2008 Annual Meeting News

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IN THIS ISSUE OF
Spotlight on Teaching:
Signifying (on) Scriptures:
Text(ures) and Orientations
Dear Readers,

As many of you look forward to the end of the semester, we in the executive office are excited to present another issue of the Academy's newspaper of record. Of particular note in the Focus section of Religious Studies News is the unveiling of our most recent survey of the undergraduate study of religion. The results of this important survey are being published here for the first time. The complete survey, together with analysis, will be posted on our website this summer. Also in this section is a report on a relatively new trend — undergraduate research in religious studies.

In the March RSN we published the results of our survey of the membership regarding our Annual Meeting. At the April meeting of the Board, the results of the survey were discussed and in this topic you will also see the Board's action regarding the Religious Studies News: The newspaper of record for the field especially designed to serve the professional needs of persons interested in teaching and scholarship in religion. 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 the services and programs of the AAR and other organizations, including employment services and registration information for the AAR Annual Meeting.

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

[FROM THE EDITOR]

2008 Member Calendar

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

May
- Spotlight on Teaching Spring issue.
- 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 Regional international meeting, Montreal, Quebec.
- May 15. Change of due date for priority receipt of the Annual Meeting Program Planner. Programs Planners will be mailed to members in late May.
- (For more Annual Meeting information, see www.aarweb.org/AnnualMeeting/Current_Meeting).

June
- June 15. Membership renewal deadline for 2008 Annual Meeting participants.
- (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.

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.
- October 13. Annual Meeting Job Center pre-registration closes.
- (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. Fall Board of Directors meeting, Chicago, IL.
- October 31. Chair 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.
- Regionally established RSN. For more information, see www.aarweb.org/Publications/RSN.

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.

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/submita/submit.announce.

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/jump/jobpostings.

2008 AAR Staff Directory

Kyle Cole
Director of Professional Programs
E-MAIL: kcole@aarweb.org
TEL: 404-727-1489

Jennifer Davenport
Associate Director of Professional Programs
E-MAIL: jdavenp@aarweb.org
TEL: 404-727-7907

Joe DeRose
Director of Technology Services
E-MAIL: jrose@aarweb.org
TEL: 404-727-7972

Toby Director
Finance and Administration Coordinator
E-MAIL: tdirector@aarweb.org
TEL: 404-727-3503

Lisa Ferrai
Associate Director of Finance and Administration
E-MAIL: lisa@aarweb.org
TEL: 404-727-2331

John Fixmier
Executive Director
E-MAIL: jfixmier@aarweb.org
TEL: 404-727-3049

Caron J. Gifford
Executive Director
E-MAIL: cgifford@aarweb.org
TEL: 404-727-2279

Stephanie Gray
Associate Director of Publications
E-MAIL: sgray@aarweb.org
TEL: 404-727-3059

Steve Herrick
Director of External Relations
E-MAIL: sherrick@aarweb.org
TEL: 404-727-7961

Margaret J. Jenkins
Director of Development
E-MAIL: mjenkins@aarweb.org
TEL: 404-727-7928

Myesha D. Jenkins
Director of Membership Development
E-MAIL: mjjenkins@aarweb.org
TEL: 404-727-3026

Aislinn Jones
Director of Meetings and Marketing
E-MAIL: ajones@aarweb.org
TEL: 404-727-8132

Dr. Deanna Lord
Director of Development
E-MAIL: dlord@aarweb.org
TEL: 404-727-3049

Aline Jones
Director of Meetings and Marketing
E-MAIL: aimeers@aarweb.org
TEL: 404-727-7954

Robert Puckett
Associate Director of Meetings
E-MAIL: rpuckett@aarweb.org
TEL: 404-527-1461

Susan Sudder
Associate Director of External Relations
E-MAIL: sudder@aarweb.org
TEL: 404-727-6273

Religious Studies News (USPS 841-720) is published quarterly by the American Academy of Religion, 825 Houston Mill Road, Suite 300, Atlanta, GA 30329 USA. 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 the services and programs of the AAR and other organizations, including employment services and registration information for the AAR Annual Meeting.

For writing and advertising guidelines, please see www.aarweb.org/publications/rsn.
2008 Plenary Speakers

Exploring the Soul of Human Community

Saturday 11:45 AM–12:45 PM
Nikky Finney, University of Kentucky

Poet Nikky Finney, a native of South Carolina, is an associate professor of creative writing at the University of Kentucky. She is also a founding member of the Affrilachian Poets, a community-based writing collective that, as the name sug- gests, acknowledges and celebrates the role African Americans have played in the development of the culture of Appalachia. Finney is the author of a collection of short stories and two books of poetry, Wings Made of Gauntlet and Rice. She and her work are also featured in a video about the Affrilachian Poets. Coal Black Voices, Finney has received an Al Smith Fellowship from the Kentucky Arts Council for her work.

2008 Presidential Address

Saturday 8:00 PM–9:00 PM
Emilie M. Townes, Yale Divinity School

Emilie M. Townes, Andrew W. Mellon Professor of American Religion and Theology at Yale University, has been instrumental in constructing womanist the- ology. Her books, Womanist Justice, Womanist Hope; In a Blaze of Glory: Womanist Spirituality as Social Witness; Breaking the Fine Rain of Death: African American Health Care; and A Womanist Ethic of Care are considered ground-breaking texts in the field. An ordained American Baptist clergywoman, Townes served as an interim minister at the Ethiopian Redemer Metropolitan Community Church in Evanston, Illinois, and held teaching positions at theological schools and seminaries, including Union Theological Seminary. She holds three degrees from the University of Chicago: a Bachelor of Arts, a Master of Arts from the Divinity School, and a Doctor of Ministry. She earned a PhD from the joint Garrett–Evangelical Theological Seminary/ Northwestern University Program in Religious and Theological Studies.

How I’ve Changed My Mind (or Not)

Sunday 7:15–8:15 PM
Charles H. Long, Chapel Hill, NC

Charles H. Long, after attending Dunbar Junior College and volunteering for the U.S. Army Air Force during World War II, received a DB and PhD from the University of Chicago. He joined Mirecea Eliade and Joseph Kitagawa in establishing the international journal History of Religions. Along with a group of his colleagues, he established the first curriculum for the study of religion at the University of Chicago. Long has been involved in the training of three generations of scholars in religion and African-American studies. He has a unique perspective from which to speak about the general meaning of religion in history and culture, and specifically about African religions in Africa and in the Atlantic world. Long has served on the fac- ulties at the University of Chicago, University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill, and Syracuse University, and is professor emeritus at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He is the author of several books, including Significations.

The Journey of Black Sacred Music

Monday 11:45 AM–12:45 PM
Nolan Williams Jr., Washington, D.C.

Even a cursory look at the career of Nolan Williams Jr. reveals the story of an excep- tional young man gifted with extraordinary talent. A musical prodigy since age four, Williams has emerged as a significant presence in the music world with his chief- editorial leadership of the landmark The African-American Hymnal; his premiere orchestrations performed by some of the country’s leading orchestras; and his musical direction for events of national and international prominence, such as inaugural events for Presidents Clinton and Bush and a U.S. celebration of South African President Nelson Mandela. Williams has also received Grammy nominations for his songwriting projects and has worked collabora- tively with major gospel and mainstream artists such as Diana Ross, Yolanda Adams, Erkyah Badu, Donnie McClurkin, and Sean Combs. Williams lives in Washington, D.C., where he is Minister of Music at the Metropolitan Baptist Church.

Special Invited Guests

Michael Heller, 2008 Templeton Prize Winner

Michael Heller, Professor of Philosophy at the Pontifical Academy of Theology in Cracow, Poland, is a cosmologist and Catholic priest who has developed sharply focused and strikingly original concepts on the origin and cause of the universe. He earned masters in theology and philosophy and a PhD in philosophy from the Catholic University of Lublin. His studies were largely in physics, but authorities pre- vented the university from granting degrees in that discipline. He has served as researcher at the Institute of Astrophysics at Oxford University and the Vatican Observatory. Heller is a compelling figure in physics, cosmology, theology, and philoso- phy with provocative concepts on issues that all of these disciplines pursue, albeit from vastly different perspectives. His aca- demic and religious background enables him to comfortably and credibly move within each of these domains, and his extraordinary writings have evoked new and important consideration of humankind’s most profound concepts.

Father Patrick Desbois

French Catholic priest and interfaith activist, Father Patrick Desbois will speak on his research in the Ukraine. Desbois has devoted his career in recent years to uncovering mass graves from the Holocaust in the Ukraine and interviewing eyewitnesses of the atrocities. He and his team have now found some 700 of an esti- mated 2,000 mass graves of Jewish victims, and he has collected over 700 oral testi- monies from those who witnessed the vio- lence (many of them as children).

Simultaneously his research team has used the archival holdings of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum to substanti- ate these oral histories, and in so doing he has changed our understanding of how the Holocaust occurred in that part of Europe. His work is a fascinating and profound example of the post-genocidal task of estab- lishing the truth and creating a ground for reconciliation.

Krista Tippett

Host of Speaking of Faith, a weekly National Public Radio program, Krista Tippett probes the myriad ways in which religious impulses inform every aspect of life and culture, nationally and globally. Speaking of Faith fills an important and neglected need in American media by addressing the intel- lectual and spiritual content of religion head-on, illuminating the ideas and prac- tices that form the headlines from the inside. A journalist and former diplomat, Tippett has hosted and produced the pro- gram since the Speaking of Faith project began as an occasional feature in 2000, before taking on its current form as a national weekly program in 2003. She is a graduate of Yale Divinity School and a for- mer Fulbright Scholar. She has reported and written for The New York Times, Newsweek, the BBC, and other internation- al news organizations. Tippett also serves as special assistant to the United States ambas- sador to West Germany.

Martin E. Marty

Martin E. Marty is one of the most promi- nent interpreters of religion and culture today. Author of more than 50 books, Marty is a speaker, columnist, pastor, and teacher. He is professor emeritus at the University of Chicago Divinity School and a for- mer Fullbright Scholar. He has reported and written for The New York Times, Newsweek, the BBC, and other internation- al news organizations. Tippett also served as special assistant to the United States ambas- sador to West Germany.

Future AAR Annual Meeting Dates and Sites

2008 — Chicago, IL
November 1–3

2009 — Montréal, QC, Canada
November 7–10

2010 — Atlanta, GA
October 30–November 2

2011 — San Francisco, CA
November 19–22

2012 — Atlanta, GA
November 3–6
Taking Religion(s) Seriously: What Students Need to Know

KRISTA TIPPETT, the host of Minnesota Public Radio's popular Speaking of Faith program, will open the Academic Relations Committee’s annual Leadership Workshop during the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Chicago on Friday, October 31.

The daylong 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.

“The goal of the workshop is that all students learn to think seriously about the ways religion(s) impacts public life and their role as citizens. This may be a common goal of religion courses offered at all sorts of institutions; however, this objective is not always articulated and may be submerged in more specialized concerns. In this workshop we explore what this goal entails and then invite participants to consider how the curriculum they oversee addresses (or could address) it, how the mission and culture of their institution shape 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, Tippett will open with a discussion of “Educating Students for Public Life.”

“We are fortunate to have Krista Tippett address this topic,” said Kyle Cole, AAR director of professional programs. “She brings a front-line perspective to the topic of religion and public life.”

After questions and answers, a panel discussion will follow, addressing “How does the goal that all students learn to think seriously about the ways religion impacts public life and their role as citizens interact with the mission and culture of your institution?” The concluding plenary will concentrate on a principal question: “How should this goal be assessed and how do you assess it?”

The workshop will expand a specific area addressed by the Eagle 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 by past workshop participants,” 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 $100, 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 – Honest 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.

9–9:15 Introductions
9:15–9:45 Educating students for public life
9:45–10:15 Break-out session

10:15–11 Panel discussion: How does this interact with the mission and culture of your institution?
11–12 Break-out session
12–1:15 Lunch
1:15–2 Assessment of your institution: How should this be assessed and how do you assess it?
2–3:30 Plenary session on objectives and assessments

The goal of the workshop is that all students learn to think seriously about the ways religion(s) impacts public life and their role as citizens. This may be a common goal of religion courses offered at all sorts of institutions; however, this objective is not always articulated and may be submerged in more specialized concerns. In this workshop we explore 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 shape 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.

TO REGISTER

Complete the information below, arrange payment, and send via fax or surface mail. You can also register online as 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 $100.00.

PAYMENT INFORMATION

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

☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ American Express ☐ Discover

Credit Card Number
Expiration Date

CID

Cardholder Signature

Name on Card (Please Print)

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.

American Academy of Religion
2451 Enterprise PKWY
 Twinsburg, OH 44087

USA
South Asian Contributions to the Study of Religion

International Focus for 2008 Annual Meeting

The Academy is committed to increasing its international membership and participation, as well as to deepening awareness of global contributions to the study of religion. In keeping with this charge, the International Connections Committee (ICC) has sponsored a focus on one region or theme at each AAR Annual Meeting since 2002. Previous years have highlighted Canadian, Japanese, Latin American, Eastern and Central European, African, and Chinese contributions to the field. At this year’s Annual Meeting in Chicago, the focus shifts to South Asia. Looking ahead, the Annual Meeting will concentrate on Globalization and Religious Studies in North America in 2009.

Beyond a series of Special Topics Forums and panels centered on a particular region, the ICC has encouraged incorporation of the area’s scholars of religion into panels across the full spectrum of AAR program units. Adding multiple dimensions to the International Focus, the committee has helped arrange films, plenary lectures, and other presentations associated with the year’s regional theme. In order to promote participation of international members at the Annual Meeting, the ICC has worked closely with the AAR executive office to raise scholarship funds for those who require financial assistance and to devise mechanisms for distributing travel assistance fairly.

This year, members of the ICC along with members of the numerous South Asia-related program units, have selected 13 scholars for full travel assistance packages in advance of the deadline for the submission of panel proposals for the Annual Meeting, which hopefully will further facilitate the integration of these scholars into the general program.

The ICC also sponsors two independent Special Topics Forums and offers four potential co-sponsorships of panels. Those program unit members seeking potential co-sponsorship for focus-related panels and events, therefore, should contact ICC Chair Richard Jaffe at richard.jaffe@duke.edu. The two planned Special Topics Forums for the Annual Meeting, which will center on various invited South Asian scholars, are “Art, Aesthetics, and Performance” and “Religion, Law, and Human Rights.”

Planning for the South Asia Focus at the upcoming Annual Meeting is being coordinated by a working group of AAR members from the various South Asia-related units and AAR committee members. We thank all those who have contributed their expertise and recommendations to the ICC thus far. Their goal has been not only to call attention to research by South Asian scholars, but also to provide an avenue for exploring central themes and issues for scholars in South Asian religions, to strengthen existing ties, and to enhance possibilities for future collaboration between South Asian scholars and members of the AAR.

We look forward to hosting and interacting with our South Asian colleagues at the Annual Meeting in Chicago.
Tour of Lake Calumet

Saturday, November 1, 9:00 AM

The Lake Calumet region on the far south side of Chicago provides a stunning example of the extremes of nature and culture in our industrialized world. Once the heart of a vast wet prairie system spanning 22,000 acres in Illinois alone, the area became the preferred dumping ground for Chicago’s industrial and municipal waste in the nineteenth century. Today just 500 acres of wetland remain, sandwiched between legal and illegal waste dumps, including a Superfund toxic waste site, and 2,000 acres of abandoned industrial lands. Yet nature does not give up so easily, and the area is also home to one of the greatest concentrations of threatened and endangered birds in Illinois, including the Midwest’s largest breeding colony of Black-crowned Night Herons. The City of Chicago and the State of Illinois are collaborating on a new Calumet Initiative to preserve natural areas and provide economic development for the Calumet, one result of which is a new Ford Calumet Environmental Center that will be built with recycled steel from abandoned industrial sites nearby.

On this bus tour led by community activists, we will see the lows and highs of the Calumet region’s industrial and natural history, and hear about the efforts of local residents to fight dumping and advocate for sustainable development of their neighborhoods. Sites to be visited on the tour may include Dead Stick Pond (familiar to fans of mystery writer Sara Paretsky), Big Marsh and the adjacent Acme Steel Coke Plant, the abandoned but soon-to-be-redeveloped U.S. Steel South Works site, as well as numerous dump sites and wetlands in the process of being restored. Tour fee: $50.

Architecture and Urban Planning: The Ethical and Environmental Functions of Architecture

Saturday, November 1, 9:00 AM

The Society for the Arts in Religious and Theological Studies (SARTS) invites the AAR membership to join them on a tour of new Chicago landmarks. The tour has been organized by SARTS member Judith Dupré, noted author of Skylines (1996), Bridges (1997), Churcher (2001), and monumenten (2007). The morning program will begin with a brief reception and talk about Chicago architecture, held at the offices of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM), led by SOM design partner Leigh Breslau, whose work focuses on arts and public assembly projects. SOM has designed and engineered landmark structures around the world, including, in Chicago, the Sears Tower, John Hancock Tower, Trump International Hotel and Tower, and the master plan for Millennium Park. The firm’s houses of worship include the United States Air Force Academy Chapel in Colorado, the Islamic Cultural Center in Manhattan, and the forthcoming Cathedral of Christ the Light in Oakland. They also have designed four of the ten tallest buildings in the world, including the Burj Dubai and the Freedom Tower at the World Trade Center in New York.

Following this presentation, a walking tour of nearby Chicago landmarks will include Millennium Park (Chicago’s award-winning center for art, music, architecture, and landscape design, which features the work of world-renowned architects, planners, artists, and designers including Frank Gehry’s Jay Pritzker Pavilion and Anish Kapoor’s Cloud Gate sculpture on the AT&T Plaza), the Chicago Tribune Tower, Marina City, and Chicago’s newest skyscraper, the Trump International Tower. The tour is free, but registration is limited.

Sacred and Religious Sites of Chicago Bus Tour

Monday, November 3, 1:00 PM

Tour Guides: Daniel Sack, University of Chicago; Jeanne Halgren Kilde, University of Minnesota; and Peter Williams, Miami University. Located at the crossroads of Chicago is a city of great religious diversity. Even if you’ve been on a sacred sites tour in Chicago before, this year you’ll visit the south side, seeing three religious landmarks you may have missed.

KAM Isaiah Israel is the oldest synagogue in Chicago, and very possibly the oldest in the Midwest, founded in 1847 as Kehilath Anshe Ma’arav (KAM), the Congregation of the Men of the West. In 1971, KAM merged with Temple Isaiah Israel to become a leader in the Reform movement. The current structure, built for Temple Isaiah Israel in 1924, was designed by Alfred Alschuler. After viewing photographs of fragments of a second-century synagogue unearthed at Tiberias by Professor Nahum Slouschno, Alschuler adapted its motifs resembling those used in architecture of the Byzantine period and incorporated them in his ornamental designs for the building.

Rockefeller Memorial Chapel opened in 1928 as the spiritual and ceremonial center of the University of Chicago. It was a gift of John D. Rockefeller and designed by Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue. It combines Gothic, Byzantine, and Romanesque features in a style designed to serve as both a Christian and nonreligious place of meeting, a place for sacred arts, and a place of worship. The chapel’s carillon, the second largest in the world, is named in honor of Rockefeller’s wife, Laura Spellman Rockefeller.

Trinity United Church of Christ, in the Princeton Park neighborhood, since its start forty-five years ago has become the largest congregation in its largely white denomination. Declaring itself “Unashamedly Black and Unapologetically Christian,” Trinity is dedicated to the Black religious experience and to its community. Its now-retired pastor Jeremiah Wright has long been a religious leader in the city and a mentor to Senator Barack Obama.

These three places, with differing histories and differing spaces, offer a valuable window into the richness of religious life in Chicago. Tour fee: $15.
Dear Fellow Members of the American Academy of Religion:

I write today to alert you to an action taken by your elected and nominated Directors at its meeting this past weekend.

In light of the scheduling and logistical problems connected with the proposed Independent Annual Meetings, and given the views of our members concerning their recent member survey, the Board, in its April 12, 2008 meeting, approved a recommendation that the AAR begin scheduling concurrent, yet independent Annual Meetings with the Society of Biblical Literature as soon as is feasible. Assuming that the SBL is agreeable to meeting concurrently, it is our intention that such meetings would feature:

1. A return to the traditional meeting time, on the weekend before the U.S. Thanksgiving holiday;
2. An AAR Program (and Program Book) that is entirely separate from the SBLs;
3. If desirable, a single, jointly sponsored Book Exhibit and a single, jointly sponsored employment interview center;
4. The invitation to and inclusion of other scholarly organizations that may wish to participate concurrently with the AAR.

Job Placement Task Force

Deanna Thompson, Hamline University

THE JOB PLACEMENT Task Force was established in late 2007 in response to recommendations by the Board of Directors with the following four-pronged task:

1. To review the full experience of the placement process for candidates and to recommend improvements in AAR Career Services and other aspects of the process;
2. To review current grant program reporting on graduates and to create guidelines for best practices for public disclosure of placement records;
3. To create a list of recommendations for how graduate programs in religion can realign their curricula to respond to current (and future) job market realities; and
4. To investigate how the AAR might best assist people being trained in religious studies to prepare for and find jobs outside of religion and theology departments, seminaries, and divinity schools. Since its creation, the task force has met twice, and is moving forward on several of these issues.

First, in terms of the AAR Annual Meeting Job Center (formerly known as the Employment Information Services Center), we are currently rethinking the form and function of the Career Services Advisory Committee (formerly known as the EIS Advisory Committee) and are working toward a new structure that will lead to more active engagement with all aspects of the job placement process. Beyond that, in response to concerns expressed by institutions and candidates about the great variety of job market approaches to the job search, the task force is finalizing guidelines of best practices for both hiring institutions and candidates as they move through the job search process.

Second, we also are investigating how many graduates are publicizing a 96 percent placement rate does not necessarily inform prospective students about average length of time in the program, or what kinds of positions graduates actually occupy. We hope that the AAR’s upcoming recommendations for posting such data will assist graduate programs in equipping prospective students with the knowledge to make informed decisions about further schooling.

The third aspect of our charge is perhaps the most daunting. We know job placement realities for graduate students in the field of religion are rapidly changing. We also know that graduate departments need to respond in time to changing realities — do not always adapt quickly enough to meet the changing demands. To better understand where graduate education in religion stands today, we created a survey for all AAR student members that was sent out in March. This instrument measured students’ perceptions on how well graduate programs are preparing them to be faculty members in the twenty-first century, and whether or not programs are equipping students to think about employment possibilities beyond the academy. After the survey results are tallied, the task force will work on next steps that move to address the most pressing areas of concern. One programmatic offering the AAR is considering is a workshop for graduate-department chair and deans to think collectively about how to address these changing realities.

Finally, the task force is beginning to imagine new ways in which the AAR can attend to the lives of scholars in positions other than traditional faculty roles. Our goals include expanding the AAR job placement offerings beyond the academy, and to introduce a new column in RSV that would focus on the lives of scholars in non-tenure track roles.

As we hope is evident, the Job Placement Task Force is engaged in the important work of attending to the present and future job placement realities of AAR members. The task force membership — Alice Hunt of Vanderbilt University, Davina Lopez of Eckerd College, A.G. Miller of Oberlin College, Wayne Proudfoot of Columbia University, Tim Renick of Georgia State University, and Deanna Thompson of Hamline University — invites you to contact us with any questions or suggestions you might have. Contact: dbinson@vanderbilt.edu

New Associate Director of Professional Programs

JESSICA DAVENPORT joined the American Academy of Religion in February 2008 as the Associate Director of Professional Programs. She is responsible for the new AAR Career Services, which includes AAR Job Postings, the AAR Annual Meeting Job Center, and other initiatives related to careers for our members. Jessica also works on various professional programs with Kyle Cole, Director of Professional Programs. “We are very excited about Jessica joining the staff,” Cole said. “With her background, she is a perfect fit for our expanding program offerings.”

Prior to working at the AAR, Jessica was a student at the Candler School of Theology in Atlanta, Georgia. While a student at Candler, Jessica worked for the Black Church Studies and Women in Theology and Ministry Programs, where she planned academic programming that focused on gender and theology and black religious traditions.

During her time in seminary, Jessica was also involved in her local church at the proposal writer and co-director of The Purpose Project, a youth-led initiative designed to provide young people with empowering programs that enable them to reflect on the ways that their sense of vocation can inform their civic duty and social action within their communities. Additionally, she worked for the Spelman College Sisters Chapel WISEDOM Center as well as the Emory University PREP Program. Jessica earned an MDiv from Candler School of Theology and a BA in Political Science from Spelman College in Atlanta, GA.

Task Force on the Status of LGBTQ Persons in the Profession

Melissa M. Wilcox, Whitman College

THE TASK FORCE on the Status of LGBTQ Persons in the Profession was established in spring 2007 to provide the AAR with information and policy recommendations regarding lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans scholars of religion (the task force has since expanded its purview to include the status of queer-identified and intersex people as well). Task force members Joe DeRose of the AAR, Jennifer Harvey of Drake University, Mark Jordan of Emory University, Laura Schneider of Chicago Theological Seminary, Melissa Wilcox of Whitman College, and Mark Wilson of the Pacific School of Religion first met in Atlanta in September 2007 to begin working out what the priorities of the task force should be, and how we should go about addressing these priorities. We held a brief follow-up gathering at the San Diego Annual Meeting, and met in February 2008 to begin acting on some of the goals we had set, while continuing to explore new ones as well.

Among the guiding principles of the task force are, first, a firm belief that our constituencies — that is, AAR LGBTQ scholars and intersex people — should play a central role in determining our priorities, and second, a profound awareness of the need for confidentiality among some of our constituencies. In an effort to address both of these concerns, Task Force members held listening sessions at an off-site location during the San Diego Annual Meeting. Task Force representatives also attended the LGBT Caucus meeting in San Diego to request feedback.

As a result of these conversations and our own observations of the needs of LGBTQ scholars, the task force has identified and begun to work on several projects. These include:

• Working with the Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession and the Committee on the Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities in the Profession to assist the AAR in drafting a comprehensive antidiscrimination policy for AAR-sponsored activities, in providing space for reports of policy violations, and in developing guidelines for institutional responses to such violations;

• Adding information in the AAR’s listing service on each hiring institution’s anti-discrimination policy, domestic partner benefits, and required statement of faith (if any);
• Adding questions on sexual orientation and gender identity to the demographics section of any surveys conducted by the AAR in the future, and to the evaluation of joint steering committee diversity that is a part of each program unit’s annual report;
• Petitioning the AAR to refrain from scheduling any further meetings in states that have passed constitutional bans on same-sex marriage; and
• Learning more about and attempting to address the specific needs of LGBTQ scholars of color and graduate students.

Over the longer term, the task force is interested in sparking conversations about a professional code of ethics for scholars of religion similar to those adhered to by philosophers, sociologists, psychologists, and others; sponsoring a mentoring program for LGBTQ scholars and a chairs’ workshop on LGBTQ issues; and supporting the development and breadth of impact of LGBTQ studies.

The task force has an exciting date of events lined up for the 2008 Annual Meeting in Chicago. We will be holding off-site listening sessions on Saturday, November 1 from 2:30—4:00 PM and Monday, November 3 from 8:00—9:30 PM, and will be sponsoring the 2008 year’s reception for LGBTQ scholars and scholars of LGBTQ studies. There will be a brown bag lunch for LGBTQ scholars of color, and a workshop on mentoring LGBTQ students. Finally, we will also sponsor a Special Topics Forum this year.

The members of the LGBTQ Task Force are both excited and honored to be serving our colleagues in this way. We look forward to hearing from LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ scholars alike about what else we can do to improve the status of LGBTQ scholars within our field.

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Greeting Members,

We are excited to debut a new area in Religious Studies News called the “Membership Corner.” This will be the place where you can get information about navigating your membership. Each issue’s “Membership Corner” will feature a helpful hint about some aspect of membership. In this issue we will focus on how to get receipts for your membership dues, donations, and Annual Meeting registration. Please don’t hesitate to contact me if you have any comments, questions, or ideas about future helpful hints.

Myesha D. Jenkins
Director of Membership Development
mjenkins@aarweb.org

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.

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Former AAR President
Jane Dammann
McAuliffe Named Bryn Mawr’s President-Elect

The Board of Trustees of Bryn Mawr College has appointed Jane Dammann McAuliffe, Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences at Georgetown University and an internationally known scholar of Islamic studies, as its eighth president. She will succeed Nancy J. Vickers, Bryn Mawr’s current president, on July 1, 2008.

McAuliffe is an internationally respected scholar in Islamic studies whose expertise is in the Qur’an and its interpretations, early Islamic history, and the interrelationships between Islam and Christianity. In addition to publishing numerous books and journal articles, she recently completed the six-volume Encyclopedia of the Qur’an, the first reference work of its kind in a Western language.

Her scholarly work has been supported by several fellowship awards, including one from the Guggenheim Foundation, and she was recently elected to the American Philosophical Society. She has served on the Vatican’s Commission for Religious Relations with Muslims, and she chairs the American Academy of Religion (of which she was president in 2004), the Association of Theological Schools, and Trinity University. She has been Dean of Georgetown College since 1999 and, before that, held faculty and administrative positions at Emory University and the University of Toronto.

Union Theological Seminary Appoints First Woman President

Serene Jones has been selected to become the 16th president and first woman president of the historic Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York. Jones will assume the presidency of the independent, nondenominational institution on July 1, 2008. She will succeed Joseph C. Hough Jr., who is retiring after serving as Union’s president since 1999.

Jones, the Titus Street Professor of Theology at Yale Divinity School, will come to Union after 17 years of scholarship, teaching, and leadership at Yale. At Yale, she started a number of initiatives, including one from the Guggenheim Foundation, and she was recently elected to the American Philosophical Society. She has served on the Vatican’s Commission for Religious Relations with Muslims, and she chairs the American Academy of Religion (of which she was president in 2004), the Association of Theological Schools, and Trinity University. She has been Dean of Georgetown College since 1999 and, before that, held faculty and administrative positions at Emory University and the University of Toronto.

Chicago Theological Seminary Names Alice Hunt Its 12th President

Alice Hunt, previously Associate Dean of Vanderbilt University’s Divinity School, and a noted Hebrew Bible scholar, will be installed as CTS president in fall 2008. Her appointment culminates a year-long search by a committee of trustees, faculty, students, and alumni, and one of seven United Church of Christ seminaries.

“In our president, we sought a partner in our quest to question, teach, and transform church and society,” said Donald Clark Jr., chair of the board of trustees and member of the search committee. “We sought an individual who shares our dedication to academic excellence, passion for social justice, and courage in response to great challenge. We found all this and more in Dr. Alice Hunt.”

“CTS is a vibrant institution with a remarkable history,” Hunt responded. “In its mission, vision, and commitments, CTS is both well-grounded in its traditions and fully aware of contexts in which we live and work. As the nature of religious life is changing, CTS is a model in preparing transformative religious leaders to live out their roles in their many contexts, with a view toward a flourishing of life for all.”

Hunt was ordained at the historic Fiftieth Avenue Baptist Church, National Baptist Convention, in Nashville, Tennessee. She holds a PhD in Old Testament, with an emphasis on the Hebrew Bible, from Vanderbilt University. Her published work includes Missing Primes: The Zadokites in Tradition and History (2006) and essays on work such as Approaching Isaiah: New Approaches to the Study of the Persian Period (2007), Israel’s Prophet and Israel’s Past (2006), and Methods of Biblical Interpretation (2004). A critical reader in religious affairs and theological education, Hunt chairs the American Academy of Religion Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession as well as the Historical Books section for the Society of Biblical Literature’s international meeting. She also serves on the board of directors and executive committee for the American Academy of Religion. Theological Book Awards

The Association of Theological Bookdealers recently announced the 2007 winners of the Theologos Awards. The awards represent the unique, professional evaluations of people who sell academic religious books. The Association of Theological Bookdealers is a collaborative organization of diverse theological bookstores and publishers working together to enhance the quality and ensure the future of theological bookelling. Only the bookeller members of the association are eligible to vote.

Best General Interest Book
Take This Bread: A Radical Conversion
Sara Miles
Random House

Best Academic Book
The Gospel of Matthew
R. T. France
Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Best Children’s Book
Four Feet, Two Sandals
Karen Lynn Wipfler and Khatra Mohammed
Illustrated by Doug Chaya
Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Book of the Year
Jesus of Nazareth
Pope Benedict XVI
Doubleday

Publisher of the Year
Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
Religion Newswriters Identify Year’s Top Ten Religion Stories

Editor’s Note:
Information for this article was provided by RNA Extra Online, the newsletter of the Religion Newswriters Association www.rna.org.

In December, the Religion Newswriters Association conducted an online poll of its active members, who identified the following as the top ten religion news stories of 2007. Eighty people, or 27 percent of its membership, responded.

1. Evangelical voters ponder whether they will be able to support the eventual Republican candidate, as they did in 2004, because of questions about the leaders’ faith and/or platform. Many say they would be reluctant to vote for Mormon Mitt Romney.

2. Leading Democratic presidential candidates make conscious efforts to woo faith-based voters after admitting failure to do so in 2004.

3. The role of gays and lesbians in clergy continues as a deeply dividing issue. An Episcopal Church promise to exercise restraint on gay issues fails to stem the number of congregations seeking to leave the mainline denomination, while in a close vote, Canadian Anglican bishops vote to nullify lay and clerical approval of same-sex blessings. Meanwhile, Conservative Jews become more open to gay leadership.

4. Global warming rises in importance among religious groups, with many mainline leaders giving it high priority and evangelical leaders split over its importance compared to other social and moral causes.

5. The question of what to do about illegal immigration is debated by religious leaders and groups on both sides of the issue. Some take an active role in supporting undocumented immigrants.

6. Thousands of Buddhist monks lead a pro-democracy protest in Myanmar, which is brutally crushed after a week.

7. Some Conservative U.S. Episcopalians realign with Anglican bishops in Africa and elsewhere in the global South, initiating legal disputes about church property ownership.

8. The Supreme Court by a 5-4 vote rules on the conservative side in three major cases with religious implications: upholding a ban on partial-birth abortions; allowing schools to establish some limits on students’ free speech; and denying a challenge to the Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives.

9. Death takes evangelical leaders known, among other things, for their television work: Jerry Falwell, Rex Humbard, D. James Kennedy; plus Billy Graham’s wife, Ruth, and Jim Bakker’s ex-wife, Tammy Faye Messner. Other deaths include Gilbert Patterson, presiding bishop of the Church of God in Christ, and Bible scholar Bruce Metzger.

10. The cost of priestly sex abuse to the Roman Catholic Church in the United States surpasses $2.1 billion, with a record $660 million settlement involving the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, and earlier settlements this year total $100 million in Portland, Oregon, and Spokane, Washington.
### AAR Undergraduate Departments Survey Shows Increases in Religious Studies

**IN 2005, THE AAR conducted its own undergraduate survey of the 2004–2005 academic year. Two and one-half years later, the results show that courses, enrollments, majors/degrees, and faculty have grown steadily. The last such survey was conducted for the 1999–2000 academic year, and it also collected limited data from the 1996–1997 academic year. With this final survey, the Academy now has trend data showing changes — mostly growth — in a field influenced after the events of September 11, 2001.**

The survey of the 1999–2000 academic year was conducted by NORC, utilizing approximately $250,000 of a Lilly Endowment-funded “Strengthening College and University Programs in Religion and Theology” (SCURT) initiative. Additionally, several other entities joined with the AAR in sponsoring the 2000 survey: the Association of Theological Schools, the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education, the Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion, the Canadian Society for the Study of Religion, the Council of Societies for the Study of Religion, the Fund for Theological Education, the Council of Graduate Studies in Religion, and the Society of Biblical Literature.

The new survey was conducted online by AAR alone with residual funds from the original Lilly-SCURT initiative. By going online, the AAR was able to collect data without having to relay it into another system before analysis. David Brevington, an Emory sociology PhD candidate who has worked on the past surveys, conducted the data analysis. Please see the accompanying articles in this Focus section for methodology details.

### Institutional Findings

For this undergraduate survey, institutional data was collected regarding Carnegie classification, institution and program type, academic calendar, and whether the program offered a major or minor, among other data.

The Carnegie classification respondents were as follows:

- Baccalaureate colleges – liberal arts (35.5%)
- Doctoral/research – extensive (17%)
- Master's colleges/universities I (13.4%)
- Master's colleges/universities II (12.7%)
- Baccalaureate colleges – general (10.8%)
- Doctoral/research – intensive (5.7%)
- Theological/specialized faith institutions (2.3%)
- Baccalaureate/associate's colleges (1.5%)
- Associate's colleges (0.8%)
- Other (0.2%)

Only 3.5 percent and 0.2 percent respectively reported they were accredited by either the Association for Biblical Higher Education (ABHE) or the Transnational Association of Christian Schools (TACS).

The institution type respondents were as follows:

- Protestant (29.8%)
- Public (28%)
- Private, nonsectarian (24.3%)
- Catholic (15.2%)
- Other Religion (2.5%)
- Jewish (0.2%)

Eighty-five percent of the respondents reported they were on the semester academic calendar; 4.9 percent reported a 4-1-4 calendar; 3.7 percent reported a quarter calendar; 3.7 percent other; and 1.9 percent reported a trimester calendar.

The program types were as follows:

- Free-standing department (53.4%)
- Combined department (32.3%)
- Program that borrows faculty (7.5%)
- Humanities or social science department (6.6%)
- Research center (0.2%)

### Courses

Course offerings in the field showed overall growth of 23 percent. The survey asked whether courses were offered, how many were offered in 2004–2005, whether the course was offered as a major, and whether the courses fulfilled a general education/distribution requirement for the institution. The table on the next page illustrates these findings in percentages reporting “yes,” excluding the number offered during the 2004–2005 year as it can only be reported in raw numbers.

### Enrollment and Majors

Enrollment increased by 22 percent in 2004–2005 when compared with 1999–2000; the respondents reported 68,864 more students enrolled in the 2004–2005 academic year. Public schools reported the largest growth increase at 40 percent. Of the responding institutions, 83 percent offered a religion major and 81.5 percent offered a religion minor. Most of the growth came within public institutions, which reported a 53 percent increase in majors and 44 percent increase in bachelor’s degrees conferred (cross-tabulation tables for institution type, region, and department type will be posted online at www.aarweb.org in the summer).

Bachelor’s degrees increased overall by 22 percent; the number of BAs awarded to women increased by 26 percent and the number of BAs awarded to men increased by 18 percent.

The survey also asked what program activities are offered at the institution:

- Internships available (46.3%)
- Grants/scholarships/prizes (45.9%)
- Public lecture series (45.5%)
- Honors program (45.3%)
- Website (38.8%)
- Associations/clubs for majors (35.5%)
- Visiting scholar program (15.5%)
- Alumni newsletter (15.5%)
- Partnerships with primary/secondary schools (4.7%)

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Ten was the most commonly reported number of religion courses required for a major, followed by 12; 11 courses was the number of religion courses required for a minor, followed by 12; 11 courses was the number of religion courses required for a major, followed by 12; 11 courses was the number of religion courses required for a minor.

Faculty

The faculty data indicated growth in all areas from the 1999–2000 survey; however, as national data has shown, the total tenure and tenure-track lines grew at a slower rate than the nontenured and part-time positions.

The tenured positions grew by 18 percent, with men in tenured positions increasing by 15 percent and women in tenured positions increasing by 32 percent. While the increase for women was dramatic, there is still a huge discrepancy between men and women in actual number of tenured positions occupied: 3,067 reported for men compared with 678 for women.

The data showed a similar pattern for tenure-track positions. Growth was a percentage growth in these areas far outpacing tenured and tenure-track lines.

The data also indicates that while a gender gap continues to exist, women are securing positions at much greater rates than in the past.

There continues to be a great discrepancy, however, between faculty of color and white faculty. Among full-time faculty, just 10 percent are people of color; with part-time faculty, the figure is 14 percent.

### 1999–2004 Numbers for Comparison to Humanities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Offered</th>
<th>Required for Major</th>
<th>Gen Ed/Distribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Religion</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>29.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts, Literature, and Religion</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible Languages</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Cultural</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>18.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christian Ethics</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>28.4</td>
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<tr>
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<td>60.0</td>
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<td>35.7</td>
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<tr>
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<td>8.2</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comparative</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
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<td>3.3</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
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<td>6.3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
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<td>Ethics</td>
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<td>15.5</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
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<td>Gender and Sexuality</td>
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<td>6.7</td>
<td>22.0</td>
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<td>2.9</td>
<td>12.0</td>
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<td>Intro – Bible</td>
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<td>34.9</td>
<td>48.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intro – Eastern Religions</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>25.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intro – Sacred Texts</td>
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<td>4.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
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<td>Intro – Western Religions</td>
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<td>21.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intro – World Religion</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>41.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduction to Religion</td>
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<td>Islam</td>
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<td>4.1</td>
<td>8.2</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Practical</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy of Religion</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preaching</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>2.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Racial and Ethnic Studies</td>
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<td>3.1</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Education</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritual and Performance</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Scientific Study</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's Studies</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth/Family Ministry</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Ratio of PT faculty of color to FT white faculty

| FT Caucasian Faculty | 63.2% | PT Caucasian Faculty | 86.3% |

### Ratio of PT to FT faculty

| FT Faculty of Color | 90.3% |

### Next Steps

This summer, the AAR will be posting the data from the survey online. There, cross-tabulations of all data along multiple types — program, institution, regional, and others — along with the entire frequency tables and survey instrument will be available for members to see. Additionally, the data set will be posted nationally for other social science researchers to use for further studies. An announcement will be sent to all members when the complete data is posted.

### Change from 1999–2000 to 2004–2005 academic years

Raw change indicates raw numeric increase from 1999–2000 to 2004–2005 academic years

Growth change indicates change BASED on raw growth from 1999–2000 to 2004–2005 academic years

Example: a growth change of 1.26 indicates that a particular category has increased 126% from 1999–2000 to 2004–2005

Number of positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>16,067</td>
<td>13,076.5</td>
<td>2,990.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2,141</td>
<td>1,816</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2,038</td>
<td>1,612</td>
<td>426</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Number of bachelor’s degrees received

| All       | 4,179     | 3,428      | 751           | 22%           |
| Male      | 2,141     | 1,816      | 325           | 18%           |
| Female    | 2,038     | 1,612      | 426           | 26%           |

### Number of positions (i.e., salary lines) supported

| FT Tenured | 4,405     | 3,745      | 660           | 18%           |
| FT Tenured – Male | 3,513     | 3,067      | 446           | 15%           |
| FT Tenured – Female | 892      | 678        | 214           | 32%           |
| FT Tenure track | 1,813    | 1,398      | 415           | 30%           |
| FT Tenure track – Male | 1,227   | 961        | 266           | 28%           |
| FT Tenure track – Female | 586     | 437        | 149           | 34%           |
| FT Nontenure track | 1,649   | 1,153      | 496           | 43%           |
| FT Nontenure track – Male | 1,222   | 877        | 345           | 39%           |
| FT Nontenure track – Female | 427    | 276        | 151           | 55%           |
| Part-time | 5,019     | 3,486      | 1,533         | 44%           |
| Part-time – Male | 3,513   | 2,465      | 1,048         | 43%           |
| Part-time – Female | 1,506   | 1,021      | 485           | 48%           |
**AAR Undergraduate Departments Survey Methodology**

The American Academy of Religion fielded a second wave of its Undergraduate Survey on September 29, 2005, clarifying the academic year of fall 2004 through spring 2005. The survey was live for over a year, with final data collection ending on September 30, 2006.

While the first wave of the survey (1999–2000 academic year) was fielded as a mailed paper instrument, for the second wave the AAR utilized online surveying techniques to host the survey and communicate with respondents electronically. The survey was hosted on AAR’s Web server, e-mail reminders were used to notify respondents of the survey.

Out of 1,202 departments and programs across Canada and the United States invited to take the survey, 490 responded to the survey, making for a 40.8 percent response rate. This rate, although lower than the 1999–2000 surveying period of 78.8 percent (807 responses out of 1,148), is well within normal response rates for surveying. The difference in response rates is largely attributable to the fact that the first survey was fielded by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago, and NORC used its considerable resources to contact programs and departments who had not completed the inaugural survey repeatedly by phone, mail, and e-mail. For the second wave, the AAR decided to conduct the survey in-house with residual funds left over from the original Lilly-SCURT grant, using Internet technology to facilitate the process. The AAR staff did contact nonresponders multiple times, using multiple avenues of communication including e-mail, e-bulletin reminders, telephoning by AAR Regionally Elected Directors, telephoning by AAR interns and e-mail reminders from AAR officers, and a final mailed letter from AAR Executive Director Jack Fitzmier near the end of the survey period. In all, a total of eight points of communication were used throughout the survey period to bolster response rates. These points of communication are summarized in the following:

- **September 29, 2005** – First e-mail letter sent to departments, signed by then AAR Executive Director Barbara DeConcini
- **September 29, 2005** – Survey goes live
- **October 31, 2005** – E-mail reminder letter from Kyle Cole, AAR Director of Professional Programs
- **March 2006** – E-bulletin reminder
- **April 2006** – E-bulletin reminder
- **April 21, 2006** – E-mail reminder letter from AAR officers Diana Eck, Jeffrey Stout, and Emilie Townes
- **April 27, 2006** – Telephoning request of Regionally Elected Directors to departments in the regions who had not responded
- **May 2006** – E-bulletin reminder
- **May and June 2006** – Upper Midwest, Midwest, Southwest, and Western Regionally Elected Directors complete their lists by the end of June. Summer intern at AAR offices called departments in the other six regions during the summer of 2006
- **August 2006** – E-bulletin reminder
- **August 30, 2006** – Letter from Jack Fitzmier went out for final push to end data collection
- **September 30, 2006** – Data collection ends

The survey instrument for 2004–2005 replicates the survey instrument from 1999–2000, with several important additions. The most important additions to the survey instrument are questions concerning the race and ethnicity of both full-time and part-time faculty. Other additions include questions regarding accreditation with ABHE and TACs, Carnegie Classification (this data existed in the AAR databases from the previous survey wave), minor concentrations in specific religious traditions, course data on practical training associated with applied programs, and whether and what other departments provide faculty to teach in a program.

Survey results have been analyzed for information about the second wave survey period of 2004–2005, as well as for changes between the first wave period of 1999–2000 and the second wave period of 2004–2005. Additionally, the second wave instrument asked questions about the previous period of 1999–2000. This is a fruitful continuation of the practice of asking for data from a previous period — the first wave of the Undergraduate Survey asked for data from the 1996–1997 academic year.

Together, the results from the two survey waves provide three periods of data. Several caveats need to be specified in understanding these data. Because of the difference in response rates between the surveys, comparing raw numbers across the two survey waves will appear to denote significant reductions in almost all areas, such as number of majors, enrollments, number of tenured female faculty, and so on. This interpretation is inaccurate — it does not take the relative population sizes of the number of respondents for each wave of the survey into account. For example, when examining the total number of courses offered in the 2004–2005 period (16,067 courses) versus the 1999–2000 period (30,924 courses), it appears that there is a large reduction in courses offered. This runs counter to intuition and anecdotal evidence. The issue is that there is not an “apples to apples” comparison — more departments submitted information in the first wave of the survey. The pool of potential departments submitting data on total courses for the 2004–2005 survey wave is almost half that of those departments submitting data for the 1999–2000 survey wave.

Fortunately, we do have the ability to make an “apples to apples” comparison for some questions across survey waves. Both survey waves asked departments for historical data; in the case of the 2004–2005 survey wave, this data was prepopulated in the online survey fields using data supplied by respondents in the 1999–2000 wave. Such data exist for number of courses, total enrollments, majors, male and female BAs, and male and female faculty. These data allow us to limit comparisons to only those institutions that answered the 2004–2005 survey. This allows us to utilize the raw numbers in the survey for these questions for comparative purposes. For instance, when there appeared to be a large decrease in the number of courses offered by religion departments between 1999–2000 and 2004–2005, we see that there is actually an increase when using the technique outlined above. Furthermore, when examining the resulting output (Figure 2 below), we immediately see the issue outlined above. The raw numbers across the three survey periods indicate the same drastic decrease from 1999–2000 to 2004–2005.

However, we can compare the ratio of the raw number where a time period and institute type cross with the total for that time period with corresponding ratios for the same category across time periods. This technique controls for the large changes in raw numbers. For example, if we examine Figure 2 again, we see that for public institutions, there were 4,186 courses in 2004–2005, 6,969 courses in 1999–2000, and 6,781 courses in 1996–1997. If we just examine these numbers, we see a modest upward shift from the first period to the second, and a distinctive drop in number of courses in the last period.

But this is an “apples to apples” comparison. If we examine the ratio of the number of courses offered in public institutions to the total number of courses in each survey period, however, we can compare in an “apples to apples” fashion because we are mathematically accounting for the large difference in total response rate between the survey waves. Using this approach, we see that courses at public institutions dip slightly between the first and second survey period and then rebound by 3.5 percentage points from the second to the third survey period.

Throughout the analysis of data we present both types of comparisons across time periods where we have the information. We provide cross-tabulation tables for institution type, program type, affiliations, and AAR region. These data will be posted on the AAR website this summer.

**Figure 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution Type</th>
<th># Courses 2004–2005</th>
<th>%</th>
<th># Courses 1999–2000</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Raw Change</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>4,186</td>
<td>26.05</td>
<td>3,321.5</td>
<td>25.40</td>
<td>864.5</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private, non sectarian</td>
<td>2,644</td>
<td>16.46</td>
<td>2,369.0</td>
<td>18.12</td>
<td>275.0</td>
<td>-1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>3,574</td>
<td>22.24</td>
<td>2,831.0</td>
<td>21.65</td>
<td>743.0</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>5,124</td>
<td>31.89</td>
<td>4,342.0</td>
<td>33.20</td>
<td>782.0</td>
<td>-1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other religion</td>
<td>531</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>213.0</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>318.0</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>16,067</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>13,076.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,990.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution Type</th>
<th># Courses 2004–2005</th>
<th>%</th>
<th># Courses 1999–2000</th>
<th>%</th>
<th># Courses 1996–1997</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>4,186</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>3,321.5</td>
<td>25.40</td>
<td>6,781</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private, non sectarian</td>
<td>2,644</td>
<td>16.46</td>
<td>2,369.0</td>
<td>18.12</td>
<td>4,725</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>3,574</td>
<td>22.24</td>
<td>2,831.0</td>
<td>21.65</td>
<td>5,687</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>5,124</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
<td>4,342.0</td>
<td>33.20</td>
<td>10,274</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other religion</td>
<td>531</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>213.0</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>746</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>16,067</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00%</strong></td>
<td><strong>13,076.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00%</strong></td>
<td><strong>30,924</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AAR Undergraduate Departments Survey Comparative Analysis of Wave I and II

David V. Brewington, Emory University

With the second wave of the Undergraduate Department Survey the AAR now has a set of data over time, allowing us to begin to understand how the field of religious studies has changed in the last decade. In some cases we have three periods to compare because the original 1999–2000 survey asked for data from the 1996–1997 academic year. An issue that affects analysis of the data across survey waves is the difference in response rates between surveys. The first wave garnered a response rate of 78 percent while the second wave response rate was 40 percent. This difference affects comparative analysis over time because we do not know if one or other of the survey results are statistically representative of the entire population of over 1,200 religious studies departments and programs in the United States and Canada.

To resolve this issue, we identified 267 programs and departments that responded to both waves of the survey, and answered a substantial number of items in the survey to allow for comparison. By restricting the following analyses to these programs and departments, we can conservatively analyze how these 267 religious studies departments have changed in the last ten years without making inferences about the entire population of departments for which we do not have accurate measures. It is important to stress, then, that the following analyses should be taken as a measure of what has changed to only these 267 departments.

Undergraduate Education and Students

For the most part, total courses offered, enrollments, numbers of majors, and bachelor’s degrees conferred increase between 1996 and 2005. For example, consider total courses offered in Table 1.

Table 1: Period to period and net change for Undergraduate Education/Faculty categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tenured – Female</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenured – Male</td>
<td>804</td>
<td>861</td>
<td>829</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure-track – Female</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure-track – Male</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Appointments – Female</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Appointments – Male</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time non tenure – Female</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time non tenure – Male</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time faculty – Female</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time faculty – Male</td>
<td>509</td>
<td>667</td>
<td>694</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Undergraduate Education and Faculty

Table 2 shows changes in faculty rank for the period 1996 to 2005. From the 1996–1997 to 1999–2000 periods, all ranks show increases. With the exception of tenured faculty, all ranks also show increases from 1999 to 2005. Faculty at the tenured rank showed a slight decrease of 0.5 percent in this period. All ranks showed net increases over the entire period from 1996 to 2005. Increases of tenure-track and joint appointed faculty were strongest in the second period from 1999 to 2005.

Table 2: Period to period and net change for Undergraduate Education/Faculty categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<td>54</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tenure-track – Female</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>168</td>
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<tr>
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<td>509</td>
<td>667</td>
<td>694</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Undergraduate Education and Course Work

Most courses showed increases by percentage in counting toward the major. New Religious Movements, Indigenous Religions, and Women’s Studies were the three courses showing the largest increase for percentage of courses counting toward the major (with increases of 171.4 percent, 140 percent, and 84.6 percent respectively). By contrast, the Social Scientific Study of Religion, Introduction to Sacred Texts, and Ritual Performance showed the steepest declines in courses that count toward the major, with -28 percent, -20 percent, and -15.4 percent respectively.

Most course topics that count toward general education credit increased, with the exception of Introduction to Sacred Texts, which declined by 32.3 percent. The top three increases in course topics by percentage are New Religious Movements (126.7 percent), Indigenous Religions (140 percent), and Islam (70 percent). The smallest three increases in course topics by percentage are Introduction to Religion (1.7 percent), Christian Ethics (2.1 percent), and Introduction to Easter Religions (2.5 percent).

In terms of the number of courses offered, New Religious Movements (65 percent), American Religion (62.3 percent), and Islam (52.8 percent) showed the three highest increases by percentage. Ritual and Performance, Introduction to Sacred Texts, and Confucianism/Daoism suffered the steepest declines in numbers of courses offered with -37.1 percent, -27.3 percent, and -21.1 percent respectively.
Colleges and universities are promoting undergraduate research and highlighting it for prospective students as an opportunity for educational growth and improved career prospects. Faculty at many institutions are encouraged or even required to mentor undergraduate research projects. In 2005, the Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR) and the National Conferences on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) endorsed a joint statement that read in part, “We believe that undergraduate research is the pedagogy for the twenty-first century.”

The initial impetus for undergraduate research, however, developed in the natural and social sciences, and most descriptions of the undergraduate research process use the language of scientific experimentation. CUR, for example, which focuses primarily on work in the natural and social sciences, defines undergraduate research as “an inquiry or investigation conducted by an undergraduate student that makes an original intellectual or creative contribution to the discipline.”

But is this the appropriate model for undergraduate research in religious studies? Rebecca Todd Peters of Elon University and Bernardine McNary-Zak of Rhodes College both mentored undergraduate research projects and were curious to learn more about how our discipline has addressed the topic. They were surprised to find that there is very little literature on undergraduate research in the humanities in general, and virtually nothing on it in religious studies.

At the first consultation meeting in April 2007, religious studies and theology faculty participated from colleges and universities in the United States and Canada. We discussed the reservations, do not fit the type of research that students credit for undergraduate research, others have no formal means of crediting faculty mentors. Few schools appear to have systems in place for assessing the quality of faculty mentoring.

Several members of the working group presented synopses of their work at a panel sponsored by the Academic Teaching and Study Section at the 2007 AAR Annual Meeting in San Diego. We have discussed plans to design a website dedicated to undergraduate research in religious studies, and are at work on a volume to be edited by Peters and McNary-Zak tentatively titled Teaching Undergraduate Research in Religious Studies. 

Table 4: Course change between survey periods. Table shows the raw and percentage change between 1999–2000 and 2004–2005 for courses offered, whether courses qualified for general education requirements, whether courses qualified toward the major, and how many courses or sections of courses were offered.

Robin Rinehart, Lafayette College

Robin Rinehart is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Lafayette College, where she teaches courses on Asian religions, theories of religion, gender and religion, and alternative religious movements in the United States. Her research focuses on the religious literatures of the Punjab region of South Asia, and she is currently working on a controversial Sikh text called the Dasam Granth. She travels to India regularly for research. She is co-chair of the Religion in South Asia section of the AAR and a steering committee member of the newly formed Sikh Studies Consultation.

Previous and Related AAR Surveys of the Undergraduate and Graduate Study of Religion and Theology

2000 Survey of Departments of Religion www.aarweb.org/Programs/Department_Services/Survey_Data/Undergraduate

2002 Survey of Graduate Programs www.aarweb.org/Programs/Department_Services/Survey_Data/Graduate

May 2008 RN 15
RELIGION IS an obvious factor in many political debates: abortion, same-sex marriage, the war on terror, immigration, and many issues in public schools. The economy doesn’t make the list, but now that it has emerged as voters’ top concern — in a presidential election year, no less — that may be changing. The public profile of poverty is heightening as more Americans fear they are losing ground financially. All major religions teach care for the poor and needy, and nearly nine in ten Americans identify with one of them. That may not translate into a tidal wave of support for the one in eight Americans who are poor, but there are signs that religious motivation stands a chance of significantly impacting the lives of the country’s 36.5 million poor.

Economic fears are closely tied to the perception that the divide between the haves and have-nots is becoming more stark:
- The income gap between the wealthiest and poorest Americans is at its widest level since the 1920s.
- Some groups are hit much harder by poverty: one in four blacks, one in five Hispanics, one in six children under 18, and almost one in four households headed by a single woman.
- The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina put a spotlight on an underclass many Americans weren’t aware of.
- Mortgage problems, housing prices, rising health care, and gas costs disproportionately affect people with lower incomes.

At the same time, the interplay between religious groups and government is changing in ways that open new avenues for religious voices to influence public policy.
- The Democratic presidential candidates — the political party most closely associated with concern for the poor and least associated with religion — are embracing religion as a motivating factor for policy change. Senators Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton are both explicitly tying some of their policy proposals to their faith.
- Many evangelicals — the religious group most closely associated with the Republican Party — have broadened their political agenda and are embracing poverty as a top concern. Groups such as the Sojourners, led by Jim Wallis, have bolstered their activism and visibility.
- Religious groups have become more aggressive about lobbying for changes in public policies that affect the poor. A Religious Working Group on the Farm Bill, led by Bread for the World, spearheaded lobbying for changes that would fight poverty, reduce hunger, and improve nutrition.
- Religious congregations, denominations, and organizations — a major provider of food and shelter for the poor and needy — are spending more effort lobbying for political change instead of increasing the charity they offer.
- Moderate and liberal people of faith are forming and expanding organizations that connect policy agendas to faith. Faith in Public Life, Faithful America, and the Catholic Alliance for the Common Good are among groups promoting faith-based responses to poverty, connecting like-minded groups, and offering resources.
- President Bush’s faith-based initiative firmly established a precedent for increasing the availability of government funding for social services provided by faith groups.

Religious teaching rarely directly translates into public action. The vast majority of Americans support the death penalty even though most religious groups oppose it. The pope tells Catholic elected officials that they have a responsibility to back policies that reflect church teaching, but many support abortion rights.

And sometimes the greatest strides on an issue connected to faith are made by someone for whom religion is not a motivation. When President Lyndon B. Johnson declared a “war on poverty” in 1964, when the poverty rate was a whopping 23 percent, religion wasn’t a contributing factor.

Might 2008 — and beyond — be different? Is it possible that national and state elected officials will decide to reduce poverty and actually find a way to do it — and that religious advocates will be partly responsible? The possibility exists because of an intersection of factors.

Americans think the government should help poor people. In surveys, a majority of Americans say the government should do more to help poor people, even if it means raising taxes. The public cost of poverty is becoming more clear. One recent study found that it costs the nation $90 billion a year to shoulder the effects of hunger, which increases health, job, and school problems. And in the last decade there has been greater acknowledgment that religion deserves a place in public policy discourse — even though there is deep disagreement over what it should be.

As the economy testters, more people experience the vulnerability of poverty or know people who are scrambling to put food on the table and pay the rent, whether they are downsized white-collar workers or the “working poor” — those who work full-time or more in lower-paying jobs and still can’t make ends meet. By government standards, you’re poor if you live in a household of four that earns less than $20,614.

Poverty is a complex issue that requires complex solutions. You can’t single out wages, education, job training, the rise in single-parent households, the lack of affordable housing, the effects of imprisonment, or the loss of factory jobs, although all of those are factors, along with many others.

Which gets us back to religion. The major religions do indeed teach care for the poor and needy, and people of faith are on the frontlines of the soup kitchens, homeless shelters, and other charities that extend a hand to the poor every day. But religious teaching is as complex as poverty itself.

Think back to 2003, when Alabama Governor Bob Riley proposed reforming the state’s tax structure so that it raised taxes for the wealthy and cut taxes for the poor. He said he had a moral obligation that was inspired by Christian teaching. Voters — most of whom were Christian — rejected the plan by a two-to-one margin, for a variety of reasons.

Just because Christians, Jews, and Muslims are taught to help the poor doesn’t mean they agree on how to do it. Theology matters. Is poverty primarily caused by social structures or by individual choices? How does the balance between personal responsibility and society’s responsibility play out in policy? Is there a “preferential option” for the poor, or not?

“Here are honest disagreements.”

Religion is just one strand of the debate on how to reduce poverty in one of the richest and most religious countries in the world. It is a potentially powerful strand, however, if people feel a moral urgency to make a difference.

Perhaps the role of religion in this issue is to increase the public understanding of poverty and explore the curious disconnect between religious belief and public priorities. The professor who teaches, research, and write, the clergy who preach, the activists who organize and lobby, and the people who serve sandwiches may all disagree on what causes poverty and what can be done about it. But they can help others see the public and personal dimensions of poverty, the costs to the country in a global economy, and the cost in individual lives whose potential goes unfulfilled. And they can insist on the debate and then help sharpen it until it yields concrete policy that makes reducing poverty a priority.

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American Academy of Religion
825 Houston Mill Road, Suite 300
Atlanta, GA 30329
Research Briefing

Medieval Lay Piety and Anti-Heretical Movements

Donald Prudlo, Jacksonville State University

Donald Prudlo received his PhD in European Religious History from the University of Virginia. He is currently Assistant Professor of Ancient and Medieval History at Jacksonville State University in Alabama. He recently published The Martyred Inquisitor: The Life and Cult of Peter of Verona (1252) with Ashgate Press.

I WAS FORTUNATE to receive an AAR grant that allowed me to pursue the study of new documents I found in relation to my research on Peter of Verona, a thirteenth-century Dominican inquisitor in northern Italy. This find, I believe, will be of interest to scholars of lay piety, heresy, and religious orders in the medieval world.

Thanks in part to this generous grant I was able to spend nearly a month at the Archivio di Stato in Milan, Italy, going through a large portion of their collection of medieval records pertaining to the activities of the Dominican order. In particular, I was focused on a brief mention of a Scuola dei Fedeli or a “School of the Faithful” in a handlist of manuscripts. This was significant because it seemed to indicate that there was a third alternative to previously recognized groups aimed at aiding the inquisition. Besides societies of armed men who served as the inquisition’s retainers and pious sodalities who served as spiritual supporters (usually Marian in orientation), this discovery possibly meant that there was an active attempt on the part of the Dominicans to mold the laity intellectually to battle heresy with persuasion. Such an endeavor would have been a unique attempt in medieval Italy.

When I arrived I was very pleased to discover the existence of this society in four previously unknown documents, two of them from Masters General of the Dominican order, and two letters from Pope Innocent IV and Pope Alexander IV, respectively. I was able to distinguish it from previous societies founded by Peter of Verona, and in a letter of Master General Humbert of Romans, I was able definitively to prove that Peter founded the order. Before his death it was called the Society or School of the Faithful, dedicated to Saint John the Baptist.

The documents were preserved in Archivio di Stato: Pio Albergo Trivulzio, Orfanotrofio Maschile, Inquisizione di Milano, Cart. 3. I believe that these documents have gone unnoticed because they were not in the standard inquisition collections, but were rather inserted in records of male orphans. The first letter was from Innocent IV in 1252, a month after Peter’s murder, where he prays the school’s uprightness of life and pious conversation, and grants them the indult to participate in ecclesial services during an interdict. The next two letters were written in 1255 by Humbert of Romans, around the General Chapter held in Milan that same year. In the first, Humbert states that their purpose is the “extermination of heresy and the edification of the faithful” and grants them a share in the prayers and masses of the order. The second letter, written a month later, was specifically directed to the Society of St. Peter Martyr, formerly the Society of the Faithful, clearly distinguishing them from the school, and granting them a share in the prayers of the order as well. The final letter is the most interesting because it is a lengthy bull from Pope Alexander IV in 1260 confirming the statutes of the school. In order to enjoy the privileges of the newly confirmed school, Alexander commands that any postulants must be ready to fight against heretics, to defend the Catholic faith “either with weapons or without them,” and that they obey the pope or his deputies to attack receivers or abettors of heretics. He also commands that they are to influence the commune to insert antiheresitical laws into the city statutes. For so doing he grants them a three-year indulgence. The existence of the school is also confirmed by a series of letters in 1310 by the provincial priors of most of the Dominican world, which included the school in their prayers.

I was able to include some of this material in my new book on Peter of Verona, but I am also planning a comprehensive article about the above discoveries. In this I will be more than happy to include my gratitude for the kind support of the American Academy of Religion, which has aided me in looking into a new area of medieval lived religion.
The Demons (and Delights?) of Dissertation Writing
Tovis Page, Harvard University

A MOST DONE with your paper? a well-meaning relative asked me recently.
“One more year,” I answered, not bothering to clarify that said “paper” is actually — excuse me — a dissertation. In such situations I used to explain that, really, and rather unfortunately, the dissertation is more like a book than a paper. But I no longer do. The people who ask me this question don’t want information about what I’m doing, they just want to know whether or not I’m still doing it.

Many of my friends and family members have never asked what the dissertation is actually about, and those who do rarely remember for long. I’m always amazed when I hear my mother explaining to other people what I study: “Something about animals,” she often says, searching for words, “and women and oppression.” While this bears some resemblance to the nexus of interests that I took with me to Harvard Divinity School as a master’s student nearly a decade ago, it hardly represents the focus of my research now. Recently she asked me, registering surprise that I would be applying for jobs in the field of religion, “But how much do you really study religion?” “A lot, Mom,” I sighed, “I’m getting a PhD in religious studies.”

While such questions from family and friends are well meaning, they often exacerbate the sense of isolation and existential angst faced by dissertation writers. Does my research matter? Am I ever going to finish? What am I really doing in this project? Does it make any sense? Will I just get a job, and if so, where? Will I earn enough to cover student loan repayments and living expenses?

Dissertation writing is a lonely process. You spend countless hours by yourself, in your head: reading, thinking, and — on good days — writing. Deadlines and feedback are few and far between. It requires a huge amount of self-discipline and offers ample opportunities to “face your inner demons,” such as self-doubt, anxiety, and a whole host of other lovelies. Some demons you meet for the first time during the dissertation process, such as, in my case, procrastination.

Before I started the dissertation process, I didn’t think of myself as a procrastinator. I had no reason to: I kept up with course readings and turned in assignments on time. As a teaching assistant, I prepared diligently for class and promptly returned student work. But the dissertation is different. The deadlines are my own. My meeting them or not seems only to affect me. Evidently, I think it’s okay to blow off deadlines if I’m the only one to bear the consequences (in reality, of course, those close to me also suffer the consequences . . . my partner George, for one, will be as relieved as I will be when I finish!).

Does my research matter? Am I ever going to finish? What am I really doing in this project? Does it make any sense? Will I get a job, and if so, where? Will I earn enough to cover student loan repayments and living expenses?

It’s not that I don’t mind letting myself finish by missing my own deadlines. I do, and I take myself to task for it. In fact, I’m the only one to bear the consequences (in reality, of course, those close to me also suffer the consequences . . . my partner George, for one, will be as relieved as I will be when I finish!).

Seeking Applications for the From the Student Desk Editor Position
The AAR Student Director, Nichole R. Phillips, seeks an editor for the From the Student Desk feature column published three times a year in Religious Studies News. The From the Student Desk editor will solicit articles for the March, May, and October issues of RSN based on established submission guidelines. The editor will work closely with the Student Director and the AAR Staff Liaison to the Graduate Student Committee. The editor will also submit an annual status report to the Student Director.

The term of service is November 2008 to November 2010. The qualifications include: 1) Current student membership in the AAR for at least one calendar year prior to applying; 2) Previous editing experience; and 3) Current enrollment in a PhD program.

To apply for this position, please send a brief statement of interest with biographical sketch and current CV to Student Director, Nichole R. Phillips, via e-mail (phillipsn@gmail.com). As part of the selection process, candidate finalists will be asked to copy edit a sample column. All applications must be received by Monday, June 30, 2008.
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