

GTU DEAN'S NEWSLETTER



Inside this Issue

.....

From the Dean.....	1
Announcements.....	2
BJRT.....	4
From the Library.....	5
ICP.....	6
WSR.....	6
CARe.....	7
CDS.....	8
CIS.....	9
CJS.....	10
CLGS.....	11

**History says, *Don't hope*
On this side of the grave.
 But then, once in a lifetime
 The longed-for tidal wave
 Of justice can rise up,
 And hope and history rhyme.**

President-Elect Biden is fond of this beautiful quote from *The Cure at Troy* (1990) by Seamus Heaney. It fits the moment and our yearning to transform hope into justice. In verse, Heaney has reworked Sophocles' play, *Philoctetes*, in which the eponymous hero lies abandoned, but retains possession of an enchanted bow that is crucial to the Greek victory. Odysseus urges Neoptolemus to use trickery to retrieve the bow, reasoning that the outcome – victory – outweighs a personal ethical lapse. Neoptolemus' conscience wins out, so it's divine intervention that leads Philoctetes, with the bow, to return to help his former comrades.

As we begin the final month of this extraordinarily long year, themes from *Philoctetes* resonate. What does morality mean to each of us? The pandemic has illuminated the connection between personal behavior and public good. Systemic racism, embedded misogyny, the climate crisis – as a nation, we face deep problems that challenge our morality. At the GTU, one of our guiding principles is *teaching patterns of faith that encourage justice and care of the planet*. We can play our part, individually and institutionally, in “The longed-for tidal wave / Of justice.”

Elizabeth S Peña
 Elizabeth S. Peña, PhD

Interim Dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Academic Accomplishments and Deadlines

Dissertation Successfully Defended

Sheryl Johnson, THET

Comprehensive Proposal Approved

Shinmin Lee, HCSR

Yong Park, THET

Kenneth Schoon, HCSR

Sang-Pil Yun, THET

David Patrick Harry, HCSR

Paula Thompson, HCSR



Congratulations to all!

(Pictured: Sheryl Johnson)

Important Reminders

The deadline to submit your dissertation proposal is **January 25, 2021, 12 noon (PST)**.

Spring 2021 - Intent to Graduate (MA): <https://forms.gle/5r5dAhAVVRvoamxV9>

Spring 2021 - Intent to Graduate (PhD): <https://forms.gle/WJ3Quc3aJ7EYPTzB8>

Correction! Chan Essay Prize

On behalf of the Core Doctoral Faculty Awards Committee, the Dean is pleased to announce **Myoung-Ho Sin** as the winner of this year's **2020** Chan Essay contest for his paper, "From Homo Economicus to Homo Oikos Sacralis: Redefining Human Being in the Face of Climate Change." Congratulations Myoung-Ho!

November's issue of the Dean's Newsletter incorrectly printed "2019 Chan Essay"

GTU Member Schools

Spring 2021 Semester

Institution	Spring 2021 plans	For more information
BST	Remote start, possible change if conditions warrant	www.bst.edu
CDSP	Remote start, possible change if conditions warrant	https://cdsp.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/CDSP-Course-Modalities-SP21-...
DSPT	Remote start, possible change if conditions warrant with option to attend or teach remotely if desired	https://www.dspt.edu/current-courses-syllabi
GTU	Remote instruction	https://www.gtu.edu/coronavirus-resources-gtu
JST-SCU	Remote start, possible change if conditions warrant with option to remain remote if desired	https://www.scu.edu/jst/news-and-events/covid-19-updates/
PLTS-CLU	Remote instruction	https://www.callutheran.edu/know/
PSR	Remote instruction	https://www.psr.edu/resource/coronavirus/
SFTS-Redlands	Remote start, possible change if conditions warrant with option to remain remote if desired	No link provided
SKSM	Remote instruction	https://www.sksm.edu/coronavirus/

Remote learning at the GTU

In consultation with GTU leadership, the GTU COVID-19 Response Team, and using the guidance of health officers from Alameda County and the City of Berkeley, the decision has been made that **all GTU instruction will continue to rely on remote modalities for Spring 2021.**

[Click here for more information and helpful resources.](#)

A graphic featuring a pile of dark brown coffee beans on the left side. The background is a light brown color. A large blue circle is positioned over the beans, containing the text "Coffee Hour with the Dean" in white. Below the circle, the text "Every Tuesday morning, 9-10am PST join Interim Dean Dr. Elizabeth S. Peña on Zoom for a casual coffee hour." is written in a smaller font. At the bottom right, the text "Zoom Meeting ID: 919 7110 2288" is displayed.

**Coffee Hour
with the Dean**

Every Tuesday morning, 9-10am PST
join Interim Dean Dr. Elizabeth S. Peña
on Zoom for a casual coffee hour.

Zoom Meeting ID: 919 7110 2288



Berkeley Journal of Religion and Theology

2021 Call for Papers

The **Berkeley Journal of Religion and Theology** (BJRT) is the double-blind, peer-reviewed journal of the Graduate Theological Union. The mission of the BJRT is to be an inclusive and diverse forum of original, leading edge scholarship in inter-religious studies, philosophy, and theology that reflects the GTU's endeavor to be a nexus for "where religion meets the world."

To this end, the editors of the BJRT invite scholars from pertinent disciplines and backgrounds to submit articles and book reviews for publication in the journal. The deadline for all submissions for the next regular issue (Vol. 7) is **March 1, 2021**.

Instructions for submission and a Style Guide for authors and book reviewers are available on the BJRT website (bjrt.gtu.edu).

For more information, please email the managing editor at bjrt@ses.gtu.edu

Follow BJRT on [Facebook](#) and [Academia.com](#)



GTU

Berkeley Journal of
Religion and Theology

GTU Professional Development
 Program Workshop

How to Teach an Introductory Course

Facilitated by **Dr. Diandra Erickson**
 Wednesday, Dec. 2 | 10 - 11 am

Zoom ID: **978 6840 4257**

RSVP: cmotupalli@gtu.edu



DEAR FIRST YEAR STUDENTS:

SAVE THE DATE!

MID-YEAR ORIENTATION

FEB 3, 2021. WED. 11 AM - 12 NOON

Zoom ID: 988 4208 9000

From the Library



Paying your fines online with your credit card or PayPal account allows you to take control of your library account. If you have fines on your card, you'll be able to click a link in your library account to begin the online payment process.

You can log into your account anytime at [**grace.gtu.edu/patroninfo**](https://grace.gtu.edu/patroninfo) to see what items you have checked out and when they are due. You can renew your items (as long as no one else needs them) and

request more materials for your research. Most items are due back on December 11, but please remember to return items as soon as you're done with them so others can access them. Please renew within a week before the item's due date to avoid fines.

Visit [**gtu.edu/library**](https://gtu.edu/library) for more information on library services, such as scanning and curbside pickup, and chat with a librarian if you have any questions.

Interreligious Chaplaincy Program

ICP-CJS Fellowship

ICP is currently accepting applications for the ICP-CJS Fellowship, which offers a scholarship to cover partial tuition for required chaplaincy courses. The scholarship is made possible through collaboration with the Center for Jewish Studies and a generous gift from The Taube Foundation. The deadline for applying for Spring is **December 15, 2020**.

ICP Student Affiliation Changes

ICP no longer requires students to affiliate with the Centers for Dharma, Jewish, or Islamic Studies as a prerequisite for admission into the program. Students may select a “general” option.

Intersession and Spring Courses

ICP is offering one course in the January Intersession, **Spiritual Care for Marginalized Communities** (PT-2100), and two courses in Spring 2021, a seminar in **Pediatric Chaplaincy** (PT-2000), and **Religious and Spiritual Diversity in Counseling** (PT-2050). Register for courses at gtusonis.net

Women’s Studies in Religion

Empowering Communal Healing in Ritual Gathering

Thursday, December 10 | 5:30-6:30pm (PST)

As we near the close of the Fall semester, especially amid the tensions of this COVID pandemic, WSR invites the GTU community to a communal gathering for encouragement, empowerment, and ritual healing.

Interreligious meditative expressions celebrate our diversity and creative spirituality. Join us with diverse voices guiding breathing exercises, spoken word, chant, prayer, and indigenous earth practices. Let’s share this communal hour as a gift.

Please email wsr@gtu.edu to RSVP for this online event.

Center for the Arts & Religion

November Art Window

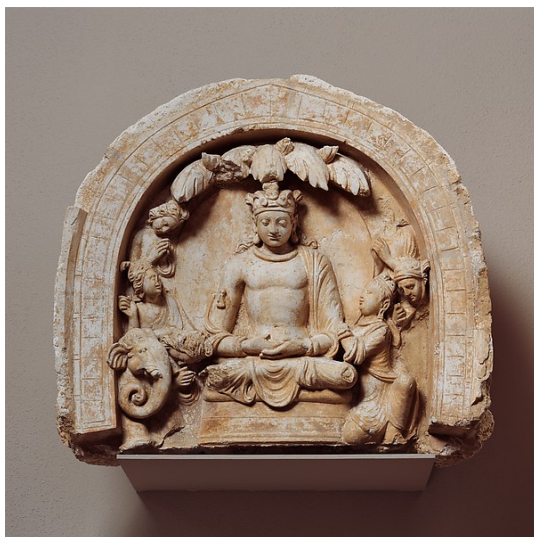
CARe's Fall "in-person" exhibition is still up and running! Be sure to check out the ground floor of the GTU North Building for our latest exhibition, *Art Window*, now on view - from outside! - in the Doug Adams Gallery window.

Our December artist is **Shirin Khalatbari**, an interdisciplinary artist from Iran, who recently received her MFA from San Francisco State University. She also holds an MA in Archaeology from the University of Rome. Shirin's work confronts the entropy of memory and history.



Shirin's site-specific installation looks at the world's Refugee Crisis, which is only worsening during the COVID pandemic. Shirin takes, from satellite imagery, the most common routes of refugees the world over and captures them on the glittering gold background of metallic emergency blankets. The blankets are similar to the ones often given to refugees by immigration officials. Be sure to stop by the GTU North Building through December to see Shirin's powerful and stunning piece.

"Four distinct types of identities in Shakyamuni Buddha's last life: A reexamination of early Buddhist images" with Dr. Dessi Vendova



Thursday, December 17 | 12-1pm | Online

Join us on Zoom for our last event of the semester! **Dr. Dessi Vendova**, our Post-Doctoral Fellow in East Asian Art & Religion will be discussing her research on Buddhist imagery from India, Central Asia, and China. By examining several early textual versions of the Buddha's life (extant in Sanskrit, Pali and Chinese), Dr. Vendova proposes a new approach and novel interpretive outlook to image identification of early Buddhist images.

Please email care@gtu.edu to RSVP this event.

Center for Dharma Studies

Recent Publications

Congratulations to Rachelle Syed for her publication “Come, O Comet! Build a Bridge of Fire Across Darkness! A Theological Reflection on the Bhakti-Mysticism of Kazi Nazrul Islam,” in the *Journal of Interreligious Studies*, No. 31 (2020): Issue 31. [View Rachelle's publication online!](#)

Congratulations to Dr. Cogen Bohanec, CDS Alum, for the publication of his article “Semiotics and Illocution in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Sādhana,” in *Contemplative Studies and Hinduism: Meditation, Devotion, Prayer, & Worship* (Routledge, October 2020). [View Dr. Bohanec's article online!](#)

Commendations to Zipei Tang, Rachelle Syed, and Charissa Jaeger-Sanders. Their papers have been accepted for presentation at the AAR/Western Region which is hosted (virtually) by the GTU this year.

AAR Paper Presentations by CDS Faculty

- “*Embodied Knowing & Epistemic Justice*” to be presented at the AAR Special Roundtable on the Scholar-Practitioner by Dr. Rita D. Sherma
- “The Methodology of Bhakti in Ramakrishna’s Contemplative Praxis” to be presented at the AAR RSO Society for Hindu-Christian Studies by Dr. Rita D. Sherma

AAR-WR
Annual Conference
March 19-21, 2021



Graduate
Theological
Union



Center for Islamic Studies

COVID-19 and the 2020 US Presidential Election: Precariousness, Connectedness, Creative Expressions

December 8, 1:00-2:30pm (PST)

Dr. Munir Jiwa, Chair of the AAR's Committee on Racial and Ethnic Minorities, will be moderating the committee-led Zoom panel, "COVID-19 and the 2020 US Presidential Election: Precariousness, Connectedness, Creative Expressions".

Please see the AAR online schedule for further details.

News

Congratulations to Mahjabeen Dhala who has been selected to join a cohort of scholars in a collaborative project that considers how the Islamic Studies classroom can integrate community-engaged learning opportunities. This project is sponsored by the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion in partnership with the Center for Social Concern at Johns Hopkins University.

GTU-Luce Grant

CIS is delighted to share that it will be facilitating ongoing conversations throughout December, January, and the Spring semester with the **GTU-Luce grant** community partners on the topics of the pandemic, vulnerable communities, race, spiritual care and leadership. GTU gratefully acknowledges the incredible work of Dr. Valerie Miles-Tribble, Dr. Dorsey Blake, and Mahjabeen Dhala, for their leadership and care in serving on the grant's steering committee, and to GTU alum Huzaifa Shahbaz for his dedicated work on this project.

Please visit the CIS webpage for more information.

Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies

Jews and Race Lecture Series

What is the relationship between Jewishness and whiteness? What particular challenges have Jews of color faced and how do their experiences shed light on formations of Jewish identity? How might contemporary insights from critical race theory and African American Studies clarify aspects of the Jewish past? These are Just a few of the questions that this series will explore.

All lectures in this series are online, free, and open to the public.

A Second Exodus: Ethiopian Jews in Israel between Religion, Nation and State



Thursday, December 3 | 4pm (Pacific Time)

Marva Shalev Marom is a PhD student at Stanford Graduate School of Education, in the concentration of Education and Jewish Studies and Race Inequality and Language in Education. For over a decade, Marva created music education programs in collaboration with Ethiopian Israeli youths in the Tel Aviv periphery. At the same time, she acquired an MA in religious studies from Tel Aviv University, focusing on mystical scripture in Hebrew and Sanskrit.

Her dissertation is a community-based research project done in collaboration with four Ethiopian Israeli teenage girls. Together, they explore the identity formation of Ethiopian Israelis in the religious track of Israel’s public-school system, in the context of statewide policies that are exclusive and discriminatory of dark-skinned Jews. Considering the intersection of Jewishness and Blackness from their powerful perspective, as Black, Jewish, Ethiopian, Israeli young women, illuminates their agency and resilience, and mirrors rapturous tensions between religious, national and state definitions of Jewishness in Israel.

[Click here to register](#)

This series on Jews and Race is a collaboration between the Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish studies at the Graduate Theological Union, the Berkeley Center for Jewish Studies, the Berkeley Center for the Study of Religion, and the Berkeley Institute for Jewish Law and Israel Studies.

Center for LGBTQ & Gender Studies (PSR)

CLGS Lavender Lunch: “Harm Reduction as Queer Ministry” with Blyth Barnow

ONLINE | Tuesday, 3 December | 12:15pm - 1:15pm (PST)

Join us on Zoom!

CLGS Jewish Queeries Series: “Queer Jewish Love from the Torah to Today: A Gay Orthodox Perspective” with Rabbi Daniel Atwood.

ONLINE | Thursday, 3 December | 1pm - 2pm (PST)

Join us on Zoom!

CLGS Queer & Latinx Faith Conversations: “A Matter of Faith: A Panel Discussion Among Young Latinx Queer Folxs.”

ONLINE | Wednesday, 16 December | 12pm - 1pm (PST)

Join us on Zoom!

Sexuality Issues for Religious Professionals

January 2021 online CLGS/PSR course with Professor Debra Haffner.

Please email clgs@clgs.org for more information.



AAR/SBL Annual Meeting

Don't forget! The **American Academy of Religion** and the Society of Biblical Literature annual meeting is taking place online now through December 10.

Find presentations by GTU students, faculty and alumni.



The GTU Dean's Office wishes you a safe & joyful Winter Break!
Don't forget, Spring classes begin February 1, 2021





The Dean's Newsletter

The Dean's Newsletter is for official notices from the Graduate Theological Union Dean's Office regarding academic affairs and for announcements of educational events focusing on academic research and thus of particular interest to faculty and MA and PhD students.

Send submissions by the second to last Friday of the month to lwebster@gtu.edu

Lydia Webster, Executive Assistant to the Interim Dean

Graduate Theological Union Office of the Dean

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