



Above, Yasmin, Benazir, and Farzana Assadzada singing medieval Persian religious poetry in traditional style for use in podcasts. The sisters are members of Shafique Virani's collaborative research team - see story on page 7.

## From the Chair John Kloppenborg

2011-2012 has been an exceptionally strong year in the Department for the Study of Religion. Excellence in scholarship and in teaching attracted major awards: In the Spring, Prof. David Novak was elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, the most prestigious academic society in Canada. Two of our faculty, Frances Garrett and Amira Mittermaier won year-long fellowships in the Jackman Humanities Institute, an award that gives the holder a year away from teaching, an office in perhaps the best real estate at the U of T, and brilliant conversations and collaborations with other U of T scholars and graduate and undergraduate students, all thinking about the topic of

"Food." Speaking of Amira... her book, *Dreams that Matter: Egyptian Landscapes of the Imagination*, has now garnered no fewer than four prizes and awards, including the 2012 Clifford Geertz Prize in the Anthropology of Religion. Already hard at work on her second project, Amira has just returned from a semester away in Cairo where she was working on Islamic charities. In the wake of the Arab Spring and just after Ramadan, it is difficult to think of a more opportune time to be on the ground, researching charitable practices.

And speaking of Frances, this year the University's Northrop Frye Award for the faculty member who exemplified the integration of research and teaching was

awarded to Frances. The citation in the ceremony, on April 10, describes Frances as an "exceptional" and "amazing instructor" who actively engages students in her research projects, and who has been instrumental in "opening up opportunities for research that would not have been imagined possible for undergraduates."

More awards and honors: Simon Coleman was awarded the 2012 Emerald Literati Network Award for Excellence for his chapter "Prosperity Unbound?" and was named as one of Canada's most influential scholars of religion. And in October 2011, I myself was awarded a Doctor of Arts, *honoris causa*, by my *alma mater*, the University of Lethbridge.

# From the Graduate Director

## Jennifer A. Harris

Thursdays are busy days in the Department. Once a month, our Pedagogy Luncheon gathered graduate students and faculty to discuss issues in teaching. In 2011-12, our topics included: “How to Teach Better Reading and Writing Skills,” a syllabus-writing workshop, faculty/TA collaboration in the classroom, some hidden treasures in the Blackboard courseware, innovative pedagogy, and “Teaching Violence and Religion in the Classroom.” Each event has been well attended and responses to the material have been positive.

This year, we also hosted ten Thursday afternoon graduate colloquia, at which doctoral candidates discussed their work-in-progress. Congratulations to Paul Nahme, Paul York, Syed Adnan Hussain, Tim Langille, Nick Dion, Dianna Roberts-Zauderer, Brian Carwana, Erin Vearncombe, Simon Appoloni, and Dace Veinberga for your thoughtful and engaging presentations. Thanks go as well to the faculty respondents who participated in the colloquia: Ken Green, James DiCenso, Mohammed Fadel, Judith Newman, Marsha Hewitt, Jill Ross, Pamela Klassen (twice!), and Larry Schmidt.

The year was enhanced by many other events as well. In September, two of our graduate students, Arun Brahmhatt and Eric Steinschneider, coordinated and hosted a two-day international conference on South Asian Religions, in cooperation with UTM. The conference was well attended and all reports of its outcome were quite favourable. Great work, Eric and Arun!

In December, we were delighted to host Professor Amir Hussain, an alumnus of the DSR and current editor of the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, for an afternoon workshop for graduate students looking to publish. Amir’s presentation was lively and informative, and attracted students not only from the Department, but across the campus. Thank you, Amir!

In more bureaucratic matters, we continue to work towards creating a formal Professionalization Seminar requirement for doctoral students. This new requirement (to begin officially in 2013-14) will formalize a series of ad-hoc and informal workshops and presentations that already take place in the Department. This year, for example, we held workshops on writing scholarship applications, applying to our doctoral program, conference presentations, job-interview skills, and academic publishing.

We have also begun a multi-year review of our core “Method and Theory in the Study of Religion” courses (at the undergraduate, Master’s and PhD levels). Ours will be the first close look at these important courses since they were reviewed in 1993 by then-doctoral student Russell McCutcheon. The “MTSR” courses shape the identity of the Department in significant ways, so we are pleased to take some time to examine their form and function.

This year was also marked by the tragic death of our friend, colleague, and student, T. Nicholas Schonhoffer. Nicholas’s death has been a blow to us in the Department and we miss him greatly. We were able to gather as a community in early February to hold a memorial event. Over 100 people attended, many with warm memories of their friend and colleague. The Department has started a bursary to honour Nicholas (see page 23 for details) and the T. Nicholas Schonhoffer Library, a collection of Nicholas’s academic books, which was graciously donated to the Department by the Schonhoffer family, was officially opened on 24 April. We extend our deepest condolences to the Schonhoffer family.



From left to right, Amy Marie Fisher, Graduate Director Jennifer A. Harris, Professor Kyle Smith, Nigel Fernando, Amy Elizabeth Fisher, and Department Manager Irene Kao.

# GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS

**Simon Appolloni** received the Thomas and Beverley Simpson/OGS Ontario Graduate Scholarship. He taught RLG228 Religion, Ethics, Environment for the DSR and guest-lectured in PHL273 Environmental Philosophy, and HPS326 History of Science and Religion. He published “‘Repugnant,’ ‘Not Repugnant at All’: How the Respective Epistemic Attitudes of Georges Lemaître and Sir Arthur Eddington Influenced How Each Approached the Idea of a Beginning of the Universe,” in the *IBSU Scientific Journal* 5(1); and pending publication is his “Environmentalism as Religion: A Fruitful Concept?,” co-authored with Chris Hrynkow, **Sarah Kleeb**, and **André Maintenay**, for *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses*. He is also busy editing and co-writing a book with Prof. **Stephen Scharper** for Novalis Press, entitled *Falling in Love with Earth*. Appolloni was invited to participate in a pre-AAR “Colloquium on the Methodological Diversity within the Intersecting Fields of Ecology and Theology,” and he presented “Wondering about Wonder,” which investigates the nexus of religion and the natural sciences.

**Ian Brown** was awarded the President’s Distinguished Graduate Student Award from the University of Regina.

**Callie Callon**’s essay, “Secondary Characters furthering Characterization: the Depiction of Slaves in the Acts of Peter,” was accepted by the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, and her “*Adulscentes* and *Meretrices*: The Correlation between Squandered Property and Prostitutes in the Parable of the Prodigal Son,” was accepted by the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*. She presented “Magic, Miracle, and a Strategy of Demarcation in the Acts of Peter” at the Society of Biblical Literature’s annual meeting, and “The Unibrow that Never Was (?) and the Not-So-Many Faces of Paul: a Proposal to Give the Physical Description of Paul

a Makeover” at the Canadian Society of Biblical Literature.

**Chipamong Chowdhury** has four articles/reviews in press: “Monastic Migration and The Trans-Theravāda Buddhist Ritual Experiences in Toronto,” in *Journal of South Asian Diaspora*; Book Review of Rozenberg, *Renunciation and Power: The Quest for Sainthood in Contemporary Burma* in *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*; Book Review of Samuels, *Attracting the Heart: Social Relations and Aesthetics of Emotion in Sri Lankan Monastic Culture* in *Journal of Contemporary Buddhism*; and Book Review of Jerryson and Juergensmeyer (eds), *Buddhist Warfare*, in *Journal of Religion and Culture*. He presented a number of papers: “Bangladeshi Buddhist Dilemmas and their Diaspora in Toronto,” at the Eastern International Regional Meeting of the American Academy of Religion; “Neglected Saint: Arahant Sivali and Its Worships in Theravāda Buddhism,” at the U of California, Santa Barbara, “What Buddhism does for Politics/What Politics do for Buddhism?: The Role of Diasporic Monastic Protests for the Chittagong Hill Tracts (Bangladesh),” at the University of Toronto; and “Who Betrays Buddhism? Buddhist Monastic Politics and Sinhala Nationalism in Contemporary Sri Lanka,” at the Association for Asian Studies meeting.

**Yaniv Feller** has been awarded the Government of Ontario Trillium Scholarship and the Shier Family Award from the Centre for Jewish Studies. He presented two conference papers: “On the Makom: Places, Exile and Creation in the Work of Barbara Honigmann” at the international conference in Jerusalem Damals, Dann und Danach: Barbara Honigmann; and “‘Let a New Light Shine upon Zion’: Space Construction and the Jewish Prayer Book Reform in Germany” at the Graduate Conference in Jewish Studies at Carleton University. He also published a review of Lobel’s *The Quest for God and the Good* in the U of T’s *Journal of Jewish Thought*. During the

summer Yaniv will travel to Israel to participate in a summer school for Jewish Studies, organized by the Israeli Institute for Advanced Studies, the Hebrew U of Jerusalem and the U of Pennsylvania.

**Alex Green** delivered a paper, “Between Maimonides and Spinoza: Constructing an Ethics of War and Peace in the Jewish Tradition,” at the Society for Jewish Ethics Annual Meeting.

**Basit Kareem Iqbal** will receive his MA this summer, his thesis entitled “Chronopolitics of Allegory in Talal Asad’s Anthropology of Secularism.” He has presented “Islam and Theologies of Translation in(to) the Public Sphere” at McGill; “The Contested Simplicity of Asecular Revolution” at U of T; and “Tragedy and Talal Asad’s Anthropology of Secularism” at the AAR-Eastern meeting.

**Amy Marie Fisher, Nathalie LaCoste, Ryan Stoner** and **Madison Robins** presented a panel entitled “Cultural Memory and the Growth of Tradition in the Second Temple Period” at the Western Jewish Studies Association (a regional division of AJS) Annual Meeting in Oregon. Their papers, which discussed the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice, Ben Sira, 1 Enoch, and 2 Maccabees respectively, were part of a larger discussion of issues in Jewish Studies ranging from antiquity to Medieval Spain to contemporary Middle Eastern and North American politics.

**Rebekka King** has received a one-year postdoctoral fellowship at Emory as part of the Initiative in Religious Practices and Practical Theology.

**Richard Last** published “Communities That Write: Christ-Groups, Associations and Gospel Communities,” in *New Testament Studies* 58 (2); and he presented “Were there Officers in the Corinthian Christ-Group?” at the 2012 annual meeting of the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies.

**Bryan Levman** taught RLG 371HS Buddhist Thought and RLG 260Y1 Introduction to Sanskrit. He also



# Teaching with New Media, Collaboration and Community Engagement

By Syed Adnan Hussain, Ben Wood, and Frances Garrett

This year DSR faculty and students have experimented with a range of projects focused on engaging undergraduate students in original research in the classroom using a variety of new media, collaborative pedagogical approaches. Courses involved students in digital storytelling and oral histories, video and audio editing, collaborative textual analysis, and Javascript-enabled timeline and website creation. This story discusses five such courses taught by DSR faculty and students; also see the story on pg. 7 about Prof Shafique Virani's work in this area.

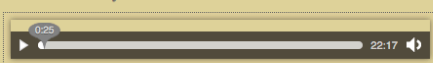
Digital storytelling represents something of a watershed in engaged pedagogy. The term, coined by Dana Atchley, originally served as a means of exploring the traditional role of the storyteller fused with video technologies. From its origins as a short first person video-narrative, digital storytelling now includes "interactive forms from hypertext, Web-based narratives combining image-sound-animation-video, the virtual cinema of narrative games or game like conceptual pieces, and other practices of using digital media tools" (McLellan, H., "Digital Storytelling in Higher Education," *Journal of Computing in Higher Education* 19:1 (2006)). In Fall 2011, Professors Ajay Rao and Ken Derry launched a pilot digital storytelling program under the auspices of UTM's Graduate Expansion Fund (GEF) and the Instructional Technology Innovation Fund (ITIF). Graduate student Syed Adnan Hussain and the professors developed two digital storytelling projects. The first, developed for an

Introduction to South Asian Religions course at UTM, involved a group of 40 students interviewing members of diasporic South Asian communities in the greater Toronto area about religious practice in the Canadian context.

The second project involved students in Ken Derry's Method and Theory in the History of Religion course. The latter course dealt primarily with methodological and theoretical approaches in the study of religion. However, as opposed to using a final paper as the primary means of evaluation, students were instructed in the use of digital technologies to develop a short digital story of no more than ten minutes in length. Their projects were to focus on conversations with local professors and graduate students on the methodologies they use in the study of religion. Students interviewed and filmed academics outside their 'comfort zones' (i.e. their offices), to develop critical questions about the scholars' recent academic works, and to encourage their interlocutors to openly discuss the challenges posed by methodological and theoretical approaches to the study of religion. The instructors hoped that having an opportunity to interview academics beyond the classroom would challenge the students' perceptions of venerable and unapproachable professors and take some of the mystique out of academic study. This also provided an opportunity for colleagues to explain their works—many of which are not intended for undergraduate consumption—to students interested in the academic study of religion. This approach proved a

## A Practitioner's Insight to the Buddhist SGI Tradition

An Oral History With Kate Greco



### Kate Greco: A Personal Oral History (October, 2011)

Through conducting individual oral histories of Buddhists living in Toronto, this group project aims to challenge the idea of "Buddhism", and religions in general as an inherent, linear, and monolithic entity. Our group the Salamander in turn wishes to analyze Soka Gakkai Buddhists in Canada with the same critical approach. Through our interviewee Kate Greco's personal accounts, we wish to contextualize religious practice and attempt to trace the significance of the Soka Gakkai tradition in Kate's life, and in the lives of Canadian adherents in general.

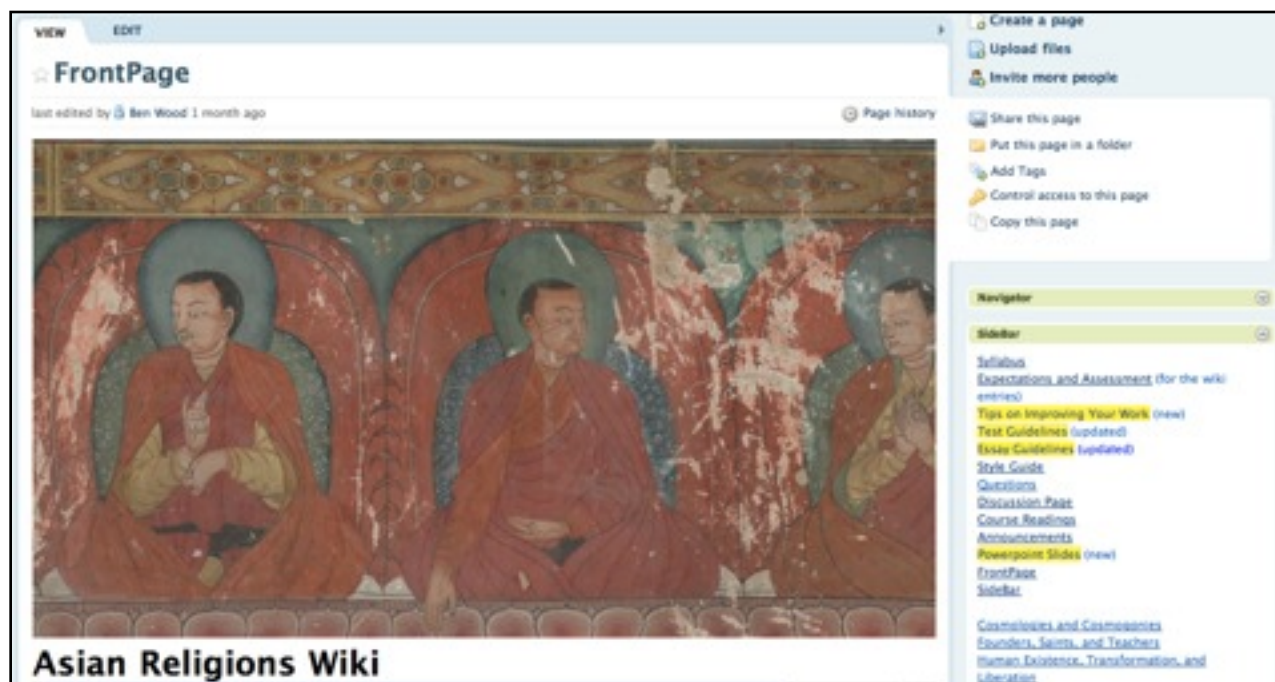
Having joined the Soka Gakkai International in the 1980s, our interviewee Kate Greco has been a SGI member for over twenty years. She now resides in Toronto and participates actively in Canada's SGI communities and takes part in various leadership roles. Since receiving her first personal Gohonzon as a sign of official membership in the religious community, the SGI has been an important part in Kate's life. The chanting of Nam Myoho Renge Kyo motivates her

attitudes towards life, and aides her in difficult times and important decision makings. The accepting community of SGI Canada has provided



- ["The Role of Women in the SGI" By Maguy Jbeili](#)
- ["Adaptation of SGI in Canada" By Daigengna Duor](#)
- ["What is Buddhist about Soka Gakkai?" By Austin Saucio](#)

At left, a website created by students in Frances Garrett's third-year undergraduate course. Students learned to adapt a series of HTML and Javascript files to display an oral history audio recording (that they had recorded and edited) time-synced with relevant contextual data (displayed in the right side box), such as maps, images, or text, supporting the listener's understanding of the interview. Additional linked pages authored by individual students featured essays and a timeline of the interviewee's story contextualized historically. The audio interview page was made using Mozilla's Popcorn, a Javascript framework for HTML5 media, and the timelines were made using MIT's SIMILE Timeline.



compelling means for these students to engage dense methodological and theoretical texts in a narrative manner. The approach also echoed, not incidentally, the very process of meaning-construction that forms the object of much scholarly study in the field of religion by asking students to tell a story with focus and direction using the raw materials of scholarly pronouncements and explanations. In assembling and editing their video footage, students were faced with the task of creating a sense and order out of what at times appeared to be chaos. The final stages of this project will involve the development of a module that can be replicated by other members of our department, with the hope that digital storytelling becomes a readily available alternative to traditional paper writing.

Working collaboratively and taking advantage of online tools was at the core of another undergraduate course taught in fall 2011, in which doctoral student Ben Wood engaged students in the study of Buddhist life-writing in Tibet through a survey of traditional Tibetan biographies. Emphasizing the reading of primary texts, the goal in this course was to contextualize a single Tibetan biography within a wider sample of comparative texts. To give students a taste of what scholarly collaboration can bring to individual research, each student focused on a different piece of literature and shared their findings. Using a highly structured online document (accessed through a shared Dropbox folder), students shared their individual research, using the collective document to trace literary themes and narrative structures across numerous lengthy works. This collaboratively generated data supplied students with a source of deep contextualization for their own analyses that would be unattainable by the individual student over a single semester. Positioned as 'experts,' students were able

to attempt broad definitions of Tibetan sacred biography and to produce original scholarly research.

In the spring, Ben taught an Asian religions survey course at the University of Victoria. In this large course of 90 students, he employed a team-oriented pedagogical approach in an attempt to enhance the students' classroom experience and also to highlight the value of comparing topics across different religious traditions. Working in online 'research teams,' students collaboratively produced wikis (on a pbworks.com website, pictured above) that served as the basis for both students' mid-term tests and their final comparative essays. Each wiki considered a different thematic topic, and students were required to collaborate, organize, and understand the course material—Asian religious traditions—thematically. This approach, inspired by a team-taught course taught by CSR graduate students Nicholas Dion and Rebekka King (see story on page 13), revealed the benefits of collating data comparatively, and also helped students develop skills in project management and group collaboration.

The model of working collaboratively on research projects uniting students and community members, as in the digital storytelling project above, has also shaped Prof. Frances Garrett's undergraduate teaching. In fall 2011 she taught an undergraduate course that was run in parallel with another course, History and its Publics in the Digital Age, in the History Department, taught by Matt Price. The two courses were organized around the same set of assignments, although the content matter was different, Price's course studying Toronto immigration history and Garrett's course studying Buddhist thought. Because the technically-oriented learning objectives for the courses were the same, the two instructors shared a course website and scheduled

continued on page 20

# Modern Hebrew Courses in 2011-2012

Dr. Keren T Rubinstein

This year we welcomed a large cohort of students into Modern Hebrew, a program that is divided across three streams for beginners, intermediates and advanced. The beginners class included twenty-seven participants (including an auditor from the Jewish community, two Religion grad students and a member of the faculty). The class was diverse and soon enough arranged itself into smaller integrated learning groups. It is always a pleasure to take learners on the journey of the Hebrew language, tackling issues like the existence of two alphabets, the relationship with Biblical Hebrew, the idiosyncratic vocalization system and learning to live without it, patterns of grammatical gender (setting us off on more than a few tangents about language and sexual politics) and the tight bonds between Israeli language and Yiddish, Arabic, English, Aramaic and other Jewish and global languages. Thanks to youtube we were able to approach all these notions and more as embedded within a rich cultural matrix, represented in part through Israeli music; here the students' tastes proved slightly less eclectic than mine. One of the highlights was definitely a group's oral presentation that was a spin-off of 'Master Chef' in Hebrew, including Jewish and Bedouin contestants, with the examiner and audience participating as the judging panel.

Intermediate Hebrew was bolstered by the participation of auditors, which was crucial given the relatively low retention rates from previous years. The Advanced cohort was a consolidated yet mixed group and our discussions revolved around three key themes: Eliezer Ben Yehuda, the man and the myth; the debates surrounding Modern Hebrew language change; and Israeli nature as seen through the lens of national culture. In the second semester our activities shifted

to two levels of life in Israel, including popular culture and ethnic diversity. The students' end of year presentations wove together all that they had gleaned from our examinations of television, music and advertising with their new understanding of the country's complex history of migration and Israeli multiculturalism. A timely visit to the department by Iraqi-Israeli musician Yair Dalal, including a short performance of Oud music, illustrated many of the issues students raised in discussion.

Class time was further complemented by regular Hebrew Table meetings that often took place at Hillel; this was a good way to introduce all three cohorts and chat informally about the language and its cultural contexts (more often than not, over a light dinner). These conversations continued during our regular film screenings, which in future would have to include some additional time for discussion. Yona Katz, our TA during the second semester, incorporated grammar drills and exercises into these sessions and helped the students progress to the intermediate level.

Two Jewish holidays were celebrated in our classes, including Purim, during which the advanced class ventured to Hillel to participate in the traditional reading of the Scroll of Esther - a first for some of the students as well as myself. Passover sealed the year, as did a surprise farewell party the students had organized. We also enjoyed a kosher-catered end-of-year film screening about the holiday and its potential for renewal.

It was a good note on which to end what was a most rewarding year, and begin to plan the next.

## Dianna Roberts-Zauderer at Hebrew University

I spent June and July of 2011 at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Mount Scopus campus, studying Arabic. I slept in the dormitory with 4 mature women students who were studying Biblical Hebrew. My 25-minute walk to campus every morning afforded me a breathtaking panoramic view of the Old City of Jerusalem. It was a difficult yet exhilarating experience to learn how to read, write and understand a new language, with a new alphabet, from scratch. The street signs no longer looked like elegant scribble to me, and I would stop in my tracks to read them slowly, sounding out each letter. That first week, when I was learning how to write Arabic letters, you would have seen me bent over my notebook with a pencil and eraser in hand, my tongue sticking out, forming letters in deep concentration. I have newfound respect for children in Grade One!

*Dianna is a doctoral candidate in the DSR. Her research interests include medieval Jewish philosophy, history and poetics.*





# Virani DreamTeam Strikes Again

## This year at the Virani project

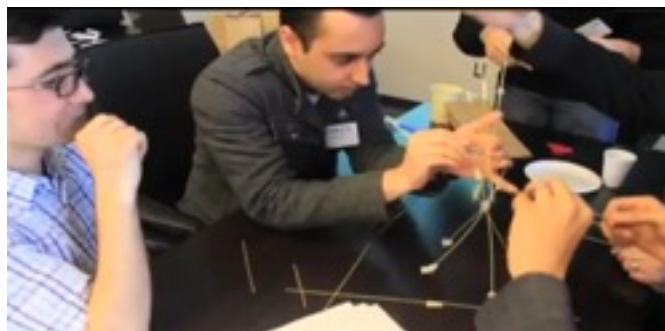
By Shanifa Nasser Suderji

At a recent keynote at the National Educational Computing Conference, Chris Lehmann, renowned speaker and educator in the area of technology and pedagogy, commented, “Tools don’t teach, but they can change the way we teach.” For the students on Professor Shafique Virani’s research team, the ways in which they are learning and researching have certainly been reshaped by the range of technological tools they have been exposed to over the past few years through their many projects on Islam and Muslim Civilizations.

Every year, over a hundred undergraduate and graduate students apply to join Virani’s research team through the University’s Research Opportunity Program, Independent Studies courses and the Work-Study Program. This year’s roster brought together the talents of creative students from a range of disciplines, including religion specialists, sound engineers, web designers, computer programmers, film and video editors, voice actors, illustrators, and language students. Funding from SSHRC, the Ontario Ministry of Research and Innovation, and other grants has supported the team’s technological strengths, with several research team students attending events such as the TIFF Nexus New Media Literacies Conference, equipping them with a network of skills and partners they need to succeed in their projects.

Virani’s research team, or the “Dream Team” as its members warmly refer to it, seeks not only to conduct research into pivotal moments in Muslim history, but also to broaden the reach of their findings to a larger audience. The close knit team has collaborated on a number of wide-reaching projects, including the creation of a series of YouTube videos, audiobooks and podcasts. These researchers have worked to identify successful techniques used in award-winning audiobooks and to outline specific considerations that might make a podcast of a scholarly nature distinct from other types of recordings. These projects aim specifically to translate academic publications into formats more accessible and engaging for non-specialist audiences, and will soon become available through the University of Toronto’s partnership with iTunes U and Focus on Research.

Among the team’s longest-running projects is the creation of the iBrary Online, a digital repository of scholarly resources related to Islamic Studies meant to serve as a reference tool for academics and the public alike. The iBrary project highlights the pluralistic heritage of the Muslim world, as well as the exchange of its vibrant intellectual and scientific contributions throughout history. Students working on the iBrary project have conducted research into resources on Islamic history, art, architecture, literature, and philosophy, creating extensive databases featuring more than a thousand resources on Islamic law, the Qur’an, hadith (prophetic



A still image from “Teamwork and Pluralism,” one of a number of videos made by Virani’s students, on the ViraniDreamTeam YouTube channel, <http://www.youtube.com/user/ViraniDreamTeam>.

traditions) collections, languages, scholarly journals and dictionaries, as well as study-abroad language programs from around the globe. Work on the iBrary began in 2006 and will be completed in time for a launch in the near future.

In navigating the plethora of tools available for their projects, the team’s work often involves comparing and assessing available technologies to identify the tools most apt for their specific needs. Sustainability and extended product support are significant factors in weighing the options. For example, students working on cartography this year were forced to consider the fact that while Google Earth is among the most sophisticated mapping tools available online, it may not necessarily contain the features necessary for historical projects such as Virani’s interactive mapping application involving the diary of a 1923 Muslim traveller to Central Asia and China. Nonetheless the enormity of Google’s online presence and its relative stability in the past decade promises more lasting product support than might smaller software providers. Students working on this project therefore undertook careful research to determine which tools contain the necessary support for early 20th century geopolitical boundaries in order to make the expedition come to life online. Such projects have fostered in Virani’s research team a greater technological literacy and aptitude for problem-solving specific to their projects and transferrable to their pursuits both within the academy and beyond.

For Virani’s research students, the integration of cutting-edge technology into their numerous projects has fostered the growth of their team into a community of exchange and collaboration, a space in which students not only learn and think in innovative ways, but collectively build upon their findings to produce tangible and engaging results.

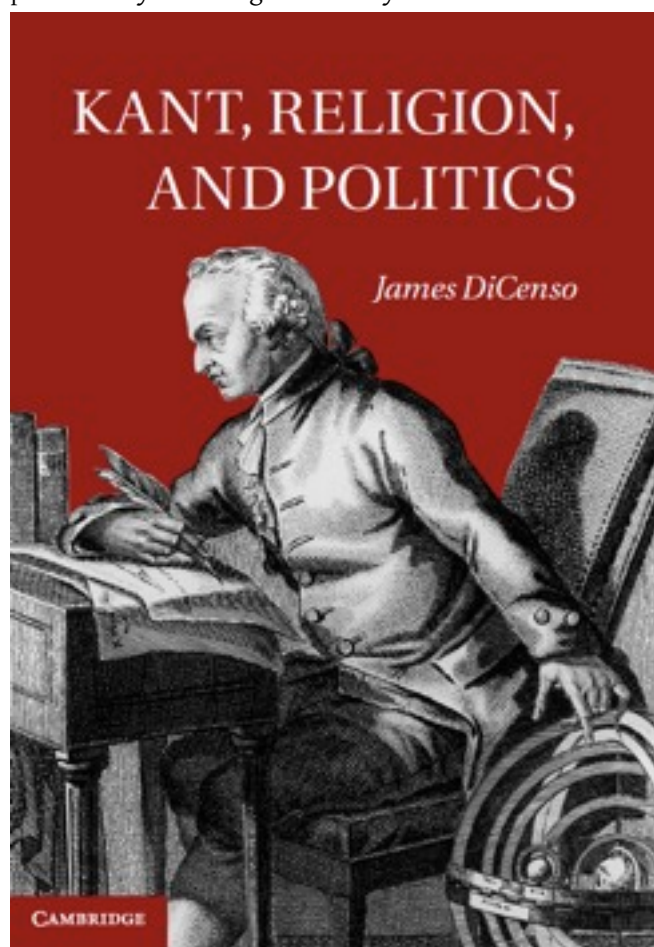
*Shanifa is a first-year doctoral student at the DSR and Research Coordinator for Virani’s research team. Her interests include Islamic mysticism, classical Persian literature, the religious landscape online, and the emerging world of the digital humanities.*

## FACULTY NEWS

**Joseph M. Bryant's** article, "New Directions and Perennial Challenges in the Sociology of Philosophy," was published as part of a symposium on the work of Richard Rorty, appearing in the *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 47 (1).

**Simon Coleman** has been awarded the Emerald Literati Network 2012 Awards for Excellence. His chapter, "Prosperity Unbound? Debating the 'Sacrificial Economy,'" published in *Research in Economic Anthropology* (volume 31) was chosen as an Outstanding Author Contribution Award Winner at the Literati Network Awards for Excellence 2012. In March, Toronto's *Globe and Mail* carried a story "Who are Canada's research stars?" in which Coleman was listed as one of the three most influential Religion researchers (**Michael Lambek**, cross-appointed to Religion, was one of the others).

**James DiCenso's** new book, *Kant, Religion, and Politics* was published by Cambridge University Press last fall.



**Amir Harrak** published *Catalogue of Syriac and Garshuni Manuscripts: Manuscripts Owned by the Iraqi Department of Antiquities and Heritage*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 639, Subsidia 129 (Leuven: Peeters, 2011). In this work, forty-three Syriac and Garshuni manuscripts owned by the Iraqi Department of Antiquities and Heritage are here catalogued and described in great detail. The manuscripts

cover major literary genres known to Syriac literature, each of which is discussed in a lengthy introduction with an up-to-date bibliography. To illustrate the contents and styles of the manuscripts, short texts extracted from most of them are given in Syriac and Garshuni with translations in English. Some manuscripts are liturgical and were once the property of Melkite, Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholic, and Assyrian churches. Other manuscripts are spiritual and theological compendiums, biblical lectionaries and psalms, Melkite pastoral letters dealing with Roman Catholic devotional practices, charms and popular medicine, and *sofyata* and *durikyata* poems. A unique manuscript consists of a Kurdish (Kurmanji) grammar in Syriac authored by a 19th century Chaldean monk living in the Monastery of Rabban Hormizd in northern Iraq. The codices are dated between the 16th and the 19th centuries, and they were produced in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and central and eastern Anatolia.

**Frances Garrett** received several awards this year: the 2012 Northrop Frye Award recognizing distinguished achievement in connecting teaching and research; a 12-month residential Jackman Humanities Institute Faculty Research Fellowship, to be served in 2012-13; a SSHRC Aid to Research Workshops Grant to host an event on The Literary in Tibet; and grants from the Instructional Technology Initiative Fund and the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (with Matt Price of History; see story on page 4). With Khenpo Kunga Sherab and Ben Wood, she was also awarded a contract from 84,000 for the translation into English of the Buddhist canonical work, "The Mahayana Sutra entitled Illumination of Noble Dreams." This year Garrett published "Shaping the Illness of Hunger: A Culinary Aesthetics of Food and Healing in Tibet" in *Asian Medicine: Tradition and Modernity* 6 (1), and produced three short documentary films, directed by a Tibetan film student, Wendekar. She delivered several papers, including "Eating Right with Tibetan Food Practices" at the American Academy of Religion Meeting, and "Digital Scholarship in the Academic Promotion Process" and "The Changing Landscape of Scholarly Production" at the U of T.

**Kenneth Green** has two forthcoming books with the University of Chicago Press, due to appear in February 2013: *Leo Strauss, On Maimonides: The Complete Writings*, which he edited; and a book which he wrote, *Leo Strauss and the Rediscovery of Maimonides*. He's had two papers either recently published or about to appear in print: "Spinoza's Defense of the Bible," in *The Companionship of Books: Essays in Honor of Laurence Berns*, eds. S. Portnoff, A. Udoff, & M.D. Yaffe, (Lexington Books, 2012), and "What S.Y. Agnon Taught Gershom Scholem on Jewish History," to appear in the forthcoming Brill volume, *Encountering the Medieval in Modern Jewish Thought*, eds. J.A. Diamond and A. Hughes. He's been asked to lecture at the University of Chicago in May, on "The Achievement of Leo Strauss in Rediscovering Maimonides," and he'll be participating in a conference at the Shalem

continued on next page



Center in Jerusalem in July, on Philosophical Interpretations of the Bible; his paper is entitled: "What Moses Saw: Maimonidean Meditations, or On the Speculative Teaching of the Torah." Green also transcribed, edited, and introduced: Emil L. Fackenheim, "Reflections by the Author on To Mend the Word: Response to a Letter (1983)," which will appear in *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, and he transcribed, edited, and introduced: Emil L. Fackenheim, "Leo Strauss, the 'New Thinking,' and To Mend the Word (1984)," which will appear in *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy*. He continues the editing of a book he's written on Emil Fackenheim's post-Holocaust thought, and he is also working on research related to a book he's writing on the biblical figure of Moses.

**Todd Lawson** was on the advisory board of the Göttingen conference on education, a historic joint cooperative effort between al-Azhar University and the University of Göttingen. He also joined the editorial board of the *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* and the editorial board of the *Journal for Shi'i Islamic Studies*, and he was made an Honorary Fellow of the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society. He has spent time organizing a panel for the Frye Centenary to be held at U of T in October 2012: Northrop Frye, The Qur'an, Islam and Islamic Literature. Lawson's publications include *Gnostic Apocalypse and Islam: Qur'an, Exegesis, Messianism and the Literary Origins of the Babi Religion* (Routledge); and Lawson and Omid Ghaemmaghami (eds.) *A Most Noble Pattern: Collected Essays on the Writings of the Báb, 'Ali Muhammad Shirazi (1819-1850)* (Routledge). His invited lectures include "Imagination as Holy Communion," at the Ibn Arabi Society Symposium in Berkeley; the McMartin Memorial Lecture on "The Crucifixion and the Qur'an" at Carleton U; "Consciousness, Imagination and Gratitude: The Inexhaustible Sources of the Self" at the Ibn Arabi Society Symposium at Worcester College, Oxford; "Muhammad the Educator: Education and the Epic of Islam" in Göttingen; the Temenos Academy Lecture in London on "Northrop Frye the Qur'an and the Great Code of Islam"; "Northrop Frye's Reading of the Qur'an: A Study of Frygian Marginalia" at the University of London Qur'anic Studies Conference; and "Charles Adams and the Study of Henry Corbin" at the American Academy of Religion Conference.

**Reid B. Locklin** is nearly weeping in relief and celebration at the publication this fall of his *Liturgy of Liberation: A Christian Commentary on Shankara's Upadesasahari* (Peeters and Eerdmans). This year he will also be publishing a bibliographic essay on Sankara for *Oxford Bibliographies Online*, and a collaborative article co-authored with Tracy Tiemeier of Loyola Marymount University and Johann Vento of Georgian Court University, entitled "Teaching World Religions without Teaching 'World Religions,'" in *Teaching Theology and Religion* 15.2 (2012). The service-learning course detailed in this article also became the subject of a teaching

profile by the University of Toronto Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation (<http://www.teaching.utoronto.ca/topics/sfi/focus-faculty/locklin.htm>). Reid continues to co-chair the Comparative Theology Group at the American Academy of Religion, to co-edit the AAR publication *Spotlight on Teaching* and, for the first time, to serve on the Leadership Team for a Wabash Center Workshop for Pre-Tenure Religion Faculty at Colleges and Universities (2012-13), all while serving as Coordinator for the Christianity and Culture Programme at St. Michael's College.

**Thomas McIntire** has published two new lengthy pieces on Canadian religion, "Protestants of Canada" in the book *Religions of Canadians* (University of Toronto Press), and "The Formation of the United Church 1899-1930" in *The United Church of Canada: a History* (Wilfrid Laurier University Press).

**David Novak** has been elected President of the Union for Traditional Judaism, and Vice-President of the Institute on Religion and Public Life. He was the keynote speaker at a conference at Bar Ilan University (Israel) on the work of Shmuel Trigano, Professor of Sociology at U. Paris X: Nanterre; Novak wrote the foreword to the new English translation of Trigano's book, *Philosophie de la loi: l'origine de politique dans la Tora*.

**Ajay Rao** received a Shastri India Studies fellowship for 2012-13 to support a project on representations of religious conflict in the Vijayanagara empire. Rao uses imaginative literature and philosophical discourse alongside inscriptions and archeological evidence to study a series of conflicts from multiple contemporary angles and from subsequent vantage points in history. These sources facilitate the exploration of meaning systems within which historical actors contextualized, interpreted, and made use of conflict. In India, Rao will be retrieving palm-leaf and paper manuscripts of unpublished Sanskrit texts.

**Michael Stoeber** published "Mysticism in Ecumenical Dialogue" in the book *Teaching Mysticism* (Oxford), and his "Theosophical Influences on the Painting and Writing of Lawren Harris" is in the current *Toronto Journal of Theology*. He presented "The Reception of Kundalini Yoga in California and Its Relation to Sikh Dharma/3HO" at the AAR meeting in San Francisco; "Some Comparative Reflections on Christian Recollection and Mindfulness Meditation" at Campion College, Oxford. He will lead the 2012 Annual Day of Quiet Reflection for the Evelyn Underhill Society in Washington D.C., on the topic of Evelyn Underhill's interfaith conversations. Last February he had a solo-exhibit of his abstract paintings at Galleria 814 in Toronto, on the theme "Spiritual Impressions."

# RPS and Service Learning

By Amy E. Fisher

Douglas Coupland used his 2010 Massey Lectures to tell a good story. *Player One: What is to Become of Us?* is a story about religion, it turns out; a story Charles Taylor has been telling for years – including the time he gave the Massey Lectures himself in 2001. The lectures, initially given in open spaces like publicly funded universities and concert halls, later broadcast on the publicly funded CBC, eventually published by Anansi Press, itself supported by various federal and provincial government agencies, are artifacts of religion in the Canadian public sphere. Students in this year's Service-Learning course were surprised to find an interesting relationship between these two books, and the larger body of work they represent. Coupland animates Taylor's *Modern Social Imaginary* – he shows what it's like to live here and now, with a flattened sense of time, a disenchanted understanding of God, an overdetermined sense of freedom and authenticity, a loss of meaning. Coupland's characters seem almost to be coming apart at the seams, in a fractured and confusing time, a reality Taylor laments in *The Malaise of Modernity*. It's as if Coupland's question "What is to become of us?" follows on the heels of Taylor's description in *A Secular Age*. These, along with readings by Jeffrey Stout, Winnifred Sullivan, Chris Hedges, Cornel West, and others, provided a theoretical and otherwise academic basis for critical reflection on practical experiences. Students kept weekly blogs, using those short writing assignments to place their field experiences in conversation scholarship; tacking back and forth between service and more traditional forms of learning.

This year, 10 students participated in the Service-Learning course, filling a variety of placement positions secured for them by the Centre for Community Partnerships, here at the University of Toronto. Some students helped the St. Jamestown Community Corner initiative, and MPP Cheri DiNovo's Ruth's Daughters of Canada, to organize inter-faith dialogues on important social issues. Other students deepened an already rich relationship between

our department and the U of T Multi-faith Centre, while yet another benefited from an ongoing partnership with the Shores Jewish Environmental Program and Kavanah Community Garden, directed by CSR graduate Risa Alyson Strauss. Just one student secured her own placement: at the Canadian Muslim Lawyers Association – in anticipation of her future career as a secular Muslim lawyer in Canada. Finally, two students completed shorter and more intense internships at the Tony Blair Faith Foundation and we're excited to see one of these students go on to a summer internship at their offices in England!

Time and again, students see this course as a great way to finish up their undergraduate experience – an opportunity to put into practice the knowledge they have earned by more traditional learning methods over the course of their degree programs. Many say that they have let themselves overlook religion's positive capacity in the public sphere. Here, they are invited to see its complicating force alongside its contribution to the common good.

Those of us involved in administering the RPS Service-Learning Course are interested in hearing from faculty, staff and graduate students about any potential partners. Is there someone or some group you work with who might be interested in taking on student interns for 30-40-hour placements during the Winter 2013 semester? Let us know!

## The Religious Diversity Youth Leadership Project

Religion in the Public Sphere, together with the Multi-Faith Centre and the Centre for Community Partnerships, has won a three-year, \$500,000 grant from Citizenship and Immigration Canada to bring together university students with youth in the Greater Toronto Area to build networks of communication and action around the problems and possibilities of living in a religiously diverse society. RPS's primary role in the project is to plan and host public fora and research/policy workshops on specific issues with a GTA focus, including religious diversity and health, religion, gender, and sexuality, and religious diversity and the arts. Groups of faculty have volunteered to plan each forum, and a schedule will be posted on our website soon. The first forum was a policy dialogue on "Creed, Freedom of Religion, and Human Rights," held in January 2012 in partnership with the Ontario Human Rights Commission, and featured an impressively diverse crowd of policy-makers, legal experts, community organizers, faculty, and graduate students. The Project will also enable the DSR to expand faculty and graduate student opportunities for community engagement, such as our popular workshops for teachers and high school students on methods and approaches to the study of religious diversity. In addition, the Project helps to support the RPS Service-Learning Internship course offered by the DSR, which organizes volunteer opportunities for undergraduate students to engage in public service that allows them to observe the dynamics of religious diversity in the public sphere.



At left, a khidma (Sufi soup kitchen) in Alexandria; below, a Ramadan table in Cairo. Photos by Amira Mittermaier.

Mittermaier's 2010 book, *Dreams that Matter*, has been selected for several awards: the American Academy of Religion's Award for Excellence, the Geertz SAR award, and the Chicago Folklore Prize. The book also placed second for the Victor Turner Prize in Ethnographic Writing.



## Amira Mittermaier: New research on food and charity in Egypt

The giving of food is one of the quintessential forms of gift-giving; it is a fundamental ethical practice in many religious and non-religious traditions. Amira Mittermaier's new research project ethnographically examines the multiple and sometimes contradictory meanings attached to the mundane acts of cooking, serving, and eating food in different Egyptian spaces of food distribution. She draws on in-depth ethnographic fieldwork at Sufi-run soup kitchens, Ramadan tables (mawa'id al-rahman), charity organizations, and saint shrines where individual believers hand out food to visitors. Her research illuminates what kinds of selves, relationships, politics, and economies are forged by the acts of preparing and distributing food, and what kinds of ethics are at work. Mittermaier reads the act of "feeding the poor" against the backdrop of the Egyptian revolution in 2011, which has heightened debates around social justice. Besides considering how the pious act of giving is re-

imagined at a time when high food prices have become one of the main drivers of public protest, she also critically engages with the widespread critique that dismisses charity as "unproductive," "inefficient," and too emotionally driven. As an alternative she suggests reading her interlocutors' practices as articulating and embodying a complex, religious grounded, and historically shaped ethics of distribution.

Amira Mittermaier's current research on charity in Egypt is supported by a SSHRC Standard Research Grant, a Post-Ph.D. Research Grant by the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, and most recently by the award of a 12-month residential faculty research fellowship at the Jackman Humanities Institute, to be served in 2012-13.



### Graduate student news, continued from page 3

enrolled in a Chinese reading course at McMaster University with Prof. James Benn and wrote an article entitled “The Transmission of the Dhāraṇīs of the Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra and Reconstruction of Kumārajīva’s Source,” which deals with issues of language change over time and the challenges of translating Prakrit phonetically into Chinese (in order to preserve the exact sound of the dhāraṇīs).

Levman’s article on “Sanskrit in Toronto,” co-authored with Libbie Mills, was accepted by *Mosaic*, summarizes the importance of Sanskrit for South Asian and East Asian socio-cultural-political-religious studies in general, with case studies of how students have used Sanskrit in their academic pursuits. Levman’s article “The muṇḍa/muṇḍaka crux: What does the word mean?,” forthcoming in *Canadian Journal of Buddhist Studies* looks at how non-Indo Aryan influences (i. e. Munda, Dravidian and Tibetan) on the Buddha’s thought and teachings; and his “What does the Pāli phrase pahitatta mean?” is forth-coming with the *Thai International Journal for Buddhist Studies*. Other publications this year include “What does amisā/misā mean in Minor Rock Edict I?” in *Felicitations Volume in Honour of Venerable Dr. Pategama Gnanarama Thera* (D.Litt); and “Lexical Ambiguities in the Buddhist Teachings, An Example & Methodology” in *International Journal for the Study of Humanistic Buddhism* 2.

**Dianna Roberts-Zauderer** received the Tarek Heggy Graduate Scholarship in Jewish-Muslim Relations, an Ontario Graduate Scholarship, and a Canadian

Friends of Hebrew University of Jerusalem Award.

**Lindsay Macumber** has been selected to participate in two seminars this summer. The first is the Curt C. and Else Silberman Seminar for Faculty at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. This is a two-week long program in June consisting of lectures,



Nick Dion, Marilyn Colaco, and Brigidda Zapata.

seminars, and workshops, led by leading scholars of the Holocaust, including Dorota Glowacka and Atina Grossmann. The theme this year is “The Gendered Experience of the Holocaust.” The second is the Annual Institute on the Holocaust and Jewish Civilization at Northwestern University, Evanston IL. This is a two-week program in June for graduate students working in Holocaust Studies, and consists of lectures and workshops aimed at broadening the interdisciplinary perspective of participants.

**Shanifa Nasser Sunderji** received a Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship Nomination, a Senior Women Academic Administrators of Canada Graduate

Student Award of Merit Nomination, a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Doctoral Award, and a University of Toronto Mary H. Beatty Top-Up Scholarship.

**Justin Stein** has two articles in press: “‘Global Flows’ of ‘Universal Energy’? The Utility of Aquatic Metaphors to Model the Transculturation of Reiki,” in *Transcultural Studies*; and “The Japanese New Religious Practices of jōrei and okiyome in the Context of Asian Spiritual Healing Traditions,” in *Japanese Religions*. He also published “‘Reiki Balances the Chakras’: A Japanese Healing Practice in New Age India,” in the Chao Center for Asian Studies 2011 Transnational Asia Graduate Student Conference Working Papers.

**Ryan Stoner** presented the paper “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner: The Parable of the Great Feast (Luke 14:15-24) and the Social Control of Jokes” at the Canadian Society for Biblical Studies Annual Conference; he published a book review in *Dead Sea Discoveries* (18.3) on *Wisdom at Qumran: A Form-Critical Analysis of the Admonitions in 4Q Instruction* (Daryl Jefferies); his paper “The Periodization of Time in the Enochic Apocalypse of Weeks” was accepted for the Enoch Graduate Seminar, which will be held at the University of Notre Dame in June; and he organized and presented on a panel entitled “Cultural Memory and Growth of Tradition in Second Temple Judaism” at the Western Jewish Studies Association conference held at the University of Oregon with fellow CSR students Madison Robbins, Amy Fisher and Nathalie LaCoste.

# Something New in the Classroom

By Nicholas Dion and Rebekka King

When we first decided that we wanted to teach a class together, we knew that we wanted to do something different. Indeed, the title of the course, RLG304 Language, Symbol, Self, demanded originality and creativity. While most co-taught courses split content between instructors, we thought it might bring an added dimension to the student experience if they consistently received two distinct evaluations of the subject matter. We picked a topic on which we usually disagreed – the value and place of social constructionist theories in the study of religion – and built a syllabus. We started with classic theories of social constructionism, having students read *The Social Construction of Reality* by Berger and Luckmann, followed it up with Hacking's *The Social Construction of What?*, and then threw in Masuzawa's *The Invention of World Religions* and Keane's *Christian Moderns*.

We decided to take things one step further after Rebekka stumbled on an article by Queen's University's James Miller outlining how he adapted 'open space technology' to teach a course on religions and the environment. Open space technology is a resolutely un-technological pedagogical technique that is meant to place students in control of how and what they learn. We decided to break each two-hour lecture into four distinct half-hour segments. In the first half-hour, students were asked to form groups and discuss the week's reading, based on reflective journals that they had to prepare every week. Each group was expected to produce a single question related to the reading that they wanted to bring to discuss; questions were written on the board and, having reviewed the list of options, students voted. The

winner (and sometimes also the runner-up) formed the basis for discussion in the second half-hour of the lecture. This approach was intended to create a democratic, learner-centred environment, and to promote the notion that knowledge is generated rather than received. We encouraged students to respectfully disagree with each other and to press their classmates to justify their arguments. When necessary, Nick (the psychoanalyst/philosopher) and Rebekka (the anthropologist) stepped in to model how easy it is to disagree! The third half-hour was meant to be a traditional lecture. In practice, however, this time often became a guided extension of the second half-hour. While we tried to remain on the sidelines as much as possible in the second half-hour, we participated actively in discussion in the third half-hour, making comments and raising further questions. Our participation often radically changed the tone of conversation, students looking to us for answers instead of to each other. This component was the most challenging part of the course for us since we had to maneuver within the confines of the topics that students had chosen and find ways to link them to points we wanted to make about the lecture topic. Try bridging the gap between Hacking's notion of scientific truth and the prevalence of Ritalin prescriptions, or tying Berger and Luckmann's 'secondary socialization' to social media and the construction of online identities! Not always an easy task... but lots of fun and a true test of our ability to think on our feet. It also proved to be one of the most satisfying parts of the course as we were able to observe and learn from each other's teaching styles and practices.

continued on page 21

## Studying the History of Science, Medicine, and Religion with Visiting Professor Ronald L. Numbers

By Justin Stein

How have advancements in science and medicine affected American theologies? How have diverse groups that object to Darwinism on religious grounds used different strategies to engage with the U. S. legal and education systems? In the face of claims that the rise of scientific authority causes religious belief to decline, why hasn't the number of U. S. scientists who believe in a God who answers individuals' prayers significantly changed over the last century, remaining close to 40%? Along with a small group of students, half of whom are at the U of T's Institute for the History &

Philosophy of Science & Technology, I had the opportunity to explore these questions and more in a seminar led by Dr. Ronald L. Numbers, Hilldale Professor of the History of Science and Medicine at the University of Wisconsin, and Madison and F. Ross Johnson-Connaught Distinguished Visitor in American Studies. This course was this year's offering in an annual series of intensive courses offered by U of T's Centre for the Study of the United States. Although the condensation of a semester's worth of meetings (and readings) to a three-week period was a challenge, the rewards of interdisciplinary dialogue moderated by a luminary in the field were well worth it.

*Justin is a doctoral student in the DSR. His research interests include the relationships between science, medicine, and religion (particularly in movements centered on spiritual healing) in North America and Japan since the late nineteenth century.*



From left to right, Qinghai Nationalities University's Prof. Chopa Dondrup with DSR's Barbara Hazelton, Khenpo Kunga Sherab, Matt King and Frances Garrett meeting to discuss the Gesar project research.

## Mapping an Epic

By Matt King

Much has happened in the first year of our multi-year SSHRC Partnership Development Grant-funded project, focusing on the Gesar of Ling epic tradition, which is often times cited as the most expansive epic tradition on earth, with redactions found across the Western Himalayas, Tibet, West and North China, Mongolia, Buryatia and other places in Central and Inner Asia. The project aims to examine textual and oral episodes traditions that depict healing acts and geographic sites that provide healing power, to explore how "Gesar-inflected" healing has spread beyond the epic to ritual literature and practice, and to analyze these geographic, narrative and scholarly sites of healing knowledge, practice and power with the use of an integrated set of digital maps and tools.

This research is being carried out in partnership with an international research team of scholars and students at the U of T, the University of Virginia, Cardiff University in the UK, and Qinghai Nationalities University in China. In the

first year of the project, research has been undertaken in the DSR and in and around Qinghai in collaboration with fellow researchers based in Xining, some of whom we welcomed on short stays here in the DSR over the winter.

Of our two primary goals this year, the first was to get a sense of the state of the field on our topic across as many languages of scholarship as possible. To this end, we employed six undergraduates with relevant language expertise to create a large annotated bibliography of sources in Tibetan, English, Chinese, Russian, French and German. The second was to begin field research in Tibetan communities in China and in Toronto, in order to identify avenues to develop longer-term research goals in the years to come. Our field-work in Eastern Tibet was largely carried out by Prof. Chopa Dondrub (a Gesar expert from Qinghai Nationalities University whom we welcomed here in the DSR last winter), his student Namlha (who was also working here for three months), and our Tibetan field officer Wendekar, who worked with us here for several months last year. This team has now carried out several dozen

interviews with academics, monks and local residents around Gesar sites in Eastern Tibet. Since one of our commitments in this project is that all deliverables will be made available in English and Tibetan, our team in China has transcribed and translated these interviews.

A goal for our Toronto team this summer (which includes Prof. Frances Garrett, Khenpo Kunga Sherab, and DSR graduate students Andrew Erlich, Barbara Hazelton, Jennifer Bright and myself) is to make a series of short audio documentaries out of those interviews, which capture a variety of associations Tibetans have with situated narratives of Gesar-inflected healing, and which will serve as an introduction to the project on a website. Also this summer, Khenpo Kunga and I will pursue research into a series of unstudied letters exchanged by two lamas in the 18th c. on the historical validity of the Gesar tradition and its transition into broadly Buddhist, textual and ritual discursive arenas. Russian scholars have described these letters as the first piece of Orientalist scholarship on earth - a high claim, and something worth exploring further!

Now that we have both a very broad (and constantly growing) set of local informants as well as an annotated body of secondary scholarship, we are in a great position to begin thinking about bigger projects we wish to undertake next year, which will include more active participation by our other research collaborators. We will be helped greatly in this shift to more sustained research (and more focused output) next year because one of our primary collaborators, Prof. Geoffrey Samuel of Cardiff U, will be in residence at the U of T all next year. As one of the foremost anthropologists of Tibetan cultural regions and an expert on the Gesar tradition, our team is excited to welcome him as we continue to chart out this fascinating and rich area of research.

*Matt is a PhD. Candidate in the DSR who is writing his dissertation on the historiography of Mongolia's last Buddhist historian, Zawa Damdin Lam (1867-1937).*



## Religion undergrads win awards for research

Undergraduates in Religion won several distinguished awards this year.

**Christopher Hiebert** was awarded a University of Toronto Excellence Award (UTEA) to conduct research in Tibetan communities in India, he was appointed as a Jackman Humanities Institute Undergraduate Research Fellow for 2011-12, and he was awarded the McNab Scholarship for an outstanding third-year student in Religion. As a JHI Fellow, his project explores the role of religious practice in creating specifically Tibetan spaces in exile communities and how these practices and spaces are used to enact and contest varying conceptions of 'Tibetan-ness' among Tibetans in exile. Hiebert will continue his work in Tibetan Studies in the University of Virginia's MA/PhD program this fall.

**Stephanie Nikolaidis** was awarded the McNab Scholarship for an outstanding fourth-year student in Religion. She is

now in Berlin, where she will be living for the next few months in order to work on her German. "My main interest in the field of religious studies," Stephanie writes from Berlin, "is applied ethics, i.e. how people's religious beliefs affect how they act morally in the world." She will begin an MA program at Leiden University in the Netherlands this fall, in an interdisciplinary program called Religion, Culture and Society.

**Laura Boles** was also appointed as a Jackman Humanities Institute Undergraduate Research Fellow for 2011-12. She writes, "The experience of being a Research Fellow has enabled me to discuss my work with students and faculty whose own areas of study differ greatly from my own. My colleagues have challenged me to look at my own research from new angles, and they have offered insightful suggestions. I have been looking at how the diasporic experience has changed since 9/11 and how it has been documented in fiction, using "The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao" by Junot Díaz and "The



Religion graduate Stephanie Nikolaidis.

Namesake" by Jhumpa Lahiri as examples. My final essay, titled "homeland/Homeland: Diasporic Literature in the Post-9/11 Context," suggests that by exploring the affective dimensions of the diaspora, diasporic texts are more successful in capturing post-9/11 United States than other post-9/11 literature."

## Daniel Karasik Playwright and Religion student

I took RLG100, World Religions, when I was fresh out of high school, back in 2004/05. It intrigued and frustrated me. I had an excellent, inspiring TA, who engaged with the course material in provocative ways, but I couldn't seem to ignite my rather theoretical curiosity about religious diversity into something



more deeply felt—into a passion. I left school after that year, bummed around in West Africa, and studied at a pluralistic, egalitarian yeshiva in Jerusalem. I felt an equal amount of attraction to and alienation from my own religious tradition, Judaism, an ambivalence that survived my weeks of intensive study in Israel. Throughout this time, I was writing, writing tons: poetry, fiction, a play.

When the following year I returned to U of T, where I eventually wound up once again in the Religion department, I was much happier to be there than I'd been before. Now that I'd seen a little more of the world and engaged with it in more richly varied ways, I found my questions about the world had proliferated, clarified themselves, deepened—and the university, particularly the Religion and Philosophy departments, seemed to me a fruitful place to ask them.

I've since pursued a tandem "career": I work in the arts, primarily as a writer, alongside my part-time studies at U of T. It's with a bit of regret that I finish my (now truly epic) BA next year, since more and more I've found my creative work informed by my readings and conversations in the Religion department in particular. Art needs to be informed by lived experience, but it also needs to be animated by ideas, ideas with urgency, with complexity and depth. I consider it a privilege to have been part of a community of ideas as dynamic as the one at U of T.

*Daniel Karasik, a fourth-year Religion student, is the grand prize winner of the 2012 CBC Literary Award for Fiction and the 2011 Canadian Jewish Playwriting Award. His plays have been seen in Toronto, New York, and Germany, and a volume of two of them (The Crossing Guard & In Full Light) is published by Playwrights Canada Press. Cormorant Books plans to release his first poetry collection in 2013.*

# Selected DSR Events

## ERASURE HISTORY WORKSHOP

In November 2011, scholars of Mediterranean antiquity met to engage in a thought experiment that would highlight the conditions of the “archive” by means of which they reconstruct the literary, religious, and social history of antiquity. Organized by Professor John W. Marshall—with immense help from graduate students when an injury impeded him—and supported by SSHRC, Classics, Jewish Studies, Medieval Studies, and the study of Religion, the participants reconsidered key literary and historical problems in antiquity, as if a key source had not survived to modernity. This loss of evidence, programmatic for the conference, but endemic and arbitrary in the archive of antiquity, is the dominant condition under which scholars investigate antiquity: so much more has been lost than has survived.

Presenters included: Jonathan Burgess (Toronto), Edward Champlin (Princeton), Eva Mroczek (U Indiana), Anders Runesson (McMaster), Mark Goodacre (Duke), Eldon Epp (Harvard), John Gager (Princeton), Giovanni Bazanna (Harvard), Nicola Denzey-Lewis (Brown), Kate Cooper (Manchester), and James Corke-Webster (Manchester). Local respondents were Dimitri Nakassis, Dan Machiela, John Kloppenborg, Peter Richardson, David Kaden, Sarah Rollens, Nick Schonhoffer, Erin Vearncombe, and Tony Burke.

The point of the workshop was to disturb the false feeling of security that can arise from a strong knowledge of the sources that survive and to temper our confidence while building a methodologically stronger foundation for our understanding of Mediterranean Antiquity. Efforts to publish the presentations are now underway.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP FOR TEACHERS

In February 2012, the DSR hosted a workshop for local public school teachers in order to showcase the diversity of research in the department. This event was initiated by John Kloppenborg at the request of local teacher David Orenstein, who has attended past events put on by the department. As part of their Professional Development Day, school teachers opted to visit the department to hear a series of talks by members of the department. The workshop, entitled “Current Issues in the Study of Religion,” dealt with a variety of traditions, approaches, and historical contexts. Amira Mittermaier initiated the discussion with the timely issue of Islamic charity in contemporary Egypt, especially in the context of the recent Arab Spring; her presentation was based on her recent fieldwork in Egypt. Ph.D. candidate Sarah

Rollens spoke next on the historical context of the earliest Jesus movement in Roman Galilee in the first century, which is a topic that figures centrally in her dissertation research. After lunch, Arti Dhand resumed the workshop with a lecture on South Asian epics and how they embody core ideas and values of the Hindu tradition. Finally, Judith Newman rounded off the day with a talk on the influence of the Dead Sea Scrolls on our understanding of the Bible.

The workshop was well attended and provided a productive atmosphere not only for teachers to learn from speakers, but also for speakers to hear about the interests and experiences of the audience. The teachers in attendance brought different levels of familiarity with these topics to the workshop, and their curiosity was evident throughout the day. Speakers fielded questions concerning the reconstruction of the historical Jesus, the manuscript production of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the nature of dharma in Hinduism, and the political future of Egypt, to name only a few. Several of the teachers were especially interested in how to translate the information from these topics into accessible material for their own students. There were many enthusiastic requests to continue to offer this program in subsequent years as an option for local teachers on their Professional Development Day. Overall, this workshop provided a new and worthwhile opportunity for the department to connect with community members and share its most up-to-date research.

## GRADUATE CONFERENCE ON SOUTH ASIAN RELIGIONS

The inaugural meeting of the University of Toronto Conference on South Asian Religions, a biennial graduate student conference, was held in fall 2011. 21 graduate students from across North America, including six students from the DSR, presented papers organized around the theme, “Crossing Boundaries: Texts, Traditions, Temporalities.” Each of the seven panels had a faculty respondent from within the DSR, demonstrating the strength of the department in South Asian Religions. The conference culminated in a plenary address delivered by Laurie L. Patton, Dean of Art and Sciences and Professor of Religion at Duke University. The conference was made possible through generous support from the Department of Historical Studies at UTM, the DSR, and the Centre for South Asian Studies.

## NUMATA BUDDHIST STUDIES PROGRAM

This year’s University of Toronto/McMaster University Yehan Numata Buddhist Studies Program hosted the following visiting speakers at the U of T: Michelle Wang

(Georgetown U) on “Changing Conceptions of ‘Maṇḍala’ in Tang China: Ritual, Image-Making, and the Limits of Visual Representation”; Toru Funayama (Kyoto U) on “Kamalaśīla’s View on Yogic Perception and the Bodhisattva Path”; Lara Braitstein (McGill U) on “Rdo ring pa’s Rnam thar and the Limits of Reading History from Autobiography”; Pierce Salguero (Penn State U, Abington College) on “Chinese Buddhist Medicine: Global and Local Perspectives on a Tradition of Religious Healing”; Collett Cox (U of Washington) on “Brittle Birch Bark Speaks: the Earliest Buddhist Manuscripts of Ancient Gandhāra”; and Johannes Bronkhorst (U of Lausanne) on “Who is a Brahmin? Some questions linked to the spread of Brahmanism” (co-hosted by the Hindu Studies Colloquium, the Centre for South Asian Studies, and the Asian Institute).

The Numata program also sponsored a conference in March, “Theravāda Civilizations: Thematic Continuities and Vernacular Appropriations,” co-sponsored by the Luce Foundation, the Centre for South Asian Studies and the Centre for Southeast Asian Studies. Steven Collins’ opening lecture addressed the civilizing power of Buddhism on the historical development of societies in South and Southeast Asia. Meetings over the next two days began by talking about what happens in acts of gifting by looking at donations to the sangha or offerings to the Buddha. Juliane Schober (Arizona State) and Thomas Borchert (U of Vermont) presented examples from Burma and Yunnan; Steven Collins (U of

Chicago) and Charles Hallisey (Harvard) shared their thoughts about how to understand hagiographies better by problematizing the relation between the mythical and the historical in modernist readings of premodern texts. Charles Keyes (U of Washington) and Kate Crosby (SOAS) demonstrated how paying attention to the rituals



Ashley Thompson and Christoph Emmrich

and discussions on status connected to Theravāda disrobing practices allows us to understand better the role of the monastic in lay life and vice-versa. Justin McDaniel (U Penn) and Christoph Emmrich (U of T) discussed the usefulness of

failure and fragmentation in looking in novel ways at what makes up a Buddhist life. The second day saw sessions dedicated to the locality and the trans-locality of Theravāda historiographies. Steve Berkwitz (Missouri State) suggested that vamsas as a genre tend towards the translocal, and Jacques Leider (EFO Chiang Mai) proposed that all vamsas are instead inherently local. The contributions by Patrick Pranke (U of Kentucky), Donald Swearer (Harvard), John Holt (Bowdoin) and Anne Blackburn (Cornell) drew on their materials from Thai and Burmese chronicles. The conference concluded with a panel on the Buddha’s parinibbāna and its visual representations, with comments by Louis Gabaude (EFO, Chiang Mai), Anne Hansen (U of Wisconsin) and Ashley Thompson (U of Leeds).

## SEMINAR FOR CULTURE AND RELIGION IN ANTIQUITY

Every year, the SCRA lecture series brings together those working in the fields of Classics, Near and Middle Eastern Studies, Late Antiquity, Biblical Studies, Christian Origins, and Second Temple Judaism. The goal is to explore religious traditions throughout antiquity, broadly located between the 5th century BCE and the 5th century CE. This year, organizers John Marshall and Judith Newman invited five scholars to share their current work. The first lecturer of the year, Zeba Crook, graduated from the U of T and teaches at Carleton U (Ottawa). He presented an exploration of the role of kinship and fictive kinship in the letters of Paul and Cicero. Our second speaker visited us from Bar Ilan U (Tel Aviv), James Kugel, who focused on a motif which appears in ancient biblical interpretation, the descent of the wicked angels. Next, Liv Lied (Norwegian School of Theology) visited Toronto to speak about the reception of 2 Baruch through the lenses of performance and authority. Anders Runesson was the first speaker in 2012 visiting from McMaster. He discussed Apostolic Judaism, as an alternative approach to the “parting of the ways” approach to the early separation between Judaism and Christianity in the first several centuries. The final lecture featured Ra’anan Boustan (UCLA). His lecture analyzed kingship and imperial discourses in Christian Rome. In addition to the lectures, each scholar devoted time to meet with graduate students over lunch. These intimate settings provided students access to the scholars to discuss their research, ask questions, and receive pedagogical and career advice. Generous sponsors of the lectures this year included the Centre for Jewish Studies, Emmanuel College, and the DSR.



# Lincoln H. Blumell's *Lettered Christians*

## Review by Sarah E. Rollens

New Testament Tools, Studies and Documents 39. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2012. vxi + 437 pp.

*Lettered Christians: Christians, Letters, and Late Antique Oxyrhynchus* is based on Lincoln H. Blumell's recent dissertation at the DSR under the direction of John S. Kloppenborg. Where the study of early Christianity typically focuses on texts penned by erudite Christian authors, Blumell's project joins a growing trend to supplement these elite voices with data "on the ground." In this case, the object of analysis is the huge cache of documentary papyri discovered at the end of the nineteenth century in garbage heaps near the city of Oxyrhynchus in Egypt. The author is interested in a particular subset of these documents (Christian letters that date between the third and the seventh centuries C.E.) and what they indicate about the social history of Christianity in the Oxyrhynchite nome (county). Figuring out which of these letters should be deemed "Christian letters," however, is no easy task.

As one might expect, Christians rarely explicitly identified themselves as such in their personal correspondences. Blumell, therefore, first assembles a collection of features which might indicate, with different degrees of certitude, that the author of a given letter was Christian. These include such markers as the specific term "Christian," the presence of crosses or monograms (e.g., the christogram or the staurogram), *nomina sacra*, and references to monotheistic theology. Of the 8,500 documents that have been published from Oxyrhynchus, only 800 are letters, and of those, under 200 are explicitly Christian based on this reasoning.

Blumell investigates this collection of Christian letters for evidence of travel, social networks, and Christian education. Contrary to the image propagated in ancient Christian literature, most Oxyrhynchite Christians were not apparently travelling for pilgrimage or proselytization. Most travel was undertaken for more ordinary reasons, and it appears especially common to travel for purposes related to one's occupation. Moreover, based on this epistolary evidence, Oxyrhynchite Christians rarely ventured far from home; most letters attest to social and occupational networks within the Oxyrhynchite nome itself. Long distance travel and correspondence are rare.

When it comes to evidence for Christian education in Oxyrhynchus, Blumell is surprised to find that the letters are noticeably devoid of overt references to scripture. After scrutinizing the letters, "there are only four instances where a scriptural passage has been explicitly cited [Ephesians, Job, Sirach, and Genesis], one instance of a quote [Job], and a handful of what would appear to be genuine echoes/

reminiscences" (232). This is probably a function of the fact that the letters largely concern quotidian affairs, and it should not be taken to imply that these Christians were less interested in scriptural matters than others throughout the Mediterranean world. Blumell also points out that although the church did not typically make an effort to educate the laity to any great degree, the style and form of Christian letters is on par with non-Christian ones.

Blumell rounds off the discussion by examining the letters for their onomastic evidence. In addition to rarely identifying themselves as Christian, Oxyrhynchite Christians did not initially bear overtly Christian names either—if anything they

had ostensibly Jewish names, such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. (Of course, boundaries between the two traditions are still ill-defined in this period.)

Names such as Peter, Paul, and John are attested in the letters, but Mark and Matthew are absent.

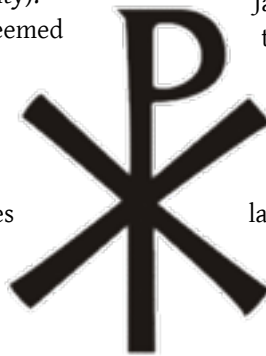
Names connected to Christian martyrs and local legendary figures are well attested. In general, the late antique period witnesses a shift in naming patterns, with overtly Christian names becoming more popular and pagan ones slowly disappearing. This accords with the increasing Christianization of Egypt during this time.

The epilogue briefly considers the odd decline of papyrological evidence at Oxyrhynchus starting in the middle of the seventh century. There is not a persuasive explanation for this decline, as the Christian community seems to have survived well into the period of Muslim rule. Perhaps, Blumell speculates, more recent papyri from the seventh century onward were on the outermost layers of the garbage mounds and were simply not able to survive natural decay or later settlement patterns.

*Lettered Christians* is a sobering reminder of the fragmentary nature of our sources for ancient Christianity, but it is simultaneously a testament to the ways in which "mundane" documentary evidence can flesh out the narrative of early Christianity, which is still largely constructed on the basis of elite literary products. Despite Blumell's detailed and original investigation, his book is only the beginning of the research that needs to be done on these sources. Only a fraction of the documents from Oxyrhynchus have even been published.

Given the superior quality of the analysis in *Lettered Christians*, one hopes that he will continue this project as more of these documents become available.

*Sarah is a PhD candidate in the Department for the Study of Religion and the Centre for Jewish Studies.*



# The Medium and the Missionary: Christianity and Colonialism in Canada

## Pamela Klassen

In January 2012, I delivered the John Albert Hall Lectures at the Centre for Studies of Religion and Society in the University of Victoria. Over the course of eight days, the four lectures examined how changing media technologies have shaped Christian practices of testimony and confession over the past hundred years in North America. Focusing particularly on how Anglican missionaries invested photographs, printing presses, and radio with both communicative and “spiritual” meaning, I argued that confessional stories and their mediation were at the heart of the missionary labour that contributed to the colonial invention of early Canada. Missionaries, anthropologists, and First Nations people all strove to narrate—and testify—to their experiences as they participated in and sometimes resisted the creation of Canada in the late nineteenth and

early twentieth centuries. Following the life and travels of Du Vernet, the eventual Archbishop of British Columbia, the book traces his shift from a confident evangelist to a questioning technological mystic, as he travels from Toronto, to the Rainy River Ojibwe, and settles in Prince Rupert, BC.

The Centre for Studies in Religion and Society, directed by Paul Bramadat, was a remarkably hospitable intellectual hub within the University of Victoria, something that many DSR graduate students, including Rebekka King and Benjamin Wood, also know from their visits to the CSRS as research and teaching fellows. I was particularly fortunate to present this British Columbia-based research at the University of Victoria, which is an important center for the study of religion in the context of First Nations history.

## Communities that Write

### Richard Last

Last year I wrote an article that appeared in the April 2012 issue of *New Testament Studies*, in which I contribute to a debate that asks: to whom were the gospels written? The two dominant answers are: (1) the gospels were written for individual communities and (2) the gospels were composed for ‘all Christians.’ Proponents from both perspectives agree that these texts were produced within early churches, but no one had mined our extensive data from ancient associations for information on how, why and to whom communities wrote in antiquity. By employing this new approach, I offered two observations about ancient communal writing.

The first observation concerns the nature of authorship. Some scholars believe that gospel-writers were individual authors working within early churches. As a result of their individualism, their final products supposedly failed to reflect the concerns and contexts of their communities. The problem with this theory, I argue, is that writing in antiquity was a collaborative project. For example, associations composed and authorized their material collectively – their writings were customarily read before the entire group and approved by vote before written in final form and deemed authoritative. Ancient writers, such as Pliny the Younger and Josephus, draw attention to the collaborative nature of the pre-publication stage of writings. These authors typically sought input from others before publishing their work. In fact, early Christian writers seem to have been just as collaborative. For example, the apostle Paul worked with co-authors and secretaries while composing letters. Patterns of collectivism

in ancient writing practices likely ensured that a communal text such as a gospel would reflect the attitudes and contributions of the affiliates from its authoring community. The authorization process by which an association or synagogue accepted a new piece of writing should caution against the idea that a text about Jesus could automatically be made authoritative in a community that did not write it.

My second observation speaks more directly to whether the gospels furthered the agenda of narrow or broad audiences. I found that associations were mostly interested in themselves when they wrote, even when their intended audience was broad. They wrote to record their foundation stories, to legitimate themselves in front of other members of their polis, to attract wealthy affiliates, and to establish communal guidelines that fit their particular membership profile. We find a similarly-selfish agenda behind the Hellenistic Jewish text, *Joseph and Aseneth*. This narrative was written within an Egyptian Jewish community in order to affirm its challenged rights to landownership in Heliopolis. Early Christian communities were just as self-interested. Given the diversity of the early movement, it is no surprise that individual gospels, tailored to suit the interests of their authoring community, were only authoritative for the congregations that wrote them. It is partially for this reason that the Matthean community decided to make its own gospel even though it already had access to gospels written by external groups with different identities and concerns.

*Richard is a PhD candidate in the DSR studying the social benefits of membership in the first-century Corinthian Christ-group.*

shared technical tutorials throughout the semester.

The work of these two courses was focused on the creation of an online oral history presentation for which, in the case of Garrett's course, students studied aspects of the life-story of a local Buddhist practitioner, reflecting on how issues in Buddhist thought are lived as contextualized and evolving challenges for individual practitioners. In both courses, students learned how to plan, record, edit and analyze an oral history and prepare it for online presentation; they engaged in the hands-on practice of original research in history and religious studies; they gained practical skills in the collaborative use of various information technologies, including Zotero, Drupal, HTML, CSS and Javascript; and they learned and practiced skills in project planning and management, and in collaborative critical thinking, brainstorming, negotiation, delegation of tasks, and writing as part of a team.

In Garrett's and Price's courses, the final project of creating websites for their oral history projects required students to learn the basics of HTML, CSS, and even a modest amount of Javascript. The learning curve was steep for all students, but students were excited about the oral history assignment and, with some hard work, mastered the technologies needed to complete their projects. At the beginning of the semester, one of Garrett's students wrote,

"When I left class last Friday I felt intimidated by the course objectives and overwhelmed by the prospect of creating an online oral history presentation. Through the last three years of my undergraduate degree as a Religious Studies and English double major, I have never been required by a course to go outside the classroom and engage with practitioners in the community. When I signed up for the course I felt certain that every Friday morning a professor would lecture from a set of notes and I would be required to listen and take my own notes and then regurgitate the information in a final essay and/or exam. However, having read the readings for this week, I feel less nervous about the

```
// inside this script element we don't write in HTML, but in the Javascript language instead.
// this is what comments look like in that language.

// this is a little logic, we create something called a "function" that checks to see
// if the web page has loaded yet, and then starts working.
document.addEventListener("DOMContentLoaded", function() {

    // we define a new variable here, which creates a "Popcorn instance" based on the
    // file that lives in the HTML element called "media"
    // Because there's no semi-colon at the end of the line, this whole section of
    // code is interpreted as a single command.
    var pop = new Popcorn("#media");

    // now instruct "pop" to listen to the file, and pay attention to see when it plays.
    .listen('play', function(){
        $(".staticcontent").remove();
    })

    // here are several commands that we give to popcorn. Each uses one of the popcorn.js
    // plugin commands ("footnote", "googlemap", "image", etc.) to pop new content up into
    // an HTML element identified by the "target" variable you see here.

    // each command has a set of "parameter-value pairs" that tell popcorn what to do.

    .googlemap({ // run the googlemap plugin; not the open paren followed by open bracket
        "id": "firstmap", // id of info -- usually not important, you can leave it out. note the final comma
        "start": 10, // what time, IN SECONDS, to start showing this information
        "end": 0, // what time to stop
        "target": "popcorn-container", // where to display -- don't forget this!
        "type": "TERRAIN", // what kind of map
        "zoom": 15, // zoom level
        "location": "Fort Angeles, WA", // where to start
    }) // don't forget to close your brackets
});
```

A Javascript template page that students in Garrett's and Price's courses were required to modify for use in their own oral history websites.

coursework and I would go as far as to say I am excited to participate and actively engage with the course material in the hands-on practice of oral history.... I think engaging in the practice of oral history and assessing the course material in such a tangible way will allow me to step outside the comfort zone of the classroom as a silent student and give me the confidence to further develop as an academic."

This collaboration with the History Department led to another project in which Garrett and Price will develop a new software platform providing academic profiles for students in each department, aiming to create a more cohesive academic experience for students in these programs. Secure online profiles, designed to reflect and support academic interests and achievements, will enable students and faculty to identify others within their departmental community with shared academic interests, expertise, and experiences, and to form networks and working groups around those interests. The creation of persistent, interlinked academic profiles will thus facilitate student/faculty networking and mentorship in the particular educational context of a departmental unit. With support from the U of T's Instructional Technology Initiative Fund and the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, this project will be developed over the next two years in the Department for the Study of Religion and the History Department.



Finally, the last half-hour of the class took the form of a debate. There were no exams in this course, nor were students asked to write any essays. Instead, evaluation was based on participation, weekly journals, and the oral and written components to the debate. Each group debated twice during the semester and debate motions indirectly related to the readings – anything from “Can devout individuals who confess a particular religious faith also be effective scholars of religion?” for Masuzawa’s *The Invention of World Religions*, to “Do native categories suffice for scholars of religion?” for Keane’s *Christian Moderns* – were assigned in the first week. Students were given time to make opening comments, to rebut, to conclude, and to take questions from the class. They were not graded on oral presentation but rather on their ability to work in groups (as assessed by teammates) and on their debate document, a written, expanded version of the argument presented orally. Groups functioned well overall, and we feel that the students benefited from the opportunity to practice an essential skill rarely emphasized in the humanities.

Based on student comments and on our own perception, the class seems to have been a success. For third- and fourth-year undergraduates who often complain that they do not feel engaged in their own learning process, the class provided a contrast. Students report coming out of the class with a greater appreciation for the theories we discussed. Overall, we look forward to attempting this pedagogical method again – with a few small changes – in the near future. Until then, we are currently co-writing a paper with four students from the class to reflect on the experience. We will present this paper in May at the Eastern International Region American Academy of Religion conference in Waterloo – it will be the students’ first time presenting at an academic conference.

Nick is a doctoral candidate completing his dissertation on the topic of Freud and space. He will be teaching a course on religion in the works of Joss Whedon this summer. Rebekka is a doctoral candidate working in anthropology of religion and North American religion. This summer she will be teaching a course on Rites of Passage.

We are immensely proud of the accomplishments of our graduate students too. They have been remarkably active in major academic conferences – the American Academy of Religion, Society of Biblical Literature, the Context Group, the Humanities and Social Sciences Congress, and the Western Association of Jewish Studies – and they continue to publish journal articles in top-tier academic journals. A recent DSR graduate, Lincoln Blumell, now at Brigham Young University, has just published a revised version of his dissertation as *Lettered Christians: Christians, Letters, and Late Antique Oxyrhynchus* in the prestigious series, *New Testament Tools, Studies and Documents* (see review on page 18).

For the first time, the Department has partnered with high-school teachers from the Toronto District School Board, to offer a workshop on various aspects of the contemporary study of religion. Four of our members presented their work to 35 teachers, who received the workshop with such enthusiasm that we will offer similar events at least once a year from now on. We believe that this will be an effective way to communicate to teachers, and through them to high-school students, that the study of religion is an exciting, challenging, and timely intellectual enterprise that engages critical issues of human life.

The Department was the beneficiary of a surprise and valuable gift. Ms. Gerda Cole, a long-time attendee at the Seminar on Culture and Religion in Antiquity, kindly donated to the Department the facsimile edition of the Leningrad Codex (Codex Leningradensis B19A), the oldest surviving complete copy of the Hebrew Bible, dating from 1008, or possibly 1009, CE. It is now on display in the foyer.



Codex Leningradensis, folio 474a

continued on page 24



Keren Rubenstein teaching Hebrew language courses.

# The Evolution of Religion and Morality

## DSR's Shafique Virani and Partners Win Major New SSHRC Grant

Religion in some form exists in every society, is one of the defining features of our species, and is also at the center of many contemporary social and political conflicts. From tensions between religious rights and the values of civil society in Canada to controversies over abortion, polygamy, interfaith relations and the teaching of evolution, not a day goes by without religion making international headlines. Despite its ubiquity and centrality to human affairs, however, religion remains, from an academic perspective, one of the least studied and most poorly understood aspects of human behavior. We know much more about the structure of the Shakespearean sonnet, or the intricacies of the human digestive system, than we do about why a person would be willing to die on behalf of a deity, or abandon a life of comfort to become a charity worker dedicated to the poor. The proposed project is founded on the conviction that effectively answering the question of what religion

is, and why it plays such a ubiquitous role in human existence, requires going beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries, including the line that still divides the humanities and the natural sciences. This project proposes to establish, over 6 years, the institutional framework for an interdisciplinary, international partnered research network dedicated to exploring the evolution of religion and morality. This network of partner institutions in North America, Europe and East Asia will bring together theorists of religion, philosophers, historians, linguists, anthropologists, psychologists, economists, biologists, and mathematicians to generate hypotheses concerning the evolutionary origins of religion and morality, and test them with a variety of methods, including textual interpretation, qualitative historical analysis, quantification of historical data, ethnographic observation, controlled laboratory experiments and mathematical modeling. The creation of this research-driven network will be accompanied by the formation of a new, permanent Program for the Study of Religion at UBC, an undergraduate and graduate training and research program with a strongly interdisciplinary character. Including also a partnership between UBC-SFU, McGill and the U of T, this project will create a powerful synergy combining world-class research, HQP training, undergraduate education and public outreach.

# Hasid Tales, Poetry, Kafka and the Talmud

By Cole Sadler

I have fond memories of the fall semester of 2011 in which I made friends with visiting Professor Jean Baumgarten of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), Centre de Recherches Historiques (CHR), Centre d'Études Juives (CEJ), in Paris. I met Professor Baumgarten on the elevator, not being in any of his courses, and we struck up a lovely rapport and became friends. I drew him a newspaper-style comic illustrating the Hasidic tale of Schwartz Wolfe, at which he had a good laugh; the comic is now framed and returned with him to France.

I attended all three special guest lectures given by Prof. Baumgarten for CJS. The lectures dealt with dissemination of Shabbatean heresy via Yiddish literature as a medium for Jews illiterate in Hebrew. Among the more shocking and interesting topics was a kind of Jewish 'satanism' in Poland among those who felt that the world had been given to Lilith and Samael. I attended one lecture wearing a mask with fake blood pouring from the eyes. Prof. Baumgarten

was pleased at the appropriateness of the attire to the subject matter and referred to me as Shabbatai Zvi from then on.

With Prof. Baumgarten's impending departure in December, I made sure to throw a party at my large co-op house in his honour. He sat in a chair like one of the Rebbes of old, while people from the department paid their respects. In attendance were the DSR's Yaniv Feller, Chipamong Chowdhury, a number of Prof. Baumgarten's undergraduate students, and DSR faculty Harry Fox and his wife Tirzah. Wine was drank, Yiddish Hardcore Punk music was danced to Hasidic style, and recitations were given of Hasid tales, poetry, Kafka and the Talmud (thank Prof. Fox for the last one). I was greatly honoured to have Prof. Baumgarten at my house, and I count him as a dear friend whom I plan to visit in the future.

*Cole Sadler is an MA student at DSR. His interests include Continental European Philosophy, Hermeneutics, Existential Ethics and Jewish-Christian Dialogue.*

## CORE FACULTY

**Bryant, Joseph** Sociology of Religion | **Coleman, Simon** Anthropology of Religion | **Dhand, Arti** Hinduism and South Asian Studies | **DiCenso, James** Religion, Ethics and Modern Thought | **Emmrich, Christoph** Buddhist Studies | **Fox, Harry** Judaism | **Garrett, Frances** Buddhist Studies | **Goldberg, Sol** Philosophy of Religion | **Goodman, Amanda** Buddhist Studies | **Green, Kenneth** Judaism | **Harris, Jennifer** Medieval Christianity | **Klassen, Pamela** Anthropology of Christianity | **Kloppenborg, John** Religions of Mediterranean Antiquity | **Locklin, Reid** Comparative Theology | **Marshall, John** Religions of Mediterranean Antiquity | **Marshall, Ruth** Religion, Politics & the Public Sphere | **Mittermaier, Amira** Modern Islam | **Najman, Hindy** Religions of Mediterranean Antiquity | **Newman, Judith** Hebrew Bible | **Novak, David** Modern Judaism | **O'Neill, Kevin** Globalization/transnationalism | **Raman, Srilata** Modern Hinduism | **Rao, Ajay** South Asian Religions | **Rubenstein, Keren** Modern Hebrew | **Ruffle, Karen** Religion and Gender | **Saleh, Walid** Islam | **Smith, Kyle** Syriac Christianity | **Virani, Shafique** Islam

## AFFILIATED FACULTY

**Abray, Jane** Religion & Gender, Christianity | **Airhart, Phyllis** Modern Christianity | **Argarate, Pablo** Early Christianity | **Bahat, Dan** Biblical Archaeology | **Bendlin, Andreas** Roman History | **Bergen, Doris** History | **Black, Deborah** Medieval Philosophy | **Boddy, Janice** Anthropology of Religion | **Cobb, Michael** English and Sexual Diversity Studies | **Coachelin, Isabelle** Medieval Mediterranean Christianity | **Corbett, John** Judaism and Early Christianity | **Cunningham, Hilary** Religion, Culture and Society | **Daswani, Girish** Anthropology | **Dixon, David** Psychology of Religion | **Donaldson, Terence** Early Christianity | **Eisenbichler, Konrad** Renaissance Studies | **Emon, Anver** Islamic Law | **Everett, Nicholas** History | **Fadel, Mohammad** Law | **Fehige, Yiftach** Religion & Science | **Franks, Paul** Philosophy of Religion, Jewish Thought | **Gibbs, Robert** Philosophy of Religion, Jewish Thought | **Goering, Joseph** Religion, Culture and Society | **Goetschel, Willi** Philosophy | **Gooch, Paul** Philosophy of Religion | **Hackworth, Jason** Geography | **Harrak, Amir** Aramaic & Syriac Languages | **Hewitt, Marsha** Religion, Ethics and Modern Thought | **Kanaganayakam, Chelva** Tamil and South Asian Literature | **Kasturi, Malavika** South Asian History and Religion | **Khan, Abraham** Philosophy of Religion | **Kingwell, Mark** Religion, Aesthetics and Politics | **Kivimae, Juri** Early Modern Europe | **Lambek, Michael** Anthropology of Religion | **Lawson, Todd** Islamic Studies | **Meacham, Tirzah** Judaism | **Magee, John** Classics and Medieval Studies | **McLean, Bradley** Christian Origins, Interpretation Theory | **McGowan, Mark** Modern Christianity | **Metso, Sarianna** Hebrew Bible | **Meyerson, Mark** History | **Mills, Kenneth** History | **Most, Andrea** English and Jewish Studies | **Mullin-Cuthbert, Amy** Religion and Aesthetics, Religion and Women | **Northrup, Linda** Medieval Islamic History | **Purtile, Jennifer** Asian Art | **Raffaelli, Enrico** Zoroastrianism | **Ross, Jill** Comparative Literature | **Sharma, Jayeeta** South Asian Studies | **Scharper, Stephen** Religion and the Environment | **Shantz, Colleen** Christian Origins | **Shen, Vincent** Chinese Religions and Philosophy | **Stefanovic, Ingrid** Religion, Culture and Society | **Stoeber, Michael** Philosophy of Religion | **Subtelny, Maria** Islam | **Taylor, Glen** Religion of Ancient Israel | **Ten Kortenaar, Neil** Comparative Literature | **Terpstra, Nicholas** Religion, Culture and Society | **Toulouse, Mark** North American Religions | **Vaage, Leif** Early Christianity | **Vaggione, Richard** Christianity | **Walfish, Barry** Medieval Judaism | **Wiebe, Donald** Philosophy of Religion

## RETIRED FACULTY

**Davies, A.** Modern Christianity | **Dooley, A.** Celtic Religion | **McIntire, T.** Modern Christianity | **McMullin, N.** Buddhist Studies | **McSorley, H.** Reformation thought, inner Christian ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue | **Nicholson, G.** Philosophy of Religion | **O'Connell, J.** South Asian Religions | **O'Toole, R.** Religion, Culture and Society | **Richardson, P.** Religions of Mediterranean Antiquity | **Savory, R.M.** Religion and politics in Islam, Shi'ism; modern Iran | **Schmidt, L.** Religion and Ethics | **Sinkewicz, R.** Early & Medieval Christianity | **Vertin, J.M.** Philosophy of Religion | **Watson, G.A.B.** Christianity

## GRADUATE STUDENT AWARDS, 2011-12

**SSHRC:** Rachel Loewen, Shanifa Nasser-Sunderji, Ryan Olfert, Richard Last, Matt King; **CGSD SSHRC:** Rebecca Bartel, Ian Brown, Michelle Christian, Brigidda Zapata, Maria Dasios, Elizabeth Klaiber, Callie Callon, Youcef Soufi, Madison Robins, David Belfon, Paul Nahme; **CGSM SSHRC:** Nigel Fernando, Omar Edaibat **OGS-PhD:** Nicholas Dion, Greg Beiles, Arun Brahmbhatt, David Kaden, Sarah Rollens, Simon Appolloni, Andrew Erlich, Barbara Hazelton, Mourad Laabdi, Nathalie LaCoste, Lindsay Macumber, Dianna Roberts-Zauderer, Paul York, Amy Elizabeth Fisher; **OGS-MA:** Nicholas Field; **Connaught:** Amy Marie Fisher, Shaftolu Gulamadov, Sarah Rollens; **Trillium:** Yaniv Feller; **Avie Bennett Award:** Ian Brown, Ryan Olfert, Elena Young; **Mary H. Beatty Fellowship:** Shanifa Nasser-Sunderji, Ryan Olfert; **FAS Fund for Study Elsewhere of Less Commonly Taught Languages:** Jessica Radin; **H. Albert Ellam Travel Award:** Alexander Green; **Jackman Junior Fellow:** Jairan Gahan; **McGuaig-Throop Bursary:** Alexander Green; **Julia Ching Award:** Jenny Bright

## PH.D. GRADUATES

Jason McKinney "On the Metapolitics of Decay: Walter Benjamin's Will to Happiness"; Christina Reimer "A Fountain Sealed: Virginity and the American Evangelical Family"; Kathleen Gibbons "Vice and Self-Examination in the Christian Dessert"; Keir Hammer "Disambiguating Rebirth: A Socio-rhetorical Exploration of Rebirth Language in 1 Peter"

## MA GRADUATES

Nigel Fernando, Andrew Erlich, Basit Iqbal, Sean Hillman, Barbara Hazelton, Shanifa Nasser-Sunderji, Elliot Berger, Nicole Hilton, Victoria Nguyen, Arthur Ringis, Samuel Shonkoff, Brigidda Zapata

## Nicholas Schonhoffer

It is with great sadness that we announce the death of one of our doctoral students, Nicholas Schonhoffer, who died on January 24th, 2012. The Department offers its deepest condolences to his family and to all his friends. A memorial was held for Nick on Thursday February 2nd and a Travelling Bursary has been created in his name. Nick will be sorely missed by all who knew him. Nick was working on a dissertation on the social and political contexts of the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of John. He had participated for two years in the archaeological excavations at Bethsaida, Israel and was in the final stages of his doctoral degree.

The DSR welcomes donations to the T. Nicholas Schonhoffer Travelling Bursary. The Donation Form can be found at:

<http://www.religion.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/In-Memoriam-Pledge-Form.pdf>



Amy Fisher and Sarina Annis at the grave of Archbishop Frederick H. Du Vernet, in Fairlawn Cemetery, Prince Rupert.



In May 2011, two Religion students joined Prof. Pamela Klassen on a research trip to archives in Vancouver and Prince Rupert, British Columbia, thanks to the support of a SSHRC Standard Research Grant. Amy Fisher, a Ph.D. candidate, and Sarina Annis, a third-year undergraduate majoring in Religion and Philosophy, had their fill of reading and photographing missionary newsletters and journals, letters, and books from the personal library of Anglican Archbishop Frederick Du Vernet (1860-1924), who is the subject of Klassen's next book.

Sarina Annis, Pamela Klassen, and Amy Fisher on the last evening of their stay in Prince Rupert, with the Hecate Strait behind them.



#### From the Chair, continued from page 21

As I have done for the past two years, this summer I will take several graduate students to Israel to participate in the excavations at et-Tell, likely the location of the biblical site Bethsaida. The dig, directed by Dr. Rami Arav of the University of Nebraska at Omaha, has already excavated a wealth of artifacts from the site, including a gold aureus of Antoninus Pius (emperor 138-161 CE), numerous items of pottery, fishing equipment and, last year, two Egyptian scarabs.

Finally, the Department has been enhanced by a number of recent hires and visitors. Amanda Goodman was hired this spring into a tenure-track position in Chinese Buddhism. Dr. Keren Rubinstein joined the Department in the summer of 2011,

teaching modern Hebrew. Dr. Sol Golberg, a philosopher of religion, will join the Department in July 2012 and begin to offer courses in contemporary ethics, philosophy of religion, and Jewish thought. And we are pleased to have Dr. Matthew Lagrone join us as a Tikvah post-doctoral fellow, teaching courses in contemporary Judaism.

As always, as Chair I express my deep appreciation to our administrative staff, Irene Kao, Marilyn Colaco, and Fereshteh Hashemi, and to my fellow department administrative colleagues, Drs. Frances Garrett and Jennifer Harris, whose support, creativity, energy, and scholarship make this a great place to be.

The University of Toronto respects your privacy. We do not sell, rent or trade our mailing lists. If you no longer wish to receive newsletters from the Department for the Study of Religion, please call (416) 978-2139 or e-mail [address.update@utoronto.ca](mailto:address.update@utoronto.ca).

Department for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto  
170 St. George Street, Floor 3  
Toronto, ON M5R 2M8 Canada  
Phone 416-978-2395  
Fax 416-978-1610  
[www.religion.utoronto.ca/](http://www.religion.utoronto.ca/)

Newsletter Editor: Frances Garrett  
([frances.garrett@utoronto.ca](mailto:frances.garrett@utoronto.ca))

## Please support the Department for the Study of Religion by making a gift

The family, friends and colleagues of Nicholas Schonhoffer invite you to make a donation to the Department for the Study of Religion, at the University of Toronto, in order to establish a bursary in his memory.

Please return this completed form or donate by phone by contacting Jacob Wesolowski at 416.978.2722.

Give: ☐ \$250 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$50 ☐ Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Please recognize me as a member of the Presidents' Circle.  
This calendar year I have given a total of \$1,827 or more.

Please designate my gift as follows:

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ to the Department for the Study of Religion

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ to the T. Nicholas Schonhoffer Travelling Bursary

### Payment Options

☐ Cheque (Payable to the University of Toronto)  
(If donating to the T. Nicholas Schonhoffer Travelling Bursary, please indicate \*Schonhoffer in the memo)

☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ American Express

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry: \_\_\_\_\_

Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

May we recognize you by including your name in published donor lists?

☐ Yes, please recognize me as \_\_\_\_\_

☐ No

**Please note that a tax receipt will be sent to you by mail**

Please return this form to:

OFFICE OF ADVANCEMENT

ATTN: JACOB WESOLOWSKI, DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

Sidney Smith Hall, 100 St. George Street, Suite 2032

Toronto, ON, M5S 3G3, Canada

Or e-mail to: [jacob.wesolowski@utoronto.ca](mailto:jacob.wesolowski@utoronto.ca)

**Thank you for your generous support!**

### Leadership Giving Societies

*The Presidents' Circle* honours donors whose annual commitment of \$1,827 or more reflects the vision and leadership of the University's past presidents – individuals who helped U of T achieve its prominence.

Individuals who give \$2,500 or more annually to any department within the Faculty of Arts & Science are included in *The Dean's Society*. Members receive invitations to exclusive events and online recognition.

These unique giving societies are an opportunity for the University to maintain an ongoing relationship with its leadership donors. As a member, you will be recognized as one of our most generous benefactors, receiving invitations to special events throughout the year, including the Presidents' Circle Garden Party.

### Other Ways to Give

There are many ways to support us - from leaving a lasting legacy in your Will to making a tax-efficient Gift of Securities. If you would like more information on:

- Leaving a bequest
- Making a Gift of Securities
- Giving through an employer's Corporate Matching Gift Program
- Or other alternatives

Please call Jacob Wesolowski at 416.978.2722 or send an e-mail to [jacob.wesolowski@utoronto.ca](mailto:jacob.wesolowski@utoronto.ca)

### Your Privacy

The information on this form is collected and used solely for the administration of the University's advancement activities, undertaken pursuant to the University of Toronto Act, 1971.

If you have any questions, please refer to [www.utoronto.ca/privacy](http://www.utoronto.ca/privacy) or contact the University's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Coordinator at 416.946.7303, McMurich Building, Room 201, 12 Queen's Park Crescent West, Toronto, ON M5S 1A8.

**Project Code: 0560001600**

**Solicitation Code: 0570045385**

**Charitable Reg. BN 108162330-RR0001**