents always save $1 off general admission.

**Shedd Aquarium**

1200 South Lake Shore Drive
312-932-3315

The aquarium offers more than 22,000 aquatic animals from around the world. See all Shedd has to offer with the All Access Pass, which includes the original aquarium building, Wild Reef, Amazon Rising, and the Oceanarium. Open weekdays 9 AM–5 PM; weekends 9 AM–6 PM; and some holidays. $23, seniors and children (3–11) $16. Group rates are available.

**Sputrus Museum/Sputrus Institute of Jewish Studies**

610 South Michigan Avenue
312-322-1700

Sputrus Institute of Jewish Studies includes Sputrus Museum, the research facilities of the Acher Library and the Chicago Jewish Archives. Highlights include a unique display of over 1,000 objects from Sputrus Museum’s world-class collection, a series of special changing exhibitions, and site-specific installations of work by leading international artists. Open Sunday–Wednesday 10 AM–6 PM; Thursday 10 AM–7 PM; and Friday 10 AM–5 PM. Sputrus is closed Saturday for the Jewish Sabbath, and public and Jewish holidays. Museum Admission $7, students and seniors $5. Sputrus members and children under 5 free. Free museum admission for everyone every Tuesday from 10 AM–12 PM and every Thursday from 3 PM–7 PM.

**Chicago’s Magnificent Mile**

Chicago’s Magnificent Mile is a world-renowned shopping district. Shoppers can enjoy magnificent department stores and boutiques comprising a diverse mix of American and international style. With over 460 retail stores, there is something for everyone.

**900 Shops**

900 North Michigan Avenue
312-915-3916

Anchoring the chic north end of Michigan Avenue, The 900 Shops features six levels of shopping, including Bloomingdale’s, MaxMara, Gucci, Coach, Marina Rinaldi, Ethel’s Chocolate Lounge, Preggers, The Silk Trading Co., and 60 other exclusive retailers. Open Monday–Saturday 10 AM–7 PM; and Sunday 12 PM–6 PM.

**Chicago Place**

700 North Michigan Avenue
312-266-7710

North Michigan Avenue’s most unique shopping experience! Over 50 shops and restaurants featuring Saks Fifth Avenue, Chiaroscuro, Designtoscana, Talbots, and much more! Open Monday–Friday 10 AM–7 PM; Saturday 10 AM–6 PM; and Sunday 12 PM–5 PM.

**Water Tower Place**

835 North Michigan Avenue
312-449-3166

Water Tower Place is Chicago’s premier shopping destination. Its stunning eighth-level atrium features more than 100 of your favorite stores, spas, and restaurants, plus a mix of distinctive specialty shops and boutiques. It offers a unique, high-energy, urban shopping experience you simply won’t find anywhere else in the city. Open Monday–Saturday 10 AM–6 PM; and Sunday 11 AM–6 PM. Visit their website for more information and visitor incentives at www.shopwatertower.com.

**2008 ANNUAL MEETING NEWS**

For complete information about Job Postings and the AAR Annual Meeting Job Center, please see www.aarweb.org/jump/careers.

Also posted within the AAR Career Services will be information to help in the job hunt process, notices of workshops from the Academic Relations Committee, Teaching and Learning Committee, Theological Education Steering Committee, and others, and articles discussing career issues — from leaving graduate school to retirement.

“I think you will find the Career Services a ‘must stop’ location on our website,” said Fitzmier. “We are excited about this new service, and always encourage feedback on how to make it better.”

**Job Center Preregistration Deadline is October 13!**
Taking Religion(s) Seriously: What Students Need to Know

The Academic Relations Committee will address student learning at its Leadership Workshop during the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Chicago on Friday, October 31. The day-long workshop, “Taking Religion(s) Seriously: What Students Need to Know,” will explore the common goal of religion courses that all students learn to think seriously about the ways religion impacts public life and their role as citizens.

“Even though this objective is not always articulated and may be submerged in more specialized concerns, it is always an underlying goal,” said Fred Glennon, chair of the Academic Relations Committee.

In this workshop we investigate what this goal entails and then invite chairs to consider how the curriculum they oversee addresses (or could address) it; how the mission and culture of their institution shapes this objective; and how it might contribute to assessment of their program’s effectiveness.

“Exchange of experience and ideas will be central to the day’s work,” Glennon said.

The interactive workshop will feature several speakers, panelists, and breakout sessions. Following the opening introduction by Chester Gillis, Georgetown University, a discussion will address two questions concerning “Educating Students for Public Life.”

1. How could and how does your institution contribute to the understanding of religion(s) through your students?
2. How are your students prepared to engage religion(s) in the public realm?

A panel discussion will follow, addressing: “How does this interact with the mission and culture of your institution?”

“The Academic Relations Committee strives to speak to the multitude of institutional contexts influencing the study of religion,” said Kyle Cole, AAR director of professional programs.

The concluding plenary will concentrate on a principal question: “How should this be assessed and how do you assess it?”

The workshop will expand a specific area addressed by the Teagle Foundation-funded “The Religion Major and Liberal Education,” which guided the theme of last year’s Leadership Workshop. “Assessment issues and student learning have been highly cited as potential workshop topics,” Glennon said. “I’m very happy for the Academy that we can explore these areas and offer such a rich workshop topic.”

Colleagues in your institution, such as chairs, other faculty members, faculty being developed to assume leadership responsibilities, and deans, may be interested in attending this workshop. Chairs may want to bring a team of faculty or send a designated faculty person.

Registration is limited to the first 75 participants, and last year’s workshop filled up long before the annual meeting. The cost for the workshop is $75, which includes the entire day of sessions, lunch, and a book on the topic. The topics for past workshops have been:

2007 Annual Meeting
Chairs Workshop — Best Practices: Diversifying Your Faculty - Holster Conversations
Leadership Workshop — The Religion Major and Liberal Education

2006 Annual Meeting
Chairs Workshop — Personnel Issues: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

2005 Annual Meeting
Chairs Workshop — Enlarging the Pie: Strategies for Managing and Growing Departmental Resources

2004 Annual Meeting
Chairs Workshop — Being a Chair in Today’s Consumer Culture: Navigating in the Knowledge Factory

Legal issues, conflicts, and life cycles will be addressed for individual, department, and administration concerns.

The workshop will be of benefit to a range of participants: faculty, administrators, and graduate students. The goal is to bring a diverse group of AAR members together in a lively and open discussion.

Preliminary Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00-9:15</td>
<td>Introductions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:15-9:45</td>
<td>Educating students for public life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:45-10:15</td>
<td>Break-out session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:15-11:00</td>
<td>Panel discussion: How does this interact with the mission and culture of your institution?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00-12:00</td>
<td>Break-out session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00-1:00</td>
<td>LUNCH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00-2:00</td>
<td>Break-out session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00-3:00</td>
<td>Plenary session on objectives and assessments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TO REGISTER
Complete the information below, arrange payment, and send via fax or surface mail. You can also register online as a part of the Annual Meeting registration process: www.aarweb.org/meeting/annual_meeting/current_meeting

Name
Department
Institution
Serving as Chair since
Number of faculty in department

Registration is limited to the first 75 participants. Send your registration form and payment of $75.00 *** before October 1, 2008 ($100.00 after and onsite).

For more information, contact Kyle Cole, Director of Professional Programs, at kcole@aarweb.org, or by phone at 404-727-1489.

The Leadership Workshop is arranged by the Academic Relations Committee of the American Academy of Religion, chaired by Fred Glennon.

Payment Information

☐ Check: (payable to “AAR Annual Meeting,” memo “Leadership Workshop”)

☐ Credit Card (Check one):
  ☐ Visa  ☐ Mastercard  ☐ American Express  ☐ Discover

Credit Card Number
Expiration Date

Cardholder Signature

Name on Card (Please Print)

* Card Identification Number: 4 digits on front of American Express; 3 digits on back of other cards.
Emilie M. Townes, an American Baptist deaconwoman, is a native of Durham, North Carolina. She holds a DMin from the University of Chicago Divinity School and a PhD in Religion in Society and Personality from Northwestern University. Townes is the first Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Christian Ethics and Theology at Yale University Divinity School, and in the fall of 2005 she was elected to the presidencia line of the American Academy of Religion. She currently serves as President, the first African-American woman to do so. In July 2008, she will become the first African-American and first woman to serve as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in the Divinity School. She is the former Carolyn Williams Beaird Professor of Christian Ethics at Union Theological Seminary. Editor of two collections of essays, A Troubling in My Soul: Womanist Perspectives on Evil and Suffering and Embracing the Spirit: Womanist Perspectives on Hope, Salvation, and Transformation, she has also authored Womanist Ethics, Womanist Hope: In a Blaze of Glory: Womanist Spirituality as Social Witness, and Breaking the Fine Rain of Death: African American Health Issues and a Womanist Ethics of Care. Her most recent book, Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil, was released in November 2009. She continues her research on women and health in the African diaspora with attention to Brazil and the United States. She is a founding member of the Initiative on Religion and Politics at Yale that seeks to bring a progressive religious voice to the education of seminarians, spark lively debate on the interplay of religion and politics in the university, and speak to the pressing social issues of the day. She is also the founder of the Middle Passage Conversations on Black Religion in the African Diaspora Initiative at Yale.

RSN: How did your parents and extended family influence your early career and education?

Townes: Both of my parents were college professors and spent the latter years of their careers as administrators. Dad was a department chair and Mom was, over the years, department chair, dean of the graduate school, and dean of the college (at one point, she was both dean) and they instilled in both my sister and me a love of books and a love for learning. Both of them were “firsts” in their families and were influenced by their parents and extended family influence your early career and education.

RSN: What points did you decide you wanted to become a scholar of religion?

Townes: This was a two-step process for me. I had avoided what I call the family business, teaching, for years. I wanted to be my own person and find a different path than my folks did. It was not that I had an aversion to teaching, it was more that I thought I would live my professional life either as a lawyer or later in some form of social justice and I would not teach. Years later, I had to admit that teaching was in my genes and that all those days spent outside of Mom’s classroom were really teaching her lecture and care about and what and how her students learned had their effect. I think the simplest way to describe the effect my family has had on me is that they taught me to demand nothing less than my best.

RSN: What is your greatest joy in teaching?

Townes: That’s a lot right now. I will meet because they would not be able to do that otherwise. I have members from the AAR and the SBL that used the additional meeting time to meet because they would not be able to do so on their own; and scholars of color who often have few scholarly interactions and how we relate to them as scholars. Social ethics, as a discipline, helps me get to this, as I think this is the way my brain works most naturally, creatively, and productively.

RSN: What has compelled you to research, teach, and lecture in the area of Christian social ethics?

Townes: I am that young black girl Alice Walker talks about in her first definition of “womanist”— wanting to know more than what was considered good for me. I drove my professors crazy with my questions. How can one think seriously of teaching as a vocation then, years later I had to admit that teaching was in my genes and that all those days spent outside of Mom’s classroom were really teaching her lecture and care about and what and how her students learned had their effect. I think the simplest way to describe the effect my family has had on me is that they taught me to demand nothing less than my best.

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The Work of the Academy

Independent Annual Meeting Survey

The American Academy of Religion invited members from 2005, 2006, and 2007 (even if their memberships had lapsed during one or two of those years) to take the Independent Annual Meeting survey. The purpose of the survey was to provide a forum for members to express their opinions about several features of the upcoming independent Annual Meetings. The survey was not intended as a referendum or as a prelude to a return to traditional AAR-SBL joint meetings. The AAR Executive Office contacted members four times about the survey.

- Every AAR member received a postcard, via USPS, explaining the survey and inviting them to take it.
- Every AAR member received a letter, via e-mail, from Jeffrey Stout, AAR President, and Emilie Townes, Vice President, explaining why the AAR was doing a survey and inviting them to take it. The e-mail contained a hot link to the survey on the AAR website.
- Each member received the October AAR E-bulletin, which contained a reminder about the opportunity to take the survey. The E-bulletin also contained a hot link to the survey on the AAR website.
- The October edition of Religious Studies News, sent to every AAR member, contained a reminder about the opportunity to take the survey and included the letter from Jeffrey Stout and Emilie Townes.

The Executive Office invited several leadership groups to encourage their AAR colleagues to take the survey. These included:
- All AAR volunteer leaders (Board Members, Program Unit Chairs, and Standing Committee members).
- Several Regionally Elected Directors sent e-mails to their regional members encouraging them to take the survey.
- Departmental Chairs whose names are included in the AAR Departments database.
- AAR members who serve as Presidents and Deans of schools who are members of the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada.

The AAR Executive Office also sent a letter, via USPS, to over 500 persons who work with Annual Meeting exhibitors — publishers, acquisition editors, and publishing house staff members — inviting them to take the survey. Many of these persons are not AAR members, so the Executive Office made arrangements for them to receive a special login ID number that would allow them to participate in the survey.

In all, 15,367 members and exhibitors were invited and enabled to take the survey. The questions posed on the survey were presented to respondents in random order to prevent order bias. The survey was available online from September 21, 2007, through October 15, 2007, and 2,706 persons participated, answering some or all of the questions. This represents a response rate of 17.61 percent.

The survey itself contained two major sections: one captured demographic information about respondents and the other posed questions about the Annual Meeting. In addition, at three places in the survey we invited respondents to make comments; we did not place a limit on how much text respondents could type into the comment boxes. Respondents made an unusually high number of comments, and some of the comments were quite lengthy. Question 12 (about the 2011 meeting) drew 1,454 comments (from 53.73 percent of respondents); 1,170 comments (from 43.24 percent of the respondents) were recorded after Question 13 (about attendance at next year’s Annual Meeting); and 629 comments (23.24 percent of the respondents) were recorded at the end of the survey. Our Board is continuing to review and assess these comments, some of which contain personal identifying information. We will make the comments section of the survey available after the Board has had a chance to review it in its entirety and to make sure that no respondent’s personal comments, intended to be made anonymously, are made public.

The results of the survey follow.

Demographic Questions*

Demographic 1: Please identify your AAR affiliation.

Demographic 2: Please identify your institutional home.

Demographic 3: Are you currently a member of the Society of Biblical Literature?

* Note: Graph scales vary

(continued on next page)
(continued from page 11)

Demographic 4: In the past have you been a member of the Society of Biblical Literature?

Demographic 5: Please identify and rank up to three religious tradition(s) on which you focus your research and teaching (Composite results below).

Demographic 6: Please identify the methodological approaches you use in your work. Enter your first, second, and third most used approaches (Composite results below).

Question 1: How important is it for you to attend Annual Meetings where the book exhibition includes displays, publications, and professional staff from both biblical studies and religious studies publishers?

Question 2: When you are deciding whether to attend the AAR Annual Meeting, how important a factor is the cost (to you) of attendance?

Question 3: Based on what you know about job candidates in your field, how important is it for the AAR and the SBL to offer a common center for interviews at a single convention site each year?

Question 4: Given your institution’s academic calendar, how important is it for the AAR to hold its Annual Meeting the weekend before the U.S. Thanksgiving holiday?

Question 5: How important is it for you to attend an AAR Annual Meeting that is scheduled concurrently with scholarly organizations other than the SBL (e.g., Middle Eastern Studies Association, Society of Christian Ethics, Association for Jewish Studies, etc.)?

Question 6: How important is it for you to be able to attend receptions, additional meetings, or workshops at an Annual Meeting that includes both AAR and SBL members?

Question 7: How important is it for you to attend the AAR Annual Meeting in the same city on the same days as the SBL?

Question 8: Based on what you know about faculty conducting searches for your institution, how important is it for the AAR and the SBL to offer a common center for interviews at a single convention site each year?

Question 9: How important is it for you to attend Annual Meetings where you can share scholarly dialogue, in and out of formal sessions, with both AAR and SBL members?

* Note: Graph scales vary

(continued on next page)
**Question 10:** AAR Annual Meetings have been held in ten different cities over the last ten years. Some members have suggested that we rotate our Annual Meetings through a smaller, fixed set of four or five cities. Would you prefer to attend meetings in many cities around the country, or would you prefer to meet in a fixed set of four or five cities?

**Question 11:** In your opinion, which three of the following are most important to you as you consider attending an Annual Meeting of the AAR? (Identify the three items most important to you).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why Attend the Annual Meeting?</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Selections</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to attend scholarly presentations (papers, panels, etc.)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,439</td>
<td>18.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to attend a large and comprehensive book exhibition</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1,185</td>
<td>15.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to meet with AAR members in one’s specialized field</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,070</td>
<td>13.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to attend or participate in SBL sessions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,021</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to be interviewed for a job</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>8.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to meet with SBL members</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>6.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to attend meetings in many cities around the country</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>5.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to interview for a job</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>4.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to meet with SBL members</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>4.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to interview job candidates</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>3.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to participate in receptions involving your alma mater</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>3.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to meet with members of scholarly societies other than the SBL</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>1.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>7,660</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 12:** In 2011, the AAR plans to meet at the same time that the SBL meets in San Francisco. The two organizations will meet in different facilities, and will not co-publish a program book. After 2011, how often would you like to see Annual Meetings conducted on roughly the model (i.e., independently administered, but in the same city and on the same weekend as the SBL’s meeting)?

**Question 13:** Do you intend to attend the 2008 AAR Annual Meeting in Chicago (held November 1st through November 3rd), the first Annual Meeting held independently of the SBL?

**Question 4:** Given your institution’s academic calendar, how important is it for the AAR to hold its Annual Meeting the weekend before the U.S. Thanksgiving holiday?

**Question 5:** How important is it to you for the AAR to hold its Annual Meeting in the same city on the same days as the SBL?

**Question 6:** How important is it for you to be able to attend receptions, additional meetings, or workshops at Annual Meeting that includes both AAR and SBL members?

**Question 7:** How important is it for you to attend an AAR Annual Meeting that is scheduled concurrently with scholarly organizations other than the SBL (e.g., Middle Eastern Studies Association, Society of Christian Ethics, Association for Jewish Studies, etc.)?

**Collapsed Responses by Percentage**

Frequently, results given on a five-choice Likert scale survey are “collapsed” to show more general results. In such instances the “Not important at all” and “Somewhat unimportant” categories are combined, the “Neutral” response is left as is, and the “Somewhat important” and “Very important” categories are combined. The following charts show how the Independent Annual Meeting survey responses can be so “collapsed.”

**Question 1:** How important is it for you to attend Annual Meetings where the book exhibition includes displays, publications, and professional staff from both biblical studies and religious studies publishers?

**Question 2:** When you are deciding whether to attend the AAR Annual Meeting, how important a factor is the cost (to you) of attendance?

**Question 3:** Based on what you know about job candidates in your field, how important is it for the AAR and the SBL to offer a common center for interviews at a single convention site each year?

*Note: Graph scales vary*
II. AAR Regional Identification

All AAR members, by virtue of where they work, are members of one of ten regions. The 2007 Regional Census of all AAR members is compared to the regional identity of all survey respondents below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>2007 Regional Census</th>
<th>IAM Survey Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>16.62%</td>
<td>16.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Atlantic</td>
<td>16.38%</td>
<td>15.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>12.52%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>12.23%</td>
<td>14.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England–Maritimes</td>
<td>9.20%</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (non-U.S., non-Canada)</td>
<td>8.69%</td>
<td>6.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern International</td>
<td>6.82%</td>
<td>6.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest</td>
<td>6.29%</td>
<td>6.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Midwest</td>
<td>5.32%</td>
<td>7.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Northwest</td>
<td>3.90%</td>
<td>3.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocky Mountain–Great Plains</td>
<td>2.55%</td>
<td>2.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion: Relative to the 2007 Regional Census, those who took the survey are highly representative of the overall AAR membership.

III. Member “Activity” Relative to the Annual Meeting

The following chart compares how many Annual Meetings, of the last five, the 2005, 2006, and 2007 members attended, as compared with how many the IAM survey respondents attended.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How many Annual Meetings of the last 5?</th>
<th>2005, 2006, and 2007 Members</th>
<th>IAM Survey Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>37/00%</td>
<td>15.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>25.30%</td>
<td>15.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>13.30%</td>
<td>14.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.90%</td>
<td>14.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.80%</td>
<td>17.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.60%</td>
<td>22.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99.90%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion: IAM survey respondents are very active relative to the general membership when it comes to Annual Meeting attendance. A much higher percentage of the respondents have attended the Annual Meeting regularly than has the general membership.

IV. Member “Activity” Relative to Membership

We have tracked the number of years, in the last three, that respondents have been members of AAR and have measured the activity of those members to keep their AAR membership current.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>2005, 2006, and 2007 Members</th>
<th>IAM Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 of 3</td>
<td>47.30%</td>
<td>77.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 of 3</td>
<td>22.50%</td>
<td>12.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 of 3</td>
<td>30.20%</td>
<td>7.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 of 3</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>2.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion: IAM respondents are more likely than most members to keep their AAR membership current.
John J. Thatamanil is Assistant Professor of Theology at Vanderbilt Divinity School. He is the author of The Irrelevant Divine: God, Creation, and the Human Predicament (Fortress Press, 2006). He is currently at work on a book tentatively entitled Religious Diversity after “Religion” (forthcoming from Fordham University Press). He is Chair of the Theological Education Steering Committee. He can be reached at john.j.thatamanil@vanderbilt.edu.

RSN: Congratulations on receiving the Planning Grant from the Henle Foundation. What was the grant for, and what did you accomplish?

Thatamanil: First, let me say that the Theological Education Steering Committee (TESC) and the AAR are enormously grateful to the Henle Foundation for this grant. The grant enabled the TESC to gather a group of distinguished scholars who work on theologies of religious pluralism (TRP) and comparative theology to plan a series of summer seminars for theological educators on TRP and comparative theology. Conversing as the Theologies of Religious Pluralism Planning Committee (TRPPC), the group included Francis X. Clooney, S.J. (Harvard Divinity School), Jeaninne Hill Fletcher (Fordham University), Mark Heim (Andover Newton Theological School), Anantanand Rambachan (St. Olaf College), and myself (Vandeshri Divinity School). Peter Ochs (University of Virginia) was unable to join us at our meeting, though he will be involved in our future work.

RSN: Let’s back up for a moment. What is the TESC, and what is its overall mandate?

Thatamanil: Our charge reads as follows: “The Theological Education Steering Committee meets the scholarly and professional needs of theological educators by creating programs and services that bring theological studies into the wider conversation of the Academy and enriches the work of theological educators.” The term “theological educator” in the first instance refers to all involved in graduate theological education. The term also includes those who teach in undergraduate theology departments or religious studies departments who take themselves to be theological educators. Anantanand Rambachan, a member of the TESC and the TRPPC, is a good example. He is a constructive theologian, albeit one who operates from within communities of belief and outside of communities of various religious traditions.

RSN: So, the TESC’s charge extends beyond Christian terrain and beyond graduate education?

Thatamanil: It hardly needs to be said that much, indeed most, of what goes by the name “theological education” in the North American context is Christian. Hence, TESC has an obligation to attend carefully to the needs of AAR members whose scholarly, teaching, and professional lives are lived out in seminaries and divinity schools. But I hasten to add that nothing that the AAR does is targeted exclusively for persons involved in single religious traditions. Theology within the AAR takes a multiplicity of configurations and even names. Although some Buddhist scholars have demonstrated relative comfort with the term “theology” — as is evidenced in the 1999 edited collection by Roger Jackson and John Makransky entitled Buddhist Theology: Critical Reflections by Contemporary Buddhist Scholars (RoutledgeCurzon) — AAR groups tend to talk about “constructive-critical” work instead. The AAR explicitly “welcomes all disciplined reflection on religion — both from within and outside of communities of belief and practice” (emphasis added). Naturally, these communities are not just Christian. So, the term “theology,” within the AAR and hence also for the TESC, needs to be understood as a narrowly Christian term.

Even on the graduate front, theological education encompasses the various university divinity schools which have long been and continue to be populated by persons from a variety of traditions. Some seminaries also are becoming multireligious, both on the faculty side as well as among students. Hartford Seminary and Lutheran Theological Seminary in Chicago are examples that come readily to mind. Of course, graduate theological education also includes the various Jewish seminaries. I expect that in this decade, we will also see the rise of graduate Muslim institutions. Still more broadly, graduate and undergraduate theology and religious studies departments also include Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, and others who would characterize their work as “constructive-critical” if not “theological.”

RSN: And this religious diversity is central to the work of the TESC and the TRPPC?

Thatamanil: Yes, the work of the TRPPC is to plan summer seminars for faculty on TRP and comparative theology. While religious diversity has been a fact of life in American scholarship since the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, few scholars in theological education are trained in TRP and comparative theology. The trouble is that clergy and religious leaders from across traditions — who are by necessity generalists — have to deal routinely with questions about how to officiate at interreligious weddings or fulfill chaplaincy obligations that require engagement with persons across traditions. Life in an ever more pluralistic nation makes reflection about the nature and meaning of religious diversity a fundamental component in their theological formation. Speaking in Christian terms, we would hardly consider a student training for ordination well-prepared if she were unable to work up a good sermon; likewise, it is hard to see how we could call a minister well-prepared for her vocation if she finds herself unable to educate her congregation about how to respond to widespread resistance in her town when Muslims seek to purchase an unused church building.

The question of religious diversity also bears on every area within theological education and is not just a matter to be left to the theologians. Church historians have long known that encountering with religious diversity is a reality in all historical periods, but that knowledge has not sufficiently trickled down to students. The reality of religious diversity is especially pressing for pastoral caregivers and chaplains in hospital and military settings, but seminary training remains largely monoreligious.

RSN: So, the summer seminars are not meant for those who are already experts in TRP or comparative theology?

Thatamanil: Right. The TESC and the TRPPC believe that most academic institutions — whether we are speaking of graduate seminaries or undergraduate religious studies departments — cannot afford to dedicate faculty lines to specialist scholars in these areas. Meanwhile, nonspecialists are keenly feeling the need to get up to speed on the relevant literature and incorporate theological reflection about religious diversity into their teaching and research.

RSN: You keep referring to theological reflection about religious diversity, but isn’t such reflection exclusively a Christian preoccupation?

Thatamanil: Not at all. As Anant Rambachan observed during our planning meeting, religious traditions have always spoken about other traditions and communities. What is new, Rambachan insists, is that such speaking does and indeed must now happen in the presence of these others. On the research front, we are seeing the emergence of new work that goes beyond attending to Christian approaches to religious diversity. Kristen Kühling’s Buddhist Inclusion: Attitudes toward Religious Others (Ashgate, 2005) is a monograph that comes readily to mind. Paul Knitter’s edited volume, The Myth of Religious Superiority (Orbis, 2004) includes Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jewish, and Muslim approaches to religious diversity. Likewise, David Ray Griffin’s edited collection, Deep Religious Pluralism (WJK, 2005) also includes a variety of religious perspectives.

RSN: Is the work of the TRPPC finished?

Thatamanil: Hardly! Although our work as a planning group is largely complete, all members of TRPPC, Peter Ochs included, have agreed to serve as part of the teaching team for the first run of our summer seminars, providing of course, that we receive funding.

RSN: So what will these summer seminars look like? What are your basic instructional goals?

Thatamanil: Well, we took our mark from Rabbanach’s argument that we must generate a religiously diverse group to think about religious diversity. That will be a basic consideration. Second, we agreed that these summer seminars cannot amount to remedial coursework in world religions. No doubt faculty participants will learn a great deal about traditions other than their own, but by way of focused learning and reflection on theologies of religious pluralism and comparative theology.

The core goal of these seminars will be to help faculty participants to formulate a working answer to the question, “What significance does my neighbor’s tradition have for my own?” As of the end of the summer seminar, faculty participants will have worked out the basic elements of their own TRP and have substantive familiarity with current literature in TRP and comparative theology. We also hope to equip faculty participants to incorporate their learning into restructuring their courses. How might the basic course in theology include a unit on TRP and comparative theology? How might a course in Hebrew Bible, New Testament, or pastoral care take up questions of religious diversity?

As far as content goes, we begin with the assumption that religious traditions have long histories of speaking about other communities and traditions. So, part of our work will be to unearth and to articulate those histories. The subsequent question is this: What should our traditions say about our religious neighbors? What can we say about our neighbors in the presence and hearing of those neighbors?

RSN: Is there a normative theology of religious pluralism that your group will commend to faculty seminar participants?

Thatamanil: Not at all. I doubt that the members of this religiously and theologically diverse group could come to any such consensus! Our task is to introduce seminar participants to the best current scholarship in these contested fields and to assist seminar participants in formulating their own positions. The only constraint on all who are present — on instructors and learners — is that we must articulate and defend our convictions in the presence of persons from traditions other than our own.

RSN: But won’t the very fact that the group is religiously diverse tilt the conversation in the direction of a pluralistic theology of religions of the sort advocated by John Hick or Paul Knitter?

Thatamanil: Not necessarily. Let’s admit that the presence of persons from traditions other than one’s own, especially among academic conversation partners, is likely to generate a spirit of hospitality, but that need not mean that we are compelled to agree with each other. Indeed, there is no agreement within any given tradition on these issues. Just as there are Christian inclusivists, exclusive Christians, inclusivists, and exclusivists, there are also Buddhist inclusivists and exclusivists. We cannot ignore our neighbors but we need not agree with them, indeed, our willingness to engage in informed conversation and...
Realignment of the AAR Executive Staff

Jack Fitzmier, American Academy of Religion

One recent Focus of organizational leadership is the alignment of resources — particularly of staff resources. Over the last year I have done a good deal of thinking about how the Executive Staff of the American Academy of Religion is organized. Is it properly aligned? That is, have we accurately identified our needs and do we have the right staff members in place to meet those needs? In most cases, I answered that question in the affirmative. But it was also clear that in other respects, the Executive Staff had gaps and lacunae. After a good deal of thought and discussion with our senior staff and the Executive Committee of the Board, we have done a modest realignment of the Atlanta staff. Fortunately, this has occurred without the need to let anyone go or to add additional staff. We have fine-tuned job descriptions, put backup personnel in place in critical offices, and added some functions that were missing. Here is a listing of our major areas and the staff that work in each one:

Executive: Jack Fitzmier
Finance and Administration: Deborah N. Byler, Toby Director, Deanna Lord
Development: Margaret Jenkins
Publications: Carey J. Gifford, Stephanie Gray
Professional Programs: Kyle Cole, Jessica Snavder
External Relations: Steve Herrick, Susan Snider

Membership Development: Myshka Jenkins
Information Technology: Joe DeRose

While this does not represent a radical restructuring, there are some new features. We have given sharper focus to two areas — Publications, which is headed up by Carey J. Gifford, and Professional Programs, which is headed up by Kyle Cole. We have also added a function that was somewhat nascent, but is increasingly important to the success of the AAR — that of Marketing. Ailslone Jones has added this to her portfolio, and has been able to do so, in part, because we brought Robert Puckert, her assistant, onto the staff in a full time capacity. Third, and most important, we have created an altogether new role — that of Membership Development. Myshka Jenkins has agreed to take on this challenge. She will help us think about who our members are, why they have joined the AAR, and what their professional and scholarly needs are. The changes, as well as a series of other more modest staffing shifts, are intended to help our Executive Staff to continue its tradition of excellence in serving you, our members. If you have any questions about the realignment, please contact Jack Fitzmier, AAR Executive Director, at 404-727-3049.

(continued from page 14)

debate with persons from other traditions is itself a sign that we take them seriously enough to discuss them. Moreover, there is a perception among some that the question of religious diversity is a matter of concern for mainline liberals alone, but judging by the scholarship, that is not the case. Some of the best work being done in the field comes from evangelicals. I am thinking in particular about Amy Wong’s fine work, Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religion (Baker, 2003) in employing his method. But there is a continuing conversation about the centrality of questions of pneumatology. Given his work in particular, it is no longer possible to characterize — perhaps we should say of soteriology to questions of pneumatology. TRP has proceeded by taking up the following question: Are the various religions paths up the same mountain or paths up different mountains? Put otherwise, do the religions aspire to the same good or are there religious goods or ends? I am increasingly worried about what these questions take for granted: that there are in the world a variety of “religions,” that these traditions are sealed off from each other, and that these are variations of the same generic reality. These assumptions are problematic not least because they take for granted that soteriological differences come into play only when one crosses the boundary between one religion and another. My current book project is driven by a critical concern that we can send out application materials

RSN: What special areas of expertise will this particular group of instructors bring to the first offering of the summer seminar?

Thatamanil: Well, first let me say that we will not limit the instructional team to the scholars already mentioned, namely — Clooney, Heim, Hill Fletcher, Ochs, Rambachan, and myself. Our work would be incomplete without Muslim and Buddhist perspectives at the very least. A least common denominator is that each of these scholars would do a far better job at characterizing their own work than I am able to do. Finally, I’m certain that in a seminar for faculty learners, the participants themselves will offer an abundance of resources.

Now to your question:

Francis X. Clooney, S.J. ranks as perhaps our most distinguished comparative theologian. His work focuses on how to read Hindu texts with care in their home contexts and then bring those texts into conversation with Christian theology. He has recently completed a Christian commentary on a key work of the Sri Vaisnava theologian Vedanta Desika as well as a second book on loving surrender in Francis De Sales and Vedanta Desika. Mark Heim has argued that talk about religious traditions as paths to the selfsame end is limited if not mistaken. He argues that a multiplicity of salvations, a diversity of religious ends. Mark also makes a complementary effort to find in the trinity a constructive Christian theological foundation for attention to the distinctive character of other religions. In his teaching work, Mark reports that he finds difficult, if not impossible, to form students in their own traditions without helping those students think through why they ought to think about other traditions. He is also increasingly encouraging Christian students who have been significantly formed in and by traditions other than their own. Now we are training to be Christian leaders and seeking to integrate their multiple religious commitments. For such students, questions of TRP and comparative theology are absolutely critical. Unfortunately, Mark observes that many theological institutions have little at the heart of their curricula to help students take up these questions.

Jeanine Hill Fletcher has recently published a ground-breaking book entitled Monopoly on Salvation? A Feminist Approach to Religious Pluralism (Continuum, 2005). The virtues of this book are many, not least that it makes a compelling case that our religious traditions have always been in contact with and shaped by each other. That work is part of a larger argument against the relativization of religious tradi- tions over against each other. She underscores claims to radical difference between traditions, claims that undergird notions of utter incom- mensurability, and she also challenges those who posit an underlying sameness between and across traditions. Here, her critique challenges the work of both John Hick and our own Mark Heim. Her work also sheds new light on impor- tant postcolonial themes like hybridity. Her cur- rent and future work is also concerned to explore the lived experience of women’s inter reli- gious dialogue.

Peter Ochs’s work on scriptural reasoning as a way of advancing an Abrahamic theology is well known. In a recent essay, Ochs characterizes scriptural reasoning as, “pragmatic, postliberal, scriptural, and inter-Abrahamic.” He also notes that scriptural reasoning is especially concerned to correct for modern liberal theology’s insuffi- cient attentions to questions of everyday practice. He brings a wealth of experience to the work of comparative theology:

Anantanand Rambachan writes as a constructive thinker within the Hindu tradition of Advaita Vedanta. His work is particularly concerned to take up the tension between 19th and 20th cen- tury representations of Hinduism as “mystical” and anti-scriptural and his own experience of the Advaita tradition as fundamentally commis- sioned to exegesis and commentary. Rambachan has extensive experience in interreligious dia- logue at national and international levels.

RSN: And what about your own work?

Thatamanil: Well, my first book was an exercise in constructive comparative theology. I compared Sankara and Tillich on the human premillenary and offered a proposal for what a nondualist Christian theology might look like. My current book project is driven by a critical worry broached in Jeanine’s book. So much of TRP has proceeded by taking up the following question: Are the various religions paths up the same mountain or paths up different mountains? Put otherwise, do the religions aspire to the same good or are there religious goods or ends? I am increasingly worried about what these questions take for granted: that there are in the world a variety of “religions,” that these traditions are sealed off from each other, and that these are variations of the same generic reality. These assumptions are problematic not least because they take for granted that soteriological differences come into play only when one crosses the boundary between one religion and another.

RSN: Readers also know that there has been an explosion of important scholarship, much of it coming from postcolonial quarters, that renders problematic the very idea of “religion.” I am thinking especially about the work of Talal Asad and S. N. Balagangadhara in anthropology but also the impressive work of scholars like Timothy Fitzgerald, Richard King, Russell McCaughen, and others. A conclusion to be drawn from their work is that critical scholarly work cannot treat the category “religion” and its contrast term “secular” for granted. Theology of religious pluralism, has by and large, done just that. My sense is that it is high time for TRP and comparative theology to con- sider what this scholarship has to say about our enterprise.

RSN: What will you look for when selecting seminar participants? Will there be an application process?

Thatamanil: We have not yet developed application forms. But, in short, yes. We envision an application process, and we hope to have funding for faculty participants to attend these summer meetings. We are also hoping to have funding in place for follow up grants that will enable faculty participants to take on some project for their home institution. This might mean funding for a lecture series on TRP and comparative theology, funds that will help in course creation, and the like. We will ask applicants to articulate just why a movement into this work is the next natural phase in their teaching and scholarly lives. For now, we would welcome expressions of interest via E-mail so that we can send out application materials should funding come through.
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 on the following groups:

- Academic Relations Committee
- Book Award Juries
- Career Services Advisory Committee
- History of Religions Jury
- International Connections Committee
- Nominations Committee
- Publications Committee
- Research Grant Jury
- 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 activity 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.

Nominations must be made in writing, and must include:
- a description of the nominee’s academic and professional interests;
- a summary of the nominee’s activity in the AAR;
- a statement describing the nominee’s interest or promise for a particular assignment; and
- 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, 2008, and may be e-mailed, faxed, or posted to:

Jack 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

Emilie Townes, President of the AAR, will review nominations and make selections during August and September 2008. 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/about_AAR/committees.
**THE AAR THANKS THE FOLLOWING OUTGOING COMMITTEE, TASK FORCE, AND JURY MEMBERS**

Richard Amesbury, Claremont School of Theology (Graduate Student)
Ellen T. Armour, Vanderbilt University (Research Grants)
Ali S. Asani, Harvard University (Religion in the Schools)
John Berthrong, Boston University (Research Grants)
Kimberly Brosler, Princeton Theological Seminary (Graduate Student)
Karen McCarthy Brown, Drew University (History of Religions)
Richard M. Carp, Appalachian State University (Academic Relations)
John C. Cavadini, University of Notre Dame (Program)
Francis X. Clooney, Harvard University (Executive)
Frederick M. Denny, University of Colorado, Boulder (Rocky Mountains–Great Plains Regionally Elected Director)
James A. Donahue, Graduate Theological Union (Elected Director)
Diana L. Eck, Harvard University (Executive, Nominations, and Program)
Robert Flanigan, Spelman College (Finance)
Nancy Frankenberry, Dartmouth College (Nominations)
Jin Hee Han, New York Theological Seminary (International Connections)
Bradley L. Herling, Marymount Manhattan College (Graduate Student)
Richard Heyduck, Northeast Texas Community College (Religion in the Schools)
Thomas P. Kaulus, Ohio State University (History of Religions)
Melissa Johnston-Barrett, Emory University (Graduate Student)
Julia A. Lamm, Georgetown University (Book Awards Jury)
Jane Marie Law, Cornell University (Regions and Eastern International Regionally Elected Director)
Bruce B. Lawrence, Duke University (History of Religions)
Maurice Lee, Harvard University (Graduate Student)
Davina C. Lopez, Eckerd College (Graduate Student)
Daisy L. Machado, Union Theological Seminary (Theological Education)
Heather A. McKay, Edge Hill University (International Connections)
Stephanie Y. Mitchem, University of South Carolina (Status of Women in the Profession)
Gustav Niebuhr, Syracuse University (Public Understanding of Religion)
Stacy L. Parry, Lubbock Christian University (Executive and Southwest Regionally Elected Director)
Michelle Pesantubbee, University of Iowa (Executive)
Timothy M. Renick, Georgia State University (Teaching and Learning)
Sarah McFarland Taylor, Northwestern University (Regions)
Nelly Van Doom-Harder, Valparaiso University (Program)
Lynne Westfield, Drew University (Religion in the Schools)
Chun-Fang Yu, Columbia University (Academic Relations)

**Update on Government Relations Program**

The AAR CONTINUED to support and expand its government relations program in 2007. During the year, the AAR advocated for increased federal funding for the humanities and coordinated almost a dozen meetings for FBI and prison chaplaincy program officials to meet with scholars on a variety of issues related to religious beliefs and practices.

In March 2007, the AAR and 36 other scholarly associations co-sponsored Humanities Advocacy Day, an annual event in Washington, D.C., organized by the National Humanities Alliance. AAR board members Frederick Denny and Stacy Patty, member Scott Collins-Jones, and staffers Steve Herrick and Shelly Roberts met with congressional staff from Colorado, Georgia, Pennsylvania, and Texas to advocate for increased funding for the National Endowment for the Humanities. NEH is the largest funder of humanities programs in the United States. At the time of the RSN copy deadline, the AAR is supporting funding of the $160 million approved by the House Appropriations Committee for fiscal year 2008, which is an increase of $19 million above the fiscal year 2007 NEH appropriation.

In November, the AAR arranged four meetings between scholars and three FBI officials to meet with chaplaincy program officials to meet with chaplaincy program officials to discuss a variety of issues related to religious beliefs and practices.

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In the Public Interest

Going Public on Religion: Paradise or Pitfall?
Colleen McDannell, University of Utah


WHEN THE San Diego Union-Tribune reported on the November AAR meeting, writer Sandi Dolbee couldn’t pass up the chance to mention the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster. Did her November 17th article promote or ridicule the academic study of religion? Noted religion scholar Robert A. Orsi (Northwestern University), Stephen Prothero (Boston University), and Diane Winston (University of Southern California) all featured at a Special Topics Forum sponsored by the Public Understanding of Religion Committee — had some answers. Each laid out distinct ways that we should understand our roles as public intellectuals. While Robert Orsi voiced great respect for his colleagues who talk to the media, he does not. For Orsi, the “true public” for scholars of religion is our students and our colleagues. By doing what we do best — teaching and researching, — we reach in a sophisticated and nuanced manner a surprisingly wide public. Students talk to their families and friends (what we might think of as an extended field of others who will be affected by what we teach: “the ghosts in the classrooms”) and in this way spread our insights wider than we think. When students go home for Thanksgiving break, for instance, they might bring the latest fact they learned on religion into contexts in which we have more control.

Orsi concluded by raising a larger question: Why are we all so hungry to get into the news? Stephen Prothero provided one possible answer: To feed the masses. Although Americans are the most religious people in the Western world, we are not the most educated on matters of religion. This ignorance has serious civic and international repercussions. All of us should find a way to teach not just our students and colleagues, but the general public. This public ranges from our neighbors who go to the local church to the international readers of the New York Times. As public intellectuals, our moderate voices work to drown out the extreme ones who often command attention by sheer force of will. As scholars, we need to model a different way of talking about religion.

For Prothero, “writing is a passion” and so he enjoys communicating to a general audience. To follow Prothero’s model, writing in clear and accessible prose should be promoted by doctoral programs and encouraged among our colleagues. While his first university press book perhaps had a stunning 500 readers, his more recent book — World Religions in America — was read by 11,000 readers. His materials have been translated into four languages. Though Orsi, Prothero, and Winston have a great deal of success with their works, they are quick to stress that their writing does not guarantee success. Their writing appears in places that many readers might never visit. And success does not necessarily guarantee success, even in the realm of academic publishing. Professor Prothero’s debate article on Darwinism — a debate article — appeared in The Conversation and won no editors. It has been read by 19,000 readers, but has not reached a peer-reviewed journal. 

For Prothero, revealing rather than concealing allowed him to come alive and to speak in a voice more fully his own. At the same time, he quickly learned that “going public” means giving up control. A news show asked him to give his “religion literacy quiz” to a local audience. He was too busy to do so. “One of the things I enjoy communicating to a general audience is that I want to talk to them. I want to have the chance to talk.”

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Winston reminded the audience that journalists, of whatever media, have limitations that they cannot control. They often practice self-censorship, knowing what stories or ideas will or will not get by their own editors. Current journalists often command attention by sheer force of will. They often practice self-censorship, knowing what stories or ideas will or will not get by their own editors. Current journalists need to say complicated and significant things about religion in contexts in which we have more control.

Why are we all so hungry to get into the news? Winston was a self-confessed “recovering journalist,” admitted to committing all of the sins that Orsi and Prothero attributed to the media. For her, the overarching question was “So what? What if reporters only discuss the paper on the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster? For Winston, the stakes are too high to get frustrated about the current state of journalism. Like Prothero, Winston believes that as scholars we need to improve the level of education about religion in whatever ways we can.

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Winston also suggested “doing it yourself,” especially in the area of new media (Internet sites, blogging, podcasts) that are replacing the mainstream media of newspapers and magazines. The democratic nature of the new media allows for scholars to become reporters. Blogging opens the flow of information by encouraging individuals to shape public discourse as they see fit. Looking for stories of religion constructed with more sensitivity and nuance? Check out the Internet. One example Winston provided is the newly launched newinitiative.org. Journalism programs from Columbia, Berkeley, University of Southern California, and Northwestern University also post in-depth stories about religion.

While expressing generally positive feelings toward “going public on religion,” the audience raised several important issues. University administrators might be excited to find their faculty members on television or reviewed in the New York Times, but tenure committees are less impressed. Departments rarely have standards in place for attracting new forms of public scholarship. Where does blogging fit into standard professional evaluation criteria? Does giving a talk at a local mosque fall under the category of service or teaching? If scholarship is our craft, how do we make our prolonged conversation with students and colleagues more significant?

In our sense, the news media does not come to us to be educated about our areas of expertise. The hard, disciplined language of scholarship is needed to say complicated and significant things about religion in contexts in which we have more control.


AAR Research Grant Program

Did you know that you could receive up to $5,000 in research assistance from the AAR? Since 1992, the Academy has awarded over $500,000 to members for individual and collaborative research projects. The application deadline is August 1st of each year. For application information and eligibility requirements, see www.aarweb.org/grants.

2007–2008 Research Grant Winners

Collaborative

Adèle Reinhartz, University of Ottawa
Heart (Thropograph) and Soul: How Movies Mediate Meaning. Collaborative-Same-Shame. University of Ottawa.

Individual

Julia Babić, University of Redlands

William Howard, University of Southern California
Buddhist-Contemplative Art: Zha Ming and His Network

William P. Harmon, University of Tennessee, Chattanooga
Suicide Bombers Become Goddesses: Women, Apostasy, and Sacred Violence in South Asia

Scott Heise, Florida International University
Sacred High City, Sacred Low City: A Tale of Religious Sites in Two Tokyo Neighborhoods

Jennifer M. Jones, Truman State University
There’s a Methodism to His Madness: William Blake as a Religious Moderate

Crag Johnson, University of Colorado at Boulder
Religion in the Moment: Contemporary Lives of Indigenous Traditions

Frank J. Eom, Boston University
From Guru to Sheikhs: Bawa Muhaiyuden and the Making of Ethnic “Soft” Family

Leda Paau, Duke University
Annotating Passions: Oral Narrative and Religion in Colonial India

Miranda Beller Shaw, University of Richmond
Buddhist Goddess of Tibet and Nepal: Final Phase of Fieldwork at the Matsunaga, Hiaran College

Recollcting Miling Thronblopdey: Visionary History and Contemporary Life at a Seventeenth-Century Mindrolling, Monastery and Its Holy Landscape in Central Bhutan

Manuel A. Vasquez, University of Florida
Performing Identities and Spaces among Brazilian and Congolese Immigrants in London and Atlanta: The Case of Two Transnational Religious Networks

March 2008 RSN • 19

American Academy of Religion
Student Liaison Group
Spring 2008

The Student Liaison Group (SLG) is composed of AAR graduate student members who are appointed or elected by their department to serve. Currently, the Student Liaison Group is open to students enrolled in a PhD program. Student liaisons are a resource for students who need information about AAR’s programs and services. They also report on the needs and activities of students to the student director and participate in efforts to expand student involvement in the Academy. If you would like more information about how your PhD program can be represented, contact Mysha D. Jenkins at mjenkins@harvard.edu. The next appointment period is August 2008.

1. Baylor University, Cameron Jorgenson
2. Boston College, Bede Bidlack
3. Catholic University of America, Jay Carney
4. Chicago Theological Seminary, Adam Kotsko
5. Columbia University, Daniel Vaca
6. Concordia University, Laurie Lamotheaux Scholes
7. University of Dayton, Coleman Fannin
8. Drew University, Krista Hughes
9. Duke University, Susanna L. Drake
10. Emory University, Matthew Bersagel Braley
11. Florida State University, Kathleen Hladky
12. University of Florida, Eleanor Finnegan
13. Fuller Theological Seminary, Matt Hamsher
14. Graduate Theological Union, Erin Brigham
15. Harvard University, Linford Fisher
16. Iliff School of Theology, Stephanie Yuhas
17. Loyola University, Chicago, Andrea Hollingsworth
18. McGill University, Lei Kuan Lai
19. McMaster University, Sherry Smith
20. University of Missouri, Kansas City, Day Lane
21. University of Oxford, Brian Frank Curry
22. Pacifica Graduate Institute, Joe Good
23. Princeton University, Jimmy Yu
24. Southern Methodist University, Mary C. Moorman
25. Union Theological Seminary, New York, K. Christine Pac
26. Union Theological Seminary & Presbyterian School of Christian Education, Tammie Marie Grimm
27. University of Toronto, Rebekka King
28. University of Virginia, Timothy P. McConnell
29. University of Waterloo, Mandy Furney
30. Wheaton College, Michael D. White

In the Next Issue of Spotlight on Teaching:
Signifying (on) Scriptures: Reorienting Teaching and Research
Guest Editor: Vincent L. Wimbush

From the Student Desk

Getting Stuck Overseas? Reflections on Graduate Studies Abroad

J. Patrick Hornbeck II, Fordham University

The news that I had been accepted into Oxford University’s graduate program in theology was greeted by my professors at Georgetown with a blend of delight and skepticism. “It looks like a compelling offer,” I was told on several occasions, ‘but don’t take it; you’ll only end up getting stuck permanently in Britain.” It seemed that everyone had a story of another American who had pursued doctoral studies abroad and then found it impossible to secure a position back home.

In the end, I took the plunge and headed across the pond. What I discovered was an academic system whose methods and priorities diverged sharply from those I had been accustomed to in the United States. It is now, with four years of hindsight, that I have been able to see how the many peculiarities of life and study in Oxford have shaped my habits as a thinker and teacher. Those peculiarities are clearly not suited to everyone. But for those who embark upon the experience with a sense of what is in store for them and a willingness to invest time in sustaining relationships with colleagues and institutions on both sides of the Atlantic, graduate studies abroad can be highly rewarding.

The most obvious difference between an Oxford (indeed, a British) graduate program and an American one has to do with independence. Broadly speaking, British doctorates are research-based; there is no mandatory coursework, there are no comprehensive exams, and the degree is awarded exclusively on the merits of the dissertation. Even so-called ‘taught’ graduate courses may involve no more than two or three hours of contact time per week. The result is that graduate students have an unparalleled degree of freedom; they can read widely, attend lectures and seminars in fields outside their own, and develop their ideas at their own pace. But this freedom also entails responsibilities: without comprehensive exams, students must themselves ensure that they have sufficient breadth as well as depth of knowledge; without constant deadlines, they must quickly master self-discipline.

Crucial to this process is the relationship between a student and his or her supervisor. If having a supportive adviser and committee is important to American doctoral students, it is the sine qua non of graduate studies in Oxford. Since the supervisor is the individual with whom a student will have almost exclusive contact, the importance of choosing him or her cannot be underestimated. I have benefited immensely from a supervisor who has consistently shown interest in my development as a historian of late medieval Christianity and as a scholar more generally, who has gone out of his way to argue on my behalf, and who has made it clear that the flourishing of his graduate students ranks high among his priorities. My time in Britain would have been significantly poorer without this support, and I would encourage students thinking about applying for a British graduate degree to identify a potential supervisor and to get a sense of what a working relationship with him or her might be like before signing on the dotted line.

The intellectual independence I have enjoyed and the close relationship I have developed with my advisor have been at the heart of my Oxford experience. I have also gained from being in close proximity to archives of primary sources and to a community of scholars of late medieval and early modern England likely unequalled outside the United Kingdom. These and other circumstances have made my decision to come to Oxford the right one for me, but it is not necessarily right for everyone. Some will prefer a broader program of study; others will benefit from the more structured approach of North American universities.

But for those who do choose to pursue their graduate work overseas, and who wish ultimately to return to the United States, a word of warning. I have often found myself tempted to lose touch with North American academe, and I am grateful that a number of mentors reminded me to forge connections and attend conferences on both sides of the Atlantic, to stay involved with the AAR and other professional organizations, and to seek out teaching opportunities, where possible, in both systems. Indeed, there are more than pragmatic gains to be realized, not least because the opportunity to learn and to teach in both the highly individualized British tradition and its broader-based American counterpart can lead to the cross-pollination of ideas and practices within academic specialities and with regard to pedagogy.

So should American applicants to graduate school be worried about “getting stuck” overseas? Some may well decide to remain abroad of their own volition. But with some careful choices during the application process and some careful planning after ward, no one need be permanently disadvantaged by the presence of a long-term student visa in a passport.
Research Briefing

A Pivotal Decade in the Life and Work of I. B. Horner

Grace G. Burford, Prescott College

For most of the twentieth century, British scholar Isaline B. Horner (1896–1981) devoted her considerable intelligence, time, energy, leadership, and finances to establishing an understanding of Buddhism in the West based on careful study of texts that constitute the scriptures, written in the Pāli language. Horner continued her discussions of religion in her correspondence with D. J. Stephen. In 1923 Horner became the librarian at Newnham College, a position she would hold until she left Cambridge in 1936. In 1925 Horner contacted then–PTS president Caroline Rhys Davids and expressed an interest in learning more about Buddhism. It was Rhys Davids — herself a dedicated feminist — who suggested the topic of women and Buddhism to Horner. For the latter half of the 1920s Horner immersed herself in the study of Theravāda Buddhism in Western and Asian countries today. In the summer of 1926 Horner began her most significant personal relationship, with fellow Newnham scholar Elsie Butler.

Grace G. Burford is (the only) Professor of Religious Studies at Prescott College in Prescott, Arizona, where she teaches in the Cultural and Regional Studies Program about the connections among religions, modernization and globalization, social change, gender and sexuality, peace studies, science, and environmentalism. She also offers courses on Buddhism and on the varieties of religious experience. Her research for her first book, Desire, Death, and Goodness: The Conflict of Ultimate Values in Theravāda Buddhism, utilized a lot of the work on Pāli texts done by I. B. Horner and the Pāli Text Society. She is currently researching the life and work of Horner, a twentieth century British scholar of Buddhism.

Horner's upbringing and education prepared her for a life of international travel, language study, and a focus on women. Raised in a moneyed middle-class family at a time when women were beginning to break into higher education, Horner attended (1914–17) one of the two newly established women's colleges at Cambridge University, Newnham College.

What would, indeed, become a life of travel, study, and focus on women began to blossom for Horner in the 1920s. In 1920, the principal of Newnham suggested that Horner accompany the principal's sister, D. J. Stephen, to India to establish a Christian college for women. Stephen needed a traveling companion and Horner leapt at the opportunity, although she firmly rejected Christianity herself. During her two years (1921–23) in India, Horner exhibited a keen intellectual interest in religion and included in her letters home detailed descriptions of the exotic Hindu activities she witnessed. But she reserved her personal enthusiasm and immersion in those of us who work in primarily under-graduate teaching positions at small colleges. I extend my thanks to include the members of the Lesbian and Feminist Issues in Religion Group of the AAR, whose interest in the life and work of I. B. Horner inspires me to continue this research.

Thus, in this one decade, Horner made her first trip to Asia, developed an interest in Theravāda Buddhism, established a friendship with D. J. Stephen (with whom she engaged in extensive correspondence on matters related to religion), undertook the study of Pāli language and Theravāda Buddhism, began her working relationship with Caroline Rhys Davids (who would serve as Horner’s most significant mentor in the study of Pāli language and texts until Rhys Davids’s death in 1941), and fell in love with Elsie Butler (Horner and Butler remained together until Butler’s death in 1959). All of these developments fed into Horner’s lifelong interest in women in Buddhism, and established patterns that would play out for the rest of her life.

I am grateful to the American Academy of Religion both for the research grant that contributed to my work on this project during the summer of 2006 and for the ongoing professional community it provides. Both are particularly helpful to those of us who work in primarily under-graduate teaching positions at small colleges.

Pedagogy of Difficult Conversations Grant Recipients

Aquinas Institute of Theology (Ann Garrido & Gregory Heilke, project directors) $19,975

Pursuing a Culture of Engaged Conversation for School and Church

Drury University (Teresa Hornsby, project director) $17,435

The Most Difficult Religious Conversations: Pedagogical Strategies for Teaching the Complexities of Abortion

Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (Stephen G. Ray, Jr., project director) $20,000

Knowing Too Much, Understanding Too Little: Overcoming Alienation and Presumed Epistemically Privileged as Learning Barriers in Courses about the Black Christian Tradition

New Brunswick Theological Seminary (Virginia Wiles, project director) $19,976

How Can You Say That? Choosing Challenging Conversations

Texas Christian University (Melanie Harris, project director) $20,000

Teaching into the Difficult: Racial Ethnic Woman Professor—White University

United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities (Sharon Tan, project director) $10,967

The Pedagogy of Difficult Conversations: Seeking Theological and Cultural Diversity in a Liberal Seminary

Western Theological Seminary (Cynthia Holder Rich, project director) $20,000

Engaging the Pedagogy of Difficult Conversations

Funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. and located at Wabash College

Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion

Announcing...
An overwhelming 94.5 percent of survey respondents thought the 2007 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 San Diego 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 around the world; 56 nationalities were represented. Canadians made up the largest international group with 390 attendees, followed by the United Kingdom (283), Germany (87), the Netherlands (67), Australia (53), and Israel (45). California was the best-represented state in 2007 with 1,966 attendees, followed by Illinois (519), New York (492), Texas (424), Massachusetts (411), and Pennsylvania (380). AAR’s 2007 international focus was on China, and the Annual Meeting hosted 36 attendees from China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, including 11 AAR travel subsidy recipients. Consequently, the 2008 international focus on South Asia and South Asian scholarship should encourage participants from that region.

Once again, Annual Meeting registration and housing was handled by Experient. Satisfaction with the registration and housing process was very high; 96 percent of respondents rated the process positively. The peak hotel night was Saturday, November 17, with over 4,500 hotel rooms in use. Overall more than 19,800 room nights were occupied during the meeting.

The comments from survey respondents were generally positive. The most frequent complaint was about the long walks between the Convention Center, the Marriott Marina, and the Grand Hyatt. Because the American Association of Pharmaceutical Sciences meeting overlapped with the AAR and SBL move-in day on Thursday, November 15, we were unable to secure the exhibit halls on the west wing of the Convention Center, closer to the headquarters hotels. This left us with Halls F and G on the east wing of the building. Because the meeting rooms were larger and more plentiful in the east wing (above the exhibit hall), we decided to utilize them instead of the west wing meeting space. The AAR will address this issue in Chicago by holding the vast majority of its sessions in the Chicago Hilton Towers Hotel, with additional meetings and some overflow in the Palmer House Hilton Hotel. The shuttle loop will run between the two hotels on a regular basis.

The Annual Meeting Satisfaction Survey is sent via e-mail to all AAR members (over 12,400) at the conclusion of each meeting and is offered online at the AAR website. The number of responses this year was 1,157, which represents about 9.5 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 meeting.
**Media Attend the 2007 Annual Meeting**


Prior to the start of the meeting, the Associated Press published a story about one AAR panel in particular, the Religion and Popular Culture Group’s “Evolutionary Controversy and a Side of Pasta: The Flying Spaghetti Monster and the Subversive Function of Religious Parody.” The story was picked up by CNN and more than 125 other national and international news outlets. Several panelists were featured in the article.

The AAR hosted its fourth annual reception for journalists prior to Saturday evening’s awards ceremony. At the reception, two winners of the 2007 AAR Awards for Best In-Depth Reporting were honored for their outstanding contributions to religion newswriting.

**With Gratitude!**

THE AAR WOULD like to thank the following co-sponsors of these Chinese scholars at the 2007 Annual Meeting. To co-sponsor a South Asian scholar this year, contact Kyle Cole, Director of Professional Programs, at kcole@aarweb.org.

- Princeton University and Harvard University – Chunwen Hao, Capital Normal University
- Lafayette College – Yen-zen Tsai, National Chengchi University
- College of New Jersey – Zhihua Yao, Chinese University of Hong Kong
- Columbia University and the University of Chicago – Xin Yu, Fudan University
- Humboldt State University and Indiana University, Bloomington – Weichi Zhou, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
- University of Arizona – Rosemary Carbine, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
- University of California, Berkeley (Religion in South Asia Section) – Moses N. Moore, Arizona State University (Comparative Theology Consultation)
- University of California, Santa Barbara – Jay E. Johnson, Pacific School of Religion (Gay Men’s Issues in Religion Group)
- University of Colorado, Boulder – Steven Engler, Bangor University (Comparative Religion Group)
- University of Connecticut (Korean Religions Group) – Jung Ha Kim, Georgia State University
- University of Florida – Oren Stier, Florida International University (Afro–American Religious Traditions Group)
- University of Illinois at Chicago – John Goulde, Sweet Briar College (Korean Religions Group)
- University of Iowa (Christian Systematic Theology Section) – Selva Raj, Albion College (Comparative Studies in Religion Group)
- University of Kentucky (Religion, Holocaust, and Genocide Group) – Michael McNally, Carleton College (Native Traditions in the Americas Group)
- University of Maryland, College Park (Comparative Studies in Religion Group) – Donald L. Boisvert, Concordia University (Gay Men’s Issues in Religion Group)
- University of Massachusetts, Amherst (Nineteenth-Century Theology Group) – Amir Hussain, Loyola Marymount University (Religion, Film, and Visual Culture Group)
- University of Michigan, Ann Arbor (American Religion Group) – Richendaelectra D. Ogedee, Yale University (Biblical/Contextual Ethics Consultation)
- University of Minnesota (Comparative Theology Consultation) – Donald L. Boisvert, Concordia University (Christian Systematic Theology Section)
- University of Notre Dame (Religion in South Asia Section) – Thomas A. Carlson, University of Tennessee, Knoxville (Comparative Religion Group)
- University of North Carolina Greensboro (Christian Systematic Theology Section) – Kip Eldred, Emmanuel School of Religion (African Religions Group)
- University of Oregon (Biblical/Contextual Ethics Consultation) – Steven Engler, Bangor University (Comparative Religion Group)
- University of Pennsylvania (Pragmatism and Empiricism in American Religious Thought Group) – Richard C. Martin, Emsary University (Comparative Islam Consultation)
- University of Pennsylvania (Comparative Theology Consultation) – Jane Dammann McNulife, Georgetown University (Qur’an Group)
- University of Pennsylvania (Christian Systematic Theology Section) – K. Steve McCormick, Nazarene Theological Seminary (Wesleyan Studies Group)
- University of Pennsylvania (Christian Systematic Theology Section) – Michael McNally, Carleton College (Native Traditions in the Americas Group)
- University of Pennsylvania (Comparative Religion Group) – Bonnie Miller–McLemore, Vanderbilt University (Practical Theology Group)
- University of Pennsylvania (Comparative Religion Group) – Moses N. Moore, Arizona State University (Afro–American Religious Traditions Group)
- University of Pennsylvania (Comparative Religion Group) – Thomas W. Ogletree, Yale University (Comparative Religion Group)
- University of Pittsburgh (Philosophy of Religion Section) – Donald L. Boisvert, Concordia University (Christian Systematic Theology Section)
- University of Virginia (Arts, Literature, and Religion Section) – Jennifer L. Geddes, University of Virginia (Religion, Film, and Visual Culture Group)
- Washington University (Biblical/Contextual Ethics Consultation) – Steven Engler, Bangor University (Comparative Religion Group)
- Wesleyan University (Qur’an Group) – Richard C. Martin, Emsary University (Comparative Islam Consultation)
- Western Michigan University (Comparative Religion Group) – Jane Dammann McNulife, Georgetown University (Qur’an Group)
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- Western Michigan University (Comparative Religion Group) – Jeanette Reedy Solano, California State University, Fullerton (Religion in Latin America and the Caribbean Group)
- Western Michigan University (Comparative Religion Group) – Cynthia Rigby, Austin Theological Seminary (Christian Systematic Theology Section)
- Western Michigan University (Comparative Religion Group) – Donna Seamone, Acadia University (Ritual Studies Group)
- Western Michigan University (Comparative Religion Group) – Teresa M. Shaw, Claremont Graduate University (Afro–American Religious Traditions Group)
- Western Michigan University (Comparative Religion Group) – Robert J. Sherman, Bangor Theological Seminary (Reformed Theology and History Group)
- Western Michigan University (Comparative Religion Group) – Glen Stassen, Fuller Theological Seminary (Comparative Religion Group)
- Western Michigan University (Comparative Religion Group) – Oren Stier, Florida International University (Religion, Holocaust, and Genocide Group)
- Western Michigan University (Comparative Religion Group) – Ines M. Talamantez, University of California, Santa Barbara (Comparative Religion Group)
- Western Michigan University (Comparative Religion Group) – Tracy Tiermeier, Loyola Marymount University (Comparative Religion Group)
- Western Michigan University (Comparative Religion Group) – Anne Joh, Phillips Theological Seminary (Asian North American Religion, Culture, and Society Group)
- Western Michigan University (Comparative Religion Group) – Parimal Patil, Harvard University (Religion in South Asia Section)
- Western Michigan University (Comparative Religion Group) – Greg Peterson, South Dakota State University (Science, Technology, and Religion Group)
- Western Michigan University (Comparative Religion Group) – Barbara Pitkin, Stanford University (Childhood Studies and Religion Consultation)
- Western Michigan University (Comparative Religion Group) – S. Brent Plate, Texas Christian University (Arts, Literature, and Religion Section)
- Western Michigan University (Comparative Religion Group) – Selva Raj, Albion College (Comparative Studies in Religion Section)
- Western Michigan University (Comparative Religion Group) – Jeanette Reedy Solano, California State University, Fullerton (Religion in Latin America and the Caribbean Group)

With Gratitude!}

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- University of Iowa (Christian Systematic Theology Section) – Selva Raj, Albion College (Comparative Studies in Religion Group)
- University of Kentucky (Religion, Holocaust, and Genocide Group) – Michael McNally, Carleton College (Native Traditions in the Americas Group)
- University of Maryland, College Park (Comparative Religion Group) – Donald L. Boisvert, Concordia University (Christian Systematic Theology Section)
- University of Pennsylvania (Comparative Religion Group) – Donald L. Boisvert, Concordia University (Christian Systematic Theology Section)
- University of Pennsylvania (Comparative Religion Group) – Jane Dammann McNulife, Georgetown University (Qur’an Group)
- University of Pennsylvania (Comparative Religion Group) – K. Steve McCormick, Nazarene Theological Seminary (Wesleyan Studies Group)
- University of Pennsylvania (Comparative Religion Group) – Michael McNally, Carleton College (Native Traditions in the Americas Group)
- University of Pennsylvania (Comparative Religion Group) – Bonnie Miller–McLemore, Vanderbilt University (Practical Theology Group)
- University of Pennsylvania (Comparative Religion Group) – Moses N. Moore, Arizona State University (Afro–American Religious Traditions Group)
- University of Pennsylvania (Comparative Religion Group) – Thomas W. Ogletree, Yale University (Comparative Religion Group)
- University of Pennsylvania (Comparative Religion Group) – Donald L. Boisvert, Concordia University (Christian Systematic Theology Section)
- University of Pennsylvania (Comparative Religion Group) – Jeanette Reedy Solano, California State University, Fullerton (Religion in Latin America and the Caribbean Group)
- University of Pennsylvania (Comparative Religion Group) – Cynthia Rigby, Austin Theological Seminary (Christian Systematic Theology Section)
- University of Pennsylvania (Comparative Religion Group) – Donna Seamone, Acadia University (Ritual Studies Group)
- University of Pennsylvania (Comparative Religion Group) – Teresa M. Shaw, Claremont Graduate University (Afro–American Religious Traditions Group)
- University of Pennsylvania (Comparative Religion Group) – Robert J. Sherman, Bangor Theological Seminary (Reformed Theology and History Group)
- University of Pennsylvania (Comparative Religion Group) – Glen Stassen, Fuller Theological Seminary (Comparative Religion Group)
- University of Pennsylvania (Comparative Religion Group) – Oren Stier, Florida International University (Religion, Holocaust, and Genocide Group)
- University of Pennsylvania (Comparative Religion Group) – Ines M. Talamantez, University of California, Santa Barbara (Comparative Religion Group)
- University of Pennsylvania (Comparative Religion Group) – Tracy Tiermeier, Loyola Marymount University (Comparative Religion Group)

2007 Martin Marty Award Winner, Robert N. Bellah, speaks to the audience.
Candidate Registration Trend Continues at EIS Center

The 2007 Employment Information Services Center (EIS) saw a total of 669 candidates and 152 employers, continuing a trend from the previous year. In 2006 EIS saw a dramatic 46 percent rise in candidate registrations, and 2007 registrations were only slightly less (which is expected at a West Coast meeting). These figures indicate that the number of job seekers has increased greatly while the number of available jobs is increasing only moderately. The ratio of registered jobs to registered candidates in 2007 was 1:4.4.

The EIS Center was jointly hosted by the AAR and the SBL at the San Diego 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 on page 25). 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 specializations, as long as each person can teach the general courses. In contrast, a candidate’s primary choice is usually his or her area of research; they can teach more broadly. Take Introduction to Religion as an example. One need not specialize in this area to teach such a course. So despite the fact that the classification had a 1:1 primary ratio in 2007, candidates who chose this classification 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 2007, it might seem that each candidate in that field had a 75 percent chance of getting a job. However, many candidates who chose Hinduism or Buddhism as their specialty have the ability to teach Asian religions. So employers needing an Asian religions teacher are not limited only to those candidates who consider it to be their specialty. This is where the “all” columns come into play. These columns indicate the total number of times a classification was chosen as either primary or “additional.” These columns often give better indication of the ratio of positions to candidates within a particular subfield. Take the example from above. Many of the candidates who chose Hinduism or Buddhism as their primary classification likely chose Asian Religions as an additional choice. Therefore, the position-to-candidate ratio of 19:37 (or 1:2) 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. Such data is available upon request from Jessica Davenport at jdavenport@aarweb.org.

EIS Center Registration 2005–2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employers</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2005</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positions Registered</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>148</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Institutions Registered</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>126</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preregistered</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Onsite</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio of Positions to Candidates</td>
<td>1:4.4</td>
<td>1:4.27</td>
<td>1:3.47</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2005</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Registered</td>
<td>669</td>
<td>747</td>
<td>513</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preregistered</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>722</td>
<td>419</td>
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<tr>
<td>Registered Onsite</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>94</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female Participants</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>224</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male Participants</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>217</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did Not Report Gender</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio of Female to Male</td>
<td>1:2.1</td>
<td>1:2.1</td>
<td>1:1.5</td>
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</table>

See additional 2005–2007 registration data in the chart at right.

AAR Career Services

Visit the AAR’s new Career Services webpage at www.aarweb.org/jump/careers for these services:

- Job Postings
- Annual Meeting Job Center
- Candidate CVs
- Workshop Information
- Employment Statistics
- Articles Discussing Career Issues

Also see the article on page 7 for information about the 2008 Job Center.
### 2007 ANNUAL MEETING NEWS

#### Job Classifications

<table>
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<td>All</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Primary</td>
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<td><strong>Ancient Near Eastern Languages</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Archaeology — Greco-Roman</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Asian Religions (general or not listed separately)</strong></td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td><strong>Catholic Theology (all areas)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Christian Theology (general or not listed separately)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Hebrew Bible/Old Testament</strong></td>
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<td><strong>History of Religion (general)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Islam</strong></td>
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<td><strong>New Testament</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>150</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>669</td>
<td>1903</td>
<td>174</td>
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</table>
To get a more accurate picture of employment trends in the field, the AAR and the SBL have expanded their data collection efforts. Employment Information Services (EIS) created a web-based, anonymous survey to track hirings by specialization and to collect demographic information on job candidates. In spring 2007, surveys were sent to all candidates who had registered for the 2006 EIS Center and to all employers who had advertised a position in *Openings* in 2006. Presented here are highlights of the data received.

Complete results, including new data on the PhD-granting institutions of candidates who received a position offer, can be found at www.aarweb.org/jump/eis. This ongoing project will provide longitudinal data.

### Employer Survey Data

Out of 567 employer solicitations, 201 responses were received (35 percent response rate). Eighty-six percent of those who responded filled the position which they had advertised in *Openings*. Of the 172 positions filled, 80 percent of the employers report interviewing the applicant at the EIS Center. The majority of the positions filled were at the assistant professor level (61 percent), followed by associate professor (15 percent), full professor (9 percent), lecturer (6 percent), instructor (5 percent) and visiting (5 percent), with 3 percent of the positions ranked as "other." Sixty-three percent of the positions were tenure-track, 18 percent were tenured, 17 percent were nontenure-track, and less than 2 percent were either limited or adjunct. None were reported as a joint appointment. Sixty-five percent of the appointees were male; 35 percent were female. The racial/ethnic distribution of the appointees was as follows: 75 percent Caucasian or Euro-American, 6 percent Asian or Pacific Islander, 6 percent Latino/a or Hispanic, 1 percent African-American or black, 2 percent multiracial, and 12 percent reported "other."

### Candidate Survey Data

Out of 746 candidate solicitations, 263 responses were received (45.25 percent response rate). When asked to indicate employment status during the search, 46 percent reported being a graduate student, 35 percent reported full-time/nontenure-track faculty (Candidates could select more than one response), Seventy-two percent reported being a graduate student (40 percent), part-time/adjunct faculty (40 percent), full-time/nontenure-track faculty (21 percent), and teaching assistant (4 percent) (Candidates could select more than one response). Eighteen percent did not know the time of the survey what they would do the following academic year.

### Candidate Demographics

Sixty-two percent of the candidates who registered for the 2006 EIS Center were male; 38 percent were female. Regarding race/ethnicity, 86 percent of the registrants reported their race/ethnicity as Caucasian or Euro-American, 4.5 percent African-American or black, 4 percent Asian or Pacific Islander, 2 percent multicultural, 2 percent Latino/a or Hispanic, 0.5 percent American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 1 percent chose "other." In terms of citizenship, 85 percent were United States citizens, 6 percent were noncitizen residents of the United States, 5 percent were citizens of Canada, and 4 percent reported their citizenship as "other."

### Job Offers

Of the 102 candidates who accepted positions, 72 percent reported feeling satisfied with the position, and 3 percent report being thrilled with the new position, 25 percent report feeling satisfied with the position, and 3 percent report feeling unsatisfied. None reported feeling deeply unhappy about the position.

### Job Search Experience

Most responding candidates (90 percent) reported 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 marital status, partner’s career, partner’s willingness to relocate, and religious beliefs. Sixty-nine percent reported that the interviewer directly asked an inappropriate question. Forty-three percent stated the interviewer indirectly broached an inappropriate topic. Eighty-eight percent of the respondents answered the question truthfully, while 22 percent changed the topic in order to avoid the question. Forty-seven percent are not sure whether their answer was to their advantage or disadvantage. Thirty-seven percent believe their answer was to their disadvantage and 16 percent believe it was to their advantage.
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