



The Big House in Klemtu, BC. Photo by Sean Hillman. See story on page 4.

## From the Chair John Kloppenborg

The past year has been typically busy, September beginning with the welcome of new graduate students into the Department, and no fewer than six dissertation defenses in time for the November convocation and conferral of degrees and several more in the June convocation. Our graduates have been remarkably successful in obtaining post docs and teaching positions – at Princeton University, Queens University, Rhodes College (Memphis), St. Olaf College, St. Mary's University (Halifax), and Middle Tennessee State University. At the previous (2013) convocation, a former chair of the Department, Professor Jane McAuliffe, was honored with an honorary doctoral degree, in

recognition of her contributions to the U of T and to higher education. Jane was one of the first doctoral graduates from the Centre for the Study of Religion, and went to teach at Emory, Georgetown, and in 2008 became the eighth president of Bryn Mawr College.

Speaking of honours... Dr. Amira Mittermaier was elected to the new Royal Society of Canada College of New Scholars, Artists and Scientists – the only new fellow from the Faculty of Arts and Science! I was elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, to join Professor David Novak and Professor Peter Richardson of the Department for the Study of Religion. Professor Pamela Klassen won the Northrop Frye teaching

award, which recognizes faculty who involve students in their research, and she has also won the Annaliese Maier Prize from the Humboldt Foundation, which will allow her to take students to Tübingen for their research, and to organize conferences in Germany and in Toronto for the next five years. Professors Garrett and I have been successful with two U of T (undergraduate) Excellence Awards for the summer of 2015, which will allow two undergraduate to work on the research projects of their mentors. One is already off to India, and another is immersed in Greek and Latin epigraphy, working with me on my project on associative practices in Mediterranean

# From the Graduate Director

## Jennifer A. Harris

The past years have presented some great joys and some challenges to the graduate programme at the DSR. Among the joys, we celebrated the completion of a number of PhD and MA degrees. Here is a list of the graduates from our programme since our last newsletter:

PhD: Usha Khosla, Norman Tobias, Syed Adnan Hussain, Callie Callon, Erin Vearncombe, Ryan Stoner, David Kaden, Matt King, Simon Appolloni, Ronald Charles, Bryan Levman, Shari Golberg, Jodie Boyer, Tim Langille, Rick Last, Smita Kothari, Sarah Rollens, Alex Green, Paul Nahme, and John Lorenc.

MA: Ramzi Taleb, Vishal Sharma, Judith Ellen Brunton, Sara Abdel-Latif, Joel Richmond, Rose Deighton, Mariam Irshad, Grace MacCormick, Gary Mansfield, Kunga Sherab, Patrick Stange, Jasveen Puri, and Allison Murphy.

Many of our PhD graduates have gone on to full-time academic work (including post-doctoral fellowship). And a number of the MA students have gone on to doctoral work in the DSR and elsewhere. We also celebrate the non-academic work undertaken by our doctoral and master's graduates.

According to statistics drawn up by the University of Toronto, our doctoral students have been completing their degrees in record time. Last year, the average time to completion was 5.5

years (down from 7.3 years in 2010). Our multi-year average time to completion (2009-2014) is now 6.1 years, which is below the average for humanities doctorates at the University of Toronto. Given that funding for the doctoral programme ends after the fifth year, we are pleased to see our students completing in a timely manner.

I note these statistics because time to completion and funding were among the issues raised during a significant challenge we faced. Many of our graduate students went out on strike as members of CUPE 3902. The strike was a difficult time for everyone involved (graduate students, undergraduate students, staff and faculty), but we were a mutually supportive community. Staff, faculty, and students volunteered to make hot lunches for striking graduate students and showed their support in other ways as well. Students expressed their appreciation in a lunch they cooked for the Department after the strike ended.

In the coming year, we look forward to developing a proposal for a new Masters in Religion and the Public Sphere programme.



Students and supportive faculty on the picket line (left) and snacks for hungry strikers in the Department lounge (right).

## GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS 2013-14 & 2014-15

**Brigidda Bell** was awarded the 2014 TATP Teaching Excellence Award.

**Michelle Christian** won the 2014 Jeremias Prize for a Graduate student for her essay “Money and the construction of value in Mt 10:29-31//Lk 12:6-7” at the Humanities and Social Science Congress in 2014.

**Alison Colpitts** and **Helen Mo** founded Sunday Morning Salon, a discussion group for young(ish) people to learn and exchange ideas about current social and political issues. Launched in 2013, Salon topics have included Toronto identity politics, the use and misuse of social technologies, wealth disparity, and the Crimean crisis. Alison and Helen also maintain the Sunday Morning Blog; visit [www.sundaymorningsalon.com](http://www.sundaymorningsalon.com).

**Alex Damm**’s (Ph.D. 2012) *Ancient Rhetoric and the Synoptic Problem: Clarifying Markan Priority* (Leuven: Peeters, 2013) was awarded the Francis W. Beare Prize for the best monograph published in 2013 in the area of Religion in the Mediterranean at the Humanities and Social Science Congress in 2014.

**Yaniv Feller** published “From Aher to Marcion: Martin Buber’s Understanding of Gnosis” in *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, a review of Judith Butler’s *Parting Ways* in *Studies in Religion*, and a review of Willi Goetschel’s *The Discipline of Philosophy and the Invention of Modern Jewish Thought in Symposia*. He presented “Election and Suffering: Leo Baeck’s Jewish Hope after the Shoa” at the Claremont Philosophy of Religion Conference, “Leo Baeck’s Colonial Fantasy” at the AJS, and “Out of the Sources of Judaism: Judith Butler and the Jewish Tradition” at the AAR.

**Sean Hillman** was a Graduate Associate at the Centre for Ethics (U of T) in 2013-2014. That year, in addition to a number of presentations in courses, he appeared on the Drew Marshall radio talk show, “Canada’s most listened-to spiritual talk show,” discussing Religious

Studies, Buddhist monasticism and community, and he organized the fourth annual “Rocking the Foundation” Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada benefit concert and he organized third annual PINKTOBER Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation of Ontario benefit concert. In 2015-16, Sean will be Clinical Bioethics Fellow at the Centre for Clinical Ethics (St. Joseph’s Health Centre); this is a one-year full-time paid fellowship in Clinical and Organizational Bioethics that includes consultations (with patients, families and health care teams), teaching, research and policy development. From 2014-present he has also served as Licensed Officiant, Chaplain of Pastoral Care (non-denominational). In 2014 he was Expert Witness in Cham Shan Temple v. Director, Ministry of the Environment: Case Nos. 13-140/13-141/13-142. In this capacity his duties included: Witness Statement and Appeal letters on Buddhism and the importance of environmental context in meditation and pilgrimage practices for Environmental Review Tribunal in the matter of the Sumac Ridge Wind Project which proposes building Industrial Wind Turbines in proximity to a major Buddhist retreat centre development project. Sean’s recent work also includes a Guest Speaker presentation on “Palliative Care and End-of-life Bioethics” at request of Dr. Tseten Dorji, Personal Physician of the Dalai Lama and Chief Medical Officer of Tibetan-run Delek Hospital, Dharamsala; Guest Facilitator service for “Bedside Body Mechanics Workshop” for medical and nursing staff at Delek Hospital; an appearance in 2014 on “Religion and Bioethics” as guest host for online interfaith panel @bioethxchat; and work as editor of the Buddhism Chapters of Multifaith Manual (2014 edition), Ontario Multifaith Council, which is distributed to provincial hospitals, jails, and long term care centres. In 2014-15 Sean completed 6 months of dissertation data collection in India.

**Sayeh Meisami** published a book, *Mulla Sadra* with Oneworld Press, 2013.

**Bryan Levman** taught a course at UTM last year on the *Dhammapada*, and he defended his dissertation, with external examiner Max Deeg. He presented a paper at a conference on “Network and Identity” at the University of Ghent, and he took part in the “Manuscripts and Writing” panel at last year’s IABS conference. He published “Cultural remnants of the indigenous peoples in the Buddhist Scriptures” in the *Buddhist Studies Review* 30.2 (2013). Levman is also working with grad students **Barbara Hazelton** and **Khenpo Kunga Sherab** on a translation of the Sanskrit, Pali, and Tibetan versions of the *Sasajataka*.

**Cole Sadler** received the SGS Conference Grant to present at the conference “Games of Late Modernity” at the International School of Philosophy (ISVW) in Leusden, the Netherlands, in 2015. He has had an editorial role in two books by **David Novak**, and worked closely with co-authors Matthew Levering and U of T’s **Anver Emon** of the Faculty of Law.

**Yousef Soufi** held a 2014-15 Jackman Humanities Institute Graduate Fellowship for his research on “Playing with the Law: The Disputation and Islamic Legal Reasoning.” Youcef examines disputation—a mode of argumentation that characterizes the Islamic legal tradition—as a game whose goal is to best the legal reasoning of an opponent. Legal principals are seen anew, not as absolute rules, but as potential moves and countermoves in a dialogical disputation, whose outcome is the product of disputants’ skill.

**Andrew Tebbutt**, **Zoe Anthony**, and **Sol Goldberg** began a Continental philosophy of religions reading group last summer. The group brought together graduate students and faculty members interested in exploring the substantive core and basic methodologies of Continental philosophy of religions.



# Living among the Pacific Coastal Natives of Klemtu, B.C.

By Sean Hillman

Life on the Pacific Coast began after six hours of travel from Vancouver on three different planes. The final leg was aboard a harrowing and noisy 4-seat “Beaver” prop-plane built in the 60s which tilted with every gust but landed us safely on the choppy water of the bay in Klemtu. As we approached the dock I was greeted by the magnificence of the Big House jutting out on a small peninsula, the face of the wooden building painted with enormous black and red animal-iconography and surrounded by snow-topped trees and a dreamy mist. My wife Alexandra met me in a beat-up white pickup truck and we brought my gear up to what would be our new home right on the ocean. That night we were awoken abruptly by sirens and phone calls informing us of a tsunami warning. There had been an earthquake close to the more northerly islands of Haida Gwaii. We were evacuated to higher ground and I unexpectedly had my first meeting with the community as we helped some of the elderly walk the steps up to the community centre. A familiar routine, people of all ages were friendly and energetic despite the late hour. It was then that I met an adorable and deeply respected matriarch who was the oldest Klemtu local, close to her 100th year. Seeing the heartwarming display of mutual helpfulness and spontaneous storytelling of previous tsunami warnings, I immediately became enamored with the people of Klemtu and their palpable sense of community.

Moving to a remote Native reservation on the Pacific Coast came about by fortunate opportunity, and living in Klemtu changed our lives forever. Through Health Canada, Alex had her choice of working as a Community Health Nurse on a number of Canadian Native reservations. She chose Klemtu based on its coastal location. Formerly called “China Hat” because of the shape of a small parallel island nearby (now known as Cone Island), Klemtu is only accessible by boat or float-plane. This meant shipping our goods by barge and getting used to the realities of living remotely such as having access to only one tiny Chinese food restaurant, and the limited availability of fruit and vegetables at the single convenience store and solitary grocery. The fishing village of around 400 community members is located mid-coast on Swindle Island. Here, two Nations live together in harmony, the Kitsoo of Tsimshian descent and the Xai’Xais who are Heiltsuk. A testament to their co-operative relations, their shared ceremonial Long House was built fairly recently and is truly remarkable

inside and out. Made mostly of cedar, the sights, smells and vibrations of the spacious and earthen-floored building filled me with awe. Enormous Douglas Firs and celebrated carvers were brought in for the main cross-beams and astounding floor-to-ceiling totems representing the four main coastal clans: Blackfish, Eagle, Raven and Wolf.

Being a coastal Native community, fish are of course central to day-to-day life. Conversation revolves around the seasonal appearances and catching success of spring herring, summer halibut and fall salmon. Many work at the hatchery and the Marine Harvest fishery, and families have shallow metal boats called ‘punts’ for private fishing. There also is burgeoning eco-tourism through the Spirit Bear Lodge which provides both employment for locals and boat-tours for international visitors looking to experience the flora and fauna of the Great Bear Rainforest. As the lodge name suggests, catching a glimpse of the elusive white bears that are held as sacred by Coastal Natives is of particular interest. Last season there was an even rarer sight of a Spirit Bear cub! Nominated by National Geographic as one of the top locations for ecologically sensitive tourism, locals often joke that unlike the tourists who often spend a great deal on their visits, they get to see all of the what the area has to offer for free!

Living in one of the largest intact temperate rainforests on the planet means milder temperatures, lush greenery and an abundance of wildlife. It also ensures almost continuous precipitation. On one rare sunny day, one fellow gave me a local opinion on Klemtu weather when I asked how he was doing and he replied wistfully, “Terrible. It’s not raining!” As with the seasonal monsoons in India, I got used to the rain and its various forms. The wind through the channel that our housing backed onto, separating Swindle and Cone Islands, made for exciting fog formations but also rainfall in every possible direction, even horizontally! Quite untouched despite an Indigenous presence for millennia, there are plentiful hiking opportunities. Twenty minutes above the village and surrounded by mountains is the pristine lake that provides the community with their fresh water supply and offering a landscape which my mother-in-law described as “the best church I have ever attended.” The lake feeds two swimming-holes, one that is easy to reach and another that requires walking up through a stream and climbing over fallen trees and huge boulders carpeted with moss until one reaches a majestic forest nook seen by only a handful of humans. The small but deep

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water-hole has been enjoyed by local children for generations and is surrounded by ferns, huge trees and rock formations that beg one to leap off! Some nature experiences of the region were a first for me, such as spotting Orcas from one of the B.C. ferries, regular Bald Eagle sightings and hearing the otherworldly guttural call of an Elephant Seal. However, it was the proximity to whales that really took the cake. One day while biking to the ferry-dock, I spotted something dark breaching the ocean surface about a half click away. For the next hour I had the privilege of observing a Humpback regularly coming up for air and then diving to reveal both pectoral fins and the tail fluke. The water from its blow-hole often sprayed onto nearby trees, showing the steep drop of the rocky shoreline. Nary another human in sight, this surreal event gave me a sense as to why these beings are held in such esteem. This was reinforced on another occasion when I was taking in the stars one night amidst a sky amazingly dark due to low light pollution. I heard waves breaking on the shore of the channel. No boats had passed recently and then, in the pitch darkness, I heard bursts of breathing from multiple locations and realized that a pod of whales was swimming

through the channel. For hours they swam and breathed nearby, and my experience during that time was indescribable save to say that it prompted something akin to a meditative state.

Although the experience of nature in Klemtu made for unforgettable memories, it is the people of Klemtu that changed us forever. On my first visit to the hatchery, a worker launched into a series of spine-chilling Sasquatch stories. A popular topic in Klemtu, to be sure, local sightings have led many Bigfoot researchers to come to the area in search of the creature over the years. One of the most enjoyable ways to regularly socialize was the weekly indoor volleyball games, evenings full of laughter, blaring dance and rock music and happy children.

Thanks to our neighbours and friends we also partook of many local foods, each with unique methods of preparation, such as seaweed, herring eggs, clams, crabs, sea urchin, ooligan grease and, of course, fish! The salmon run is central to the Klemtu annual cycle and is marked by several stages. First, the fish steadily head into the bay towards the rivers. Soon the fish are jumping right out of the water, some suggest to stir their eggs, which makes for a furious

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# Social Media in the University Classroom

By Matt King and Nathalie LaCoste

Last academic year (2013-14), we experimented with social media and online writing platforms in our courses (“The Study of Religion” and “Reading Sacred Texts”). In what follows, we summarize what we did and reflect on successes and challenges. The consensus is that some platforms, such as Twitter, offer interesting opportunities for student engagement and for bringing in-class discussions to a potentially global audience.

Follow us on twitter! @historyofwater (Nathalie LaCoste) @rlg200prof (Matt King)

## **Matt King’s course, “The Study of Religion”**

This past fall semester, I incorporated a few social media tools and an experimental final writing project into “The Study of Religion,” a large class (about 130 students by the end). I turned to these digital platforms so that I could be in regular contact with the students (and they with me) and so that they could bring most of their required writing to readers outside the university. To that end, I had tweeting their reading responses, blogging about religion in the news, and co-authoring and publishing an e-book of their final papers. I’d like to summarize the twitter and e-book assignment here, since they proved to be the most interesting and challenging.

For their twitter reading responses, each student needed to tweet me a 140-character reaction every week. They were not allowed to summarize, agree, or disagree with a given author. They needed to take an original position, even if it was just a question, but preferably a critique or else a creative connection with previous conversations from class. Although I think some students hated having to get a twitter account for this course, and while marking 130 tweets every week was exceptionally labor intensive, I would definitely try this again. Using twitter as a regular writing platform meant I could scan their tweets to gauge what they found interesting or difficult in the readings before lecture. It also allowed me to debate them individually before class, asking questions or asking for clarification. Best of all, in many cases the tweets of my students were read and re-tweeted by people from around the world; for example, an Egyptologist from the University of London re-tweeted two of my student’s comments on Asad and Islam, much to the class’s delight.

The second major experiment in this course was to co-author an e-book as a class in lieu of final papers. This was a crazy proposition from day one, and relied very heavily on Jackie Grossano and Andrew Tebbutt (the amazing TAs). This is how it worked (and while it required lots of TLC, it did mostly work!): a list of research topics and analytical perspectives were distributed, students were put into author groups of five based on their preferred analytical perspective and research

topic, they were given a basic research question (depending on whether they were Freudians, Marxists, gender theorists, etc.), and then together they co-wrote a chapter for our e-book. This meant that we had about 23 “chapters” that I am arranging into five sections in the e-book. Each section shares a research topic (Occupy, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the U of T Multifaith Centre, Idle No More, Quebec’s Charter of Secular Values), and is examined by author groups using various analytical perspectives in the study of religion (Freudian, gender theory, aesthetic formation, Marxism, and Durkheimian). I am writing an introduction, and I will be publishing this as an e-book. While I wouldn’t assign Freudianism as an analytical perspective to second years again (!), and while there was some trepidation to do sustained group work, the students were overwhelmingly positive about the experience by the end of the course. I will definitely experiment with publishing final research papers using digital platforms. I think there was a marked qualitative difference in the way they researched and wrote, knowing that the results would be published and available online, as opposed to ending up on my desk or in the TAs recycle bin.

## **Nathalie LaCoste’s course, “Reading Sacred Texts”**

Last winter semester, I incorporated twitter into the course “Reading Sacred Texts” (RLG213H1S). In the final 5 minutes of every lecture I asked the students a “Lecture Question.” The questions ranged from course related material (#RLG213 Why do you think David remains such a paradigmatic figure?) to reflections on paper writing (#RLG213 What is your best essay writing tip?). I challenged the students to reflect on the question and respond in 140 characters or less. In each response, they were asked to include the course hashtag #RLG213 so that I was able to see all of their tweets in one place when I searched #RLG213. Each week, between 15 and 25 students (out of 75) tweeted out their responses. As the semester wore on and students became more familiar with twitter, they even began creating their own hashtags based on the course material. Some weeks, other students and faculty from outside of U of T even joined in our online discussion!

For the students who did not wish to tweet, they were asked to compose their response on a piece of paper and submit it to me after class. Some of the selling points I used to promote the use of twitter for this assignment: 1. As long as they posted their tweet before the next morning I counted it (hence they could leave class 5 minutes early every week), but if using paper it was due at the end of lecture (no exceptions); 2. Students were encouraged to use their electronic devices in class (last 5 minutes only); 3. I sometimes responded to tweets

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(but never responded to written responses on paper), 4. I often tweeted information about the course, thus keeping those on twitter a bit ahead of the game (I obviously didn't only tweet messages, I did use email as well, but I often tweeted things out before I announced them in class or emailed the entire class).

What did I learned from the experience? Getting the question posted while the students were writing was a challenge.

Most of the time I didn't get a chance to post the question until much later that evening. Next time I will use a program such as HootSuite to set up my tweets ahead of time so that they appear at the exact moment when I present the question to the students.

Many students were afraid to test out twitter, they opted instead to write out their responses on paper. While I am not sure that I would want it to be mandatory for all students, I would aim

to do a better job at the beginning of the semester explaining the value of using twitter in this context.

Taking some time at the beginning of the semester to show students how to use it would have probably increased participation rates.

Overall, I am happy with the results and look forward to using this model again in future courses.

## The Elements Experiment: Religion, the Secular, and Public Spaces

What are the elements that make up our shared spaces? This is the question posed to young people by The Elements Experiment. Supported by an Inspirit Foundation National Impact Grant, and based out of the University of Toronto's Religion in the Public Sphere Initiative, The Elements Experiment was launched in 2014 by students at the Department for the Study of Religion, for young people across Canada, and across disciplines, professions, and lived experiences.

The Elements Experiment is comprised of two elements: an online space ([elements.utoronto.ca](http://elements.utoronto.ca)) and a conference. The online space invites submissions from youth (ages 18-30) across Canada to share work that speaks to the themes of religion, the secular, and public spaces in an age of diversity, regardless of whether the content is academic, journalistic, creative, or experiential. This intention was

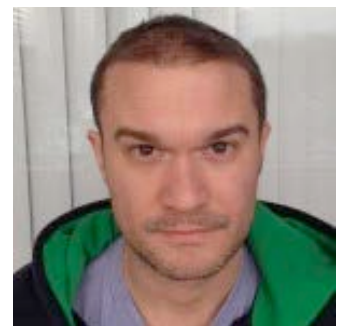
carried into the Elements Experiment Conference in October 2014, where individuals presented work they had published on the online space and new content was brought into the conversation. This conference was an opportunity for face-to-face engagement and the creation of an intellectual space without boundaries.

The Elements Experiment is actively attempting to create an intellectual space that disrupts understandings of who can speak about religion, the secular, and public spaces, and what kinds of language is considered acceptable when speaking about it. Six submissions are highlighted monthly on the online space after being in conversation with the Elements Review Committee. The Elements Experiment Conference was hosted in October 2014.

Please contact [judith.brunton@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:judith.brunton@mail.utoronto.ca) or [ayesha.valliani@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:ayesha.valliani@mail.utoronto.ca) for more information.

### POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW MARC BLAINÉY

Marc G. Blainey joined the department for the Study of Religion as a SSHRC Post-Doctoral Fellow (Jan 2014-Dec 2015). He has a B.A. in anthropology (University of Western Ontario, 2005), an M.A. in archaeology (Trent University, 2007), and a Ph.D. in socio-cultural anthropology (Tulane University, 2013). As a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the U of T he is conducting fieldwork within the scope of the Anthropology of Well-Being, focusing on how psychoactive plants are ritually employed by various spiritual devotees in North America. He has previously conducted research on European members of the Santo Daime, a Brazil-based religion in which members drink ayahuasca as a psychoactive sacrament. He has also investigated the shamanistic use of iron-ore mirrors and entheogens by the ancient Maya culture. He has published articles in academic journals such as *Anthropology of Consciousness*, *Time & Mind*, and the *Journal of Religion & Health*, as well as a paper co-authored with Paul Healy in *Ancient Mesoamerica*. More broadly, he is interested in the domains of Anthropology of Religion, Medical Anthropology, Environmental Anthropology, and Consciousness Studies.



## FACULTY NEWS

**Phyllis Airhart's** book, *A Church with the Soul of a Nation: Making and Remaking the United Church of Canada*, was a finalist for the 2015 Canada Prize in the Humanities awarded by the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences.

**Joseph M. Bryant** was interviewed on CKNW News-Talk Radio, AM980, Vancouver, The World Today with John McComb, on the topic "Are Atheists 'Smarter' than the Religious?" (August 15, 2013). In addition to identifying sundry methodological limitations in the survey research being discussed, he managed to squeeze in a timely reference to the telling case of Sir Isaac Newton. Bryant's review essay, "Apocalypse Then, Apocalypse Now?," appeared in the summer issue of *Contemporary Sociology* (2013).

**Isabelle Cochelin** collaborated on a volume with Frederick Paxton, *The Death Ritual at Cluny in the Central Middle Ages / Le rituel de la mort à Cluny au Moyen Âge central* (Brepols, 2014). This volume presents a complete reconstruction of the ritual response to terminal illness and death at the monastic community of Cluny at the height of its development in the later eleventh and early twelfth centuries. Based on the best manuscript of the customary of Bernard, the only account of the abbey's customs written at and for Cluny itself, the reconstruction contains not just Bernard's Latin description of the ritual process, but also the full texts of the prayers and chants that accompanied it, gathered, in the absence of surviving ritual books from Cluny itself, from contemporary sources with clear ties to the Cluniac customs. Facing-page English and French translations make the results available to readers with little or no facility in Latin. The authors place the Cluniac death ritual in the context of religious responses to death, dying and the care of the dead in medieval Latin Christianity as a whole. They also explicate the origins, development and meaning of the Cluniac death ritual's myriad elements as they were spoken, sung and performed within the sacred spaces of the monastic complex.

**Christoph Emmrich** published "Ritual Period: A Comparative Study of Three Newar Buddhist Menarche Manuals" in *Tradition, Text and Transformation in the Kathmandu Valley: Newar Studies in Honour of Michael Allen*, ed Iain Sinclair,

Special Section of *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* (2014); "Performing Endangerment: Damage, Loss and Maintenance in the Historiography of Newar Religious Artefacts," in *The Shadow of the Golden Age: Art and Identity from Gandhara to the Modern Age*, ed. Julia Hegewald, Studies in Asian Art and Culture (EB-Verlag, 2014); and "Bisvaṃtaraṛājāyāgu dharmmasarīra," *Buddha Jayanti Munejyā*, NS 1133, Yala (Lalitpur): Vajrācārya Pūjāvidhi Adhyāyan Samiti, NS 1133 (2013).

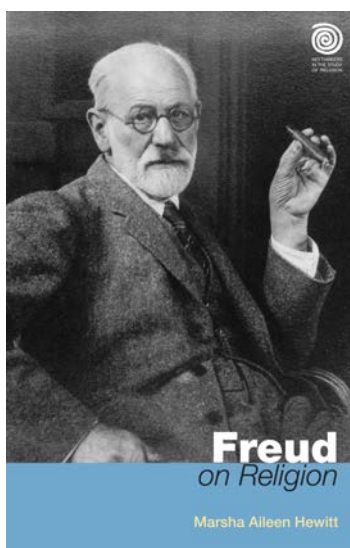
**Amanda Goodman** was awarded a Connaught New Researcher's Award in 2015.

**Ken Green** was invited to deliver the Hay of Seaton Lecture, at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, "On the Contemporary Relevance of Emil L. Fackenheim's Thought," January, 2015; his article "Is It Possible to Reconcile Reason and Revelation? Their Mutual Relations in the Thought of Leo Strauss" was published in *In Search of Humanity: Essays in Honor of Clifford Orwin*, ed. Andrea Radasanu (2015); his book manuscript, "Emil L. Fackenheim's Search for Revelation: Divine Presence and Diabolical History," is being considered for publication; his article "The Maimonidean Revolution: Western Tradition as Reason and Revelation" is to be translated into Spanish, to appear in a special monographic issue of the journal *Apeiron: Estudios de Filosofía*, in an issue entitled "Leo Strauss and Other Companions of Plato"; he presented a paper at the 2014 American Academy of Religion annual conference on "Emil Fackenheim on Heroic Individualism and the Collective Future: Particular-Historical Duties with Universal-Moral Implications"; and he participated in a ten-day Tikvah Advanced Institute

(New York City, 8-18 June 2015) with fifteen other academics (selected out of several hundred) on "Freedom and Tradition: Philosophy, Theology, Literature." During his academic leave (2014-15) he also worked on a manuscript, "What Moses Saw: Maimonidean Meditations, or, On the Torah as a Speculative Teaching."

**Marsha Hewitt** book's *Freud on Religion* was published in Acumen's series on Key Thinkers in the Study of Religion 2014. The book brings together contemporary psychoanalytic theory and case material from Freud's clinical practice to illustrate how the operations of the unconscious mind support various forms of religious belief, from mainstream to occult.

**Malavika Kasturi** has been awarded a four-year SHHRC Insight Grant to work on her next research project entitled "The Lost Mughal Pensioners of Banaras:



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Diasporic Families, Memory and Urban History in South Asia, 1800 to the Present.” She has been on research leave for the past three years. Between July 2012 and 2013, she was a Research Fellow at the Indian Institute for Advanced Study, Shimla. Currently she is in the second year of a research fellowship in New Delhi, where she is a Research Fellow at the Centre for Contemporary Studies, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. The fellowship was awarded to her to write the book on Crafting Hindu Publics. This research fellowship comes to an end in early August 2015.

**Abraham H. Khan** published *The Actualized Individual*, Ljubljana KUD Apokalipsa, 2013; “Contemporary Integration of Spirituality and Health Care Delivery; An Indo-Caribbean Case perspective Referencing an Islamic Influenced Healing Therapy,” *Voice of the Intellectual Man*(2013); “Islamic Influence in the Caribbean: Traditional and Cultural Healing Practice,” in *Caribbean Healing Traditions: Implications for Health and Mental Health* (Routledge, 2013); “Christian Spirituality, Religion and Healing,” Co-authored with E.A.Allen , in *Caribbean Healing Traditions: Implications for Health and Mental Health* (Routledge, 2013); and “Lutheranism in Guyana” in *Encyclopaedia of Caribbean Religions* (U. of Illinois, 2013). He was a keynote presenter at a conference on Integrating Traditional Healing and Spirituality into Counseling and Psychotherapy in April 2013 in Italy, speaking on “Islamic cultural tradition in the Caribbean region: opportunities and challenges to integration with Western-oriented cultural healthcare practices”; and he spoke on “Kierkegaard and Existential Turning: Making the Turn,” at The 4th Intl. Symposium of Miklavz Ocepek, honouring the birth of Kierkegaard, in Ljubljana in June 2013. He also spoke at the World Congress of Philosophy in Athens on “Detecting the Invisible Socrates in Kierkegaard’s Writings.” He convened the “Bicentennial Conference, Kierkegaard at 200” conference at U of T in April 2013.

**Pamela Klassen** was awarded the 2015 Northrop Frye Award for excellence in teaching and the Anneliese Maier Research Award to develop a collaborative project around the role of religion at sites of national memory.

**John Kloppenborg** returned to his position as chair after a year of academic leave. During the last year a number of books and essays have appeared. He edited, along with

a colleague from Leuven, Joseph Verheyden, *The Elijah-Elisha Narrative in the Composition of Luke*, Library of New Testament Studies, vol. 493 (Bloomsbury Academic 2013) and finished the editing of a second volume with Alicia Batten, entitled *The Jesus tradition in the Catholic Epistles*, Library of New Testament Studies (T & T Clark International, 2014). A couple of articles appeared: “Membership Practices in Pauline Christ groups,” *Early Christianity* 4/2 (2013); “The Parable of the Burglar in Q: Insights from Papyrology,” in *Metaphorik und Narrativität in der Logienquelle Q*, ed. Ruben Zimmermann and Dieter Roth, WUNT, vol. 315 (Mohr Siebeck, 2014); and “The Mo! Realizing of Discourse in Greco-Roman Associations,” in *“The One Who Sows Bountifully”: Essays in Honor of Stanley K. Stowers*, eds. Caroline Johnson Hodge, Saul M. Olyan, Daniel Ullucci, and Emma Wasserman, Brown Judaic Studies (Brown Judaic Studies, 2014). Conferences have kept him busy: the Social Sciences and Humanities Congress in Victoria, B.C. in June, where he presented a paper on the “Provenance of James”; a paper delivered at the Ancient Documentary Research Centre, Macquarie University, Sydney NSW Australia in July on “Paying for Dinner: Finances and the structure of early Christ groups,” a review of Dale Allison’s

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**John Kloppenborg** was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada last year. The Royal Society, founded in 1883, is Canada’s national honour society. It is modeled after the British Academy and l’Academie francaise. Royal Society fellows are among the most distinguished Canadian scholars and artists. The process of nomination and election involves a rigorous vetting of candidates. As our chair, John’s election to the Royal Society is an honour in which we his colleagues and friends all happily share.



Always reaching higher on behalf of his students and faculty, John Kloppenborg (right) hosts rock climbing outings, here with Prof. Frances Garrett (left).

# A Reflection on the 'Śaivism and the Tantric Traditions' Symposium held in Honour of Alexis G.J.S. Sanderson, March 26-28, 2015

By Larissa Fardelos

The last Thursday of March, 2015, was an exciting day at the University of Toronto for a number of momentous events, one of which was the opening of the historic symposium hosted by University of Toronto's Department for the Study of Religion at University College. This three-day symposium honouring the profoundly influential career of Alexis Sanderson, the University of Oxford's Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics, on the eve of his retirement was entitled "Śaivism and the Tantric Traditions" referring to Sanderson's ground-breaking paper of the same title published in 1988. Deemed the "symposium of the decade" in private correspondence amongst scholars in the field, this symposium brought together the foremost Indologists, philologists, and South Asianists who have worked closely with Sanderson over the years as his colleagues and students, including the esteemed Hans Bakker (University of Groningen), Shingo Einoo (University of Tokyo), Harunaga Isaacson (University of Hamburg), Dominic Goodall (Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient), our very own professors Srilata Raman and Elizabeth Mills, and many others who assembled for the occasion, traveling great distances to endure frigid spring temperatures with us here in Toronto.

Setting the tone for the proceedings, Harunaga Isaacson opened the symposium by invoking a scene all too familiar to the prodigious gathering of philologists. He asked all those present to imagine something like a post-apocalyptic future where all evidence of Professor Sanderson's scholarship has been lost except for, perhaps, one mention of his name in the extant work of a student of a student of one of Sanderson's own PhD students. This mere reference of Professor Sanderson's name, Isaacson assured, would be enough for future scholars to recognize the impact he had on the study of Asian religious traditions broadly, and our



understandings of the development of the Indic religions in particular.

As each presenter took to the podium, they could not help but begin their presentations by paying homage to Sanderson for his expert guidance as a teacher, his invaluable insight as a colleague, and his enduring influence as a scholar. The themes, locales, and pursuits of the presentations varied widely—evidencing the vast reach of Sanderson's work—and always harkened back to Sanderson's seminal publications that inspired and enabled their research. The symposium was an intimate affair held in the iconic Croft Chapter House, Professor Sanderson was seated at the head of the massive round table that fills the space with the presenters surrounding him, allowing for lively discussion in response to the presentations. Additionally, just as Professor Sanderson's lecture handouts have been coveted throughout his academic career, his commentary on each presentation offered great depth of insight and became an exciting feature of the symposium.

Professor Sanderson's keynote address, "Progress since 'Śaivism and the Tantric Traditions'," accompanied by one of his characteristic handouts, presented a range of points where his research has taken him since that pivotal publication. His presentation highlighted how far his research into Śaivism has expanded to now

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encompass greater insight into the intricacies of medieval Śaivism and networks of patronage and participation, explorations of Śaivism throughout the Indian subcontinent and into Southeast Asia, and the Śaiva influences on and interactions with Vaiṣṇavism, Buddhism, and Jainism (full lecture available at <https://youtu.be/MOvxDbQ6Ywg>). Since that early publication in 1988, Professor Sanderson has produced a rich corpus of materials that have had profound influence on the field as a whole. Now as his retirement approaches, we wait with bated breath to learn what more Professor Sanderson will uncover through his vast reading of Sanskrit materials and his tireless dedication to his scholarship, as surely more progress is to be made.

Much to the delight of the guests who had uttered their desires in hushed tones during coffee breaks, the dedicated conveners, Srilata Raman (University of Toronto) and Shaman Hatley (Concordia University),

closed the conference with the exciting news that they will be compiling the presented papers into an edited volume commemorating this extraordinary gathering of minds. This will surely be a volume utilized by generations of scholars to come and which attendees will recommend with the addition, “I was there.” Only in the beginning stages of my academic career, I feel incredibly fortunate for the opportunity to have been present for this symposium—which, taken in its entirety, was exemplary of what Isaacson admitted to be a tremendous task: defining the influence of Alexis Sanderson on Indology. As a budding scholar of the Tantric traditions, this symposium laid a foundation to understand the lineage of exceptional scholarship that has trickled down from Professor Sanderson and which will surely continue to contribute to our understandings of Indic religious traditions, perhaps well into the next yuga.





cacophony of leaping fish that I would watch for hours. Next is the catching of fish in huge, but controlled, amounts and fish storage preparation by filleting, jarring and smoking for winter. Lastly, there is the extracting of eggs and sperm for hatching next season. We were taught by many how to fillet, and a Grand Chief allowed us to observe the smoking of salmon on planks around a fire. He joked that the spread-open salmon looked like small pants, but then told us that it is important to not joke about fish because such disrespect could cause them to not return. I grew up in a Jewish household that adored smoked salmon (lox), but as an indispensable traditional food source on the coast, salmon is taken to amazingly creative levels. My favourite salmon dish, dried and salted strips called Gravlox and served with a dill-based dip, was given to us by a friend and I was hooked. At home, I enjoyed outdoor salmon grilling on cedar planks (that I chopped myself!) to get a smoky flavour. As Alex was the primary caregiver for the entire community, and gift-giving a way of life, she was often rewarded with seafood. I started baking bread to reciprocate. Every couple of weeks I also had the opportunity to cook lunch for the health centre staff, and several times I had the pleasure of cooking with an enthusiastic young local. When a Cree motivational hip-hop artist was to visit for the purpose of both performing and facilitating self-empowerment sharing-circles with locals, I was asked to bring sound, lights and smoke up from Vancouver. This was much to the delight of the community, especially the children who zoomed around with zest. Many people had neither gone very far out of the area nor seen live music of this sort, and seeing the silhouette of a traditional community line-dance on the backdrop of coloured smoke and lights pulsing to dance-music showed a breathtaking incorporation of the modern with the traditional. These small gestures were meant to thank the people for allowing me to live in their midst and have the chance get to know them.

In Klemtu traditional spirituality and organized religion run in parallel but not without mutual influence. We received several invitations to participate in both ceremony and services. The school is a hub of community

activity and host to many events such as Aboriginal Day and the Terry Fox fundraiser, but far and above the most touching for me was a mini-potlach that was organized by the Klemtu school-children. The giving feast was peppered with sacred dance and song by the children in their clan-based regalia, as well as heartwarming speeches of thanksgiving, and culminated in everyone creating a circular friendship dance. I was also invited to a Christian service which was full of hymn-singing to guitar accompaniment, fellowship, and deeply moving testimony. Many of those in Klemtu identify as Christian and as such, multi-denominational missionary visits are frequent and welcomed by the community. Fundraising for a new

church building is currently underway. As we became more integrated into this small community, we were also advised to have an elder smoke our house for purification purposes. The elder who kindly agreed had us procure Poison Root and she smoked the space while asking in her mother-tongue for the spirits to not disturb us, and reassured them that Alex was in Klemtu to care for the community. Poison Root is used both ritually and as an analgesic, so to replace that used for the house-smoking some friends took us out to the forest to dig up more. We found more than enough to reimburse and also leave some at entrances, which is meant to provide ongoing protection from spirit interference.

The timing of this adventure was perfect for me as my PhD classes were completed and preparing for my exams off-site entirely possible. The hardest part of leaving Toronto was extracting myself from the music scene, both with playing and running concerts, with which I had been deeply invested in for 7 years. Ultimately, I wanted to support Alex's dream of remote nursing and I did my best to help her stay healthy in a job that takes tremendous amounts of energy. Nurses came and went but being the only full-time nurse with only biweekly physician support meant that Alex was the primary caregiver for the entire community. Nursing was thus not constrained to the weekly 9-5 but included being on-call nightly. In some extremely moving gestures at a memorial before we left, Alex received many gifts and



accolades for her service to the community. A Chief gave me a hat because, as he explained, “he takes care of Alex so that she can take care of us.” In addition to studying and being “the nurse’s husband,” through my daily informal interactions with the people of this small community, including Band Council members, Chiefs and Grand Chiefs, I increasingly saw the anthropological potential of my being in Klemtu. I started to develop an ethnomedical research project aiming to investigate the influence of organized religion and traditional spirituality on health care decision-making among the locals. While considering the potential project, I was acutely aware of the historical harms and the continued systematic violence to Canadian Aboriginals. The Tri-Council research policies in relation to Aboriginal Studies involving human subjects are understandably rigorous and include such requirements as ensuring the input and direction of Knowledge Holders, as well as leaving data ownership and publishing decisions entirely in Native hands. As such, it was only after months of discussions with key local leaders, proposal writing, and U of T ethics approval that I approached the Klemtu Research Stewardship Board to broach the subject of a research collaboration. There was enthusiasm for the project and permission was granted with great anticipation particularly for archival data of the unique perspectives of elders. There was also the suggestion that food be included as an added topic of importance given the intimate relationship in Klemtu between health and traditional food sources. Klemtu spearheads a tremendous amount of research on resources

in their territory, research indispensable to such concerns as bear conservancy, fish-stock maintenance and protection against industrial interference such as with the Enbridge pipeline project. A grave concern that pervades daily discussions, the Pacific Coastal Nations are vocally against the pipeline proposal. It would result in tankers navigating difficult waters and the statistical inevitability of a disaster that would devastate the ecosystem of the entire coast.

During our stay, a monumental provincial shift was taking place with the delivery of Aboriginal Health Care moving from federal to Native control. This has been long in the making, perhaps even since the initial colonial interference in Native health and healing. For us the shift meant an end to the Health Canada contract and, unfortunately, caused our relocation to come to a rather abrupt end. We immediately started planning our return for shorter stays in the future. I am deeply grateful to the Kitasoo/Xai’Xais peoples for so warmly embracing us and allowing us to live together on their land and waters, and inviting us into their lives for the year Alex was there and the half-year I was able to be there. We miss the people of Klemtu terribly and often are asked by our dear friends when we will be “coming home.” Our plan is to coordinate our return with the naming ceremony of one of our close friends who will be inheriting his late father’s title as Chief. We’ll stay for some time while Alex nurses and I continue the research project where we left off. We may be Ontarians, but our hearts belong to B.C. and the people of Klemtu.

*Sean Hillman is a doctoral candidate in the DSR.*

## New Directions for the Study of Religion and the Environment

**By Paul York and Vittoria Lion**

The study of the intersection of religion and the environment has long been dominated by environmental theology (or eco-theology), and much of that has been inspired by the great thinker Thomas Berry. In last few years two new trends have emerged: the field has been increasingly addressed by the social sciences – a trend that Berry anticipated and encouraged – and it has increasingly been focused on climate change, or more particularly, the empirical study of emerging religious responses to climate change.

A standard approach to the subject in textbooks and undergraduate courses has been an examination of environmental themes in world religions, emphasizing interpretations of scriptures that favoured environmental concern, in dialogue with a summary of themes from environmental ethics, namely deep ecology, conservation ethics, and ecofeminism.

The field has in recent years been enriched by a more anthropological examination of what actual religious groups are doing in response to climate change. For example, the text *How the World’s Religions are Responding to Climate Change: Social Scientific Investigations*, edited by Robin Globus Veldman, Andrew Szasz, and Randolph Haluza-DeLay (Routledge 2014) examines several different groups in both the global north and south, ranging from the efforts of churches in the Solomon Islands to adapt to extreme weather events, to the theologically-fuelled climate change denial of American evangelicals, to the syncretism of environmentalism and indigenous traditions in Nepal.

Instead of seeking theological justifications for mitigating climate change, or alternately, targeting traditional religions as the source of the crisis, Veldman, Szasz, and Haluza-DeLay critically evaluate religious response to climate change, as they are actually occurring in the world.



## Religion Beat: A Message from the Editor

By Saliha Chattoo, Managing Editor

This year, the Religion in the Public Sphere initiative (RPS) sponsored a redesign of *Religion Beat*, a blog that was run by a steering committee of graduate students from the DSR from November 2009-July 2011. As of September 2014, Religion Beat was re-launched as a blog-style online publication of peer-reviewed articles written for public consumption. The project is primarily dedicated to providing a space for graduate students to publish more prolifically in a sophisticated online venue outside of formal journal publishing, allowing them to write for public consumption while maintaining a commitment to intellectual writing. Graduate students have already published with Religion Beat on a range of subjects that join their own research interests with the goals of RPS, and in addition to articles, writers have the opportunity to reflect on events occurring in their cities such as celebrations, debates, conferences, or public talks.

Our inaugural year hosted publications on a variety of topics, many of which were written by PhD students from our own department. Alison Colpitts and Helen Mo published an article entitled “Sunday Morning Salons: Cultivating Engaged Citizenship,” where they explore a project they launched two years ago that encourages peers—academics and non-

academics—to come together in salon-style discussions of religion, politics, economics and social issues. Anna Cwikla began a four-part series entitled “Married Magdalene?” wherein she explores and critiques the controversial new book *The Lost Gospel: Decoding the Ancient Text that Reveals Jesus’ Marriage to Mary the Magdalene* by Simcha Jacobovici and Barrie Wilson. In early 2015, Khalidah Ali published an article entitled “Bill Maher and Sam Harris: Racism, Critique, Theology and Islamophobia,” where she critiques a particularly infamous episode of *Real Time with Bill Maher* that sees Maher and popular author Sam Harris speak about the “violent tendencies of Islamic belief.” From outside of our own department and institution, publications have included an exploration of last year’s RPS research workshop entitled “Critical Creativities: Policy, Performance, Diversity and the Arts in the GTA” by Urban Planning MA student Emily Macrae, and an article entitled “Evil Concentrated and Dissipated: Boko Haram and the Politics of Evil” by the University of Alberta’s Cathryn van Kessel. Religion Beat has also launched a podcast entitled “The Religion Beat Radio Hour,” where co-producers Christopher Cornthwaite and Judith Ellen Brunton invite special guests to the table to discuss a variety of topics relevant to the theme of religion in the public sphere.

Religion Beat is the result of a lot of hard work, and I’d like to take this opportunity to thank Pamela Klassen, Siri Hansen, our wonderful editorial team Danielle Baillargeon, Kalpesh Bhatt, Christopher Cornthwaite, Nicholas Field, Rony Kozman, and Helen Mo, and our peer reviewers who are dedicated to making sure that high-quality content continues to be published. Blog-style online publications curated by academics have become important spaces for education, involvement, and student contributions, and we’re committed to continuing this work. Please visit us at [www.religionbeat.utoronto.ca](http://www.religionbeat.utoronto.ca), and encourage your students and colleagues to send in submissions so this new and exciting online publication can continue to grow!

# RELIGION BEAT



# New Pali Research Library at the DSR

By Anthony Scott

It is an exciting time for Pali studies at the University of Toronto. A relative of Sanskrit and storehouse of the Theravāda, or Southern Buddhist canon, Pali is an Indo-Aryan literary language boasting a more than 2000 year pedigree. With courses offered at the beginner, intermediate and advanced level next year, the language is currently enjoying a renaissance of sorts in the Department for the Study of Religion. According to Associate Professor Christoph Emmrich, this breadth of Pali training ranks Toronto among the top such centers in North America. Professor Emmrich and Toronto's other Pali scholars teach traditional vocabulary and grammar in manifold ways, such as with Sinhalese pronunciation, via Burmese script or as embedded in manuscript cultures, thereby ensuring students are prepared to research living and ancient traditions alike.

To encourage the flourishing of Pali at the University of Toronto, two dedicated pupils have made a donation sure to benefit all their current and future colleagues. Jan and Albert Sugerman have generously provided for a Pali Research Library to be permanently housed at the Department for the Study of Religion, room 319. Their gracious dāna, as it is known in Pali, has ensured that students and researchers will have access to a wide range of crucial language resources, both in and out of class. The library is curated by Professor Emmrich and includes the Critical Pali Dictionary, the latest edition of the Pali-English Dictionary and an array of textbooks, handbooks and manuals.

Such a library will help foster the interest in Pali at the University of Toronto, acting as a veritable headquarters for all levels of study. As the library continues to grow the expanding body of Pali researchers will have the textual support necessary to go deeper into their studies. No doubt the donation of Jan and Albert Sugerman will prove invaluable to undergraduate, graduate and Pali enthusiasts for generations. Please come by room 319 to view this collection and help celebrate our own Pali renaissance!



## U of T Researchers Receive Major Award from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation John E. Sawyer Seminar in the Comparative Study of Cultures

Last year four faculty members of the University have received funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to establish a year-long research institute that will bring together faculty, postdoctoral researchers, and graduate students from across a range of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. Professors Karen Ruffle and Ajay Rao, both of whom are cross-appointed with the UTM Department of Historical Studies and the UTSG Department for the Study of Religion; Walid Saleh, who is cross-appointed to the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations and the Department for the Study of Religion at UTSG, and is the Director of the Institute of Islamic Studies; and Nhung Tuyet Tran, who is Canada Research Chair in Southeast Asian History with the UTSG Department of History and is the Director of the Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, have been granted an award of \$175,000 US for their proposal, "Religious Materiality in the Indian Ocean World, 1300-1800." This seminar

interrogates how material forms of religious culture reveal the historically contingent nature of translocal practices in the Indian Ocean World from 1300 to 1800. Such practices include the trade in Roman Catholic, Theravada Buddhist, and Shi'i Muslim relics; mosque, church, and temple architecture; funerary structures; and transformations and translations of religious food taboos and ritual commensality practices. In the coming year, they will be engaged in preparations for the 2015-2016 Seminar, which will involve meetings of a core group of researchers at Cornell and McGill Universities, as well as a series of eight additional meetings with guest speakers in Toronto, a dissertation workshop for graduate students, and a capstone conference. The seminar will provide research assistantships for two graduate students and support for one postdoctoral fellow. Events in Toronto will be hosted at the UTM and UTSG campuses.

## The Beginnings of a DSR Undergraduate Student Association

By Milo Golub, President and Co-Founder of the RSSA

In September 2013 I walked into the Arts and Sciences Student Union office to see what was required to start a student association for the Department for the Study of Religion. They laid out the fairly simple steps to recognition and handed me a seventeen year old constitution from the last time that this department had an undergraduate student association. After changing the old piece for modern times and language and finding myself some fellow interested students, we held our elections and we were off.

Since then, the undergraduate Religious Studies Student Association (RSSA) has grown and held quite the number of events. We have visited local religious institutions to see what religion is in Toronto, learning outside of the classroom or textbook. We host an ongoing lunch series with professors or graduate students to increase departmental communication and unity. Every semester we host a faculty seminar with an in house professor to see what kinds of work is being done at our department. Holding these events we seek to serve the greater community of religious studies students at the

University of Toronto as well as follow our own academic curiosity.

## Undergraduate Essay Award

Last year the undergraduate academic networking site, Whiteboard, held the Department's first essay competition for undergraduate students who had written on the topic of "Religion and Society." A student board of reviewers evaluated thirty essays. Charlotte Marcotte-Toale won first place for her paper, "The Epistemic Implications of Illusions in Freud's Critique of Religion"; Alethea Enns won second place for "Reinterpreting and Redefining Religious Performances in the Secular Sphere"; and Melis Dogan's third place essay was entitled, "Co-existence of Secular and religious spheres in human rights Discourse and the Koran as a Proponent for Women's Rights." Melis Dogan wrote, "I just wanted to extend my most sincere thank you for the creation of Whiteboard as well as for the opportunity you have provided for students to get their voices heard. Although I desired to accept my 3rd place winning passively, (I was quite humbled as I did not expect to win and the positive reactions of the audience surprised me as you read the first paragraph of my essay), I do feel incredibly privileged to have had the chance to express my passionate views

through my essay. I wrote this essay for a Religion and Human Rights course and specifically picked a topic and article that was personally relatable. As a Turkish-Muslim feminist and as someone aware of the current turmoil my country is experiencing, I felt it was necessary to voice the need for a unifying approach to human rights that includes religion. I am thankful and greatly appreciative to have received such a reward and I hope that these essay competitions continue in order to foster the development of future students' hopes and voices."

## Undergraduate Religion & Film Students at TIFF

By James McDonough

As part of a unit titled "Myths that Endure," our Religion & Film class visited the TIFF Bell Lightbox Theatre for a screening of Pier Paolo Pasolini's impassioned and hallucinogenic mythological film, *Medea*. Not only was the chance to see this enigmatic and intense film in a public screening a rare opportunity in itself, it was a useful educational engagement for a film class, allowing us to leave the lecture hall and participate in the larger film culture of Toronto in its theatres and events. It was a rare and welcome break from the conventional format, and a great opportunity to attend the Pasolini

retrospective which I was personally interested in, but would not have been able to fit into my end of term schedule.



Students and faculty at the Whiteboard launch party in the fall of 2013.

commentary on James at the 2013 Society of Biblical Literature meeting in Baltimore, an invitation to speak to graduate students at the U of Chicago in January, and two conferences in February, one in Duisberg-Essen on “the Parting of the Ways” and another paper on “Epigraphical Contributions to the study of the New Testament” delivered to a conference of Epigraphy, U of Vienna. Kloppenborg has been appointed as associate Editor of the Journal, *Early Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck), and continues as an associate editor of the *Papyrologische Kommentare zum Neuen Testament* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht), whose 5th volume on Second Corinthians has just appeared.

**Thomas McIntire** is a coauthor of the book *The Religions of India*, being published in Mumbai. He focuses on Christianity in India, and explains the emergence, diversification, and inculturation of Christian communities in India from the first century to the twenty-first. During May and June 2014 he participated in a team-taught course in a North American university program in Orvieto, an the Umbrian hill-town in Italy north of Rome. The course studies Christianity, Society, and Art and makes particular use of resources in Italy. In July 2014 he conducted research in the British Library.

**David Novak**’s work on ethics has attracted a monograph, “Normative Ethik aus Jüdischem Ethos: Eine Rekonstruktion und Diskussion von David Novaks Moraltheorie und Gesellschaftskritik,” Dissertation from the Universität Freiburg (Switzerland), 2013. Novak also has been invited to give the 2017 Gifford Lectures at the University Aberdeen. The lectureship, which dates from 1885, has featured lecturers such as William James, Andrew North Whitehead, John Dewey, Ninian Smart, Rudolf Bultmann, Josiah Royce, Michael Polanyi, Richard Swinburne, Ian Barbour, Hannah Arendt, and many other stellar scholars.

**Enrico Raffaelli** published *The sih-rōzag in Zoroastrianism: A Textual and Historico-religious Analysis* (Routledge 2014). Focusing on the Avestan and Pahlavi versions of the *Sih-rozag*, a text worshipping Zoroastrian divine entities, this book explores the spiritual principles and physical realities associated with them. Introducing the book is an overview of the structural, linguistic and historico-religious elements of the Avestan *Sih-rozag*. This overview, as well as reconstructing its approximate chronology, helps in understanding the original ritual function of the text and its relationship to the other Avestan texts. The book then studies the translation of the text in the Middle Persian language, Pahlavi, which was produced several centuries after its initial composition, when Avestan was no longer understood by the majority of the Zoroastrian community. Addressing the lacuna in literature examining an erstwhile neglected Zoroastrian text, *The Sih-Rozag in Zoroastrianism* includes a detailed commentary and an English translation of both the Avestan and Pahlavi version of

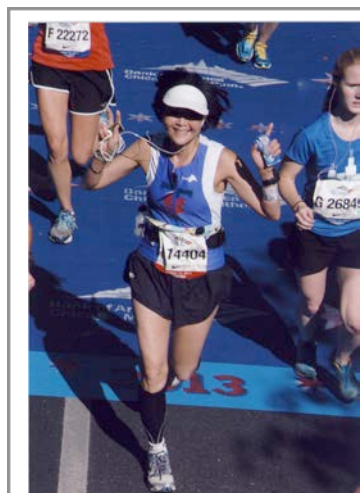
the *Sih-rozag* and will be of interest to researchers and scholars of Iranian Studies, Religion, and History.

**Kyle Smith** received the U of T’s 2015 University of Toronto Early Career Teaching Award.

**Shafique Virani** was one of the two 2014 U of T President’s Teaching Award Recipients.

## A word from Cole Sadler, the DSR Graduate Student Association’s Social Coordinator

We have had an excellent couple of years here at the DSR, with fun events for both the grad students and staff. Thanks to the generosity of the entire department, we have celebrated our peerless staff members, Fereshteh, Irene, Marilyn and Siri. Staff appreciation day was a lovely success due to the efforts of so many individuals working to bring it to fruition. Likewise for pool night at the Rivoli and end-of-year celebrations coinciding with the DSR Graduate Symposium organized by excellent GSA members. In terms of more casual events, we have been able to piggyback onto the Nuit Blanche art walk, a walk through very crowded streets to see local and international artwork. Last year we made it through massive crowds to see Ai Wei Wei’s bicycle exhibit in the middle of Nathan Phillips Square. I held several parties at my home and coordinated the family-friendly event “Religious Studies and Theology Dungeons and Dragons” for Prof. Amanda Goodman’s sons and their friends. John Marshall has also organized skating events for individuals with families. With all these happenings, I only wish I had had time to organize around more local events, such as the Santa Claus parade. Ultimately, part of my social coordinating philosophy has been concerned with putting the professional scholars of our department in dialogue with more “public” or “amateur” (in the non-pejorative sense of “one who loves”) intellectuals and scholars in the community. Thankfully, a number of the events this year had some presence of individuals involved in all manner of public work, from LGBTQ and interfaith expressions of religion, work in translation or literature, and other scholarly endeavors. Our department already works on the Religion in the Public Sphere program, and I hope that my work as Social Coordinator helped to further such an attitude.



DSR Office Manager Irene Kao crosses the finish line at yet another marathon!



The pattern that emerges is that in the global North, religious traditions are either in denial, or are silent on the issue, or where they are active and vocal on the social justice implications, they focus on mitigation, but with limited success. For example, several Catholic religious authorities are vocal on the issue, but the Roman Catholic Church in the U.S. suffers from institutional inertia, impeding serious mitigation efforts. In the global South, a primary response is the utilization of existing religious networks for adaptation efforts against extreme weather events. In some cases, local indigenous religions serve an environmental good by encouraging greater respect for the natural world and by inhibiting industrial development, but in other cases the authors who examine them argued that they inhibited scientific awareness of climate change by attributing changes in weather to various deities. Each historical example must be understood and evaluated on its own terms. This empirical approach is important, because it liberates the study of religion and the environment from the reduction of religion to belief systems and takes seriously the more functionalist view of religions as social networks, influenced by and helping to shape historical events. The study of religion in this context is important for the same reason that the study of religion and violence is important: the large audiences and extreme degree of dedication found within many religious traditions are strong determining factors in mitigation efforts, for good or ill. The potential of religions to mitigate the climate crisis through a shift in worldviews – long an emphasis among eco-theologians – certainly exists, but the failure of many traditions to act on that potential also has to be acknowledged.

The characteristics that give religions such potential for mitigation efforts, simultaneously make religiously motivated climate change denial dangerous, insofar as denial helps exacerbate the conditions that threaten humanity's survival. On a more hopeful note, a quantitative study by Anthony Leiserowitz, of the of Yale Project on Climate Change Communication, indicated that young evangelicals increasingly reject the denial of their elders, and accept the veracity of climate science. Apocalyptic Christianity, as well, insofar as it serves to de-emphasize the importance of mitigation efforts in the political area, could be said to represent a danger.

Additionally, religion is playing and will continue to play a role in exacerbating – or in some cases, ameliorating –

violent conflicts over scarce resources. Both violent and nonviolent religious responses intersect with environmental crises. For instance, the recent Sudanese civil war was said to be both a religious war and a conflict over scarce resources, one of the first of many human rights disasters exacerbated by the effects of climate change (in this case, drought). Already, roughly half of the world's refugees are said to be eco-refugees, and that number is expected to swell to the hundreds of millions in the latter half of this century, due to drought, famine, flooding and resource conflicts.

Religious responses will be major determinants in these unfolding tragedies. The potential impact of climate change on religion and on all aspects of human culture in general (e.g. politics, economics), and the way in which climate change issues are mediated through the prism of religious world views, cannot be over-emphasized.

Accordingly, climate studies will likely gain more attention among scholars. In coming years, it is probable that higher education will increasingly focus on climate change, across all disciplines. Right now the generalized course emerging in many undergraduate programs is called "Environmental Humanities," but each humanities department has the opportunity to create a specialized course (or courses) on climate related issues, and possibly secure funding for them from foundations that allocate funds for interdisciplinary climate-related studies. It is no longer just the domain of science.

In 2014 a study was published by PPRI/AAR, titled "Believers, sympathizers, & skeptics: Why Americans are conflicted about climate change, environmental policy, and science." It explored, both quantitatively and qualitatively, the phenomenon of climate change denial among Americans, and how that is influenced by religious authorities. Just as the study of religious violence has become an important area of study for scholars since 9/11 – one that highlights the importance of understanding religion in the public sphere – so too will the study of climate change and religious responses to it become a focus for scholars. Accordingly, the DSR course RLG228, Religion, Ethics, Environment, is being taught this summer with this focus.

*Paul York is a PhD Candidate in DSR; Vittoria Lion is an undergraduate honours student in DSR.*



## At left, Professor Jennifer Harris prepares an online lecture for Religion and Popular Culture

The University of Toronto has been slow to pursue online education, yet the DSR is at the forefront. Last year, our faculty colleague Kyle Smith offered his course, The Christian Tradition, online to undergraduates at UTM. In the fall of 2015, the DSR will offer its first fully online course, Religion and Popular Culture, and the following year two more will be added, Introductory Sanskrit and Introductory Classical Tibetan. Our online courses are offered for credit to U of T students only at this time, but it is our hope that future iterations of some courses will be made available more broadly.

## Faculty List

### CORE FACULTY

**Bugg, Laura Beth** Sociology of Religion | **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 | **Mills, Libbie** Sanskrit | **Mittermaier, Amira** Modern Islam | **Newman, Judith** Hebrew Bible | **Nizri, Yigael** Modern Hebrew | **Novak, David** Modern Judaism | **O'Neill, Kevin** Globalization/transnationalism | **Raman, Srilata** Modern Hinduism | **Rao, Ajay** South Asian Religions | **Ruffle, Karen** Religion and Gender | **Saleh, Walid** Islam | **Scott, Barton** Religion and Media | **Smith, Kyle** Syriac Christianity | **Virani, Shafique** Islam

### AFFILIATED FACULTY

**Airhart, Phyllis** Modern Christianity | **Bendlin, Andreas** Roman History | **Bergen, Doris** History | **Black, Deborah** Medieval Philosophy | **Blouin, Katherine** Greek and Roman history | **Boddy, Janice** Anthropology of Religion | **Cobb, Michael** English and Sexual Diversity Studies | **Cochelin, Isabelle** Medieval Mediterranean 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 | **Gibbs, Robert** Philosophy of Religion, Jewish Thought | **Goering, Joseph** Religion, Culture and Society | **Goetschel, Willi** Philosophy | **Gooch, Paul** Philosophy of Religion | **Hackworth, Jason** Geography | **Hararak, Amir** Aramaic & Syriac Languages | **Hewitt, Marsha** Religion, Ethics and Modern Thought | **Hoff, Shannon** Philosophy | **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 | **Mangina, Joseph** Christianity | **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 | **Raffaelli, Enrico** Zoroastrianism | **Ricco, John Paul** Philosophy | **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 | **Sweetman, Bob** Christianity | **Taylor, Glen** Religion of Ancient Israel | **Tavakoli-Targhi, Mohamad** Middle Eastern History | **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

### RETIRED FACULTY

**Abray, Jane** Religion & Gender, Christianity | **Corbett, J.** Judaism and Early Christianity | **Davies, A.** Modern Christianity | **Dooley, A.** Celtic Religion | **McIntire, T.** Modern Christianity | **McMullin, N.** Buddhist Studies | **McSorley, H.** Reformation thought, Christian ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue | **Nicholson, G.** Philosophy of Religion | **O'Toole, R.** Religion, Culture and Society | **Richardson, P.** Religions of Mediterranean Antiquity | **Sandahl, Stella** Hinduism and South Asian Studies | **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

antiquity. Both students will participate in a fall session where the two will be able to present some of their research to their peers.

The department hosted a number of distinguished speakers: Candida Moss (Notre Dame), Elizabeth Clark (Duke), Pascal Arnaud (Lyon), Gary Knoppers (Penn State), Jitse Dijkstra (University of Ottawa), Daniel Boyarin (Berkeley), Alexis Sanderson (Oxford), and Eric Lawee (Bar Ilan University). As usual, we have normally arranged a luncheon so that our graduate students can meet with these scholars, and discuss their research projects. During that year, the department also hosted Dr. Florence Pasche Guignard, a post doctoral fellow from the University of Lausanne, working on embodiment, gender and ritual, and Facundo Troche, a doctoral student (now a graduate) from the University of Bologna, who works on the reconstruction of the fishing industry in ancient Palestine and Roman Egypt. These visitors and guests have greatly enriched the intellectual environment of the department; in the coming year, we welcome Dr. Marc Blainey a post doctoral fellow from the University of Tulane, Dr. Nadav Sharon, a post doctoral fellow from the Hebrew University, and Professor Ernest van Eck, a visiting scholar from the University of Pretoria. In the coming year, we are welcoming Dr. Mehriban Kasim, from the Department of sociology in the University of Azerbaijan.



In December 2013 the Department celebrated the life of one of our undergraduate students, Ms. Jane Trombley, pictured at left, a student who passed away the previous year. Through the generosity of her family, two scholarships have been established in Jane's memory, one for mature undergraduate students, and a second for doctoral students in the Department. These two

scholarships will be of great help to the department in attracting the best doctoral students to our programs, and for assisting undergraduate students in meeting the expenses associated with a university education. The Department will make the first awards of the Jane Trombley scholarship in the coming September.

The Department also participated in the newly established program, "Backback to Briefcase" (B2B), an initiative that connects our students, both undergraduate and graduates, with successful graduate of our programs and who are now community leaders in medicine, advertising, public relations, media and journalism, and government. These sessions, which include both workshops and smaller intimate dinners with several distinguished alumni/ae, have proven extremely useful for our students to think about how to develop the transferrable skills necessary to the next steps in their careers. A dinner with four community leaders was attended by about twenty of our students. This program continues in the coming year.

The Department is justifiably proud of its record of fostering student research and experience. Profs. Klassen and Coleman took five graduate students to the University of Tübingen in Germany to participate in the "Scales of Value: Intersections of Religion, Economy, and Law" workshop, sponsored by the University of Toronto Germany/Europe Fund, the Jackman Humanities Institute, and the Institut für Ethnologie Schloss Hohentübingen. Our students made excellent presentations at that conference and were able to meet and interact with scholars from Germany.

Our students and faculty also made impressive showings both at the annual American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature meetings in San Diego in November 2014, and at the Humanities and Social Sciences Congress at the Université d'Ottawa in June of this year. It is clear that the DSR at the University of Toronto is the strongest and most active department of religion in Canada, and one of the strongest in North America.

There will be, of course, more to come in 2015-16.

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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/)  
[www.facebook.com/UofTReligion](https://www.facebook.com/UofTReligion)  
[www.twitter.com/UofTReligion](https://www.twitter.com/UofTReligion)

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