



The Religious Studies Voice

University of California, Riverside | Department of Religious Studies | 2018-2019

Announcements

Throughout the year, the Department hosts an active calendar of lectures, colloquia, conferences and other events centered on the academic interdisciplinary study of religion.

With four endowed chairs (Maimonides Chair in Jewish Studies, Holstein Family Chair in Religious Studies, Shrimad Rajchandra Chair in Jain Studies, and Jasbir Singh Saini Chair of Sikh and Punjabi Studies) and professors with expertise in diverse fields, the Religious Studies Department is one of the most exciting departments on campus!

Read more about the diverse faculty and graduate students inside!

Inside This Issue

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Prof. Matthew King gets tenured and publishes his first book, *Ocean of Milk, Ocean of Blood: A Mongolian Monk in the Ruins of the Qing Empire!*

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6th Sikh Studies Conference attracts international audience!

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Inaugural UCR Conference on Queer and Transgender Studies in Religion held in February!

Notes from the Chair's Desk

It has been my great privilege to serve the Department of Religious Studies for the last six years (2013-2019). As the chair of the department I have conducted its activities and transactions toward a progressive direction with the spirit of collegiality. After a period of change and uncertainty, we were able to put the department on track with four new hires, three newly tenured professors and three endowed chairs, namely Maimonides Chair in Jewish Studies, Holstein Family Chair in Religious Studies and Shrimad Rajchandra Chair in Jain Studies. These endowed chairs (along with Sikh Studies Chair) have strengthened our department and the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (CHASS) in collaborative research by organizing international conferences, seminars and academic lectures. Unsurprisingly, our department is now acknowledged as the 'most exciting department' in the College.



During this period, our Undergraduate Program in Religious Studies went through external review in 2016-2017. It has provided us with the feedback on our strengths and identified the areas where we need more support from the administration. We have already complied with the action plan to implement the recommendations of the Academic Senate Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) with regard to this review process. Similarly, our Graduate Program in Religious Studies will be going through external review process in the coming academic year 2019-2020. It will help us further strengthen our graduate program.

We are committed to our pedagogical work toward meeting the curricular needs of our graduate and undergraduate students. We have much to celebrate in terms of the success of our faculty in winning research grants to reflect their productive research trajectories. Our colloquium series has been extremely successful for training our graduate students. We are also grateful to our donors for supporting our department. In the end, I would like to express my deep sense of gratitude towards my colleagues who provided me with their unflinching support during my tenure. I offer my wholehearted support and best wishes to my successor, Dr. Melissa Wilcox, who will lead the department to new heights in the coming years.

Pashaura Singh

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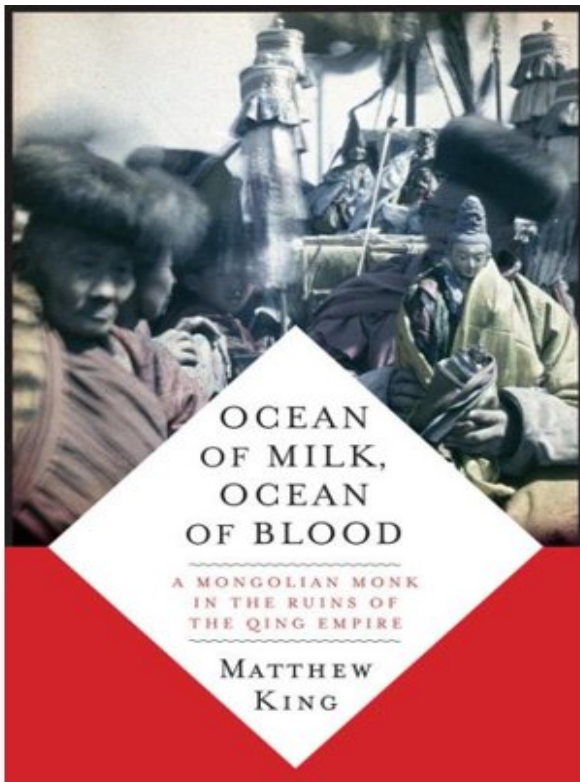
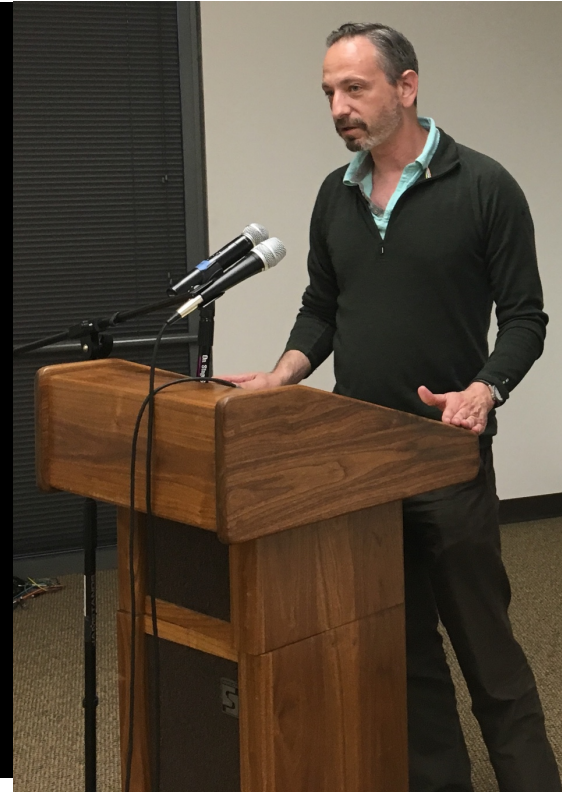


Faculty Updates

Michael Alexander began the academic year with an invited talk at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem for the conference “American Jews and Their (Various) Others.” His paper for the conference was published in the journal *Religions*, and considered the topic “The Exilic Imperative of American Jewry.” Alexander also participated in the Third Miami Beach International Roundtable on Black Judaism, offering a paper on Exilic theology among African Jews.

The Maimonides Chair in Jewish Studies at UCR hosted many Jewish Studies events on the UCR campus. “A Very Jewish Christmas: The Holiday Music of American Jews,” was conducted by Professor Peter Curtis of Riverside City College; Professor Ya'akov “Kobi” Gal of the Ben Gurion University of the Negev spoke about breakthroughs in using artificial intelligence for education; Professor Edo Bar-Zeev of Ben Gurion University of the Negev spoke about recent developments in water renewal and desalination; and Professor Bruce D. Haynes of the University of California, Davis, spoke about his new book *The Soul of Judaism: Jews of African Descent in America*. Many of these talks coincided with our Jewry and Innovation initiative.

The Maimonides Chair in Jewish Studies awarded the Jewry and Innovation Research Grant to Remy Ilona, doctoral student in the department of Religious Studies. Ilona, already an expert on Nigerian Jewry, began research towards a dissertation concerning antisemitism and ethnic cleansing in Africa.



Prof. Matthew King is pleased to report that this year he was tenured and published his first book, *Ocean of Milk, Ocean of Blood: A Mongolian Monk in the Ruins of the Qing Empire* (Columbia University Press). Other highlights include an invitation from UCLA’s Confucius Institute to visit the Magoa Grottoes (Dunhuang Caves) in Gansu (China), a famous Silk Road site in the transmission of Buddhism from India to Central and East Asia. In the spring quarter, Prof. King was a senior research fellow at the Humanities Centre for Advanced Studies’ “Multiple Secularities” group at the University of Leipzig in Germany. There he continued working on one of two new book projects about public culture between Europe and Inner Asia in the 19th century. In 2019-20, Prof. King will be a resident fellow at UCR’s Center for Ideas and Society. There he will be working to complete a book manuscript about the social history of the invention of “Asia” and “Buddhism” in the reading and translating of the *Foguoji*—a famous 5th century CE pilgrimage tale by the Chinese monk Faxian—by a dispersed network of French scholars, Siberian spies, Mongolian dissidents, and Tibetan refugees in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The past academic year has been a year of creative activities for **Dr. Pashaura Singh**. In the first place, his co-edited volume, *Living and Making Sikhi in the Diaspora: Millennial Generation Comes of Age*, was published in the special issue of *Sikh Formations: Religion, Culture, Theory* (Taylor & Francis, London and New York, December 2018). Secondly, his monograph *Oxford Dictionary of Sikh Studies* was launched on April 15, 2019 at Oxford Reference to commemorate Guru Nanak's 550th Birth Anniversary. Thirdly, he organized the 6th Sikh Studies Conference on the theme of "Celebrating Guru Nanak" in which twenty-five scholars around the world participated. The detailed conference report by Tejpaull Singh and Adam Tyson is given in this issue. Fourthly, his article, "How Avoiding the Religion-Politics Divide Plays out in Sikh Politics," was published in *Open Access Academic Journal, Religions* (MDPI 2019, 10: 296). Finally, Dr. Singh delivered a Keynote Address on "The Relevance of Guru Nanak's Message in the Age of Globalization" at a conference on "Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji – 550th Birth Anniversary Celebrations: Humanity, Justice, and Peace: Relevance of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji to the 21st Century," organized by the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute at the University of Calgary on June 14, 2019. This was a moment of pride for Dr. Singh who started his academic career in North America by completing his second Master's Degree at the University of Calgary in Canada.



This past academic year was one of speaking, writing, and organizing for **Professor Wilcox**. She completed a co-authored textbook on sexuality studies in religion (Hoel, Wilcox, and Wilson, *Religion, the Body, and Sexuality* [not our choice of title!], Routledge, 2020) and piloted it in her new course on sexuality and religion. She also completed the first textbook in the field of queer and transgender studies in religion (Wilcox, *Queer Religiosities*, Rowman & Littlefield, February 2020). Following the release of *Queer Nuns*, she was invited to give talks related to the book at Concordia, Fordham, IUPUI, Northwestern, Wesleyan, the third annual "Taking Exception" conference on American religions, and the HEMI Encuentro in Mexico City. Professor Wilcox launched two new initiatives this year through the Holstein fund: the annual Holstein Dissertation Fellowship, which provides mentoring and networking for doctoral candidates in queer and transgender studies in religion, and the biennial UCR Conference on Queer and Transgender Studies in Religion. In the coming year, Professor Wilcox is looking forward to in-depth reading and initial fieldwork for two new book projects, one on queer theory and religious studies and one on leather spirituality.

Dr. Amanda Lucia's second book, *White Utopias: Yoga, Transformational Festivals, and Countercultural Spirituality*, is currently under review with the University of California Press. *White Utopias* reveals how countercultural spiritual communities are encumbered by white viscosity, the "stickiness" of whiteness, which creates gated ideological communities despite their utopian intentions. Lucia shows how in the search for alternative modernities, these populations seek out Indic and Indigenous religions as examples of premodern authenticity. This fundamental act of appropriation renders these communities simultaneously spaces of spiritual productivity and transformation for whites, and exclusion and erasure for non-whites.

In 2018, Lucia published an article in the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, entitled "Guru Sex: Charisma, Proxemic Desire, and the Haptic Logics of the Guru-Disciple Relationship." Her next project extends this focus, with a book-length project on sexual abuse in contemporary guru-led movements. For this book, Dr. Lucia will be conducting extensive research in India, working in Hindi again, and getting back her scholarly roots as a South Asianist. Dr. Lucia is the Principle Investigator (PI) for a five-year (2019-2024), \$550,000 grant, awarded by the Henry Luce Foundation, to support research into sexual abuse in multiple religious traditions.



Celebrating 30 Years of Research
1989-2019

Mellon Advancing Intercultural Studies Conference

RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCE AND THE COMMON GOOD



Muhamad Ali

Associate Professor of Religious Studies and
Director of Middle East and Islamic Studies Program

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Sponsored by a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

Dr. Muhamad Ali submitted a book review about Chinese ways of being Muslim in Indonesia to *Journal of Chinese Religions* as well as an encyclopedia entry on Harun Nasution, an Indonesian Muslim scholar, to Oxford Islamic Studies. Dr. Ali also gave a keynote address on religious difference and common good at UCR and served as the director of Middle East and Islamic Studies Program (2016-2019). To wrap up the year, Dr. Ali welcomed Indonesian Muslim scholars from Indonesia visiting UCR to exchange ideas and experiences about being Muslim in Indonesia and America (pictured below).



This has been another productive and pleasant year for Dr. Chang as he made steady progress in his ongoing research projects and also began work on a new, collaborative article with a friend, Guo Ronggang, from Fujian Normal University. This new research takes advantage of resources only available in the Taiwanese dialect to trace the conversion of Taiwan's indigenous tribes to Christianity in the context of complex cultural and political changes.

As always, teaching and advising are some of the most satisfying aspects of his career as Chang co-chaired his first dissertation committee. Nathan Womack's meticulously researched and theoretically rich work on evangelical responses to poverty in the Inland Empire is a credit to our program. Chang eagerly await its conversion into published forms. Rick Howick sailed through his qualifying examination, displaying true mastery of interdisciplinary methods and materials. Two of our undergraduate majors, Johnathan Barreto and Guadalupe Palos also received awards this year that reflect their brilliance, diligence, and perseverance. Chang is honored to have been able to work with them all!

Finally, Chang welcomed the arrival of Margaret in October. She is a happy, delightful baby and he is looking forward to enjoying family time during a quarter of leave.



Dr. Ana Bajzelj spent the past academic year working on her co-authored book *Insistent Life: Principles for Bioethics in the Jain Tradition* that analyzes Jain doctrines as they relate to contemporary bioethics.

Nāgārjuna's *The Fundamental Verses on the Middle Way*, which she co-translated from Sanskrit to Slovenian, was published by KUD Logos (Ljubljana), and she finished an article on liberation in Jain philosophy, which got accepted for publication by the *Journal of Hindu Studies*. She delivered the Ninth Annual Mahavir Jayanti Lecture at the Florida International University and gave conference papers at the SASA 2019 Conference (Claremont) and the 51st Annual Conference of the Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy (Bath, UK).

Dr. Bajzelj also established the Shrimad Rajchandra Essay Prize and organized the First Annual Shrimad Rajchandra Lecture, which was delivered by Dr. John E. Cort (Denison University), a renowned scholar in Jain Studies. She thoroughly enjoyed her first year at UCR and is grateful for the warm welcome of her colleagues, students, and the Jain community of Southern California that funded the Shrimad

Rajchandra Endowed Chair in Jain Studies she is currently holding. Coming from a mountainous region of Slovenia, Dr. Bajzelj felt right at home when she climbed Mount San Antonio for the first time this spring.



‘Celebrating Guru Nanak: New Perspectives, Reassessments and Revivification’

On May 3-4, the largest North American conference yet in the field of Sikh Studies was held at the University of California, Riverside (UCR). The Jasbir Singh Saini Endowed Chair in Sikh and Punjabi Studies hosted the 6th Sikh Studies Conference which was convened by Dr. Pashaura Singh. This particular conference landed on the 550th anniversary commemorating the birth of the founder of the Sikh religion: Guru Nanak (1469-1539). Panel discussions were held beginning Friday morning (May 3, 2019) and concluded Saturday evening (May 4, 2019). Professors and researchers from around the world shared their expertise on a diverse range of topics and approaches within Sikh Studies including philosophy, history, musicology, literature, gender studies, and theology--all revolving around the topic of Guru Nanak and his legacy. Scholars stayed at the historic Mission Inn in downtown Riverside.

Events began Friday with a ribbon-cutting ceremony officiated by Dr. Kiril Tomoff, Associate Dean for Arts and Humanities, that inaugurated the North American debut of the Guru Nanak Art Exhibit displaying the evolution of Sikhism in forty pieces. This exhibition was organized with the collaboration of National Institute of Panjab Studies, Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan, New Delhi and Dr. Mohinder Singh. One of the exhibits displayed a 19th century painting from the Government Museum and Art Gallery in Chandigarh of a Sufi cloak (*khirqa*)--with Qur'anic verses stitched into it--bestowed on Guru Nanak during his journey to Baghdad. At the center of the exhibit were over thirty pages from an illuminated manuscript of the hagiographical *janam-sakhis* which featured major events from the life of Guru Nanak. The B-40 *Janam Sakhi*



miniatures were presented in collaboration with the Phoenix Art Museum and Dr. Parvinder Singh Khanuja. Circling this centerpiece were paintings and photographs of Sikh art, ceremonies and artifacts, all to the sound of a plucked rabab--the first accompanying instrument to Nanak's divinely inspired lyrics. Outside the art exhibit, a book exhibition was set up by Bicky Singh of SikhLens Organization which displayed several current monographs in Sikh Studies.

Through papers presented, scholars contributed to this conference's theme: bringing "new perspectives, reassessments and revivification" to the study of Guru Nanak and his legacy. Following an introduction by Dr. Pashaura Singh, Dr. Arvind-pal Singh Mandair delivered the keynote speech on "Guru Nanak in the Arena of Global Philosophies." As usual, Mandair's approach

navigated the Western intellectual tradition with aplomb while decentering Europe as a philosophical epicenter in favor of the rich philosophical tradition within Sikhism. Panel discussions then began with a discussion of Philosophy and Religious Theory by Puninder Singh and Dr. Sujinder Singh Sangha, as well as a panel on Secularism and Identity by Dr. Amritjit Singh and Dr. Nirvikar Singh. Following lunch, a specific panel was held on Guru Nanak in Sakhi literatures by Dr. Harjeet Singh Grewal, Dr. Balbinder Kaur Bhatti and Dr. Toby B. Johnson. Our doctoral student and respondent Gurbeer Singh was fascinated by Grewal's reinterpretation to the Sajjan Thug Sakhi and Johnson's ethnographic research on the teaching of Guru Nanak's life in a secluded Gurdwara in the United States. The fourth and final panel of the day, "Crossing Borders," was chaired by UCR's Dr. Muhamad Ali and exploring religious boundary-crossing between Islam and Sikhism especially, which has been lost as the common connections are made between Hinduism and Sikhism. Dr. Gurharpal Singh's paper on "The Limits to Control of Sacred Spaces in Pakistan" was presented

by Dr. Arvind-pal Singh Mandair, while Dr. Sara Grewal explored the Partition narratives in her presentation. Haroon Khalid's presentation on historical Gurdwaras in Pakistan highlighted the Sikh-Muslim connection as he spoke to how "the Pakistan government is actively seeking to renovate and open up historical gurdwaras to Sikh pilgrims." Some of these gurdwaras were sites of interreligious solidarity as "the local Muslim population upheld, in one way or another, the sanctity of the gurdwara, by either treating it as a sacred space due to its association with Nanak, or by appropriating it in a Muslim milieu." Khalid's research rounded out the first day panels.

On the first night of the conference, the participants and members of the broader local Sikh and UC Riverside communities shared a celebratory dinner and awards ceremony at the UCR Alumni Center. All were warmly greeted and congratulated by Dr. Kim Wilcox, Chancellor of UCR, Dr. Milagros Peña, Dean of the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (CHASS) at UCR, and Dr. Harkeerat Singh Dhillon, Advisor of UC Riverside School of Medicine and the previous Trustee of the UC Riverside Foundation. Dr. Mark Juergensmeyer, Distinguished Professor of Global Studies, UC Santa Barbara, gave the second keynote of the day, emphasizing over and over that—in spite of being a scholar of Sikhism -- he was "not Pashaura Singh" as a respectful nod to the depth and breadth of research in Sikh Studies that Dr. Singh has provided over the years. The night included five honorees: Dr. Mark Juergensmeyer, Dr. Mohinder Singh (Director, National Institute of Panjab Studies, Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan, New Delhi, India), and Dr. Pal Ahluwalia (Vice Chancellor and President, The University of the South Pacific, Suva, Republic of Fiji) were presented with Lifetime Achievement Awards for their distinguished contribution to



the promotion of Sikh Studies in North America, India, and the Diaspora. Dr. Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh (Crawford Family Professor of Religion & Chair of Religious Studies Department, Colby College, Waterville, ME, USA) was honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award for her distinguished contribution to the Feminist Interpretation of the Sikh Tradition. Dr. Gurcharanjit Singh Attariwala (Nanaimo, BC, Canada) was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award for his distinguished contribution to Sikh Activism and the Process of Renovation of Darbar Sahib at Kartarpur (Pakistan). This was followed by Dr. Pashuara Singh's daughter, Dr. Manpreet Kaur Singh, who not only presented at the conference, but as her father's birthday coincided with the conference, she surprised Dr. Singh with a moving tribute to his lifetime of work as a scholar, a Sikh, and as a father.

The second day began with the third Keynote Speech by Dr. Pal Ahluwalia, followed by panels by Dr. Lou Fenech and Dr. Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh, who delivered their latest research in the panel "Cross-cultural Interactions." Dr. Singh Kaur delivered a characteristically rousing talk on the "Sufi Delicacies" found in Guru Nanak's teachings, filling in an otherwise neglected degree of communication between Sikhism and Islamic mysticism. Dr. Balbinder Singh Bhogal brought his characteristic intellectual rigor to navigating mystical hermeneutics in Sikhism, eliciting no shortage of praise from Ph.D. student and respondent, Adam Tyson on Saturday's panel. Dr. Eleanor Nesbitt's paper on "Guru Nanak in the writings of western women" was read by Dr. Corinne Knight, while Dr. Opinderjit Kaur Takhar explored the contemporary issues and challenges in the Panth." The seventh panel explored "Guru Nanak in the Music" with musicologists Dr. Inderjit Kaur, Dr. Francesca Cassio, and instructor of Theological

Studies Dr. Nirinjan Kaur Khalsa. This was a welcome musical interlude from the top musicologists in Sikh Studies, as the unstruck melodies given voice by Guru Nanak were explored. Dr. Robert Cathey (respondent to keynote speeches), who has been attending conferences since the seventies, gave a glowing review, saying “your Religious Studies Department, the University, and Mission Inn made my brief time with you restorative and filled me with hope for the future” adding that “your students, faculty, and caring staff who made me feel welcomed like a long lost student into your academic home.” The hope he spoke of was due to “a new generation of brilliant young Sikh scholars who are engaging new publics around the world with Guru Nanak’s life and teachings.” Dr. Cathey’s point is well taken, and indeed the conference was joined by students from UC Riverside, Cal Poly Pomona, UC Irvine, UCLA and the University of British Columbia. For most of these students, it was their first time attending a Sikh Studies Conference. A graduating senior and first time attendee from UCLA, Manpreet Kaur Singh, recalls how “the art exhibition was an experience of its own as it not only presented our beautiful history, but also allowed individuals to experience a spiritual connection for themselves and appreciate the arts and Sikhi. As an undergraduate, it was exciting to see research being done in this field and conference allowed for a space to network with such amazing scholars. I’m grateful to the staff and everyone invoked in helping out on this conference, looking forward to next year!” The fact that the conference elicited such praise is in no small part due to the tireless efforts of the staff of UCR’s Multidisciplinary Financial and



Administrative unit, especially Francesca Moreira, Geneva Amador, and Diana Marroquin. One of the long-term goals for the Sikh Studies Conference is to seek to engage scholarship with the greater Sikh community. We were fortunate to be joined by Jaswant Singh Jhawer, President, and Kashmir Singh Randhawa, Secretary, and Dr. Surinder Singh Kohli of the Sikh Center Gurdwara in Riverside.

The final panel, “Sikh Activism, Reassessments and Revivification,” took a different approach than the other panels as it was full of activists rather than scholars. The purpose was to bridge the gap between

scholars and the community to depict an accurate image of Guru Nanak’s message. Dr. Gurcharanjit Singh Attariwala and Tejpal Singh Bainiwal shared the little known story about the renovation process for Darbar Sahib (Kartarpur) that was started by Dr. Attariwala in the early 1990s when it was in a state of ruins. To close out the panel, Dr. Manpreet Kaur Singh and Harbir Kaur Bhatia focused on the implementation of Guru Nanak’s message in the contemporary period. Following this, scholars, organizers, and volunteers were invited to a sumptuous dinner at Dr. Harkeerat Dhillon’s house to officially conclude the conference.

Report by Adam Tyson and Tejpal Singh



Graduate Student Updates

This year **Steven Quach** was awarded a grant by UCR Healthy Campus to conduct a workshop related to campus-wide health. With the support of The Office of Sustainability, he created a three-day “Mindfulness-Based Sustainability Workshop” which positioned mindfulness (Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy) as an anti-neoliberal, ethical framework to interpret and mobilize the life cycle assessments of popular consumer products. Sixty people (students, faculty, and staff) attended the workshop over the three days, including the Assistant Director of Recreation who invited Steven to speak more about mindfulness and sustainability at the 2020 Western Regional Outdoor Leadership Conference. Steven presented papers at two conferences. The first paper titled, “Buddhist Meditation as Resistance,” was presented at the *Florida State University Department of Religion 17th Annual Graduate Student Symposium*. A second paper titled, “Contemplative Practices and Neoliberalism,” was presented at the *American Academy of Religion Western Region 2019 Annual Conference* and was awarded Best Paper.

Finishing up his first year as a PhD Candidate in Religious Studies, **Remy Ilona** came to the University of California, Riverside Religious Studies program as an attorney and with an MA in Religious Studies from the Florida International University, Miami. His major area of research is Jewish Studies, with special interest in genocide, and anti-Semitism in an African context. Alongside this,



Remy’s minor area of research is African studies with special interest in Afro-American Judaism. He has written and published 10 books among which is the influential *The Igbo and Israel: An Inter-cultural Study of the Largest Jewish Diaspora*. Remy attended several conferences, among them the Conference on African Jewry convened by the American Sephardi Federation and Mimouna Organization at Center for Jewish History in New York in 2019. His presentation was one of those mentioned by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JFA) in its report.

Adam Tyson finished his last year of coursework and is going into the third year of the Ph.D. program where he will take his qualifying exams, and is a combination of nervous and excited about that. During an enlightening seminar on Sikh hermeneutics with Dr. Singh, Tejpal, and Gurbeer, he volunteered to help with the 6th Sikh Studies Conference where he served as an organizer and panel respondent. He is grateful for the opportunity as it was an amazing experience and he found it especially engaging where his interest in Sufism overlapped. Adam is taking on his first publication as a graduate student, reviewing a book for Reading Religion on a major Sufi philosopher and theologian, *Rethinking Ibn ‘Arabi*. He is happy to report that the faculty and staff in the Religious Studies program have been amazing to work with/for and tremendously helpful.



This year, **Danielle Dempsey** served as one third of the planning committee for the inaugural Queer and Trans Studies in Religion Conference held here at UCR, where she also presented a paper on her own work in the field. She was honored to receive the department's 2018-2019 June O'Connor Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award. Dani participated in the Department Colloquium series in May, where she presented on her current dissertation research, which is continually shaped by Pope Francis and the Vatican's ongoing remarks condemning "gender theory." Dani's paper proposal related to this subject was accepted for the American Academy of Religion's 2019 national meeting. This summer, Dani is looking forward to continuing her dissertation research and working as an Associate Instructor for the Religious Studies Department.

Gurbeer Singh is delighted to have finished his first year in the department and looks forward to his next year of coursework. He has an upcoming chapter "The Nagar Kirtan" in the edited volume *The Sikh World*. Gurbeer enjoyed co-organizing the highly successful Sikh Studies Conference at UC Riverside this year. This summer, he completed his training in Urdu in the SASLI program at UW Madison. Gurbeer will be presenting his paper "The Claim for Authenticity in the Sikh Tradition: The Appropriation of Puratan" at the American Academy of Religion's national meeting in November 2019. Gurbeer is very excited to see what the upcoming year has in store for him and to continue his studies in the department.



Hassanah El-Yacoubi just completed her fourth year in the Religious Studies PhD program. Over the Spring quarter she took RLST 231 in Ethnographic Methods with Dr. Amanda Lucia, in which she delved into her field work and developed a methodological framework for her research. She was invited to speak at the College of Charleston and UC Santa Barbara on the intersections of feminism, faith, and fashion. Additionally, her prospectus has officially been approved by the department, and she has now progressed to dissertation writing. To jumpstart this new phase, Hassanah was nominated by the department for the 8-week Dissertation Writing Intensive program set for the Fall. She also taught her first summer course, RLST 15, examining cross-cultural religious and philosophical interpretations of death.

Alina Pokhrel finished her first year of coursework at UCR. During her first quarter, she did a directed study with Dr. King to explore different Buddhist meditation traditions. Her paper titled, "The Transmission of Dhamma: Meditation and the Secular" was accepted to the American Academy of Religion Western Region 2019 Annual Meeting in Spring 2019. She completed a Pāli summer language program at Rangjung Yeshe Institute in Kathmandu, Nepal. In September, she travelled around South Asia to begin exploring her fieldwork interests, alongside sitting meditation retreats. She intends to continue her training in Pāli as well as explore some collaborative projects in the upcoming academic year!

UCSB MSA PRESENTS:
GUEST SPEAKER
Hassanah El-Yacoubi
Hassanah is a Doctoral Candidate in Religious Studies at UC Riverside. Her research interests include contemporary Islam, American Religious history, and the intersections of religion, gender, and fashion: specifically how the Modest Fashion Movement has impacted female Muslim identities in the U.S. She is also a leading modest fashion influencer and designer with her brand, PFH, Perfect for her.

Islam and Fashion
EXAMINING THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN FEMINISM, MODESTY, AND THE FASHION INDUSTRY

MCC LOUNGE
JUNE 1st, 2019 6-8 PM
LIGHT REFRESHMENTS PROVIDED

Tejpaul Singh Bainiwal finished his last year of coursework while taking on several other projects. In October 2018, he went with a group to the Calexico Detention Center to perform religious services. Tejpaul was selected as a Diversity Scholar for the National Trust Conference: Past Forward and a Student Scholar for the Asian Pacific Islander Americans in Historic Preservation National Forum during November. In March, Tejpaul worked on an oral history project with the Smithsonian Museum. He helped organize, served as a panel respondent, and presented at the 6th Sikh Studies Conference in May. Later that month, Tejpaul was selected to be a Diversity Scholar for the California Preservation Trust which awarded him with a scholarship and an opportunity to work with a professional in the field of historic preservation. During the 2019 summer, he completed his Urdu training in the SASLI program and gave a presentation titled, “Ghadr in Southeast Asia” in June at the 2019 WISLI Student Conference at UW Madison.

Kathryn Phillips had her prospectus approved this year and began writing her dissertation. She helped plan the inaugural Queer and Transgender Studies in Religion Conference and presented a paper titled “Holy Gender Variance: Gender Presentation of Thecla, a Queer and Transgender Studies Approach.”



October 10 – Matthew King, UC Riverside

November 7 – Grad Student AAR Panel: Danielle Dempsey, Jessica Rehman, Kathryn Phillips, Kori Pacyniak, Gurbeer Singh, and Tejpaul Singh Bainiwal

December 5 – Sarah Imhoff, Indiana University

January 16 – Sarah MacFarland Taylor, Northwestern University

February 13 – Kathryn Phillips, UC Riverside

March 5 – Erik Braun, University of Virginia

April 9 – Ana Bajzelj, UC Riverside

April 30 – James Madaio, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic and the Oxford Center of Hindu Studies

May 21 – Paul Nahme, Brown University

Upcoming 2019-20 Colloquium Series

2018-19 Colloquium Series

October 4 – “The Cathartic Freedom of Transformational Festivals: Escapes and Entrapments of Neoliberal Modernity” – Amanda Lucia, Department of Religious Studies, UC Riverside

October 19 – “Circumventing Methodological Challenges: Identity, Ritual, & the Case of the Unwanted Circumcision of a Hindu Boy” – Deepak Sarma, Case Western Reserve University

November 1 – “The Death of Jesus: Comparing Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Accounts” – Robert C. Gregg, Professor in Religious Studies, Emeritus, Stanford University

November 29 – “Making Peace with The Universe: Personal Crisis & Spiritual Genius” – Michael Alexander, Department of Religious Studies, UC Riverside

January 17 – “Addresses of Our Last Homes: Refugees, World Literature, Global Archives” – B. Venkat Mani, Department of German, Nordic, and Slavic, University of Wisconsin, Madison



February 7 – “Holy War for the Wild: Environmental Protests as Rites of Sacrifice and Mourning” – Sarah Pike, California State University, Chico

March 7 – “Indecent Buddhist Theology” – B. Scherer, INCISE, Canterbury Christ Church University

April 11 – “Saints’ Lives as Performance Art” – Virginia Burrus, Syracuse University

May 2 – “Images of Childhood: Agency and Innocence” – Michael Burroughs, California State University, Bakersfield

May 30 – “Queer(?), Sex*, and Catholicism: Examining the Relationships Between Institutional Catholic Sexual Ethics, Social Doctrine, and ‘Gender Theory’” – Danielle Dempsey, Religious Studies, UC Riverside



UCR Conference on Queer and Transgender Studies in Religion

In February, the department hosted the inaugural UCR Conference on Queer and Transgender Studies in Religion, sponsored by the Holstein Family and Community Chair in Religious Studies and organized by Professor Wilcox and graduate students Danielle Dempsey and Kathryn Phillips. Over 125 people came from nineteen U.S. states and six countries for the three-day conference, which featured fifty-nine paper presenters as well as keynote addresses by Professor Max Strassfeld of the University of Arizona and Professor Thelathia Nikki Young of Bucknell University. There was significant department participation in the conference, with paper presentations from graduate students Danielle Dempsey, Kathryn Phillips, and Kori Pacyniak and from 2010 B.A. graduate Dr. Vincent D. Cervantes

and 2017 Ph.D. graduate Dr. S.J. Crasnow. Danielle Dempsey, Elizabeth Miller, Kathryn Phillips, and Gurbeer Singh convened panels and did additional organizing work, and Tessa Harmon and Jessica Rehman pitched



“Conferences like the QTSR open arenas of necessary scholarly inquiry and build a strong community of support that drives intellectual progress and betters academicians and humanity.”

-Danielle Dempsey



in as well, as did undergraduate students Mela Calderon, Lucas Lopez, Stephanie Orozco, and Saida Solis, along with English grad student Amanda Riggle and QTSR research group member Patricia Sazani. And event coordinators Francesca Moreira and Geneva Amador were there 110% of the time, making everything come together smoothly! At the closing town hall meeting, participants expressed great excitement about the conference and discussed next steps, deciding to pursue the creation of a journal for this subfield and to continue the conference as an annual event, meeting virtually for informal workshops in even years and in person at UCR in odd years. The conference put UCR on the map as a guiding light in this rapidly-growing subfield of religious studies.

Report by Dr. Melissa Wilcox

Multidisciplinary Unit Updates

Several new staff have joined the MDU team this year. The unit was very sad to lose Ryan Mariano after 5 years of exceptional service to the departments and programs under the MDU cluster. Ryan left to accept a position with the California Indian Nations College as their Administrative Operations Specialist, we wish Ryan all the best in his future endeavors. The unit hired two new staff members to service the areas of Event Coordination, Purchasing, processing travel reimbursements and to serve as the transactors for the unit. Geneva Amador and Francesca Moreira are now serving as the units Event Coordinators/Administrative Assistants. Francesca comes to us with a background in executive management, marketing and fashion design. She has years of experience in brand management, public relations and customer service. Geneva Amador comes to us from the County of Riverside; she has 15 years of experience in the field of event coordination, conference planning, and customer service. Geneva earned her BA in Business Administration with a concentration in Management from CSU, San Bernardino.

The unit also hired Uriel “Odie” Jasso in the role of Graduate Student Affairs Officer and Dawn Viebach as the units Academic Personnel and Payroll Assistant. Odie obtained his BS in Business Administration with an emphasis in Marketing from the University of La Verne, he also holds an MA in Business Management from the University of Redlands. Odie has worked at UCR for over 10 years as a Recruitment Counselor, Admissions Counselor, Academic Advisor, High School Intern Supervisor, and Assistant Director. Dawn came to us from the HARVEST shared service center here at UCR, she has over 2



years of experience in the field of payroll and working with UC Path. Dawn has 15 years of experience in the fields of Human Resources and Worker’s Compensation and holds a BA in Business Administration from California Baptist University. The Multidisciplinary unit is very fortunate to have Geneva, Francesca, Odie, and Dawn as part of our team! They all bring so much to the unit and are assimilating to their new roles.

In other exciting news, the Multidisciplinary unit staff entered the 2018-19 UCR Staff Assembly Halloween Costume Contest and won in the category of Scariest Group Costume with their theme “Multiplanetary Delegates of the Universe.”

Report by Diana Marroquin



2019 Awards and Graduates

Edwin S. Gaustad Award: Mina Andrews Hanna

Barbara and Donald Donner Essay Award: Benjamin Hoover

Achievement and Honors Convocation Award: Alicia Cardona

Encouragement Award: Guadalupe Palos

Holstein Chair Undergraduate Award: Johnathan Barreto

June O'Connor Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award: Danielle Dempsey

Shrimad Rajchandra Essay Prize 2019: Austin Attaway



Majors

Aceves, Marcos L
Cardona, Alicia
Park, Jeesu

Masters

Richard Howick

PhD Candidacy

Richard Howick

Minors

Gortarez, Millie
Kelley, Hannah Payton
Rivera Duran, Elena
Rivera Duran, Julia
Rivera, Lizet
Salcido, Aylin
Saldana, Gabrielle Elise



PhD

Dr. Cristina Rosetti
Dr. Nathan Womack

Updates from Beyond UCR

Affaf Waseem graduated in 2015 with a double major in Global Studies and Religious Studies. She went on to obtain her Masters in Ethics, Peace, and Global Affairs at American University in Washington DC. She is currently serving as Director of the Middle Eastern, North African, South Asian (MENASA) Student Resources unit at UC Davis. Apart from supporting her community and engaging in interdisciplinary research regarding MENASA issues, Affaf also enjoys learning about the diversity of MENASA cultures, gardening, journaling, and crocheting all with a good cup of tea!



After majoring in Religious Studies at UCR, **Gabriela Perez** went off to Harvard Divinity School and earned a Master's in Theological Studies. During her time in the program, she was awarded a research travel grant to the University of Notre Dame to help in her archival research on the P.A.D.R.E.S. Movement, a group of Mexican-American priests seeking identity within a 1960's American Catholic Church. Later that year she presented her work at the American Academy of Religion's annual conference. This year, Gabby is applying to PhD programs in Religion.



Jenny Gurley graduated with a Religious Studies degree from UCR in 2012. After receiving her M.A. degree in Divinity from the University of Chicago in 2015, she is now a manager in the Religious & Spiritual Life Department at Northwestern University. Her interest is in the intersection of religion and space including programming that crosses traditional religious boundaries.

After earning her Religious Studies undergraduate degree from UCR in 2015, **Faezeh Fathizadeh** interned with Harvard's Pluralism Project where she mapped out the religious landscape of Southern California. Faezeh especially enjoyed attending and reporting on the Dalai Lama's birthday in Anaheim! After her internship, she continued her interest in community building and pluralism professionally as the Director of Development at Sacred Space International, where she facilitates peacebuilding among religious communities through sharing sacred spaces. Faezeh's favorite project thus far has been planning a track of events for the Parliament of the World's Religions Convention in Toronto this past year.



Pictures from Around the Department

Right: Dr. Muhamad Ali and several Religious Studies graduate students (Adam Tyson, Hassanah El-Yacoubi, and Christopher Hayes) at the Middle East and Islamic Studies Program End of the Year Ceremony.



Left: Dr. Pashaura Singh blowing out the candles for his cake during a surprise birthday party at the 6th Sikh Studies Conference.



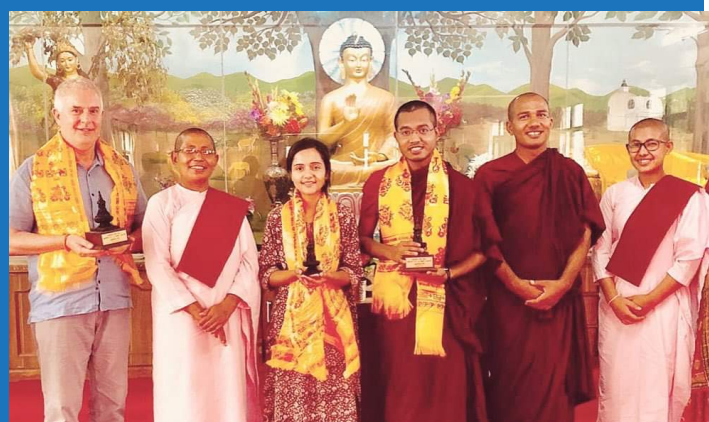
Right: Dr. Melissa Wilcox addressing the audience at the inaugural UCR Conference on Queer and Transgender Studies.



Left: Attendees at the UCR Religious Studies Department Awards Night.



Right: Alina Pokhrel with her Pali teacher and classmates during her summer abroad in Nepal.



Left: Religious Studies Department Alumni Dr. Toby Johnson speaking with attendees at the 6th Sikh Studies Conference.



Right: Dr. Ana Bajzelj's visit to the Jain Center of Southern California with her Jainism class (course 114, Jainism: An Indian Religion of Non-Violence).



Left: Dr. Muhamad Ali introducing a panel at the 6th Sikh Studies Conference.

Right: Several organizers of the 6th Sikh Studies Conference at the closing reception (Francesca Moreira, Adam Tyson, Geneva Amador and Tejpal Singh Baniwal).



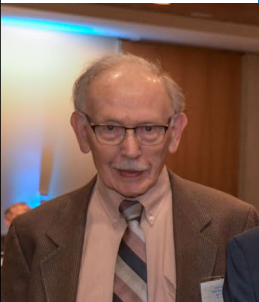
Remembering Professor Douglas Parrott

Dear UCR Religious Studies Community,

As this newsletter was going to press, our department received the sad news that Emeritus Professor Douglas M. Parrott passed away on August 17, 2019, from complications suffered following a stroke he survived in July. Professor Parrott was one of the earliest members of our department, and played a central role in laying the foundation for all the best of who we are today. He was active in department activities until the end, and knew all of our current faculty despite the fact that we all joined the department after he had retired. Professor Parrott leaves a legacy of scholarship, kindness, and generosity that will be remembered by all. There was not time to write a full obituary before the newsletter went to press, but you should be able to find it on the American Academy of Religion website within the next few months.

In sorrow,

Melissa M. Wilcox
Department Chair



Edited by: Tejpal Singh Baniwal