We’re looking forward to seeing many of you at the AAR/SBL annual meeting in San Diego in just a few days. And remember that next year the meetings will be in Atlanta, so please plan to come by campus when you are in town.

One of the things that you will see is the new Pitts Theology Library, a state-of-the-art facility with beautiful study spaces, easier access to the collections, and exceptional technological resources. An article in the newsletter tells more about David’s honor and lists more faculty and alumni books, as well as new positions, postdocs, and fellowships obtained by our recent graduates and current students. Congratulations to all.

In this issue of the GDR newsletter, we feature the theme of digital humanities and public scholarship, highlighting the work of our faculty, alums, and students. Faculty member Jacob Wright was in the news this year for the publication of his new “enhanced e-book,” King David and His Reign Revisited. In his article in the newsletter he describes this powerful new platform and how it can enable scholars to create new types of books and reach a wider variety of audiences. Also, take a look at the related article that Jacob wrote for the April 21, 2014, issue of The Chronicle of Higher Education. This year also saw the launch of the new online magazine Sacred Matters, established by Gary Laderman, with an advisory board that includes other GDR faculty and alums. Mike Altman, a recent GDR alumnus and one of the founders of Sacred Matters, describes its mission and accomplishments in this issue.

Two of our alumnae write about their experiences as public scholars. Ingrid Lilly decided to develop a website for engaging religion scholars with the public in the wake of the new Darren Aronofsky movie Noah. It’s a fascinating story about the rewards and frustrations of jumping into digital humanities. Emory is trying to find increasing opportunities for students to learn some of these skills while still in their PhD programs. Meredith Doster reflects on her experiences in becoming the assistant managing editor of the Emory-based...
Professional Training

by Bobbi Patterson

Carol and I have spent two delightful years listening to you, our alumni, about how the GDR’s professional training and programs did or did not prepare you for lives as professional scholars. As a result, with input from the Graduate Student Advisory Group and GDR staff and faculty, we have developed new ways of increasing coherency among the varied elements of our graduate education programs. This is designed to better connect elements of our training so that students’ capacities for navigating the shifting terrains of their future are better integrated and developed.

Creating a visual chart of current training requirements provides students a broad map by which they choose their own path of completion. A newly designed First Year Colloquy emphasizes a shared faculty and advanced student mentoring approach. An electronic “end of the year” reporting form offers students a single repository of their accomplishments, which never cease to amaze us. Increasing numbers of GDR students are taking advantage of our option-based Third Tattoo requirement. These students hold primary positions in Emory’s Center for Digital Scholarship. One is the associate editor of Southern Spaces, the renowned online journal. Several GDR students are helping Gary Laderman shape the new and engaging online magazine Sacred Matters. Several have worked with the Carlos Museum researching gallery objects related their fields and helping redesign curricula for visiting Atlanta public schoolchildren. These direction-bearing opportunities for professional development do not leave our students spinning in multiple directions—at least not by their assessments.

Along with them, we have carefully considered each element as part of a broader and more coherent training approach to the landscapes of the future. While retaining our core commitment to field-based and interdisciplinary preparation for the professoriate, we also are striving to provide relevant and seamless training for the broader mapping of contemporary competencies. In many ways, you know this terrain better than we. So please continue sharing your experiences and advice with us as we develop a national profile for traditional and alternative academic career preparation. We’re meeting many of our goals already and will continue to pursue them, but your input is invaluable.

The GDR’s commitment to public scholarship manifests itself in other ways as well. In February, we hosted Shaun Casey, the first person to head the US State Department’s Office of Engagement with Faith-Based Communities. Casey’s lecture is available on the GDR website, and an extended interview with him by GDR faculty member Jim Hoesterey is in Sacred Matters. Our alumni profile this year also features a GDR graduate, Abbas Barzegar, whose work on peace building is attracting national and international attention.

As these articles indicate, the field of religion and the training needed to engage in it is constantly changing. The GDR is attempting to create new ways to enhance both the formation of students and the creation of intellectual community. Associate Director Bobbi Patterson describes how alumni feedback has helped stimulate some innovations in the graduate experience in the GDR. Perhaps our most exciting innovation is the launch of the new Laney Colloquium in Religion, a program to highlight and enhance the interdisciplinary conversations that are happening in the GDR and across Emory University. GDR faculty member Ted Smith, leader of the planning process, introduces this new initiative, which we expect will become the signature of the intellectual work of the GDR.

Carol Newsom
Director of Graduate Studies

Spaces. Not all encounters with the media are intentional. In a delightful article, Kelly Murphy discusses how she negotiated the media spotlight when a course she was teaching on zombies attracted popular attention—not all of it welcome.
The Flood that Continues to Course through History

by Ingrid Lilly 11PhD (HB)

At AAR/SBL Baltimore in 2013, I attended an all-day meeting on religion and digital humanities. As I relished the stimulating atmosphere of ideas, one of my own germinated: Someone should really build a website for the then upcoming Noah movie. Darren Aronofsky, acclaimed director of Black Swan, was filming his self-described passion project. A biblical story in an artistic director’s hands? Someone should definitely make a website.

The day after I got home from SBL, while still in bed (honestly), I opened up a web-building platform that my 12-year-old stepson recommended. By the end of the day, I had designed a home page for a website on Noah’s flood. By the next day, I had secured my fourth-favorite handle for a URL. And by the end of the week, I was screen sharing my beta site on Skype with two great friends, scholars both, who became integral collaborators.

The site would go on to garner 15,000 unique visitors (and counting), serve as a resource in academic classrooms, and prompt an invitation to appear on NPR’s “On Point” to discuss the film. FLOODofNOAH.com was a learning curve, an experiment, and my obsession for the next five months.

The website banner includes the phrase, “Genesis is not the beginning or the end of the story: The Flood,” and the content is categorized by its logic. One can learn about ancient Near Eastern flood stories, the Genesis story, and how Noah’s flood figures in religious traditions, literature, culture, and contemporary conversations about climate change. Essays, media, and pedagogical resources provide an image-rich invitation to critical thinking.

One guiding mantra for the website was to open up the classroom of higher education. The Genesis flood story is the strongest pedagogical example of the documentary hypothesis and historical critical study of the Bible. Ancient flood myths demand cross-cultural agility, a mind-set increasingly needed in modern democratic and globalized societies. And the reception of Noah’s flood speaks to the power of religion in the humanities. The flood spawned several Hollywood movies, an evangelical endangered species activist, a theme park in Kentucky, a metaphor for the unconscious, Pat Robertson’s favorite hermeneutical lens for interpreting natural disasters, and a US senator justifying his support of the Keystone pipeline. The flood is an intersection. Higher education thrives in such places.

The production of the site divided into two distinct stages. The first was the long haul and could never have happened without countless collaborators. Fellow editors and GDR colleagues Kelly J. Murphy and Jackie A. Wyse-Rhodes (ABD) and I solicited and edited essays. I worked with others on multimedia, creative commons, social strategies, and search engine optimization. There were numerous false trails as well, such as the day I spent learning an animation presentation software that only furnished six seconds of usable content. I called it a loss and redirected my energies.

The second stage began just as the first was ending. Roughly 20 academics, including many GDR graduates, went to see the Noah movie on opening weekend and, through a coordinated effort, wrote topically distinct “procrastanalyses” of the film. Just five days after opening night, ours was the richest and most comprehensive set of analyses available on the web. Event-driven, rich collaboration is a rewarding way to engage digital culture. It may even prove to be a fruitful path of opportunity for the humanities.

We need funding and revenue models to make these sorts of projects more feasible. Hollywood stands to benefit. Digital educational content extends the life of a film by raising the quality of public engagement. However, I am personally ambivalent about soliciting industry partners. And while I am trained to study the past, I’m no expert on the future.
How Zombies Turned Me into a Public Scholar

by Kelly J. Murphy 11PhD (HB)

When I attended Emory, I regularly drove past a Family Radio/Harold Camping “The End Is Near!” billboard during the months leading up to May 21, 2011. Much later, during my first year teaching at Central Michigan University in 2013–2014, I designed and taught a course titled From Revelation to the Walking Dead: Apocalypse Then and Now. The department hoped that a new special topics course might generate student interest in biblical studies at CMU, and I was excited to teach a course on apocalyptic thought, a desire that initially took root when I first saw the billboards in Atlanta. While I was thrilled to be teaching two sections of engaged, creative students who helped push my academic interests in new directions, From Revelation to the Walking Dead also attracted attention outside my classroom. Initially, the CMU media department covered the course. From there, the AP picked up the story. Radio stations requested conversations with my students. Mailboxes, electronic and regular, filled with angry diatribes about wasting tax-payer dollars, while comment sections in online articles provoked disdain for the liberal arts (as well many thoughtful comments from interested readers).

The biggest lesson I learned from interacting with the media is the importance of this sentence: “There are no zombies in the Bible.” For (most) of my students, the goals of the course were clear: we were treating the concept of zombies seriously because the zombie-apocalypse craze provided one window into the way that human beings think about themselves and the world, and doing this in tandem with the study of ancient apocalyptic thought illustrated how contemporary and ancient narratives ask many of the same big questions: What does it mean to be human? What is the nature of suffering? What is the meaning of history? How does imagining the end of the world or society reflect social critiques/concerns? My students discovered that we could read the book of Revelation and see how early Christians expressed their anxieties about Roman oppression, and, similarly, we could also analyze the genre of the zombie apocalypse to see how contemporary authors/producers convey their concern over a variety of issues (e.g., fear of nuclear war, communism, debates about social injustices, consumerism, or impending environmental disaster).

Of course, there were students who were disappointed we weren’t just watching The Walking Dead and eating popcorn (the way that most of the Internet thought we were). I found that repeating the phrase “There are no zombies in the Bible” encouraged me to reframe my self-image. Prior to the course, I primarily thought of myself as a teacher. I feel passionate and comfortable in the classroom. But public attention on how I was teaching about the biblical texts meant that I couldn’t take for granted that people would understand that I wasn’t (a) failing to take the Bible seriously as a text considered sacred by different religious groups; (b) teaching students survivalist strategies for the end times; (c) only showing movies in class; and/or (d) wasting tax-payer dollars and ensuring that my students would be unemployable upon graduation. (I have an email folder that attests to the fact that many people were certain I was doing at least one of the above.)

My new self-image became one of “public scholar,” a phrase I find equally as terrifying and as exciting as the opening scene in The Walking Dead when Rick Grimes discovers the little-girl-turned-zombie. While I was reminded continually that what much of the public thinks we are doing in the classroom is vastly different from what we are actually hoping to accomplish, the experience also provided an opportunity to explain how studying zombies fosters an environment in which students can learn history, practice the kinds of useful skills they might need in the real world (analytical writing, argument adjudication, critical thinking), and make significant connections between our pasts and our present. As I continue to embrace the role of both teacher and public scholar, I find myself increasingly turning toward research that would help both my students and the larger public community understand how contemporary interests and concerns—even zombies—connect to ancient topics. How can I encourage people, both inside and outside my classroom, to get people to see that it can be both edifying and fun, when they, if you will, use their brains.
Southern Spaces: Appalachia and Beyond

by Meredith Doster

In the Graduate Division of Religion, faculty and colleagues know me by my vocal enthusiasm for and interrogation of all things Appalachian. With a master’s degree in Appalachian studies, I was thrilled to find a cohort of regional studies enthusiasts when I accepted an editorial position at *Southern Spaces,* Emory University’s peer-reviewed, multimedia journal that explores real and imagined places of the US South and their global connections. Initially attracted to the journal’s regional emphasis and content, my horizon now extends beyond the geographical boundaries of my favorite southern space, Appalachia. As an open-access journal celebrating its 10th year of publication, *Southern Spaces* is at the forefront of conversations and practices that are both responding to and responsible for the shifting contours of scholarly publishing.

Housed in Emory’s new *Center for Digital Scholarship,* *Southern Spaces* charts a path between my doctoral training and the academic publishing landscape that I am learning to navigate as a religious studies scholar-in-training. Working collaboratively with my peer editors and our interdisciplinary editorial board, I am engaging a network of colleagues whose scholarship and writing inspires my own work. In addition to honing my editorial skills, participating on a digital publication requires skill-building and professional development across a variety of platforms. For a committed Luddite who owns neither a smartphone nor a television, the technologies of Digital Humanities provide a challenge and opportunity to learn how to translate rigorous scholarship into dynamic and public-facing formats.

In addition to managing the publication and workflow of the journal, I also contributed to the layout of a new *Southern Spaces* publication that combined a scholarly essay with a mobile app tour. The complete Battle of Atlanta project involved a team of web designers, project managers, education coordinators, as well as the scholar who generated the content for both the essay and the mobile app. Working collaboratively with different departments across the library demonstrated how new media technologies can create opportunities for collaborative and innovative public scholarship. I also recently attended the inaugural *Library Publishing Forum* hosted by the *Library Publishing Coalition.* Over the course of a dynamic two-day conference, I participated in conversations with librarians and university publishing representatives about realignment strategies that are impacting higher education broadly, considering the possibilities and limitations of digital humanities scholarship, as well as my own scholarly location and output.

Now working as assistant managing editor of the journal *Southern Spaces* challenges me to think critically and expansively about the nature and future of scholarship. As we push the envelope of academic publishing, I am increasingly aware of the fault lines between “what counts” as a scholarly publication and what does not. Supporting our authors in tenure and promotion by providing analytics and statistics about their articles, I am learning how to plan for and navigate my own career as a scholar. Actively participating in the evolution of academic publishing, I approach my research and writing increasingly attentive to issues of copyright, open-access, and public consumption. As an emergent scholar of religion, my work at *Southern Spaces* expands my research and competencies beyond the borders of Appalachia, foregrounding how both old and new mechanisms of the academic publication cycle impact and shape the future of interdisciplinary scholarship.
Developing and Producing an Enhanced E-book

by Jacob L. Wright

Two years ago I hadn’t even heard of “fully enhanced e-books” and would’ve never imagined that I would be the first in my field to produce one. Fortunately, Cambridge University Press had already been taking steps in this direction and readily allowed me to try my hand at it for my monograph on King David. The project was inspired by an eagerness to use innovative publishing technologies to communicate more effectively and to keep the costs of academic publishing down.

My book was produced in two forms. One is paperback, hardback, and a traditional e-book format, while the other is the fully enhanced version that I produced myself. Everyone agreed that the enhanced version should appear earlier to ensure that it would be given a serious test-run. The results and responses have been so far very rewarding.

I hadn’t worked previously with standard programs like Adobe InDesign or Dreamweaver. In fact, I had never even built a basic web page. But I found that the programs are quite easy to learn. What’s most important is that one has a good aesthetic sense and pays attention to detail.

For scholars in the humanities, the “fully enhanced e-book” format is a game changer. It can do the work of two or more traditional print volumes. Authors can address the general reading public and beginner students in the main body of the text, while treating at length technical matters for advanced readers in extensive pull-out and pop-up windows. A traditional print book (along with the conventional e-book readers that replicate them) has two layers: the main body and a thin stratum of footnotes and endnotes. The fully enhanced e-book can display multiple narratives or voices, each speaking to a different audience.

As such, this new format can solve the endemic problems posed by academics who want their colleagues to be able to see how they arrive at their conclusions but who also want to make their work appealing for readers beyond their discipline (the “crossover” book). For publishers, if a book can address two or more readerships, it can be marketed at a more attractive price point.

As scholars in the humanities, we often need to quote primary sources at length. In print these quotations take up many pages. Due to space constraints, we usually resort to references, telling the reader where she can read the text for herself. But in an enhanced e-book, we can quote lengthy sources in their entirety without requiring extra pages. The sources are reproduced in (infinitely) scrollable windows, which can be found directly on the page or accessed via pop-up icons.

These icons correspond to footnotes and endnotes in traditional print formats. Publishers tend to prefer (short) endnotes since (lengthy) footnotes intimidate the readers, while many academics prefer footnotes since endnotes require them to use two hands. There’s an easy way around this problem. I developed a system of icons corresponding to various kinds of notes: primary sources, secondary sources, geography, video/audio clips, etc. The icons are embedded in the paragraph, and by tapping on them, one can bring up the corresponding scrollable window, map, video clip, etc.

Reading also becomes more interactive. As authors we can speak to our readers directly in audio or video clips at the end of chapters. Our readers can follow links directly to articles, books, websites, and videos. They can annotate what they read, highlight lines with a palette of colors, and share them via email and social media. From what I’ve seen so far, students have been very enthusiastic about these interactive features.

GDR Hosts Visit by Shaun Casey of the US State Department

In August 2013 Secretary of State John Kerry announced the appointment of Shaun Casey to head the State Department Office of Engagement with Faith-Based Communities. In making the announcement Kerry said, “If I went back to college today, I think I would probably major in comparative religion because that’s how integrated [religion] is in everything that we are working on and deciding and thinking about in life today.” The new office is charged with working closely with faith communities to ensure that their voices are heard in the foreign policy process, including through continued collaboration with the department’s Religion and Foreign Policy Working Group. It also is collaborating with other government officials and offices focused on religious issues, including the ambassador at large for international religious freedom and the department’s Office of International Religious Freedom.

Casey visited Emory at the invitation of the GDR from February 6–7, 2014, and presented a talk titled “Exploring Religion and US Foreign Policy: Launching the State Department’s Office of Faith-Based Community Initiatives.” A link to the video of this talk can be found on the GDR website. In addition, GDR professor Jim Hoesterey conducted an extensive interview with Casey for Sacred Matters. That wide-ranging interview can be found on the Sacred Matters website.

Casey is currently on leave of absence from Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., where he is professor of Christian ethics and director of the National Capital Semester for Seminarians. His research interests include the ethics of war and peace, the role of religion in presidential politics, public theology, the role of the Church in fighting global poverty, and the problem of theodicy as it relates to the Red Sox. In 2009 he published The Making of a Catholic President: Kennedy vs. Nixon, 1960 (New York: Oxford University Press).
Alumni Profile: Abbas Barzegar

Abbas Barzegar earned his PhD in 2010 in the West and South Asian Religions concentration, having worked closely with Richard Martin and Devin Stewart on the question of Sunni identity formation in the late antique context of religious imperialism. In the same year he began a tenure-track position at Georgia State University in the Department of Religious Studies. In addition to building a curriculum of Islamic studies course offerings, he has published articles and chapters in both his primary and secondary areas of study. Building on the habits he learned at Emory, he continues to pursue interdisciplinary research and maintains a commitment to community engaged learning.

In the fall semester of 2012 in partnership with Bilal King of Morehouse’s Department of Sociology, Barzegar launched the After Malcolm Digital Archive. The collaborative project is an oral history and document preservation initiative that seeks to better understand, record, and disseminate the multifaceted African American Muslim movement between 1965 and 1985. It is during this period that witnessed not only the transformation of the Nation of Islam from a separatist race-based organization to social movement grounded in Sunni Islam, but also the emergence of multiple forms of African American engagement with the wider Islamic tradition. In addition to recording nearly 50 oral histories with elderly African American Muslims in Atlanta who all had ties to the wider movement for black freedom, the team of volunteers has acquired primary materials that no other research institution has yet preserved. For example, the official newspaper of the Islamic Party of North America, Al-Islam, is currently available through GSU Library’s Department of Special Collections. It is also worth noting that the team was awarded funding for its programming activities from the Georgia Humanities Council in 2013. The team is also thankful to Kennesaw State University’s Zuckerman Museum of Art for generously producing an installation dedicated to the After Malcolm project. The exhibit, which houses original manuscripts, photos, and material objects runs through the end of October.

At roughly the same time two years ago Barzegar, along with a his GSU colleague Shawn Powers of the Department of Communications, began a programming and research initiative that explores the ways in which religious institutions can operate as civic partners in mitigating conflict and social discord in the Muslim world. Their inaugural program hosted an on-stage interview at the Commerce Club with South African Ambassador Ebrahim Rasool who played an active role in nonviolently disarming a Muslim urban vigilante militia in post-apartheid Cape Town. The event, sponsored by the US Institute of Peace, the Carter Center, and the World Affairs Council, was then developed into a larger research project titled Civic Approaches to Conflict Resolution in the Muslim World. The project received funding from the Luce Foundation (via the British Council) in 2013, which led to a high-level, closed-door consultative workshop at the Carter Center in May 2014 on the role of religion in the Syrian conflict. Barzegar and his partners are currently assembling a team of advisers and researchers to execute a peace-mapping project that analyzes successful case studies of religious institutions and actors intervening in conflict scenarios and consequently distills the findings for a policy-making audience.

Barzegar hopes to continue to apply religious studies methods and theories in interdisciplinary, collaborative, and applied contexts. Most recently, with Andy Altman of GSU’s Department of Philosophy, he received a National Endowment for the Humanities Award for the joint development of a course on Religious Tolerance in Secular and Religious Frameworks. This is the second NEH initiative he has participated in since he left Emory—the last being a scholar in residence for the NEH program, Muslim Journeys, which was granted to Perimeter College. In addition to his most recent published piece, “Charisma and Community: On the Aesthetics of Political Islam” in Soundings, his regular commentary and analysis are found in various print and broadcast media including CNN, Al Jazeera, Fox News, the Huffington Post, and BBC.
The Laney Colloquium in Religion

by Ted Smith 04PhD (ES)

Emory’s Graduate Division of Religion is launching the Laney Colloquium in Religion, a major initiative to promote interdisciplinary teaching and research in the study of religion. The Laney Colloquium in Religion will bring together students and faculty from every course of study within the GDR and from across the university.

The colloquium will gather scholars around a series of themes that cut across traditional boundaries such as field, method, tradition, and region. The colloquium will focus on a single theme for a two- or three-year period before moving to the next one. The theme for the first colloquium is Global Religious Circuits.

A committee consisting of GDR faculty members James Hoesterey, Emmanuel Lartey, Carol Newsom, Bobbi Patterson, Eric Reinders, Ted Smith, and Jonathan Strom, along with GDR students Lisa Hoelle and Sara Williams is planning a range of events related to the theme, including lectures, seminars, and special events. A conference in the final semester of the theme will serve as both a capstone for the process and a showcase for the scholarship produced.

“The Laney Colloquium in Religion is already generating buzz across the university,” said Carol Newsom, director of the GDR. Colleagues from the College of Arts and Sciences, the Law School, the Rollins School of Public Health, the Center for Mind, Brain, and Culture, the Carter Center, and other parts of the university have already been involved in conversations about the colloquium. Dean Lisa Tedesco of the Laney Graduate School is providing leadership funding. Dean Jan Love of Candler School of Theology is also providing significant support for the effort.

The colloquium arose in response to an external review of the GDR that urged greater integration between courses of study. GDR leadership felt it was important to deepen connections across the GDR while retaining a structure organized around distinct courses of study. That structure mirrors the structure of the guilds, journals, conferences, and other institutions that organize the field. It also fits with the prevailing practices of the academic job market in religion. The Laney Colloquium in Religion therefore seeks to build on the strengths of individual courses of study even as it connects them to one another in new ways.

The external review also encouraged the GDR to develop a “signature” for the program as a whole. Interdisciplinary study and connection to the wider university have long been strengths of the GDR. The Laney Colloquium in Religion builds on those strengths in ways that make them more visible within and beyond Emory.

The colloquium represents an ongoing investment in faculty development designed to help faculty remain at the cutting edge of their fields throughout their careers. It also promises significant benefits for students, according to GDR associate director Bobbi Patterson. “One significant gift of this interdisciplinary conversation,” she says, “is that it allows students to both witness and participate in the expansion of their major research fields toward other fields. They will have the opportunity not only to think across disciplinary and training boundaries, but also to practice doing it with their faculty.”

After three years of focusing on Global Religious Circuits, the Laney Colloquium in Religion will turn its attention to its next theme: Religious Cognitions. Planners hope that a steady rotation of themes will involve the widest possible range of faculty and students.

A Material Honor for Joyce Flueckiger

GDR professor Joyce Flueckiger is the recipient of a 2014 Guggenheim Fellowship. A specialist in performance studies, anthropology of religion, and religions of South Asia, Flueckiger’s work features a particular focus on gender.

Her Guggenheim project, Material Acts: The Agency of Materiality in India, attempts to articulate an indigenous Indian theory of the agency of materiality through performative and ethnographic analyses of a range of different kinds of material not usually included in the study of religion. The title, Material Acts, plays off of J. L. Austin’s term “speech acts”—utterances that do something rather than simply convey information. Flueckiger’s assumption, shared with performance studies scholars regarding ritual and narrative performance, is that material objects do not simply reflect preexisting ideologies and identities but create meaning, identity, theology, transformation. They do something. Indian traditions emphasize the agency (ability to act) of many forms of the...
material, without dependence on human intervention or intention (although, of course, humans often have their own intentions in relationship to the same materials).

The project will analyze five different forms of materiality in specific ethnographic contexts: festival male-to-female guising/dress (vesham)’ ornaments (focusing on the Indian wedding necklace, tali); ritual materials (flowers, fruits, new cloth, etc.) that themselves help to create the goddess of wealth/abundance Lakshmi; cement forms of the demon Ravana in the epic of the Ramayana, whose material presence creates alternative theologies; and small cement shrines built over village goddesses that transform the identities of those housed in their interiors.

The communities Flueckiger has worked in are very explicit about the creative/transformative power of the first three forms of material; using this view of materiality as a lens, she will analyze the creative potential of the last two forms, whose agency is less explicitly articulated verbally. The guiding questions of her project ask: how/when does materiality exert agency and what/how does it create?

While the content and geographic/cultural locations of Flueckiger’s major research projects to date are very different, they share theoretical interests in indigenous categories and in everyday, vernacular religion. *Gender and Genre in the Folklore of Middle India* (1996) drew on fieldwork in rural and small-town Chhattisgarh in central India. *In Amma’s Healing Room: Gender and Vernacular Islam in South India* (2006) focuses on the large urban center of Hyderabad, located on the Deccan Plateau. Her most recent book, *When the World Becomes Female: Guises of a South Indian Goddess* (2013) is based on fieldwork in the South Indian Hindu pilgrimage town of Tirupati. Each book extends the boundaries of and voices included in the traditional academic study of religion. One of the primary purposes of Flueckiger’s research is to bring unwritten traditions into the mainstream of the study and teaching of religion, with a particular emphasis on their gendered performance and experience. Each book has analyzed a repertoire of performance and ritual traditions, placing them in relationship to each other as contexts that affect how they are received by their performers and audiences.

*This article incorporates material prepared for the Guggenheim website.*

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**New Pitts Theology Library Building Opens**

GDR alums will undoubtedly remember the Pitts Theology Library on the Emory Quadrangle as a place that was both beautiful and rather difficult to use—a fantastic collection in a building that was cold and drafty, plagued by leaks, and overflowing with books. But as of August, the Pitts Theology Library has a new home in phase II of Candler’s new building complex.

With more than 610,000 volumes, Pitts is among the top three theology libraries in North America and one of the most comprehensive in the world. The old library building on the Quad was built in 1916 to house the entire School of Theology—classrooms, a chapel, offices, and the library, and did not offer the space or the controlled environment the library’s growing collections and rare manuscripts required.

The new Pitts Library will include more room for the stacks, a dedicated special collections area, increased space for small-group study, and breakout rooms for larger groups. It also will feature an 80-seat lecture hall and 1,000 square feet of adjacent exhibit space. Upgraded technology will abound, and staff workspace will be arranged to encourage collaboration.

Pitts vaulted to world-class status in 1976 when its holdings tripled through the acquisition of Hartford Seminary’s 220,000-volume collection. This year, the library completed processing a gift of 85,000 volumes from General Theological Seminary, which added to Pitts’ holdings 25,424 monographs, 428 periodicals, and 2,721 special collections titles. Click here for a virtual tour of the new Candler Library.
Sacred Matters launches, an online magazine with a strong GDR imprint

by Michael J. Altman 13PhD (ARC)

I remember when Gary Laderman sent me the email. It was July of last year and I was just settling into my first job in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Alabama. I had graduated from the GDR a couple months earlier. The subject was simply “talk?”—a very Ladermanian email subject line. So we talked and Gary explained that he had an opportunity to start a new web magazine that would be housed within the new Emory Center for Digital Scholarship. Did I want to be a part of it? Sure, I said. And thus, Sacred Matters was born.

Here we are more than a year and a half later and Sacred Matters has published over 50 articles, videos, and images. We’ve produced a series of in-depth video interviews with scholars ranging from historian of American religion Randall Balmer to Shaun Casey, special advisor to the US Secretary of State for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. But what I’m most proud of as managing editor is the range of topics we’ve been able to cover: medical marijuana in Israel, pro wrestling, secularism and Islam, Phish and the Insane Clown Posse.

Our goal at Sacred Matters has been to bring a new angle to the popular writing about religion online. We’ve avoided politics, but not policy. We’ve side-stepped polemics, but not culture. I often describe Sacred Matters as a culture magazine with a religion problem. Our subtitle is “Religious Currents in Culture” and we take its meaning in the broadest sense possible. The sacred is not confined to the “world’s religions” and religions are not simply “traditions.” In our recent “Show Us Your Sacred” series we’ve asked readers to send us images of the sacred in their lives using the hashtag #sacredmatters. We’ve gotten everything from family pets to Cornhusker football. Sociologist Emile Durkheim famously noted that the sacred was “eminently social.” We’ve tried to take that idea into the 21st century.

Sacred Matters is very much an Emory project. But even more, it is a product of the Graduate Division of Religion. Gary Laderman is GDR faculty, I am a GDR alum, and our associate editors, Anandileela Salinas and Kelly Gannon, are GDR students. So, I am extending an invitation to all of my fellow GDR alumni. Join us in this crazy experiment. We’d love to work with you and publish your writing. We’d love for you to show us your sacred. We’d love for you to share in the effervesce of Sacred Matters. Because the sacred is an eminently social thing.

Michael Altman is assistant professor in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Alabama.
In addition to the publications by GDR faculty members listed, which were published in 2013–2014, GDR member David Blumenthal has been honored by being selected for inclusion in the Brill Series, the Library of Contemporary Jewish Philosophers. The volume is David R. Blumenthal: Living with God and Humanity; edited by H. Tirosh-Samuelson and A. W. Hughes (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

As the series prospectus describes itself, “The Library of Contemporary Jewish Philosophers showcases outstanding Jewish thinkers who have made lasting contributions to constructive Jewish philosophy in the second half of the 20th century and early 21st century. Each volume is devoted to one particular thinker and is meant to show the thinker’s relationship to the Jewish philosophical past and to contemporary Jewish existence.”

In the introduction, Hava Tirosh-Samuelson characterizes as “an exacting and innovative interpreter of medieval Jewish philosophy; an original constructive theologian who offered a new post-Holocaust theology; a caring educator and politically involved public intellectual, who has used social psychology to demonstrate what needs to be done to prevent another Holocaust-like event; and above all ‘a religious Jew who takes seriously the presence of God and the truth of God’s promise to the Jewish people of seed, land, and blessing.’” A series of four essays drawn from his previous writings provide an overview of the different aspects of Blumenthal’s work. The GDR congratulates David Blumenthal on this well-deserved recognition of his contributions to Jewish philosophy and to the study of religion.

**Books published in 2013–2014 by GDR faculty**


_____. David, King of Israel, and Caleb in Biblical Memory. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014

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**STUDENT AWARDS**

Sarah Farmer (PCRL)
Dissertation Fellowship, Forum for Theological Exploration

Lisa Hoelle (JRC)
Tam Institute for Jewish Studies Summer Grant

Elana Jefferson-Tatum (PCRL)
Forum for Theological Exploration (FTE) Doctoral Fellowship

Justin Latterell (ES)
Alonzo L. McDonald Senior Fellow in Law and Religion

Adam Mathes (HS)
Tillman Military Scholar, Pat Tillman Foundation

Alphonso Saville, IV (ARC)
Thurgood Marshall Dissertation Fellowship at Dartmouth College
Eric Barreto 10PhD (NT) was promoted to associate professor of New Testament, Luther Seminary, and is editor of Reading Theologically (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014).

Gil Ben-Herut 13PhD (WSAR) is assistant professor in the Department of Religious Studies, University of South Florida (2013–2014), and recipient of the following awards: CAS Internal Awards, College of the Arts and Sciences, University of South Florida, April 2014; Humanities Institute Summer Grant, University of South Florida, March 2014; and New Researcher Grant Award, University of South Florida, February 2014.

Thomas L. Blackstone 95PhD (NT) is senior pastor at Pleasant Street UMC in Waterville, ME.

Bo-Rah Chung 09PhD (PCRL) is assistant professor at Asia Life University in Daejeon, South Korea.

Peter Yuichi Clark 01PhD (PCRL) is director, Spiritual Care Services, at UCSF Medical Center and UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospitals.

Mark DelCoglano 09PhD (HS) is assistant professor of theology at the University of St. Thomas.

Antoinette DeNapoli 09PhD (WSAR) has received the following grants and awards: American Academy of Religion Independent Research Grant (2013); Wyoming Institute for Humanities Research (2014–2015); Caitlin Long Excellent Fund (2014-2015) and is the author of Real Sadhus Sing to God: Gender, Asceticism, and Vernacular Religion in Rajasthan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014)


Peter Gathje 94PhD (ES) is associate dean of curriculum and instruction at Memphis Theological Seminary.


L. Daniel Hawk 90PhD (OT) is editor, with Kay Higuera Smith and Jayachitra Lalitha, of Evangelical Postcolonial Conversations: Global Awakenings in Theology and Praxis (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014).

Emily A. Holmes 08PhD (TS) is the recipient of the National Collegiate Honors Council Portz Grant for “Food Justice Cooking Component: The Spirituality and Ethics of Eating” and the author of Flesh Made Word: Medieval Women Mystics, Writing, and the Incarnation (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013) and Breathing with Luce Irigaray, co-edited with Lenart Škof (London: Bloomsbury, 2013)

Kyle Keefer 03 (NT) received the 2012 Kathryne Amelia Brown Teaching Award at Converse College.

Kathryn Kleinhans 95PhD (TS) was installed as the Mike and Marge McCoy Family Distinguished Chair of Lutheran Heritage and Mission at Wartburg College.

Ingrid E. Lilly 10PhD (HB) is currently visiting scholar at Pacific School of Religion and author of the website Noah’s Flood: Ancient Stories of Natural Cataclysm (floodofnoah.com).

Megan Bishop Moore 04PhD (HB) is UI and Data Analyst at Content Analytics, Inc.

Kevin O’Brien 06PhD (ES) is chair of Environmental Studies Program, Pacific Lutheran University and has received a grant from the Wabash Center for “Fostering Research Programs in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Religion and Theology” with Forrest Clingerman, PhD, and from the Louisville Institute Sabbatical Research Grant, with Kathryn Blanchard, PhD, for “Prophets Meet Profits: Christian Environmentalism and Free Markets.” He is the author of An Introduction to Christian Environmentalism: Ecology, Virtue, and Ethics (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014).

Matthew Rindge 08PhD (NT) was promoted to associate professor in 2013 and granted tenure in 2014 at Gonzaga University.

Elaine Robinson 00PhD (TS) is interim vice president of academic affairs and dean at Saint Paul School of Theology.

Louis A. Ruprecht Jr. 90PhD (ES) is director of George State University’s Center for Hellenic Studies and author of Classics at the Dawn of the Museum Era: The Life and Times of Antoine Chrysostome Quatremere de Quincy (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) and Policing the State: Democratic Reflections on Police Power Gone Awry, in Memory of Kathryn Johnston (Eugene, OR:Wipf and Stock, 2013).

Christian Scharen 01PhD (ES) is vice president of applied research at Auburn Theological Seminary in New York. He received a grant for phase two of his Learning Pastoral Imagination project and is the author of Serving the Assembly’s Worship (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2013) and Explorations in Ecclesiology and Ethnography (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012).
Phillip Michael Sherman 08PhD (HB) is tenured and promoted to associate professor of religion at Maryville College.

Marcia Mount Sloop 03PhD (TS) is author of Touchdowns for Jesus and Other Signs of Apocalypse: Lifting the Veil on Big-Time Sports (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013).

Gregory Stevenson 99PhD (NT) was named chair of the Rochester College Faculty Association and is the author of A Slaughtered Lamb: Revelation and the Apocalyptic Response to Evil and Suffering (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University, 2013).

James Strange 07PhD (NT) is associate professor of religion at Samford University and second editor with David Fiensy of Galilee in the Late Second Temple and Mishnaic Periods, Volume 1: Life, Culture, and Society (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014).

Meghan T. Sweeney 06PhD (TS) was promoted to associate professor of the practice, theology, at Boston College and director of the PULSE Program for Service Learning at Boston College.


Patricia K.ull 96PhD (HB) is affiliate developer at Hoosier Interfaith Power and Light and author of Inhabiting Eden: Christians, the Bible, and the Ecological Crisis (Louisville, KY: WJK Press, 2013).

Tim Van Meter 03PhD (PCRL) is associate professor with tenure in the Alford Chair of Christian Education and Youth Ministry at Methodist Theological School in Ohio and author of Created in Delight: Youth Ministry and the Mending of the World (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013).

Kate Zubko 08PhD (WSAR) received the Excellence in Teaching Award for untenured faculty at the University of North Carolina, Asheville and is the author of Dancing Bodies of Devotion: Fluid Gestures in Bharata Natyam (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014).

The Laney Graduate School’s commitment to graduate education had led to the establishment of four key priorities:

- Academic Identity—working internally to set academic goals related to pedagogy and programmatic priorities
- Professionalization Support—generating new programming to help students achieve their goals inside and outside of the academy
- Inclusion/Diversity—developing internal and external partnerships to increase recruitment and philanthropic support for minority students
- International Engagement—re-engaging international alumni for exchange, recruitment, and philanthropy and creating new partnerships for global initiatives

In the spirit of “inclusion and diversity” mentioned above, the graduate school is thrilled to welcome Damon Williams as director of diversity, community, and recruitment. He comes to Emory from Xavier University in New Orleans and will focus on the recruitment and retention of under-represented minority students.

In addition to our current professionalization opportunities for LGS students, new programs are constantly launched. Campus Connections will feature LGS alumni who work on college campuses but in roles beyond tenure-tracked professorships for PhDs. Through “Mentors on Call,” alumni are listed in a database for students to seek specific types of people for certain questions.

Between 1948 and 1961, 65 percent of Jewish students at Emory’s dental school were given failing grades, made to repeat a year, or even told to leave the school, despite sound academic achievements. One of those students, S. Perry Brickman, brought this injustice to light nearly half a century later, helped in part by the efforts of Arthur Levin, the Anti-Defamation League southeastern regional director who documented the pattern of discrimination and took his findings to Emory President Walter Martin more than 50 years ago. Serving as a powerful repudiation of those discriminatory acts, the Brickman-Levin Fund will increase the amount of financial for graduate students in Jewish studies and make the study of Jewish life and culture a permanent part of Emory’s graduate curriculum, providing support that will allow the university to train the next generation of Jewish scholars.

All Laney Graduate School fellows study for 12 months a year, but did you know that some receive only 10 months of financial support? The “12 for 12” initiative aims to get every graduate student to 12-month funding. The new Graduate School Fellowship Support Fund will help provide all fellows with a full year of support. You can help build this fund with a monthly gift of $12 or more.

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