A Note from the Chair
Rob Eisen

We have had another good year in the Religion Department at GW. The most significant news is that we have launched an MA program in Islamic Studies that has gotten off to a very good start. For many years we have offered an MA degree in the joint study of Hinduism and Islam. That program will continue as a track within the new program which is focused on Islamic Studies. The change was made in order to accommodate the high degree of interest among students who want to study Islam as their exclusive focus. Prof. Mohammad Faghfoory serves as director of this program. This past year, five students enrolled in the new program, an excellent number considering that we began advertising it a few short months before the beginning of the school year. We would welcome more students, so if you know of anyone interested in studying Islam on the MA level, please send them our way.

Jon Wood has completed his first year with us as a new faculty member in our department. Jon is our specialist in post-biblical Christianity, replacing Dewey Wallace who retired a year ago. Jon seems to have done very well in his first year. Student reviews have been quite enthusiastic.

Another bit of good news is that Christopher Rollston has been hired by the Department of Classics and Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, and will be teaching courses for us in Hebrew Bible. Rollston is a distinguished scholar of the ancient Near East, specializing in Hebrew Bible, Old Testament Apocrypha, Northwest Semitic literature, epigraphy and paleography.

We owe deep gratitude to donors who have generously supported our program. Two sizeable gifts are worthy of mention. One came from Penny O’Callaghan, whose son graduated as a Religion major in the spring and won the Harry Yeide Book Prize. Her gift will support faculty research and improvements to our building (which are desperately needed). The other gift came from our very own Mohammad Faghfoory who has provided funds to support student scholarships in the new MA program in Islamic Studies.

Information on all these developments and more can be found in this newsletter. Check out the piece written by Earl McClane, an alumnus of our department who studied at GW in the late 1950s and wrote to tell us how much his education in our department meant to him. We are especially pleased by the wonderful responses we got from alumni following our request that they send in information about what they are up to for a new section of our newsletter devoted to alumni updates. If you haven’t gotten around to sending in something, we will be asking for updates again in the coming year for the next newsletter. We would love to hear from you.

As always, your help is appreciated to support our endeavors. I am always available to discuss such matters, if you wish, at 202-994-6327, or email at eisen@gwu.edu.

Sincerely,
Robert Eisen
Chair, Department of Religion
Book Notice
April 2014 saw the publication of *Shifting Patterns of Worldview of Srisailam in South India* by Professorial Lecturer Prabhavati Reddy. Routledge, the publisher of the work, describes it as follows:

“In recent years, changes in religious studies in general and the study of Hinduism in particular have drawn more scholarly attention to other forms of the Hindu faith that are concretely embodied in temples, icons, artworks, rituals, and pilgrimage practices. This book analyses the phenomenon of pilgrimage as a religious practice and experience and examines Shri Shailam, a renowned south Indian pilgrimage site of Shiva and Goddess Durga. In doing so, it investigates two dimensions: the worldview of a place that is of utmost sanctity for Hindu pilgrims and its historical evolution from medieval to modern times.

Reddy blends religion, anthropology, art history and politics into one interdisciplinary exploration of how Shri Shailam became the epicentre for Shaivism. Through this approach, the book examines Shri Shailam’s influence on pan-Indian religious practices; the amalgamation of Brahanical and regional traditions; and the intersection of the ideological and the civic worlds with respect to the management of pilgrimage centre in modern times.

This book is the first thorough study of Shri Shailam and brings together phenomenological and historical study to provide a comprehensive understanding of both the religious dimension and the historical development of the social organization of the pilgrimage place. As such, it will be of interest to students of Hinduism, Pilgrimage and South Asian Studies.”

Peace Studies Update

The Peace Studies Program continued its successful growth through 2013-14. In addition to graduating our first Peace Studies major (Anthony Sulva), the Program graduated seven Peace Studies minors (Brooks Boron, Anthony Bucci, Jaclyn Culler, Carolina Epperlein Ponzeto, Margaret Malloy, Tyler Miranda, Victoria Steven). Our graduates will be moving on to exciting ventures including Teach for America; graduate programs in politics, business and law; and positions at various NGOs and businesses around the country. Peace Studies courses continue to be extremely popular among GW students. With all four Intro courses filled to capacity (with long waiting lists), we look forward to welcoming even more majors and minors in the years to come. A special thank you to Alexandra Carroll, an incredibly popular and dynamic teacher, who has taught three sections of the Intro course to meet the high demand.

The Peace Studies Program received its first ever major gift from student Mac Kibum Lee and his family. This generous gift will be utilized to enhance student programming. Such contributions attest to the vitality and importance of Peace Studies.

Finally, be sure to check out the Peace Studies website. We now have a Twitter feed, in addition to a Facebook page, so that students, faculty and other interested persons and organizations can stay abreast of new developments in the Peace Studies program.
Update from our Newest Faculty Member, Jon Wood

Since joining the GW community in August 2013, I have taught three courses—Ancient Christianity, Medieval Faith and Symbolism, and Apocalypse and Social Change. Students enlivened each class with their intellectual aptitude, energy and engagement. During the fall semester, I further enjoyed the opportunity to mentor an impressive student’s capstone thesis project—a work whose creative and insightful analysis contributed to lively conversations about religion in current political discourse. This spring, I benefitted from an extensive program of pedagogical training through the Faculty Learning Community for Junior Faculty (FLC-Jr). Numerous weekends and weekday sessions presented a broad spectrum of both high-tech and low-tech techniques for encouraging and sustaining active learning among students. (Thanks to my Medieval Faith and Symbolism class for being superb on my particular observation-day!)

As for research, I look forward to a productive summer. My ongoing book project explores the establishment of ‘priestly’ class in the Protestant state of 16th century Zurich. It is a topic that involves a variety of printed and public as well as handwritten private sources, and it is all made especially lively by the ways in which ‘priestliness’ remained essential even though the term itself was officially banned as a designation of Protestant clergy. The story entails a good bit of apocalypticism, too—and so it has that perennial piquancy going for it! A peer-reviewed chapter of my work along these lines just came out in the volume, Following Zwingli: Applying the Past in Reformation Zurich, published by Ashgate in the series, St Andrews Studies in Reformation History. (In that same volume, I am also the translator of the chapter by my Swiss colleague, Urs Leu, regarding 16th century editions of the Latin poet Martial.)

Moving forward, I am eager to expand my service to the Religion Department, Columbian College, the university and the community at large. The requirements of transition during this past year necessarily curtailed some of those opportunities. Even so, I was enormously proud to participate in both the opening Convocation and the concluding Celebration. Between those bookends, I also enjoyed a fun conversation at the Voice of America studio on the topic of the development of “Christmas” (http://www.voanews.com/media/video/on-the-line/1818344.html?z=0&zp=1). I have also recently joined a regional consortium of academics (including faculty based at GW and Georgetown) dedicated to providing adult education seminars on topics of the history, theology and modern cultural complexity of Christian tradition.

Working in the very office where the renowned Dewey Wallace achieved so much for GW (and for the world!) would surely inspire anyone. I am indeed inspired, and, above all, grateful to have joined this Department of Religion in its ongoing excellence of collegiality, teaching, research and service.

MA in Islam and Hinduism

MA thesis from Anthony Arcangeli

The Sixth Shiite Imām –J’afar al-Sādiq (d. 765 AD) among many other fields of knowledge, such as law, theology, natural philosophy and hermetic sciences, elucidated many spiritual teachings in his lifetime. He is one of the most vital and influential thinkers of the early centuries of Islam, and as such, his teachings and practices should be given proper attention. These spiritual teachings can be divided into those concerning doctrine and theory, those concerning spiritual method and its practice and those concerning virtues, which are the fruit of realized doctrine and method. Mostly based on primary sources, this study aims to initiate a series of research endeavors on early Shiite spirituality and wisdom. An interpretation of some of the spiritual teachings of Imām Sādiq is presented as representing a complete Imāmī spiritual system, containing principles and applications in order for disciples and seekers to attain sincere purity, certainty and realization of Truth.

MA in Islamic Studies update

The new MA program admitted five students for the first year. In addition to directing the program Professor Faghfoory introduced a new graduate course on Qur’an and Hadith.

The program invited a famous Iranian artist and calligrapher, Dr. Hamid Reza Ghelichkhani, who gave a presentation to students and community members on the principles of Islamic art of calligraphy.
Faculty Updates

Eyal Aviv was featured in Rainbow Rider, a documentary about one of China’s most renowned contemporary Buddhist teachers, Khenpo Sodargye, and his dialogue with Western intellectuals. He was also interviewed for PBS’s Religion & Ethics News Weekly about the recent religious and ethnic tensions in Burma. His article “Ouyang Jingwu: From Yogācāra Scholasticism to Soteriology,” appeared in a book titled Transforming Consciousness: Yogācāra Thought in Modern China and was published by Oxford University Press in April. Eyal wrote an article on the resurgence of Buddhist logic in modern China and presented it at a conference in Germany. In November, he also presented a paper about the revival of Buddhism in early 20th century China in the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Baltimore. He is currently writing a paper about the reception in modern China of the Ālambanaparīksā, a 5th century Indian Buddhist text about epistemology. He presented this paper at a conference in Taiwan this July. Finally, Eyal received a travel grant from the Sigur Center and will conduct research in China this summer.

Paul Duff participated in a conference in Lesbos in September on Sacred Meals in Antiquity. It will result in a three volume publication that will include his essay on the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11. He also gave a paper at the annual Society of Biblical Literature Meeting in Baltimore in November on the idea of covenants in Paul. He argued that Paul conceived of two covenants, the original irrevocable covenant with Israel (which he calls the ancient covenant in 2 Cor 3:14) and the new covenant (mentioned in 2 Cor 3:6) that was aimed at the gentiles. Paul did not conceive of the new covenant as replacing the original but rather existing side-by-side with it. In May 2014, Professor Duff participated in a panel discussion on the music of the contemporary Estonian composer Arvo Pärt of both sacred and secular music. Also on the program were three contemporary composers (including Douglas Boyce, chair of GW Music Dept) and an orthodox theologian from St Vladimir's Seminary in N.Y. He is currently working on a book on the Moses imagery in Paul, a book on early Christianity and pagan society in the first century, and an article on an interesting series of scenes in Revelation 10-11.

Rob Eisen continues to work on the subject of peace and violence in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. He is currently working on a book on how war is treated in Jewish law and hopes to finish it by the end of the summer of 2015. He presented a piece of his research on this topic at the World Congress of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem last summer in a talk entitled, “Discretionary War in Contemporary Jewish Law.” He gave a number of presentations this past year on themes related to his broader research interests, including “Relations Between the West and the Islamic World: The Role of Religion,” a keynote address delivered to a delegation of visiting Egyptian educators sponsored by the U.S. State Department; “The Role of Religion in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” delivered at the annual conference of the Political Studies Organization, in Washington, D.C. He also taught a seminar on “Historical Methods in Religious Studies in Western Academia,” to a group of Saudi Arabian scholars of religion visiting GW.

Mohammad Faghfoory presented a paper at a conference at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis on April 24-25 on “The Shi‘i Clergy and Current State of Political Condition in the Shi‘a World,” and another paper in the Sacred Web conference in Vancouver (April 26-28) on “A Response to the Muslim Critique of Transcendent Unity of Religions.” Both papers will be published soon. He also published the following items: Al-Ghazzali, Abu Hamdi, Path of Worshippers to the Paradise of the Lord of the Worlds, translated, annotated and introduced. Lanham, Maryland, University Press of America; a monograph on “Ethics of War and Peace in Shi‘ite Islam” in Ethics of War and Peace in World Religions, Cambridge University Press, May 2014; “Shi‘a Spirituality” in International Journal of Shi‘a Studies, London, (forthcoming); and “Clergy-State Relations in Iran: 1979-Present” in Governance in Islam, International Institute of Islamic Thought, Hernon, Virginia (in press).

Alf Hiltebeitel received a $10,000 award from the GW University Facilitating Fund for research on a book tentatively titled The Sigmund Freud-Girindrashekhar Bose Correspondence, 1920-1937. Uncanny Domesticities. Bose was India’s first psychoanalyst. The award will cover a visit to the Freud Archives in London, a paper given at an August conference in Dubrovnik, and a visit to the Freud Museum in Vienna. This past year, Alf published Part 2 of “The Mahābhārata and the Stories Some People Tell about It,” Journal of South Asian Studies 1,2 (2012), 2-26; 2,1 (2013): 1-13.2013. He has six articles in press, including “Introducing the Mahābhārata,” Religious Studies Review, an invited article-length review of five recent books and one monograph-length article on the theme of the title.
**Xiaofei Kang** was on sabbatical this academic year. She taught one course on the University Honors Program’s Faculty Fellowship in the fall and worked with a collaborator on finishing a manuscript entitled, *Contesting the Yellow Dragon: Religion, Ethnicity and the State in the Sino-Tibetan Borderlands, 1379-2009*. She has also spent much of the sabbatical year researching and writing for a new book project on gender, religion and 20th century Communist propaganda. She has presented some of the research findings at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion and the American Historical Associations (AHA) and at Loyola Marymount University at Los Angeles and Shandong University in China. In November, she co-organized a workshop on "Reading Gender in Chinese Religious Texts,” which included international scholars from North America, Europe and East Asia and discussed primary texts on gender Chinese religion. A co-edited book, *Gendering Chinese Religion: Subject, Identity and Body* is forthcoming from SUNY Press.

**Derek Malone-France** continued to serve as Executive Director of GW's University Writing Program, as well as Chair of GW's Academy of Distinguished Teachers. He also co-founded and now serves as Co-Director of GW's French Embassy Center of Excellence. Outside of GW, Derek continued to serve on the advisory council for the Baruch Blumberg Chair in Astrobiology at NASA and the Library of Congress, and he and fellow council member, John Baross (University of Washington) gave a presentation on "Process Philosophy and Astrobiology" at the American Philosophical Association's Pacific Division annual meeting in San Diego in April. Derek also continued to chair a GW university seminar on "Designing Writing Curricula for Student Veterans," and he chaired a session titled "Leading from the Front — Strategies for Working with Student Veterans" at the annual meeting of the Association of Writing Programs in Seattle in February.

**Seyyed Hossein Nasr** delivered the keynote address at the Sacred Web Conference in honor of his 80th birthday. He also delivered the commencement address at Zaytuna College. He gave two lectures at the RIS Convention, a lecture at ISNA Convention, a lecture at Davidson College (“Islam and the Modern World”), two lectures at Louisville (“Sacred Silence in Sufism and the Vedanta” and “Sacred Silence: Pathway to Compassion”), a lecture at the Michigan State University (“Islam and Nature”) and a lecture at Elmhurst College (“The Future and Promise of Interfaith Dialogue”). He completed the fifth and final volume of *Anthology of Philosophy in Persia* and the *Study Quran*, both to appear during the coming year. He published two new books in Persian, as well as a translation of *Three Muslim Sages* in Russian and a translation of *Three Muslim Sages* and *Sadr al Din Shirazi* into Chinese. He was also the external thesis advisor for four PhD theses in the United Kingdom and Iran.

**Irene Oh** has tremendously enjoyed returning to the classroom after maternity leave and sabbatical. She taught Intro to Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution, as well as the Peace Studies Capstone in the fall; and in the spring, she taught Ethics and the World Religions. She wrote an article for an anthology on Asian American Christian Ethics (Baylor University Press) on labor and education, and she co-authored a National Endowment of the Humanities Summer Institute grant proposal (“American Muslims, American Journeys”). This summer, she will be teaching a course on Peace Studies to Cypriot high school students for the Fulbright Program.

**Kelly Pemberton** happily handed over the directorship of the new MA program to Professor Mohammad Faghoory. One of the program’s required courses is Professor Pemberton’s new graduate seminar, “Islamic Historiographies.” Professor Pemberton delivered a paper, titled “Religion, Rights, and Reform: A Panel Discussion on Women's Political Participation in the Middle East and North Africa,” in September at a panel sponsored by Sigma Iota Rho, GW’s Honors Society for International Affairs. Professor Pemberton was recently awarded a CCAS Enhanced Faculty Travel Award and a Global Women’s Institute Research Fellowship. The first will help fund her trip to Jakarta, Indonesia, this summer, where she will present a paper on “Southeast Asian Islam: Legacy and New Interpretation.” The second award will support a paper for a larger book project. One of the most fulfilling assignments she worked on this year was in partnership with GW’s Global Women’s Institute and the Malala Fund, for a curriculum project based on the autobiography of the Pakistani activist and 2014 Children’s Nobel Prize nominee Malala Yousafzai. Professor Pemberton’s piece, “Religion and Religious Extremism,” will be available on the project's website this fall. Last but not least, after an unexpected hiatus from blogging for most of the academic year, her blog (http://womenandgenderinislam.com/) is back in action.

**Bob Tuttle**, whose primary appointment is in the law school, taught “Religion and American Constitutional Law” in the Religion Department’s fall 2013 curriculum. His other fall and spring semester courses were in the law school, where he teaches ethics and property law. With Professor **Ira C. Lupu**, Bob co-authored a book, *Secular Government, Religious People*, which will be published by Eerdmans in August, 2014. He and Professor Lupu delivered the department’s annual Berz Lecture. In addition to his teaching and writing, Bob continues to serve as legal counsel for the Washington D.C. Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and as a consultant to Lutheran Services in America.
Class Notes
Updates from Religion Department Alumni

Since graduating from GW, Kenny Ames, BA ’99, has worked for Reps. Steny Hoyer and Barney Frank, CQ Roll Call and Fireside21. Recently, he graduated summa cum laude with an MA in Government with a concentration in political communications from Johns Hopkins University. His thesis, Social Media #FTW!: The Influence of Social Media on American Politics, passed with honors and won the William F. Clinger, Jr. Award for outstanding thesis in institutional or representative government.

Nanci (Hollander) Caplan, BA ’03 went on to get an EdM in Counseling Psychology from Columbia University and an EdS in Education Administration from National Louis University and is a school counselor in Chicago, Ill. She married fellow GW graduate Ben Caplan, BBA ’04, and has a two-year-old daughter, Dani Maya.

Sarah Casewit, BA ’11, spent a year travelling around South East Asia, Europe and South America after graduation, visiting as many houses of worship as possible. Today, she is a luxury travel specialist in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Julie DeMarco, BA ’10, completed a year of service with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps at Verbum Dei High School in South Los Angeles. She currently teaches social justice to juniors at Archbishop Carroll High School in northeast D.C. She is also the community service coordinator and directed a Thanksgiving food drive that collected over 36,000 pounds of food for needy D.C. families last November.

Emily Filler, BA’03, recently returned from a year at Cambridge University, and is now starting a job as a visiting assistant professor of Judaism at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minn. She is also co-chair of the Scriptural/Contextual Ethics Group at the American Academy of Religion, and is an associate editor of the new Journal of Jewish Ethics (coming in 2015!). She is finishing a PhD in Jewish Studies at the University of Virginia; her dissertation is entitled “A Stubborn and Rebellion Bible: Modern Jewish scripture, troubling texts, and the recovery of rabbinic hermeneutics.”

Keila Franks, BA’14, is working in Washington, D.C., as a pro bono coordinator in the Immigrant Children's Legal Program at the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants. In January 2015, she will begin a Fulbright teaching fellowship in Malaysia.

Sarah Gillespie, BA ’06, graduated with a Master of Divinity from Andover Newton Theological School in May 2014. Currently living with her husband in Rochester, N.Y., she is finishing her preparations for ordination as a Unitarian Universalist minister. She hopes to work as a chaplain invested in both interfaith and social justice work.

Matt Goldberg, BA’96, currently lives in Louisville, Ky., where he is the Director of Community Relations for the Jewish Federation of Louisville. Part of his job is to maintain and expand relationships with different faith groups in Kentucky, as he sits on several different interfaith councils and committees.

Rachel Hollander, BA’07, got her M.S. Ed. in Jewish Education from the University of Pennsylvania. Rachel lives in Philadelphia and is the Associate Director of University of Pennsylvania Hillel.

Eiman Jahangir, BA’01, became a cardiologist and also received a Master's in Public Health. He currently lives in New Orleans and works at Ochsner Medical Center. He is also on faculty as a senior lecturer in cardiology and medicine at the Ochsner Clinical School, University of Queensland School of Medicine. He continues to take care of patients while pursuing research in epidemiology.

Kendrick Kuo, BA’11, is currently pursuing an MA in International Affairs and International Economics at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. Come December, he will apply for PhD programs in political science with the intention of becoming a PhD candidate in 2015.

Stephanie (Rozsa) Larkins, BA’05, co-founded an international development nonprofit, completed service in Peace Corps El Salvador, received her Master's of Public Administration from the University of Pennsylvania, and worked as Legislative Director for a Philadelphia City Councilman. She is now working as a Fiscal Policy Analyst in the office of Governor Deval Patrick of Massachusetts.
Jared MacDonald, BA ’13, currently lives in Seoul, where he is interning for Daily NK newspaper through the summer. In the fall, he will be starting his Master's in International Relations at Johns Hopkins-SAIS.

Charles O’Connor IV, BA ’13, is currently employed at the George Washington University and began his new position in the professional psychology program on July 14. He is still engaged with the study of religion through personal inquiry and reading. He may end up studying religion, philosophy and related topics in graduate school in the future. He says he thinks fondly of all the classes he has taken and the many professors who he maintains friendships and correspondences with.

Gregory Vaughn Palmer, BA ’76, is currently the United Methodist Bishop of the Ohio West Area.

Tiffany Purcell Pellathy, BA ’94, is a full-time graduate nursing faculty and Interim Program Director for the Adult Gerontology-Acute Care Nurse Practitioner Program at Georgetown University School of Nursing and Health Studies.

Ian Sullivan, BA ’08, has continued his study of Chinese language and traditions in Taipei, Beijing, and Honolulu. He is currently living with his wife in Kyoto and writing his dissertation on Chinese and feminist ethics for the Department of Philosophy at the University of Hawaii.

Rachael Whitley, BA ’08, completed an MA in Religion (Jewish Studies) at Vanderbilt University in 2011 and is currently in medical school at Marshall University Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine in Huntington, W.V. She intends to practice primary care upon graduation.

Jake Wolf, BA ’11, is currently at Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, pursuing his Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree. He hopes to practice small animal emergency medicine following graduation in 2017.

Some Memories of a Religion Major in the Late 1950’s
By Earl McLane, BA ’55

I graduated from a very small high school in South Carolina in 1950. One day, a large black Ford came down our sand-bed driveway with an imposing man in a business suit who wondered if I was interested in working for the FBI. I left home and began work at the Identification Division in Washington, living in the basement of my Uncle Harold on Maryland Ave. In the spring of 1951, I started part-time study at GW—taking a course in English and one in accounting. (At that time, in order to be an agent, one either had to have a law degree or be a CPA.) Realizing the time it would take to obtain a degree part-time, I resigned my job and started full-time at GW in the fall of ’51—still as a possible accounting major. Having received what I thought was a “call” to the ministry, I changed my major and signed up for New Testament with Dr. Folkemer and Greek Philosophy with Dr. Rose. I was “hooked.” Dr. Folkemer was an incredible teacher and a wonderful advisor for me. A particular high-light of my time at GW was the course in History of Religions. We used the first edition of Noss’s History of Religions (now in its 13th edition.) We also used Ballou’s Bible of the World, without a doubt the thickest book I ever owned. Meanwhile, I became involved in the Baptist Student Union. Our leader, Howard Rees, met with a small group of students—of various Christian denominations—each Thursday in “Building O”, the home of the Religion Department. Rees encouraged us to read not only Baptist, but Quaker literature and even Buber’s I-Thou. Wednesday noon was chapel at a nearby Presbyterian Church, with speakers arranged by Dr. Folkemer.

My wife-to-be, whom I had met in church, also started attending GW. We were both commuting students—Building O and Stuckey’s (the corner drug store) became our home away from home. After a while, we started commuting together—and a relationship began which has now been going on for 58 years.

With Dr. Folkemer as my “model,” I came to see my future calling to be that of a “college teacher.” Fortunately, he nominated me for a Danforth Fellowship, and I was able to go on for graduate study at Hopkins and Yale. After a thesis on Kierkegaard and five wonderful years at Washburn Univ. in Topeka, we wound up at William & Mary. Teaching has been a wonderful, fulfilling career for me—as it has also been for my wife. (She currently teaches GED in the local jail and I continue teaching in the Christopher Wren Association—a “life-long” learning program associated with W&M.)

I’m sure my current understanding of “religion”—historical, liberal, pluralistic, some would say too “humanistic,” and a sufferer of CRIS (“Conflicted Religious Identity Syndrome”), though still an “Alliance of Baptists” ‘wanting to be Christian’--owes much to my undergraduate study of religion at GW.
David and Sherry Berz Lecture, Spring 2014

In March, law professors Bob Tuttle and Ira C. “Chip” Lupu delivered this year’s annual Berz lecture. Their lecture had two parts. Bob, who is the Berz Research Professor of Law and Religion, provided an overview of their co-authored book Secular Government, Religious People, which will be published by Eerdmans in August, 2014. As Bob explained, the book offers an approach to the U.S. Constitution’s Religion Clauses that is markedly different from the one taken by most scholars and lawyers in the field. Instead of focusing on individual rights, the book contends that the Religion Clauses—and particularly the non-establishment clause—should be seen as a structural constraint on government’s jurisdiction. The government should not claim religious authority for itself or delegate state authority to religious bodies. In addition, the government must be indifferent to the religious welfare of its citizens—the state has no interest in whether people are religious or not; its only interests must be secular. Bob then briefly outlined how this jurisdictional approach would apply to deeply contested matters, such as religion in public schools and public funding of religious activities.

Chip then turned to Sebelius v. Hobby Lobby, the contraceptive mandate case that had been argued in the Supreme Court the day before the lecture. He first explained both the contraceptive mandate and the religious liberty statute, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), that is at the heart of the case. The statute allows plaintiffs to assert that a government rule or act has imposed a “substantial burden” on their religious exercise. If they succeed, the government must show that it cannot exempt the plaintiffs from the burden because doing so would threaten public interests of the highest order. Chip then explained how the jurisdictional approach, outlined in their book, would apply to the case. In particular, he explored the constitutional difficulty courts face when they are required (as RFRA does) to determine whether a particular law imposes a significant religious burden on a plaintiff. If government cannot answer religious questions, then it certainly cannot decide for plaintiffs whether a particular law violates the requirements of their faith. But if courts cannot make that determination, then religious plaintiffs are likely to prevail, and such an outcome leads to serious questions of why religion should be categorically favored over other, non-religious interests. The lecturers then enjoyed a robust discussion period with the audience.

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

Abbie Ziffren Memorial Lecture, Fall 2013

This lecture celebrates the life of Abbie Ziffren, who taught in the Religion Department in the late 1980s and early 1990s 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.

The 2013-14 Ziffren Lecture was given by Charles Villa-Vicencio, former National Research Director for the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission and currently visiting research fellow at Georgetown’s Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs. His engaging lecture, "Ingredients of Peace-Building: Initiatives in the Americas, Eastern Europe and Africa," analyzed the common elements of peace movements and offered insights into the successes and failures of attempts to establish democracies around the globe. The lively discussion was followed by a congenial meal with members of the Religion Department at Eli’s Restaurant.
Yeide Prize, 2014

This year, the department selected Ben O’Callaghan for the Harry Yeide Prize for Excellence in the Field of Religious Studies.

Ben, who goes by Trey, says, “I decided to major in religion after taking Rabbinic Judaism with Professor Eisen. The class lead me to think objectively about religion outside of my own personal tradition and lead me to mature as a scholar.

I especially enjoyed writing my senior capstone paper about Averroes' view of intellect, conjunction and immortality. It was a difficult paper to write, but extremely rewarding upon completion.

I plan on attending Duke Law School in August. I am confident that the critical thinking and writing skills I learned while studying religion at GW will serve me well at Duke and throughout the rest of my life. I am indebted to the all the professors in the department for assisting me during my four years, and I am honored to have been chosen for the Harry Yeide Prize.”

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

The Department of Religion would like to gratefully acknowledge the following generous donors who made a gift to the program from July 1, 2013–June 30, 2014.

Paul Brooks Duff**
Mohammad Faghfoory**
Jane K. Labre, CERT ’10
Jay Labre, MS ’08
Kibum Lee*
Penny O’Callaghan+
Santina Polky, BA ’11
Christina Angelica Ravelo, BA ’13
Kendall Leigh Shaw, BA ’08
Anthony Edward Sulva*
Michele B. Wahba, BA ’99
Peter R. Wahba, BA ’99, MD ’03
Sara Winters, BA ’11
Heather M. Young, BA ’94, MA ’96

Thank you for your support!

* Student
** Faculty/Staff
+Parent
Congratulations to our 2014 Graduates!

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Fatima Alam
Michael L. Allis
Anthony Arcangeli
Alix M. Arnaud
Olivia M. Bee
Brooks W. Boron
Alexandra H. Blackwell
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Victoria J. Steven
Anthony E. Sulva
Lane I. Vines
Hannah M. Wendling

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Theta Alpha Kappa

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Michael Allis
Anthony Arcangeli
Olivia Bee
Kaitlin Denney
Keila Franks
Ashley McKibbin
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