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Department of Religion

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Newsletter

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Inside:

- ☞ Faculty Book Notices
- ☞ NEH grant for Summer Institute on "American Muslims"
- ☞ Farewell to Allison Taylor-Adams
- ☞ Xu Xin lecture on "Chinese Perceptions of Jews"
- ☞ MA program update
- ☞ Peace Studies program update
- ☞ Faculty updates
- ☞ Abbie Ziffren Memorial Lecture, Spring 2015
- ☞ Alumni Weekend Save-the-Date
- ☞ David and Sherry Berz Lecture, Spring 2015
- ☞ GW class in Turkey
- ☞ GW Alumni event, "Picturing Mary"
- ☞ Report on research from Alf Hildebeitel
- ☞ Special thanks to donors
- ☞ 2015 Religion and Peace Studies graduates
- ☞ TAK inductees, 2015

A Note from the Chair

Rob Eisen

Welcome to our newsletter for the 2014-15 academic year. The most exciting news of this past year has to do with a number of developments in our new MA program in Islamic Studies. The program has been in existence for two years, and we are about to graduate our first cohort. We have also added a certificate option to the program for students who want to expand their knowledge of Islam but do not want to complete the full MA program. The certificate program is ideal for professionals in the D.C. area who deal with the Muslim world. But most important, we received a gift of \$440,000 from a group of donors to support various aspects of the program. Finally, I would like to note, as I have in previous newsletters, that our program is unique in teaching about both Sunni and Shi'ite Islam. Most programs in the U.S. are focused only on Sunni Islam. Given that the rift between these two major branches of Islam is having an enormous impact in the international sphere nowadays, we hope that our program will produce a new generation of scholars able to analyze and perhaps find ways of reconciling the two communities.

In other news, we had an unusually good year when it came to events sponsored by the Religion Department. The David and Sherry Berz Lecture consisted of a three-hour event on the theme of "Religion in China," in which five scholars gave presentations on various aspects of that topic. The event took advantage of the fact that we had two Fulbright scholars from China visiting in our department for the entire academic year. All agreed that the event was a great success. For the Abbie Ziffren Memorial Lecture, we hosted a Jewish and Palestinian speaker to address the topic of "The Role of Religion in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict." Representing the Jewish perspective was Rabbi Amy Eilberg, and representing the Palestinian view was Aziz Abu Sarah, both of whom have distinguished records as peacemaker-activists. Here too the event was a great success. Finally, mention should be made of a fascinating lecture given toward the end of the year by Professor Xu Xin of Nanjing University in China who spoke about Chinese attitudes towards Jews and Judaism.

These and other topics are discussed in this newsletter. Please be in touch with us. We would especially like to hear news from the graduates of our program. Tell us what you are up to, or share with us any special memories about your time with us at GW. And, of course, donations are always welcome. Our needs are always greater than our resources, and so your help would be greatly appreciated.

Finally, as noted in this newsletter, **Allison Taylor-Adams**, our office manager, will be leaving us just as this newsletter goes to press. Allison's contribution to our department has been immense. We wish her well as she begins a graduate program in linguistics at the University of Oregon.

Sincerely,  
Robert Eisen  
Chair, Department of Religion

## Faculty Book Notices

**Paul Duff**, *Moses in Corinth: 2 Corinthians 3 in Its Apologetic Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2015)

The imagery focused on Moses in 2 Corinthians 3 has long puzzled scholars because it seems unclear how that imagery fits into the larger context of the letter. Many have explained Paul's use of Moses here as the apostle's reaction to the "super-apostles," Jewish missionaries mentioned later in the letter. These preachers, it has been argued, promoted either a "Divine Man" Christology or a Judaizing agenda. In his new book, Duff contends that the Moses imagery has nothing to do with the super-apostles but functions instead as an integral part of Paul's first *apologia* (i.e., defense) sent to Corinth. This *apologia*, found in 2 Cor 2:14-7:4, Duff contends, represents an independent letter sent to dispel suspicions about the apostle's honesty, integrity and poor physical appearance.

**Mohammad Faghfoory** edited a book in collaboration with Golam Dastagir entitled *Sufism and Social Integration* (Chicago: ABC International-Kazi Publications, 2015). Composed of 22 articles, this is the first book that deals with the role Sufism played in the creation of cohesion and integration in Islamic society, as well as the contemporary significance and relevance of Sufism.

**Xiaofei Kang** co-edited a book with Jinhua Jia and Ping Yao entitled *Gendering Chinese Religion: Subject, Identity, and Body* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014). The book marks the emergence of a subfield focused on women, gender and religion in China studies. The total of nine articles in the book make a compelling argument about how Chinese women have deployed specific religious ideas and ritual to empower themselves and how gendered perceptions and representations of Chinese religious power have been indispensable in the historical and contemporary construction of social and political power.

**Irene Oh**, associate professor and director of the Peace Studies Program, has received a \$188,331 grant from the National Endowment of the Humanities to co-direct, with Sohail Hashmi, professor at Mt. Holyoke College, an NEH Summer Institute, "American Muslims: History, Culture, and Politics." This residential institute will be held at GW's Mt. Vernon Campus for three weeks in July, when 25 faculty from colleges and universities, selected from a competitive national pool, will participate in this intensive seminar. Instructed by over a dozen experts in the field, the participants will learn about topics ranging from Islam and the American slave trade to Muslim hip-hop, as well as tour a number of relevant sites in the D.C. metro area. The institute's goal is to create a rich website for teachers and professors who are currently teaching, or who wish to teach, about Islam and the United States. For more information, please visit the website: <http://religion.columbian.gwu.edu/neh-summer-institute>.

## ALLISON TAYLOR-ADAMS TO MOVE ON TO GREENER PASTURES

We bid farewell this summer to our executive aide, **Allison Taylor-Adams**, who will be starting a doctoral program in linguistics at the University of Oregon in the coming academic year. She intends to pursue a career in academia.

We cannot exaggerate Allison's importance to our department in the seven years she has been with us. Her role in the department's affairs went well beyond performing office tasks. She was practically a faculty member. She consistently provided invaluable insights on all department matters including course selection, curriculum development and faculty hires. No major decision in the department was made without first consulting her. Yet we recognize that it is because of her talents that Allison has to move on, and we are thrilled that she will be cultivating her own academic career and that hopefully she will soon become a colleague of ours in the academic profession.

**PROFESSOR XU XIN OF NANJING UNIVERSITY LECTURES ON  
“CHINESE PERCEPTIONS OF JEWS”**

We were honored to have Professor Xu Xin, Chairman of the Judaic Studies Program at Nanjing University in China, give a lecture on April 28 on the topic of “Chinese Perceptions of Jews: Why the Chinese are Interested in Jews and their Culture.” In China, academic programs in Judaic studies have been growing in number and size in recent years, and the one in Nanjing is the largest. Xu is the founder of that program, and is well-known for the work he has done throughout China in establishing Judaic studies as an academic discipline in that country. He also lectures throughout the world on China and the Jews, as well as a variety of other topics in Judaic studies.

Xu discussed the remarkably positive attitude that the Chinese have toward Jews, a phenomenon that is little known in the West—even among Jews. This attitude has been particularly pronounced since the 1980s. The Chinese have developed a highly favorable perception of Jews because of a belief that Jews have a great deal in common with them. Both peoples have a long history and a rich culture. Both have also experienced suffering from being dominated by Western powers. The two peoples also share common values, such as a focus on family, respect for the elderly and leading a disciplined life.

In addition, the Chinese look to the Jewish people as a role model for their future aspirations. They are impressed by the enormous contributions Jews have made in various disciplines, particularly the sciences, and they would like to see their own people emulate Jews in this regard. The Chinese are also impressed by the success that Jews have had in rebuilding a Jewish state in their ancient homeland after two thousand years of exile. They see this accomplishment as reflecting a strong sense of national identity and purpose that the Chinese would like to cultivate among their own people as well.

Professor Eisen, who invited Xu to come to speak at GW, hopes to continue developing an association with Xu and his program in Judaic studies. Eisen’s specialty is Judaism, and Nanjing University already has a partnership with GW. Professor Xiaofei Kang, a specialist in Chinese religion in the Religion Department at GW has also helped develop ties between Xu’s program and the Religion Department. She met him last year in China, and suggested that he be invited to GW. We are glad that those plans came to fruition.

**MA Program Update**

The second year of the MA program was a great success. It started with five students of diverse backgrounds from Iran, Pakistan, Egypt and the United States. We also had the first graduates of the program, **Syed Zaidi** and **Carolina Mendoza**. Syed Zaidi wrote a thesis on “The Philosophy of Isaac Israeli: A Study on the Influence of al-Kindi and the Ikhwan al-Safa upon an Early Jewish Neoplatonist.” Carolina Mendoza’s thesis is on “The Impact of Sufi Literature on Spanish Literature.” They will complete their theses before the end of summer 2015. **Timothy Schum** and **Fatemeh Sajjadi** presented papers at conferences held in Montreal and San Diego respectively.

**Peace Studies Program Update**

The Peace Studies Program continues to grow successfully. We currently have approximately 25 majors and minors, and our Introduction to Peace Studies course remains in high demand. This year we are graduating four majors in peace studies, and four minors. Our peace studies intern, **Olivia Tomaszewski**, has done an incredible job updating both our Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/GWUPeace>) and twitter feeds (<https://twitter.com/gwupeace>). Be sure to “like” and “tweet” the Peace Studies Program for regular updates!

## Faculty Updates

**Eyal Aviv** published an article entitled “A Well Reasoned Dharma: Buddhist Logic in Republican China” in the *Journal of Chinese Buddhism*. Another article will be published in a book by Routledge entitled “Religion, Historiography and Cultural Identity in the Debate over Xuyun’s Biography.” In August, he gave the keynote lecture at the Fourth Annual Meeting of the World Youth Buddhist Symposium about “Buddhist Ethics in the Age of Transhumanism.” He also presented a paper entitled “Toward a Buddhist Theory of Well-Being” at a conference organized by the Department of Religion at the University of British Columbia on “Buddhism and Well-Being.” During the year Eyal participated in a cross-disciplinary project with scholars from the Department of Philosophy about the limits of thought. He is currently working on a paper for a workshop in Taiwan entitled “Buddhist Philosophy of Consciousness: Tradition and Dialogue,” and he is finishing a book project. He is looking forward to his sabbatical in the fall of 2015.

**Paul Duff** published a book, *Moses in Corinth: The Apologetic Context of 2 Corinthians 3* (Supplements to Novum Testamentum 159; Leiden: Brill, 2015) [see **Faculty Book Notices**] and a book chapter, “The Scroll, the Temple, and the Great City: The Crisis in the Asian Assemblies and the Interlude of Rev 10:1-11:13,” in *The History of Religions School Today: Essays on the New Testament and Related Texts* edited by Thomas R. Blanton IV et al. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014). He also presented a paper at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in San Diego in November, 2014. The paper was entitled, “2 Corinthians 9: The Earliest Letter in Canonical 2 Corinthians?”

**Rob Eisen** devoted much time this past year to completing his latest book, *Zionism, Jewish Law, and the Justification of War*. The book deals with how rabbis in the religious Zionist community developed a body of Jewish law on war when Israel became a state in 1948 and Jews were confronted with waging war for the first time in almost 2,000 years. He hopes to have the book ready for publication by the end of the summer. Rob also continued his ongoing work with the Western Studies Institute in Saudi Arabia that brings scholars from Saudi Arabian universities to the U.S. for conferences with American scholars. This year, he arranged two such conferences, one on religious tolerance and another on interfaith dialogue.

**Mohammad Faghfoory** received a substantial donation to support the MA program in Islamic Studies. He published several articles, including “Muhammad: The First Sufi,” in *Arj Nameh-ye Dr. Avani* (Tehran, 2014, in Persian), and “Clergy-State Relations in Iran: 1979-Present” in *Governance in Islam* (Herndon, Virginia: International Institute of Islamic Thought, in press). In addition, in April he presented a paper at the United States Naval Academy, entitled “On the New Patterns of Shi’i Theological and Political Discourse in Iran and Iraq,” and in March he lectured at the Potomac Muslim Community Center on “Deciphering Islamic Extremism.” Finally, he gave another lecture on “The History and the Legacy of the Islamic Intellectual Tradition” during Islam Awareness Week, organized by Muslim Students Association, GW. In May, he organized a program at GW on the occasion of the publication of the monumental five-volume work of Dr. Nasr on Persian philosophy [see **Nasr** faculty update], followed by a concert of traditional Persian music.

**Alf Hiltebeitel** has two articles in press: “From Dialogue to Apostrophe: A Move by Vālmīki?” in Laurie Patton and Brian Black, eds. *Dialogue in Early South Asian Religions* (London: Ashgate, 2015); and “From *R̥sidharma* to *Vānaprastha*: The Southern Recension Makeover of the *Mahābhārata*’s *Umā-Maheśvara Saṃvāda*,” in Adam Bowles, Simon Brodbeck and Alf Hiltebeitel, eds. *The Churning the Epics and Purāṇas at the 15<sup>th</sup> World Sanskrit Conference* (New Delhi: Rashtriya Sanskrit Samsthan and D. K. Printworld, 2015). Publications also in press include “The Geography of the *Mahābhārata*’s *Upākhyānas*,” in Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee, eds. *Argument and Design: The Mahābhārata as Literature* (Leiden: E. J. Brill), from a 2012 conference held in Alf’s honor at Madison, WI. He is working on two books: one on gleaners in the Mahabharata; the other on the 1920-1937 correspondence between Sigmund Freud and India’s First Psychoanalyst Girindrashekar Bose.

**Xiaofei Kang** co-edited a book with Jinhua Jia and Ping Yao, entitled *Gendering Chinese Religion: Subject, Identity, and Body* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014). She presented papers at the annual meetings of the American Historical Association (AHA) and the American Academy of Religion (AAR) and at the Fairbank Center of Harvard University. She also served as the research director of GW’s Confucius Institute.

**Derek Malone-France** served as founding Seminar Director for the Blumberg Dialogues in Astrobiology and Society, hosted by the John W. Kluge Center, at the Library of Congress, and as a consultant to the Astrobiology Institute at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, with a grant funded by NASA, through the Lunar and Planetary Institute, at

*Continued on pg. 5*

the Universities Space Research Association. In March, Derek presided over the inaugural Blumberg Dialogue symposium, a two-day event with leading scholars in the field of Religion, convened to discuss the topic of “Astrobiology and the Religious Imagination.” Derek also presented a paper entitled “Astrobiology and Philosophy of Religion,” at the Pacific Division meeting of the American Philosophical Association, in Vancouver, B.C., in March, and a paper entitled “The Ontological Requirements of Human Discursivity and the Post-Mechanistic Turn in Contemporary Biology,” at the annual meeting of the Metaphysical Society of America, in Athens, Ga., in April.

**Seyyed Hossein Nasr** completed *The Study Qur'an*, a 2000-page translation of and commentary upon the Qur'an of which he is the chief editor. The work is planned for publication in November 2015. He also completed editing the fifth and final volume of *An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia* which appeared during the past year in London. He also continued to give lectures at several universities including Harvard, Toronto and Catholic University. His activities in inter-religious dialogue continued throughout the year. In November 2014 he led the Islamic delegation in the Common Word Initiative which held a three-day discussion in the Vatican with Catholic authorities and met the Pope. In May of 2015 he responded to Cardinal Tauran's lecture at Catholic University on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Nostra Aetate* document and also gave a lecture about the significance of this document from the Islamic point of view.

**Irene Oh** continues to serve as the director of the Peace Studies Program and taught Introduction to Peace Studies, the Peace Studies Capstone Seminar and Ethics and the World Religions. This fall, she received a \$188,331 grant from the National Endowment of the Humanities to direct a Summer Institute for college and university faculty in July 2015 at GW on the topic of “American Muslims: History, Culture, and Politics” [see page 2 of this newsletter]. Irene also published an article on Asian American Christianity in a peer-reviewed anthology, *Asian American Christian Ethics* (Baylor University Press), and is working on two articles: one on Islam and motherhood, and a second on teaching comparative religious ethics. She spoke at a panel on grants at the Annual Meeting of the Society for the Study of Muslim Ethics, and remains on the steering committee for the Comparative Religious Ethics Group for the American Academy of Religion.

**Kelly Pemberton** delivered a paper in August 2014 entitled “What Can We Learn from Islamic Gender Activism in Indonesia? A Critical Inquiry,” in Jakarta, Indonesia, at Syarif Hidayatullah University's International Conference, “Southeast Asian Islam: Legacy and New Interpretation.” In November, she gave the keynote address, “The Politics of Gender in the Sufi Imaginary,” for the conference, “Sufi Islam and the Politics of Belonging in South Asia,” at the University of Heidelberg, Germany. Finally, she delivered a lecture on “Religion, Gender, and Environmentalism in the MENA: Old Frontiers and New Directions,” at the University of Kuwait on May 5th. Professor Pemberton also did several interviews with news media (Voice of America, PBS's *To the Contrary* show, and China Central TV) about why Muslim youth in Europe and young Muslim women are drawn to extremist groups like ISIS, and whether the Qur'an could be considered a gender-egalitarian text. Professor Pemberton is on sabbatical leave for the 2015-16 academic year.

**Bob Tuttle**, whose primary appointment is in the law school, started the school year with the publication of his book, *Secular Government, Religious People* (Eerdmans), co-authored with GW law professor **Chip Lupu**. Bob was on sabbatical in the fall, when he and Lupu wrote “Corporate Free Exercise,” a chapter in a forthcoming book (from Oxford University Press) about the Supreme Court's decision in *Hobby Lobby*. Bob also continued his research into 19<sup>th</sup> century church-state conflicts in the United States, and wrote or co-wrote blog posts about a variety of pending legal disputes. In the spring, he returned to teaching in the law school, but looks forward to offering Religion Department classes again in the near future. Bob continues his legal work on behalf of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Lutheran Services in America. In recent months, Bob and Chip have been the principal authors of letters to state legislatures considering religious exemption statutes; their letters raise questions about harmful implications of such legislation.

**Jon Wood** was excited to develop and lead a new course-offering this year: Introduction to World Religions. Beyond that, his other courses—Renaissance/Reformation and Christianity in the Ancient World—provided the customary delight that arises when combining intrinsically wonderful subjects with the thoughtful engagement of keen students. This academic year, he was further glad to participate in a variety of services such as a radio-interview on the subject of the religious history of Halloween and a GW Culture-Buffs lecture in conjunction with the exhibit “Picturing Mary: Women, Mother, Idea” at the National Museum of Women in the Arts. There were also various other public presentations and service projects in his home area of Northern Virginia. This summer will bring opportunity for more focused research in his ongoing book-project on the subject of changing perceptions of priesthood in 16<sup>th</sup>-century Zurich.



**Abbie Ziffren Memorial Lecture, Spring 2015****THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT:  
A DIALOGUE BETWEEN A JEWISH AND PALESTINIAN PEACEMAKER**

The Religion Department decided to focus this year's Abbie Ziffren Memorial Lecture on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This was due, in part, to the war in Gaza last summer which once again focused the world's attention on this ongoing and seemingly intractable conflict. We also attempt every year to choose a topic for the Ziffren Lecture that is aligned with the interests of the faculty member after whom the lecture was named. Two of Abbie's many interests were Judaism and peace studies, and so this gave us another reason to have an event about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Furthermore, we decided that rather than have one speaker, it would be better to have two, one from each side of the conflict, so that both perspectives would be represented.

The event was a great success. Rabbi Amy Eilberg spoke for the Jewish side. Eilberg directs interfaith dialogue programs in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area, and teaches at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities. Her book, *From Enemy to Friend: Jewish Wisdom and the Pursuit of Peace*, was recently published by Orbis Books. On the Arab side, we had Aziz Abu Sarah, a Palestinian who has built a distinguished career in peacebuilding. He is executive director of the Center for World Religions, Diplomacy, and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University. He won the Intercultural Innovation Award from the U.N. Alliance of Civilizations and was also named a National Geographic Explorer in 2011 and a TED Fellow in 2014. In 2009, he co-founded Middle East Justice and Development Initiative (MEJDI Tours) to help resolve violent international conflict through developing business relationships between opposing sides of conflicts throughout the world.

Each of the two speakers gave a 20-minute presentation on how their respective religious tradition deals with conflict resolution. Thus, Eilberg focused on such themes as *tikkun 'olam*, which literally means "fixing the world," in the Jewish tradition. Similarly, Abu Sarah focused on such concepts as *jihad*, which can refer to war, but can also refer to bringing justice to the world through peaceful means. The liveliest part of the evening was the question and answer session in which students and faculty engaged in a discussion with the two speakers about how religion can be used to bring peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

*Alumni Weekend 2015 – Save the Date*

Save the date for GW's Alumni Weekend 2015: September 24 – 27. Every year during Alumni Weekend, campus comes alive as thousands of alumni, friends and families return to GW. During the four days of activities all Colonials and their families are invited to choose from 60+ events ranging from reunion celebrations (classes that end in 5s and 0s) and academic gatherings to networking receptions and tours of campus. More information, including registration will be posted soon at <http://alumni.gwu.edu/alumniweekend>. #GAW15

## David and Sherry Berz Lecture, Spring 2015

Thanks to generous support of the Berz family and co-sponsorship of GW's Confucius Institute, this year's Berz lecture featured a three-hour panel of five scholars from the U.S. and China on "Religion in Contemporary China."

**Professor Eyal Aviv** of GW discussed the rising popularity of Buddhism in contemporary China, especially the popularity of Tibetan Buddhism. He argued that part of Tibetan Buddhism's success is rooted in the skillful adaptation of their traditional teachings and practices to the needs and aspirations of the middle class and wealthy Chinese.

**Professor Ori Tavor** from the University of Pennsylvania examined two representations of the current resurgence of Confucianism in mainland China. He showed that the tension between the state-sponsored and grassroots Confucianism is a modern expression of an ongoing effort by the Chinese state to control Confucianism and use the image of Confucius to its own advantage.

**Professor Xiaofei Kang** of GW demonstrated the critical role of lay women in the post-Mao religious revival. Taking full advantage of the Maoist legacy of gender equality, Chinese women of different backgrounds have deployed religious resources to negotiate with or resist patriarchal authorities, to define modernity and tradition in their own terms, to improve their current status and to seek higher meanings in life.

**Professor Zhaohui He** of Shandong University and a visiting Fulbright scholar at GW compared two efforts of building a Christian church in the hometown of Confucius in the late 19th century and contemporary China. He predicted that Christianity will play an increasingly important role in the religious life of Chinese people in the near future, but it is unlikely that China will become a Christian country.

**Professor Matthew Erie** from Princeton University assessed the role of Islamic law in China's Islamic renaissance. Chinese Muslims (Hui), the Party-State and foreign Muslims all interpret Islamic law to augment their respective views of the "good." Such interpretive practices are complicated by the fact that China does not officially recognize any religious law. Hence, Islamic law remains an "unofficial" law which both constrains and enhances its capacity as a resource, normative model and set of imagined transnational connections.

The panel drew a large audience of GW faculty, students and D.C. community members and generated lively discussions on the meanings and implications of religious resurgence in contemporary Chinese society.



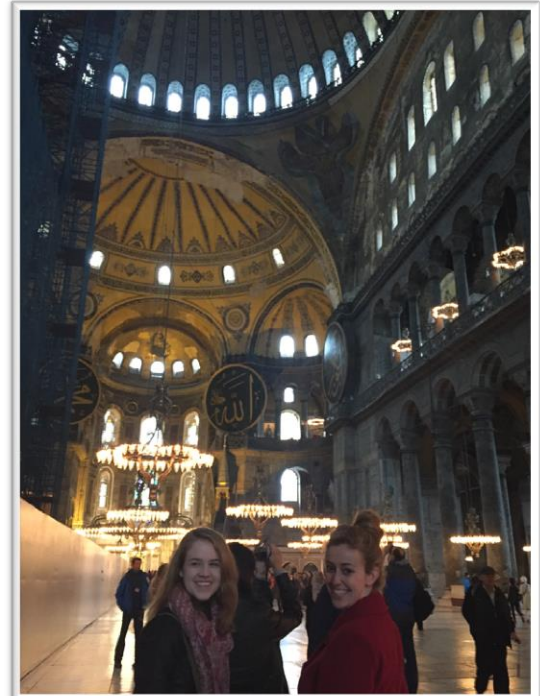
*The David and Sherry Berz Endowed Lecture is made possible by a gift from **David Berz**, BA '70, JD '73, and **Sherry Berz**, BA '72, MA '73.*



## “Religion and Empire” Course Takes GW Students to Turkey

During the spring semester of 2015, Professor **Paul Duff** taught a course entitled Religion and Empire in Columbian College’s Dean’s Scholars in Globalization program. The course focused on Christianity in the Roman Empire. During spring break, he and his class traveled to Turkey and explored a number of ancient sites. Among other places, the class visited the ruins of temples dedicated to pagan gods, temples dedicated to the Roman Imperial cult, an ancient synagogue and Hagia Sophia, the magnificent 6th century Christian church that was converted to a mosque following the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople (Istanbul) in 1453.

*Below: Professor Duff and GW undergraduates in front of the Library of Celsus at Ephesus;  
Right: GW students at the Hagia Sophia*



## GW Culture Buffs at the National Museum of Women in the Arts: “Picturing Mary: Women, Mother, Idea”

On a delightfully sunny Saturday morning in April, Professor **Irene Oh** and Professor **Jon Wood** met with a group of GW alumni “Culture Buffs” at the Hamilton restaurant in Washington, D.C. Between brunch and a lively round of Q&A, both professors spoke in anticipation of a visit to the exhibit, “Picturing Mary: Women, Mother, Idea.” Professor Oh highlighted the piquancy of the narrative: a young, unmarried mother whose precarious place in first-century Palestine nevertheless also bears relation to timeless themes of divine motherhood. Professor Wood explored vignettes of two Renaissance women—Argula von Grumbach and Jeanne de Jussie—and how it was that Marian themes inspired a dramatic range of creativity in the face of oppressive contexts. The event was crowned by a walk through the magnificent exhibit at the National Museum of Women in the Arts. The GW Culture Buffs program is sponsored by the Columbian College Alumni Office. To learn more, visit <https://alumni.gwu.edu/culture-buffs>.



### Discoveries in a London Archive

by Alf Hildebeitel

I would like to report on some progress I made in London at the Freud Archives under a 2014 UFF grant in working on my book on Sigmund Freud and Girindrashejkar Bose's correspondence. I found a large French book that is unknown, since its 1993 publication, to all those who should know of it writing about Freud in English. I finished it over the winter holidays, taking over 60 pages of single-space notes, and am in the process of rewriting parts of all my extant chapters, and must write a new conclusion. The book, by Henri and Madeleine Vermorel, is *Sigmund Freud et Romain Rolland: Correspondence 1923-1936: de la sensation océanique au trouble du souvenir sur l'Acropole*. Collection Histoire de la psychanalyse (Paris: PUF, 1993 [646 pages]). It enhances my study for two reasons. First, the Freud-Rolland exchange overlaps with Freud's 1920-1937 correspondence with Bose, whom the Vermorels don't mention. It sheds light on the Bose correspondence because when Freud and Rolland met and started up their friendship, Rolland was writing on Indian mysticism, centering his study on Swami Ramakrishna, a Bengali priest of the Goddess Kali. In an early response to Rolland, Freud rejoined that it was time for him to deepen an interest in India himself. If one follows the dates of the two exchanges, it is striking that Rolland and Bose were encouraging similar revisions to Freudian theory at the same time. Freud, however, acknowledged only Rolland, who posed a contribution that Freud worked into his theory. The heart of it, and this is the second point where the Vermorels' study affects mine, involves Rolland's assertions that an "oceanic feeling" lay at the source of all religion. Freud at first resisted this idea in *Civilization and its Discontents*, but soon it unsettled him to the point that he worked the concept into his metapsychology. And, by the Vermorels' interpretation, it ultimately "unblocked" long-repressed pre-Oedipal traumas of infancy to age two in Freud's own continued self-analysis so that Freud could finally touch on them in his last "open letter" to Rolland on Rolland's 70th birthday published (in English) as "A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis."

Along with tracing Freud's opening up to this India-inspired "oceanic feeling," the Vermorels offer a new interpretation of Freud's lifelong yet, as they argue, deepening interests in religion, for they interpret the correspondence over the "oceanic feeling" as impactful on Freud's late-in-life interests in pre-Oedipal themes involving the mother and the pre-Oedipal infancy period. This coincides with what Bose was challenging Freud to consider, and allows me to explore what Bose might have been able to contribute from an Indian perspective to Freud's rethinking, had Freud been more open to a give-and-take exchange with him as well.

It also coincides, in another way, with what Michael Bernstein (in *Freud and the Heritage of Moses*) and Jacques Derrida (in *Archive Fever*) have hit on in Freud's softening on religious traditions (not on religion itself) where he relates them to peoples' collective traumas in *Moses and Monotheism*. I thus have the opportunity to write a book that has something new to say about Freud himself, not to mention about Freud and Bose, Judaism and Hinduism, images and their rejection, God and the Goddess, and Moses and the *Mahabharata* in the light of Freud's analysis of religious traditions in terms of peoples' collective traumas.

### Special Thanks

*The Department of Religion would like to gratefully acknowledge the following generous donors who made a gift to the school from January 1, 2014 – April 30, 2015.*

Sean M. Akins, BA '03

Susan Annette Carlson, BA '80

Robert Carroll\*

Paul Brooks Duff+

Henry J. Ferry, BA '60

Griffin Edward Gasink, BA '08

Blake L. Horridge, BS '05

William M. Knott, PhD '06

Kibum Lee

Penny O'Callaghan\*\*

Santina E. Polky, BA '11

Victor Xavier Rodriguez, MS '79

Kendall Leigh Shaw, BA '08

Anthony Edward Sulva, BA '14

Sara Ann Winters, BA '11

Elizabeth Yeide\*

Heather M. Young, BA '94, MA '96

Carolyn Hetzer Zuttel, BA '78

\* *Friend*

\*\* *Parent*

+ *Faculty/Staff*

~ *Student*

Thank you for your support!



**CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2015 GRADUATES!**

**Religion Majors**

Xhesika Bardhi  
 Farishta Boura  
 Danielle Mazur  
 Jessica Simon

**Religion Minors**

Jehred Reyes

**MA in Islamic Studies**

Carolina Mendoza  
 Syed Zaidi

**Peace Studies Majors**

Kiana Davis  
 Jay Pandya  
 Shani Shih  
 Olivia Tomaszewski

**Peace Studies Minors**

Victoria Chiriboga  
 Corinne Gammon  
 Brendan McLellan  
 Isaac Suntag



The Religion Department welcomes news and updates from students and alumni.

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For alumni updates and address changes, please visit:

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*Peace Studies graduating students Jay Pandya and Olivia Tomaszewski, with program director Irene Oh Koukios (middle)*

**Theta Alpha Kappa**

Congratulations to our  
 2015 Inductees!

*Farinaz Kaviniyar*

*Ilana Levinson*

*Ross Levy*



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