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Department of Religion

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Newsletter

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A Note from the Chair

Rob Eisen

This past year was marked by a major transition in the Religion Department at GW. **Dewey Wallace** finished his last year of teaching after 50 years (!) of service to our department and the university. Rarely does one find a professor who has served a single academic institution so long and so well. Throughout his career, Dewey has been adored by colleagues and students alike for his remarkable knowledge of Christianity, his fabulous classes, and the warmth and good humor he brought to the Religion Department on a daily basis. Thankfully, Dewey will remain in the area, and we have no intention of leaving him alone! We hope that he will visit often and can be coaxed to teach a course or two for us in the coming years. We are also thankful for the fact that a new faculty member will be joining our department with a specialty in Christianity: **Jon Wood**. Jon was chosen after a rigorous search process that extended throughout a good portion of the year. Jon knows that he has large shoes to fill, but he has excellent credentials to do so.

On a sadder note, we mourn the passing this past year of two former faculty members who were instrumental in building the Department of Religion over the past several decades: **Bob Jones** who taught Biblical Studies from 1959-1991, and **Harry Yeide** who taught Christian thought and ethics from 1963-2009. They will be sorely missed.

In more positive news, we are thrilled that a new graduate program will begin in our department in the fall semester: an MA program in Islamic Studies. (For several years, we have offered an MA degree in the joint-study of Islam and Hinduism. That program will continue as a track within the new MA program in Islam.) The program offers a unique blend of training in classical and contemporary Islam. Professors Nasr, Faghfoory, and Pemberton will all be teaching the religion courses in this program. We have also hired a specialist in Islamic law to teach courses in that subject as well. The program is designed for students interested in academic careers, as well as government personnel and professionals whose work involves the Muslim world and are therefore in search of a better understanding of Islamic religion and culture. The program was approved in April of the current year and already has seven students registered for the fall, more than we had anticipated at this early stage.

There were other developments. With respect to faculty, **Alf Hildebeitel** was honored at no fewer than three academic events this past year for his vast achievements in the study of Hinduism. In the fall, we will welcome back **Irene Oh** who was on maternity leave in the fall, and sabbatical in the spring. However, **Xiaofei Kang** will be leaving us for sabbatical in the coming year. With respect to curriculum, we implemented a Senior Capstone Seminar for the Religion major this past year, and it was quite successful. In this seminar, students chose a research topic and worked on a seminar paper throughout the semester in order to consolidate their knowledge and research skills in the field of Religion.

Information on all these developments and more can be found in this newsletter. As always, your help is appreciated to support our endeavors. We are especially interested in funds that would help support graduate students pursuing the new MA degree in Islamic Studies. We are also interested in replenishing the funds that would allow us to continue presenting the Yeide Prize on a yearly basis to our top graduating major in Religion. I am always available to discuss such matters, if you wish, at 202-994-6327, or email at eisen@gwu.edu.

A Tribute to Dewey Diaz Wallace
Professor of Religion

Dewey Wallace received his BA from Whitworth College in 1957 and his Ph.D. from Princeton University in 1965. He began his career at GW in 1963 as an Assistant Professor of Religion.

The students in the Religion Department have always known Professor Wallace as an excellent teacher. The excellence of his instruction was officially recognized by the university in 2001 when he received a Bender Teaching Award and again in 2007 when he won the Oscar and Shoshana Trachtenberg Teaching Prize. Although he has spent his career teaching mostly undergraduates in the Religion Department, he nevertheless directed 16 dissertations in American Religious History in the Department of History.

Professor Wallace is recognized in his field as an authority on the English Reformation and American religious history. He is the author of *The Pilgrims* (Consortium Press, 1977), *Puritans and Predestination* (University of North Carolina Press, 1982), and *Shapers of English Calvinism, 1660-1714* (Oxford University Press, 2011). He edited an anthology on *The Spirituality of the Later Puritans* (Mercer University Press, 1987) and *The Pioneer Preacher* by Sherlock Bristol (University of Illinois Press, 1989). He has also published numerous articles.

Professor Wallace has served the university in a number of different ways. He was on the Faculty Senate Research Committee (1976-77, 1992-94), the Dean's Council of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (1977-80), the University Research Committee (1980-82, 1994-96), the Humanities Program Steering Committee (1982-2004), the Committee on Early Modern European Studies (1997-2013), and the Committee on the Human Sciences (1990-92). In addition, he served on the Faculty Senate from 1992-94 and he chaired the Department of Religion 1991-93 and 2009-11.

His colleagues wish him joy in his retirement.



Jon Wood, a scholar in the History of Christianity, will be joining the Religion Department faculty in the fall (2013). Wood earned his undergraduate degree at Vanderbilt University and his Ph.D at Princeton Seminary (2008). His field of research is early modern Christianity, focused on the Reformation. He is currently writing a book on Heinrich Bullinger, Huldrych Zwingli's successor at Zurich.

Update from Kip Kosek, interim director of Peace Studies:

Peace Studies is a fast-growing undergraduate program within the Religion department. Students in the program examine peace in its philosophical and religious dimensions, as an important aspect of international affairs, and as a vital part of social, economic, and environmental justice. These themes are explored most fully in the Intro to Peace Studies course and the senior Peace Studies Project, both expertly led this year by Professor **Alex Carroll**. The program also hopes to nurture intellectual inquiry outside of coursework. In April, Peace Studies students and their friends gathered for pizza and a screening of *5 Broken Cameras*, an Oscar-nominated documentary about the crisis in the West Bank. This past year, Professor **Kip Kosek** served as program director; Professor **Irene Oh** returns as director for 2013-14.

Don't forget to like GWU Peace Studies on Facebook!

New MA Program in Islam

(This story originally appeared in May 2013 issue of the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences e-newsletter.)

Something rather special, even symbolic, happened at GW this year when Religion Department faculty members **Robert Eisen**, who is Jewish, and **Mohammad Faghfoory**, a Muslim scholar from Iran—both devout to their respective faiths—collaborated together to create a new master’s degree program in Islamic Studies. It was an idea that grew out of their friendship and mutual interest in Islam and in interfaith dialogue to promote peace and knowledge.

“It shows what can happen when a Jew and a Muslim get together and talk to each other!” said Eisen, chair of the department. “Personal relationships can overcome divisions of many types.”



Eisen first became interested in Islam while studying the religion’s tradition as a history major at Yale University. When he pursued a Ph.D in Jewish thought with a specialty in medieval Jewish philosophy, the program included material on Islamic philosophy because of the interconnection between the two religions. In recent years, he has turned his attention to bridging knowledge and understanding among the Abrahamic religions of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity.

The unique collaboration between Eisen and Faghfoory grew out of a gradually evolving friendship that began in 2000. Over time, both engaged in interfaith and international activities focused on observing different cultures and reducing violence, particularly in the Middle East. Their bond is made all the more interesting by the fact that Faghfoory is from Iran, given the tensions that exist between Israel and Iran today.

“Without forgetting who we are, we did not see each other as Muslim and Jew, but as two friends and colleagues who wished to serve the university and the community,” Faghfoory said. “Through our collaboration, we hope to demonstrate to both Jewish and Muslim communities in this country that with good will and trust, there is nothing we cannot do together.”

The program offers an original, insider’s perspective of Islamic tradition as a religion, a civilization, a culture, and a political force. Unlike other Islam programs, it incorporates a historical component when focusing on classical texts or modern Islam.

“We combine both approaches, offering a solid grounding in classical texts with the study of modern politics and international relations in the Islamic world,” explained Eisen. “Students will have the capacity to understand the historical roots behind what’s going on in the Islamic world today.”

The connection between Islamic studies and other disciplines will bring scholars of religion, history, political science, and international relations together. In addition, guest lecturers will include former ambassadors, diplomats, and noted spiritual leaders.

“The Middle East, which receives so much attention, is only a small part of the vast world of Islam,” noted Faghfoory. “The majority of Muslims live outside that region but don’t receive nearly as much attention, which is why we developed this program using a broad prospective on the complexities and historic roots of the Islamic world.”

Among the program’s faculty is an exceptionally distinguished Islamic scholar, **Seyyed Hossein Nasr**, a University Professor of Islamic Studies; **Kelly Pemberton**, a scholar of Islamic mysticism and women’s studies; and **Irene Oh**, whose field of focus is peace studies. “Rarely can you find a program that includes as many internationally renowned scholars as we have,” Faghfoory said.

In the past, the Department of Religion offered a MA in Hinduism and Islam, a topic that is now a track within the new program for students wanting a comparative degree in Islam and Hinduism.

IN MEMORIAM

by Dewey D. Wallace, Jr.

During this past academic year, the memorial wreath that is placed on GW's Professors Gate in memory of members of the faculty who have died, hung there to honor two pillars of the university's Religion Department, professors **Robert G. Jones** and **Harry E. Yeide, Jr.** It is my sad task to report that Bob died last September 3 and Harry last February 6, but also my happier task to celebrate the careers of these two friends and colleagues who were leaders of our department, outstanding teachers, exacting scholars, and devoted to the service of the university. Harry arrived at the department in the fall of 1963; Bob had begun teaching at GW in 1959. For several years they and I were the only full-time appointments in Religion at GW. I hope that what follows will do justice to their characters and accomplishments.

ROBERT G. JONES (1925-2012)

Robert G. Jones, Professor Emeritus of Religion, died September 3, 2012, in Knoxville, TN. Born in Magnolia, Arkansas, where his father was a Baptist pastor and his mother a church organist, he attended Baylor University, from which he received a BA in 1947, with a major in English, one consequence of which was his readiness with a quotation from Wordsworth for appropriate occasions. He continued his education at Yale University, earning a BD (Bachelor of Divinity) in 1950 and a Ph.D in 1959. At Yale he worked with Millar Burrows, the noted scholar of the Dead Sea Scrolls. One of these recently discovered texts which Bob had translated and edited, *The Rules for the War of the Sons of Light with the Sons of Darkness*, was published in 1956. Other Yale luminaries of that era with whom Bob studied and whom he mentioned with some frequency were the Reformation scholar Roland Bainton and the theologian H. Richard Niebuhr.

Professor Jones taught at GW from 1959 until his retirement in 1991. As many alumni will remember, he was a popular and beloved teacher who familiarized several generations of students with modern historical-critical biblical scholarship and excelled both in large lecture classes (his introductory sections of Hebrew Bible and New Testament consistently enrolled over one hundred students and sometimes neared two hundred) and in small seminars in the Humanities Program which covered ancient Greek and Roman classics as well as the Bible. Bob was a meticulous scholar who focused on a close reading of primary texts and who insisted on a precise use of the English language; he had a passion for etymology and philology. He was also a careful and exacting reader of student papers who spent countless hours grading the papers of all his students, however large the class. For many years he presided over a weekly lunchtime discussion group of faculty and students from various departments who read the New Testament in the original Greek. For a few years he conducted another lunchtime group that read the Latin text of St. Augustine's *Confessions*. He was a leader in organizing a seminar on the Ancient Mediterranean, which attracted faculty from many neighboring universities to present and discuss their research. Beyond the GW campus he taught a regular adult Bible class at the First Baptist Church of Washington, DC. Jones was a firm believer in educating learners in a core curriculum of the "great books" and did his best to advance that ideal in his teaching. For him the truly educated person should know something about such things as Thucydides, the *Aeneid*, and the biblical book of Job. He was convinced that these books contained wisdom for all times.

As chair of the Religion Department from 1963 to 1979, Bob was a generous mentor of new members of the department and presided over its growth and transition into a department that offered courses in most of the major religions of the world. Professor Jones also served for twenty years as University Marshal, a time-consuming administrative task.

Bob was renowned for his inimitable sense of humor. As Marshal, he would ask the assembled faculty awaiting their march into the commencement auditorium to "line up in order of academic senility;" he liked to repeat the quip that "I dreamed I was lecturing, and when I woke up, I was." My favorite of his stories was that of his fellow Arkansan who proudly claimed that he had once seen Halley's Comet, "but only at a distance."

As an avocation, Bob was a skilled woodworker who made bookcases and other pieces of furniture, some of them for departmental colleagues; after his retirement he made wooden toys for charitable organizations.

With his retirement in 1991 Bob and his wife Marian moved to Tennessee to be near his daughter and grandchildren. He continued teaching on a part-time basis briefly at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and Maryville College, and for fourteen years at the Oak Ridge Institute for Continued Learning, where he was still teaching a class within less than two months of his death.

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HARRY E. YEIDE, Jr. (1931-2013)

Harry Yeide, Professor Emeritus of Religion, died February 6 at Shady Grove Adventist Hospital in Rockville, Md. He was born in Harrisburg, Pa. and grew up in Washington, D.C. where his father was an engineer for the electric company and his mother a high school teacher of Latin and Chemistry. He was educated at Williams College (BA 1953), where he majored in Political Economy; the University of Cologne in Germany, where he was a Fulbright Scholar (1953-54); Union Theological Seminary in New York City (BD 1957), where he studied under both Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr; and at Harvard University (Ph.D 1966), where his dissertation was on the social ethics of Friedrich Christoph Oetinger; it was directed by the polymath James Luther Adams, from whom Harry gained a persistent interest in the social contexts for ethical reflection. At Harvard he also studied Islam under Hamilton A. R. Gibb, one of the renowned Islamicists of that generation.

After serving as a Lutheran pastor for several years, Harry's career at GW began in the fall of 1963. Harry was an excellent instructor who took his turn teaching the Introduction to Western Religion, frequently taught the required course for majors on Theories and Methods in the Study of Religion, developed and long taught a course designated an Introduction to Religious Thought, and closer to his specialization, Christian Ethics and Modern Society and Ethics and World Religions. Harry tolerated large classes, but was in his element in smaller classes where it was more feasible to employ his Socratic and dialogical method of teaching. Fittingly for a graduate of Williams College, he liked to hold up as his ideal of teaching that of the legendary nineteenth-century President of Williams College Mark Hopkins, of whom it was said that the ideal education was to sit on one end of a log conversing with Hopkins sitting on the other. Harry liked students who would argue with him, and hone their skills of coherent reasoning in making a case. His amazingly jumbled office, teeming with books on all kinds of subjects, was almost always open and available for students, and he was unstinting in his willingness to take as much time as they wanted to further discussions that had begun in the classroom. As his career proceeded he interested himself in the issues of Bioethics and Peacemaking, and taught in both areas, in the first case in a team-taught Bioethics course which he helped organize in the Health Sciences Program, in the second through his leadership in the forming of a Columbian College program in Peace Studies, for which he pioneered such courses as The Religions Wage Peace. His excellence as a teacher was rewarded by his receipt in 1998 of the Oscar and Shoshana Trachtenberg Prize for Teaching. Both students and faculty colleagues benefitted from his analytic cast of mind.

Professor Yeide published many book reviews, encyclopedia entries, and journal articles (some in German) in his areas of expertise. His book *Studies in Classical Pietism: The Flowering of the Ecclesiola* was published in 1997. Among his scholarly activities he preferred the give and take of presenting papers at conferences, which he did with frequency, delivering some invited papers in Germany.

Harry was always interested in the workings of complex institutions, and was quite insightful about the nature of colleges and universities. He served as an Assistant Dean of Columbian College from 1967 to 1979, and then as chair of the Department of Religion from 1979 to 1991 and again from 1993 to 1997. As dean he led in the development of an Honors Program. As chair he was helpful and congenial to department members and a catalyst for new initiatives. Later in his career he was active for over a decade in the Freshmen Advising Workshops. He served on many committees—he actually liked committee meetings, especially if they were refreshingly dialectical—and particularly favored his long years on the College's Joint Committee of Faculty and Students. He also served on the GW Hospital Ethics Committee. As an adviser to students as dean, chair, or professor, he was sympathetically attuned to student concerns and always willing to listen, though he was firm in upholding academic standards. In 2007 he was awarded the Oscar and Shoshana Trachtenberg Prize for University Service.

After his retirement in 2009, Harry Yeide suffered from a series of strokes, from the complications of last of which he died on February 6.

Finally a personal note: Bob Jones brought me to GW and was a mentor in my early years, as well as an unfailing source of knowledge on everything biblical; we also shared a certain kind of humor, which we once defined as the lower Mississippi river humor belt typified by Mark Twain, inherited from my East Texan and his Arkansan father. Harry arrived at GW in the same year I did, and became a dialogue partner: eating our bag lunches together several times a week for forty-five years, we probed the ins and outs of matters political, religious, and pedagogical, among others, agreeing on many things, but emphasizing the disagreements where we could.



Faculty Updates

Eyal Aviv was nominated for the second time for the Bender teaching award this year. His article "The Root that Nourishes the Branches: The *Yogācārabhūti*'s Role in 20th Century Chinese Scholastic Buddhism" was published in a book collection by Harvard University Press. Another article titled "Ouyang Jingwu: From Yogācāra Scholasticism to Soteriology," was accepted for publication by Oxford University Press. His paper "Religion, Historiography and Cultural Identity in the Debate over Xuyun's Biography" was submitted for publication by *Modern China*. Professor Aviv is also participating in two research groups: the first studies Indian, Tibetan, and Chinese commentaries on a foundational text in the Buddhist epistemological tradition, and the second studies Buddhism in modern China. During the summer, he hopes to finish a draft of his book project and write an article on Buddhist logic in modern China for a conference in Germany next year.

Paul Duff presented the paper "Israel in the Book of Revelation: Ambiguity and Reality" at the Society of Biblical Literature Meeting in Chicago (November). He is hoping to finish a book entitled *Moses in Corinth: The Apologetic Context of Paul's Image of the Lawgiver in 2 Corinthians 3*. He mentored Religion major Claire Kozik for her Luther Rice Fellowship focused on Paul's collection of money for the Jerusalem church.

Rob Eisen continued research on peace and violence in the Abrahamic faiths this year. He is working on two topics connected to this theme: approaches to war in Jewish law, and the role of religion in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He was also invited to participate in a conference on the theme of Jewish extremism at Yeshiva University in New York in March. He has also been active in a program that is being run jointly by GW and the Western Studies Institute in Saudi Arabia. The program brings Saudi Arabian academics and professionals to the United States to learn about Western culture.

Alf Hildebeitel launched an enjoyable 2-semester course sequence this academic year, co-teaching with Professor T. P. Mahadevan of Howard University, involving a fall *R̥gveda* course followed by a spring *Mahābhārata* course. This year the sequence will be repeated with the sequel on the *Rāmāyaṇa*. This past year Alf published "The *Mahābhārata* and the Stories Some People Tell about It," Part 1, in *South Asian Studies Association Journal* 1 (Fall 2012), 1-26; Part 2, scheduled for Spring 2013 in the same journal, is still forthcoming. He has also written over half of a book manuscript titled *Uncanny Domesticities: The Sigmund Freud-Girindrashekhar Bose Correspondence and the Goddess in the Mahābhārata*. He is about to start looking for a publisher. The book began with papers at the Australian South Asia Conference in Sydney (July 2012) and the American Academy of Religion Conference (November 2012). A paper given at the American Oriental Society titled "Vedic and Epic Kurus" (March 2013) will form part of a larger paper titled "The *Mahābhārata* and the Stories Some People Tell about Its Tribal and Earliest Histories," to appear in Neera Misra, ed. *Papers from the International Seminar on the Mahābhārata: Its Historicity, Antiquity, Evolution & Impact on Civilization*, organized by Neera Misra and the Draupadi Trust in Delhi (2012). Also in press is "From *R̥sidharma* to *Vānaprastha*: the Southern Recension Makeover of the *Mahābhārata*'s *Umā-Maheśvara Saṃvāda*" in Adam Bowles, Simon Brodbeck, and Alf Hildebeitel, eds. *Essays from the Epics and Purāṇas Section of the 15th World Sanskrit Conference*, New Delhi, January 2012 (descriptive title only); and "Dialogue and Apostrophe: A Move by Vālmīki?" in Brian Black and Laurie L. Patton, eds., projected collection of essays on dialogue in India.

Xiaofei Kang presented papers on women and religion in twentieth-century and contemporary China at the International Conference on "The Construction of Contemporary China" at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in December 2012, the 12th Annual Conference of Association for Asian Performance, Washington, D.C., August 2012, and the International Symposium on "Religion in Rural North China," Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J., May, 2013. A co-edited volume entitled *Gendering Chinese Religion: Subject, Identity and Body* is forthcoming with the State University of New York Press. She also contributed to the successful launch of GW's Confucius Institute in spring 2013.

Derek Malone-France's latest book, *Faith, Fallibility, and the Virtue of Anxiety: An Essay in Religion and Political Liberalism* has been shortlisted as a finalist for the American Academy of Religion's 2013 annual prize for Best Work in the Constructive-Reflective Study of Religion. The book, which has received wide attention in multiple fields of study was also the subject of a special, plenary session panel discussion at the annual meeting of the Society for Philosophy of Religion in February. The panel discussion featured responses to the book presented by scholars from both the United States and Europe, and Derek presented a reply to each response. In December, Derek was named to the selection and advisory committee for the new NASA/Library of Congress Baruch Blumberg Chair in Astrobiology, which has been established to develop

a program of research and public education on the humanistic and social implications of the search for extraterrestrial life. Derek also presented a paper and chaired a colloquium session at the annual meeting of the American Philosophical Association's Pacific Division in March. Derek provided commentary on one of the presidential campaign debates between then-candidates Barack Obama and Mitt Romney for a radio piece and an online feature article for Voice of America. He also moderated a debate between the well-known progressive pundit Ezra Klein and former Treasurer of the United States and conservative pundit Bay Buchanan. At GW, Derek continued to serve as Executive Director of the University Writing Program, while also being appointed by the Provost as the Founding Chair of the university's new Academy of Distinguished Teachers. And he was interviewed about the University Writing Program's national seminar on "Designing Writing Curricula for Student Veterans" by the Associated Press, for an article that appeared in print in the Washington Post and widely online through outlets including CNN and Fox News. Derek was also selected as a finalist for the university-wide Faculty Service Excellence Award. Finally, Derek designed and taught the new Senior Capstone course on research methods for Religion majors.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr just finished editing the fifth and last volume of *An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia* which is to appear at the end of this year. Also, as chief editor of the *Study Qur'an*, he is working with the editors on proofs, indices, maps etc. of this major work whose text has already been sent to the publications who plan to bring it out in 2014. Finally, he is going over the proofs of his translation of Mulla Sadra's *Book of Metaphysical Penetrations* which is coming out in a bilingual form in the Brigham Young University Series of Islamic texts. He also continues his activity in inter-religious dialogue and participated and spoke on May 17th in a major gathering with the Dalai Lama and a number of Jewish and Christian leaders in Louisville.

Irene Oh was on leave for the 2012-2013 academic year. She spent the fall semester on maternity leave caring for her baby daughter, Elaine, who was born in July 2012. She also published an article, "Engendering Martyrs: Muslim Mothers and Martyrdom," in the anthology, *Religious Ethics in a Time of Globalism: Shaping a Third Wave of Comparative Analysis* (eds. Elizabeth Bucar and Aaron Stalnaker), and continued to serve as vice president for the Society for the Study of Muslim Ethics and as co-chair for the American Academy of Religion Working Group in Comparative Religious Ethics. Irene was on sabbatical during the spring semester and submitted a grant, "Modern Islam," to the National Endowment for the Humanities, and worked on her book, *An Ethic of Motherhood*. She is currently advising a group of high school students visiting GW this summer from Cyprus as part of the Fulbright Program.

Kelly Pemberton worked closely with Professors Eisen and Mohammad Faghfoory to design a new MA degree program in Islam this year. Professor Pemberton also spent part of the academic year designing a new graduate course, Islamic Historiography, for this program, which will be offered in the spring semester, 2014. Professor Pemberton offered an online version of her Women in Islam course this summer, 2013. The course debuted last year, but this year featured an interactive component with the Egyptian NGO Geel el-Amal (Generation of Hope), a women's NGO based in Alexandria whose members she met during the course of research on her book on Islamic medicine, a work that is still in progress but nearing completion. Also on the publishing front, two of Professor Pemberton's articles appeared in print last fall. One, "Sufis and Social Activism: a Chishti Response to Communal Strife in India Today" appeared in the volume *In Search of South Asian Sufis*, edited by Clinton Bennett and Charles Ramsey. Another, "Devotional Literature," was published in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Islam and Women* in 2013. Three more, "The Production of Islamic Modernities: Didactic Literature for Women in Turkey and India," "Perfecting Women in the New Age of Ignorance: Emerging Patterns of Islamic Rhetoric in Indo-Pakistan and Beyond," and "Perfecting Women in the New Age of Ignorance: Patterns of Gender Discourse in Popular Indo-Pakistani 'Women's Literature'", will be published later this year. Professor Pemberton's blog, <http://www.womenandgenderinislam.wordpress.com>, continues to operate, with new posts focusing on the implications of the rising influence and power of Islamic political parties for women living in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa). Finally, last fall, 2012, Professor Pemberton delivered a lecture presentation on women and Islam in the MENA and South Asia for K-12 educators at a workshop on Islam for the George Washington University's Institute for Middle East Studies.

During the 2012-2013 academic year, **Dewey Wallace** returned to a last year of teaching after a full year's sabbatical leave. He undertook the onerous task of clearing out his office after 50 years at the university. The department and university conferred upon him the title of Professor Emeritus of Religion. He has two forthcoming invited publications: a chapter entitled "Bunyan's Theology and Religious Context" in the Oxford University Press's *Oxford Handbook of John Bunyan* and an "Introduction to Peter Sterry, *A Discourse of the Freedom of the Will*" to appear in a series of facsimile reprints for the series Reformation Heritage Books.

David and Sherry Berz Lecture, Fall 2012

Professor Robert Campany of Vanderbilt University delivered this year's annual Berz Lecture in October. The title of the lecture was "The Incredible Vanishing Religion: Glimmers of Buddhist Imagination from Early Medieval China." Drawing on his newly published book on Buddhist miracle stories, Professor Campany set out to recover a kind of Buddhism that has "vanished" from the modernist view of Buddhism as mostly a philosophy and a religion preaching nothing more than compassion and meditational practices. The Buddhist world in early medieval China, as Professor Campany demonstrated with a number of fascinating miracle stories, was an "imaginal world" full of ghosts, spirits, karmic retribution, purgatory scenes, sutra veneration and other devotional practices. As Buddhism was making its first entry into China, the miracle stories served as an effective vehicle of religious persuasion that integrated the foreign Buddhist ideas with preexisting Chinese beliefs. Professor Campany's revisionist view of Buddhism generated enthusiastic responses from both students and faculty.



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

Abbie Ziffren Memorial Lecture, Spring 2013

This lecture celebrates the life of Abbie Ziffren, who taught in the Religion Department in the late 1980's and early 1990's before her untimely passing, and each year we attempt to preserve Abbie's memory by inviting a lecturer who will address our faculty and students about an area in which Abbie was interested.

This year's event enlisted a well-attended talk by Professor Johannes Bronkhorst, Emeritus Professor of Indology of the University of Lausanne, Switzerland. The talk's title "Peace in Ancient India," was well matched to the chief interests of the lecture series' namesake Abbie Ziffren, whose teaching took in both Peace Studies and Indian religions. Professor Bronkhorst is a most versatile scholar, with important publications covering the full spectrum of classical Indian thought systems and their texts. He is in fact one of the few scholars today who has resisted the specialization that turns most scholars of classical South Asia into experts on some facet of either Hinduism, Buddhism, or Jainism. From the perspective of such studies, he can often be quite the controversialist, pointing out seams in the received wisdom that accompanies traditional scholarly views. One sees this lively feature in many of his articles and in two of his recent books: *Greater Magadha* (2009), which argues for the relative autonomy of North-Eastern India from ca. 800 BCE to the turn of the millennium, and in *Karma* (2012), which argues that the idea of karma as rebirth is, as it were, backdated to the early Upaniṣads, and alien to early Brahmanical texts. His "Peace" talk sought to make the point that while ancient and modern India have had much to say about peace as a spiritual matter, neither achieved a translation of this ideal into the practical political sphere.



Yeide Prize, 2013

This year, the department selected two recipients for the Harry Yeide Prize for Excellence in the Field of Religious Studies – **Matthew DeGioia** and **Sierra Schellenberg**.

Matthew says, “I would like to express my gratitude to the faculty of the Religion department for recognizing my academic achievement, as well as for their courteous gesture of awarding me with the Harry Yeide prize. I am also thankful for those who support the department financially, hoping that their contributions will continue to assist in expanding an already robust program in Religious Studies.” He says his time at GW has featured a lot of growth, both intellectually and spiritually. “The highlight of my studies at GW was studying under Derek Malone-France, whose relentlessly inquiring spirit drove me to become more precise and efficient as a writer, which culminated in my Senior Capstone project entitled *Dualism and Disillusionment*.” Since graduation, Matt looks forward to the prospect of attending law school in the upcoming year, and continuing to apply the critical thinking skills that he has acquired from being a religion major at GW. He says, “I am looking forward to serving my local community as a legal counselor, hoping that I will be able to give back a portion of what I have been graciously given!”

Sierra graduated in December 2012 with double BAs in Philosophy and Religious Studies. She says she has spent the past several months as a journalist, writing for anyone who will pay her and sometimes for people who don't. She started an editorial fellowship at Green America in May and hopes that it will open some doors into the field of environmental journalism. Sierra says, “It seems silly to accept an award from the GW religion department for excellence in the field, when without their enthusiasm, extensive knowledge, patience and dedication to their students, there likely would have been no enthusiasm to begin with.” She would like to offer her sincerest thanks to all her wonderful professors here at GW and also to those who donated to the Harry Yeide prize. As an aspiring journalist and satirist, the critical thinking skills and interdisciplinary nature imparted during her time at the university could not be more relevant.



A special “thank you” to our donors who funded this prize. The department continues to welcome contributions to this fund in recognition of Harry's scholarship, leadership, and friendship. If you would like to preserve Harry's presence in our department, please see the last page of this newsletter for how to contribute.

Special Thanks

We thank the following people for their contributions and support during the 2012-2013 academic year (July 1, 2012-June 30, 2013)

Mr. Martin Harry Aurand, MA '81

Mr. Matthew Oliver Dhaiti, BA '13

Dr. Paul Brooks Duff

Dr. Henry J. Ferry, BA '60

Ms. Ann O. Cannon Finch, BA '09

Ms. Christina Angelica Ravelo, BA '13

Mrs. Barbara G. Selzer, BA '75

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

Mrs. Carolyn Hetzer Zuttel, BA '78



Update on Balaji Hebbar, Professorial Lecturer

On May 14th 2013, Professor Hebbar was awarded the D.Litt. degree in Pretoria by the University of South Africa. It was the result of an eight year research on the theories of the French Indo-European studies Sorbonne savant Georges Dumezil (1898-1986) and the University of Chicago based American Indologist Wendy Doniger (1940-) as applied to the Hindu Epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The title of this 800-page dissertation was *Deciphering Patterns of Triadism in the Hindu Epics*. The dissertation was adjudged by a team of international scholars who had to unanimously agree that the work was a significant contribution to the field. Professor Hebbar already has a Ph.D. from the University of Utrecht (Netherlands).

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2013 GRADUATES!

- Matthew DeGioia
- Danielle H. Goldberg
- Claire E. Kozik
- Yael D. Lukin
- Harrison J. Meyers
- Alisha L. Murdock
- Christina A. Ravelo
- Sierra M. Schellenberg
- Andrew J. Silva
- Rebecca S. Vossmeier
- Julia M. Wheeler
- Kristel R. Yoneda



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

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 Washington, DC 20052 religion@gwu.edu
 On the web: www.gwu.edu/~religion

For alumni updates and address changes, please visit:

<http://alumni.gwu.edu/connect/update/index.html>



Religion Department “graduates”: Graduating students Danielle Goldberg, Julia Wheeler, and Alisha Murdock, with retiring faculty member Dewey Wallace

MA Program in Islam and Hinduism

MA thesis (in progress)

Nariman Aavani’s MA thesis explores the complexities of a theory of knowledge that has long been debated in Islamic philosophical circles: the relationship between the knower and the known. Looking through the lens of the writings of three Persian philosophers who succeeded the famous 17th century philosopher and theologian, Mulla Sadra (d. 1640), namely, Mullā Hādī Sabziwārī, Sayyid Abū’l-Ḥasan Rafī‘ī Qazwīnī, and Ḥasan Ḥasanzādah Āmulī, Mr. Aavani works out a taxonomy of the most significant approaches to the theory of knowledge. With an emphasis on investigating these philosophers’ treatment of the unity of three components of the equation of knower and known: 1) intellect, 2) agent of intellection, and 3) the intelligible (object), he situates his work as both textual analysis (in the vein of the history of ideas) and as investigation of the ways in which the Islamic philosophical tradition has continued to thrive, and retain its relevance in Iran to the present. Finally, Mr. Aavani’s work emphasizes the significance of these discussions for understanding the ways in which we, as scholars and other interested parties, understand and articulate the history of Islamic philosophy.

**Theta Alpha Kappa
 Congratulations to our 2013
 Inductees!**

- Alexandra Blackwell
- Jacob Bressman
- Sydney Carnevale
- Joshua Grace
- Ryan Heaney
- Krista Mancini
- Danielle Mazur
- Jill Reavis
- Christina Ravelo
- Leana Thorn



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Gifts to the Department of Religion allow us to provide support for faculty and student research and academic travel, graduate student fellowships, and student enrichment activities, including guest speakers, visiting faculty, and symposia. Each gift, no matter how large or small, makes a positive impact on our educational mission and furthers our standing as one of the nation's top liberal arts colleges at one of the world's preeminent universities.

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Donations for the MA program in Islam should be designated “Religion Department-MA Islam” in the memo line

Thank you for your support!

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