

# THE DEAN'S NEWSLETTER

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## MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE – AND THEN?



**Dr. Arthur Holder**  
Academic Dean and  
Vice President of  
Academic Affairs

Have you ever had a mystical experience? When the Pew Research Center asked a representative group of Americans if they had ever had a mystical or religious experience defined as “a moment of sudden religious insight or awakening,” 49% of them said yes. So nearly half of the population has had a mystical experience at some point in their lives. Remember this is all self-reported; so far there is no scientifically reliable machinery for detecting mystical experience. But it’s also complicated because people may have different understandings of what counts as a religious or mystical experience. So some researchers have tried to be more specific.

For example, a British professor named David Hay has identified eight major types of experiences that people often classify as religious or mystical:

- A patterning of events in a person’s life that convinces them that in some strange way they were meant to happen.
- An awareness of the presence of God or some divine being.
- An awareness of receiving help in answer to prayer.
- An awareness of being looked after or guided by an angel or some other presence besides God.
- An awareness of being in the presence of someone who has died.
- An awareness of a sacred presence in nature.
- An awareness of an evil presence in the room.
- Experiencing in an extraordinary way that everything in the universe is connected.

Now I have to admit that I’ve had all of those experiences—most of them more than once. That doesn’t make me special; apparently it just makes me pretty typical or average. It seems that many people have mystical experiences with a

high degree of frequency. But having had a mystical experience is not so important in and of itself. What really matters is what comes next. I think we have four basic options: 1) We can deny that it ever happened. 2) We can admit that we experienced something extraordinary, but try to explain it away. 3) We can hold on to the experience, or try to repeat it. 4) We have to see things differently from now on.

Once we acknowledge that the mystical experience wasn’t a momentary aberration distracting us from reality, we gain some insight into the way things really are all the time. Then we have to change our way of thinking, and our way of being in the world. So have you ever had a mystical experience? According to the pollsters, chances are that you have, or that someday you will. But whether you ever have such an experience or not, what matters is how you are going to live according to the light you have been given. Mystical experience isn’t just a glimpse of heaven; it is a revelation of what life can be—should be—right here on earth.

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Dr. Anantanand  
Rambachan

## 2015 SURJIT SINGH LECTURE ON COMPARATIVE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT AND CULTURE

**“Interreligious Relations  
as Friendship:  
Mahatma Gandhi and  
Charles Freer Andrews”  
Dr. Anantanand  
Rambachan  
Friday, April 10, 2015  
2pm Reception  
3pm Lecture  
Dinner Boardroom, 3rd  
floor of the GTU Library  
2400 Ridge Road,  
Berkeley**

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) and the Reverend Charles Freer Andrews (1871-1940) shared an extraordinary relationship. From 1914, until his death in 1940, Andrews worked closely with Gandhi in the Indian independence move-

ment and in the service of India. Their relationship blossomed quickly and remains an illuminating example of friendship across traditions. This lecture examines the shared commitments that brought this remarkable Hindu and Christian pair together, as well as the challenges and risks of their friendship.

Dr. Anantanand Rambachan is Professor of Religion at Saint Olaf College in Minnesota, where he has been teaching since 1985. A native of Trinidad, he received his Ph.D. from the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom. He is the author of several books including *Accomplishing the Accomplished*, *The Limits of Scripture*,

*The Advaita Worldview: God, World and Humanity*, and *Not-Two: A Hindu Theology of Liberation* (forthcoming). The British Broadcasting Corporation transmitted a series of his lectures around the world. For over twenty years, Professor Rambachan has been involved in the field of interreligious relations as a Hindu participant and analyst. He was a guest participant in the last four General Assemblies of the World Council of Churches, and he is a regular participant in the consultations of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue at the Vatican and an educator on interfaith issues in Minnesota.

## 2015 SARLO EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AWARD

The Sarlo Excellence in Teaching Award is given each year to a member of the Core Doctoral Faculty whose teaching and mentoring of doctoral students embodies the values of interreligious dialogue and interdisciplinary approach to teaching. The next recipient of this honor, which entails a substantial monetary award, will be announced at the GTU Commencement on May 7, 2015.

Selection will be made by the Appointments and Review Committee of the Core Doctoral Faculty, with the addition of the GTU President as a voting member for this purpose. The Faculty Council has approved a nomination procedure in which a list of candi-

dates will be composed from nominations submitted by doctoral and MA students through the Areas of Study in the doctoral program.

The Area Student Assistant in each area will be responsible for facilitating a process by which students in the area will select one Core Doctoral Faculty member to nominate for this award. Discussion may take place among doctoral students when they gather at the February and March area meetings, but opportunity should be provided for all students to participate in the selection through email. GTU MA students are invited to submit their suggestions for nominations to MA Program Coordinator Angela Muñoz who will forward them to the doctoral student area assistant

in the relevant doctoral area of study.

The faculty person nominated may be from within the area, or from another area. The name of the one Core Doctoral Faculty member nominated by an area's students should be forwarded to the GTU Dean by the Area Student Assistant as soon as possible, but no later than Friday, March 20. The selection criteria are as follows:

- Eligible candidates are active members of the Core Doctoral Faculty.
- Candidates exhibit creative and effective pedagogical methods and performance, both in the classroom and in their advising and mentoring of doctoral students.
- Candidates exhibit ecumenical and/or interreligious sensi-

tivity and commitment in their teaching, regardless of the subject matter or field.

d. Candidates exhibit and promote effective use of interdisciplinary approaches, as appropriate to their fields.

e. Candidates display sensitivity to ethnic and cultural diversity.

f. Sarlo Award recipients may be selected only once.

Previous recipients are Judith Berling (2003), Fumitaka Matsuo (2004), Clare Fischer (2005), Doug Adams (2006), Gina Hens-Piazza (2007), Jerome Baggett (2008), Lewis Rambo (2009), Alejandro García Rivera (2010), Ron Nakasone (2011), Boyung Lee (2012), Mia Mochizuki (2013), and William O'Neill (2014). This annual award is made possible by a generous gift from the Sarlo Foundation.

CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDIES: NEWS & EVENTS

**“Translation, Migration, Conversion: New Directions in Jewish Bible Translation and Beyond”**

Sunday, March 15: Easton Hall, 10:15am, 2401 Ridge Road, Berkeley CA 94709.

Monday, March 16: GTU Dinner Board Room, 9:30am, 2400 Ridge Road, Berkeley CA 94709.

**The Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies at the Graduate Theological Union cordially invites you to a reception in honor of Naomi Seidman for twenty years of inspirational scholarship, teaching, and leadership at the GTU.**

Please join us for the event on March 16th, 2015, at 1:00 pm at the GTU Library, 2400 Ridge Road, Berkeley CA. We look forward to gathering Naomi’s students, colleagues, and close collaborators to celebrate her achievements.

CJS invites you to submit words of tribute for a booklet to be printed in honor of the occasion. Contributions should be approximately three hundred words in length. Please send your contribution to [cjs@gtu.edu](mailto:cjs@gtu.edu) by March 1,



2015-2016 FINANCIAL AID APPLICATION DEADLINES

Financial Aid Applications for the 2015-2016 academic year are available online at: [www.gtu.edu/admissions/financial-aid](http://www.gtu.edu/admissions/financial-aid).

Financial Aid Applicants: please find your deadline date below and visit the GTU Consortial Financial Aid website for instructions on how to complete and submit the 2015-16 Financial Aid Application and Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). To reach the Financial Aid Office with a question, please email [finaid@gtu.edu](mailto:finaid@gtu.edu) or call the us at 510-649-2469.

Common MA Students affiliated with-	
ABSW	April 15, 2015
CIS	April 1, 2015
CJS	April 1, 2015
DSPT	March 15, 2015
IBS	April 1, 2015
JST	March 1, 2015
PAOI	April 1, 2015
PLTS	March 15, 2015
SFTS	April 15, 2015
SKSM	April 1, 2015

**Attention, Prospective Graduate!**

All prospective graduates who have borrowed federal Direct Stafford and Graduate Plus loans during the course of their program are REQUIRED to complete Loan

Exit Counseling prior to graduation. The Consortial Financial Aid Office, in partnership with each of the member schools, makes every effort to support student borrowers in preparing for successful student loan repayment.

The Consortial Financial Aid Office will host Federal Student Loan Exit Counseling Sessions in coordination with our member schools during the month of April. For an update on specific dates go to <http://gtu.edu/important-financial-aid-dates-events>



GTU COMMENCEMENT  
MAY 7, 4PM, PLTS  
CHAPEL OF THE CROSS



## CARE: NEWS & EVENTS

### Brown Bag Lunch Series Friday, March 6, 2015

Guest Speaker: Justin Tanis  
Doug Adams Gallery  
12-1pm  
"Invisibility = Death"

"Silence = Death" was a seminal statement in the 1980s and 1990s during the height of the AIDS years. It was the slogan of the activist group ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) but it also conveyed a specific strategy for addressing the devastation of AIDS. In this talk, we'll look at three HIV+ artists, Juan Gonzales, Albert Winn, and David Wojnarowicz, and the ways in which their work embodies the efforts to make the suffering of those impacted by HIV/AIDS visible through posters, protests, political funerals, and visibility campaigns in order to invigorate research, treatment, and compassionate responses.

### "Exploring Icons: From Veneration to Preservation" Panel Discussion

Thursday, March 12, 2015  
Doug Adams Gallery  
5-7pm

Light refreshments provided

Panelists include:

His Eminence Metropolitan Nikitas, Director, Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute

Dr. Rossitza Schroeder, CARE/PSR Assistant Professor of Art & Religion, and Doug Adams Gallery Guest Curator

Elisabeth Cornu, Art Conservator

### *Present Absence: Icons from the Collection of the Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute*

February 3 - May 29, 2015  
Regular Gallery Hours: T, Th, F 10am-3pm  
Doug Adams Gallery  
1798 Scenic Avenue, Berkeley

An exhibition catalog for the show is available at [care-gtu.org](http://care-gtu.org).

THESIS/  
DISSERTATION  
FILING  
DEADLINE  
FOR SPRING  
GRADUATION  
IS APRIL 6

DOCTORAL STUDENTS  
MARCH 11, 12:30-  
2:00PM  
STUDENT LOUNGE  
2465 LeCONTE  
AVENUE

THE STUDENT  
ADVISORY  
COMMITTEE IS  
SPONSORING THIS  
FORUM FOR  
DOCTORAL  
STUDENTS TO DISCUSS  
ISSUES OF RACE  
AND RELIGION IN THE  
CLASSROOM.

LUNCH AND  
REFRESHMENTS WILL  
BE PROVIDED



## GTU LIBRARY: READING OF THE SACRED TEXTS

The 23rd annual Sacred Texts Lecture is scheduled for Wednesday, March 11. Thepo Tulku is the featured speaker. A tulku is a custodian of a specific lineage of teachings in Tibetan Buddhism who is given empowerments and trained from a young age by students of his predecessor.

Here is a short excerpt from an article Thepo Tulku wrote entitled "The People of Tibet Need Help Now."

"On the night of March 17,

1959, the Dalai Lama disguised himself as a Chinese soldier, slipped out of his summer palace, and headed south toward India. He was escorted by his loyal entourage, and by Khampa warriors. At the time, I was five years old. I was living in the Ganden monastery in Tibet, as a reincarnated Tulku.

Word of the escape spread quickly. As people throughout Tibet learned of the Dalai Lama's flight, many decided

to make the perilous choice to try and follow him to India. Some of our monastery elders fled, and they took me along with them to exile in India. I was separated from my mother and father. I never saw them again."

The lecture begins at 7pm; a reception precedes the lecture at 6:30pm. Both the lecture and reception will take place in the GTU Dinner Board Room and are open to the public.



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATION: ADVANCEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

March 5, 2015

7-9 p.m.

International House, Auditorium

A celebration and panel discussion focusing on women's accomplishments as well as barriers to gender equality, moderated by Professor Minoo Moallem, UC Berkeley

Gender & Women's Studies Department. Panelists include Nathalie Delrue-McGuire, Consul General of Belgium; Cassie Doyle, Consul General of Canada; Ana Valenzuela, Consul General of El Salvador and Hilde Skorpen, Consul General of Norway.

Sponsors: Graduate Theological Union, International House, Department of Gender and Women's Studies, United Nations Association, USA East Bay Chapter



INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS, LUNCH GET-TOGETHER, MARCH 4, 12-1PM, GTU STUDENT LOUNGE. PLEASE RSVP TO CHAITANYA MOTUPALLI, MSPCHAITANYA@GMAIL.COM

CENTER FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES: OPEN HOUSE

Thursday, March 12, 2015, 11:30AM-1:30PM

The Center of Islamic Studies at the Graduate Theological Union would like to invite

you to our CIS Open House! Come and meet your fellow CIS students, professors, staff, and community members. Refreshments provided; please RSVP to cis@gtu.edu.

Location: Center for Islamic Studies, 2452 Virginia Street, Berkeley, CA 94709.



BOOK FORUM: REFIGURING THEOLOGICAL HERMENEUTICS WITH DR. MARION GRAU, THURSDAY, MARCH 19TH, 7:45PM

Hermeneutics can be said to be operative when something is not immediately intelligible. The divine, experiences of God and the sacred, are of course a notorious hermeneutical problem. How to render, translate, interpret the unintelligible, the infinitely untranslatable without indeed admitting to its impossibility? This book argues that interpretive agency has aspects that are represented by the figures of Hermes, trickster, and fool. These figures reveal, perform, and challenge the status quo of a society and its structures of power, knowledge and belief.

Associate Professor of Theol-

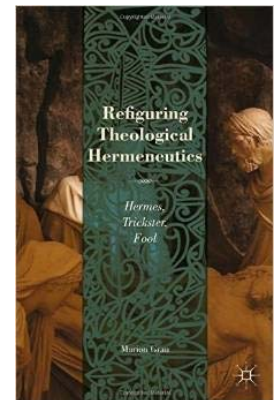
ogy Dr. Marion Grau presents her new book in conversation with panelists:

Anna Rebecca Solevåg (PhD) is a postdoctoral research fellow at the School of Mission and Theology in Stavanger, Norway. Currently a visiting scholar at GTU, Solevåg is a New Testament scholar working on issues of disability, gender and reception history.

Mai-Anh Le Tran is Associate Professor of Christian Religious Education at Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. She is current President of the Religious Education Association.

The Rev. Dr. Jay Emerson Johnson is Lecturer in Theology and Culture at Pacific School of Religion and a member of the Core Doctoral Faculty at the Graduate Theological Union. He is also a clergy associate at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Berkeley, California.

This forum is a part of CDSP's weekly Community Night. Join us for Eucharist at 5:45 in All Saints Chapel and dinner (\$12 – please RSVP to the CDSP Front Office at 510-204-0700)



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION:  
CAREER SUPPORT WORKSHOPS FOR PHD STUDENTS

There will be a series of professional development and career workshops sponsored by the American Academy of Religion to be held April 18th and 19th 2015.

These workshops have been created to address some of the anxieties and concerns that many graduate students experience when entering the job market with a PhD. They are designed to provide both emotional and practical support for PhDs looking to change their lives by increasing economic opportunity and entering into a new, healthier, more sustainable and hopefully happier relationship with academia and the private sector.

**Envisioning Academic Alternatives**

**Saturday April 18  
9:30 am-12:30 pm**

This will be a workshop for graduate students and PhDs in Religious Studies, Humanities or Theology that will help them identify their skills and consider a range of possible career options that can fit holistically into wider life strategies, while also focusing on creating new and healthy relationships with academia.

**Career Transitions for Religious Professionals**

**Saturday April 18  
2pm-5pm**

This will focus on career transitions and job skills for religious professionals, exploring the unique skill sets that religious professionals have and can contribute in a variety of professional environments.

**PhD Transitions Over 40**

**Sunday April 19  
10am-1 pm**

This will provide an overview of the specific circumstances that people over 40 with a PhD face in making career transitions, either into or outside of academia.

These workshops will be held in downtown San Francisco at the Golden Gate University Campus. The registration fee to secure a place is \$25, and people can register for the event and find out more information through our event website

at [www.phdlifetransitions.com](http://www.phdlifetransitions.com). The facilitators will be Dr. Amy Hale and Dr. Jeffery Yergler from Golden Gate University. For information please contact us at [phdlifetransitions@gmail.com](mailto:phdlifetransitions@gmail.com).



DOCTORAL  
STUDENT  
ELECTIONS  
MAKE SURE TO  
VOTE FOR  
DOCTORAL  
STUDENT  
REPRESENTATIVES  
BETWEEN MARCH 9  
-20. BE ON THE  
LOOKOUT FOR  
YOUR EBALLOT.

AQUINAS LECTURE 2015: SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS IN ART AND LEGEND: AN  
ICONOGRAPHIC STUDY OF THE ANGELIC DOCTOR

**Wednesday, March 18, 2015,  
7:30 pm**

In keeping with our mission - to engage contemporary scholarship with the wisdom of tradition, especially as exemplified by St. Thomas Aquinas - every year our faculty nominate a scholar to present a paper in which the thought and method of Aquinas are applied to a contemporary issue in the Annual Aquinas Lecture.

The 25th Annual Aquinas Lecture will be delivered by DSPT Professor of Religion and the Arts Michael Morris, OP, who

will speak on Saint Thomas Aquinas in Art and Legend: An Iconographic Study of the Angelic Doctor. While the writings of Thomas Aquinas have been studied and celebrated for centuries, the legends of his life and the meaning behind the manner of his representation in art have attracted less attention. In this illustrated lecture Michael Morris, OP, an art historian, will examine the iconography of the saint and explore the fables and the facts behind the Church's most honored theologian.



Michael Morris, OP, is DSPT Professor of Religion and the Arts with PhD in Art History from University of California at Berkeley. This semester he is teaching Art & Religion: The Modern Era and Contemporary Cinema: Theological Reflection. He is a member of the Core Doctoral Faculty of the GTU.



The Triumph of St. Thomas Aquinas, Benozzo Gozzoli, 1471

# HONORABLE MENTION

## MA STUDENTS

### Thesis Successfully Defended

Liusamoa Simolea, PSR  
Ramona Rachita, PAOI

## PHD STUDENTS

### General Comprehensive Exam Passed

Paul Blankenship, SPRT  
Heeyoung Chung, SPRT  
Jiyoung Ko, SPRT  
Mauricio Najarro, SPRT

### Comprehensive Exams Proposal Approved

Amanda Kaminski, SPRT  
Cesar Melgar, BIBL  
Seumaninoa Puaina, BIBL

### Oral Comprehensive Exams Passed

Philip Erwin, BIBL  
Veronica Goines, IDS  
Reem Javed, IDS  
Stephen King, SPRT\*  
Michelle Mueller, CHSR  
Se Hoon Park, SPRT  
Hun Cho Yu, THEO\*

\* with distinction

### Advanced to Candidacy

Jeanyoun Kim, HIST  
Chaitanya Motupalli, ETHC

### Oral Dissertation Successfully Defended

Matthew Gaudet, ETHC  
Elizabeth Ingenthron, IDS  
Jun Kim, BIBL  
Sang-Yoon Kim, HIST  
Patricia McKee, ART  
Kyle Schiefelbein, LITG

## GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION

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### THE DEAN'S NEWSLETTER

The Dean's Newsletter is for official notices from the GTU Dean's Office regarding academic affairs and for announcements of educational events (lectures, conferences) focusing on academic research and thus of particular interest to faculty and MA and PhD students. Send submissions to Angela Muñoz, [amunoz@gtu.edu](mailto:amunoz@gtu.edu).