

THE DEAN'S NEWSLETTER

RELIGION: PROBLEM OR SOLUTION?

After the recent violent attacks in Beirut and Paris, many people are discussing the role that religion plays in such catastrophic events. Some suggest that religion—especially religion of the fundamentalist variety—has been a major cause of violence throughout human history right up to the present day. On the contrary, others argue that religion offers the only real hope we have of getting people and nations to come together across boundaries of nation, race, ideology, and economic self-interest.

There is ample evidence available to support both points of view. But the question is complicated by the fact that human beings are notoriously subject to self-deception. The reasons we give for the actions we take are not always indicative of our real motivations. Religious fervor can mask all sorts of other convictions and emotions, both positive and negative.

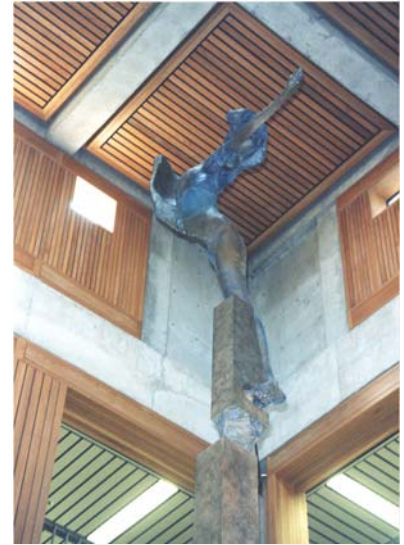
My own view is that religion in itself is neither the problem nor the solution. Or I suppose you could say that it is potentially both at once. Like every other aspect of human experience from science and technology to the arts, religion is multivalent. Our religious beliefs and practices can lead us to great heights, but they can also take us into the lowest depths. Being religious is no guarantee of being just, or of being right.

If that is the case, why do we at the GTU invest our time and energy in the study of religion? Precisely because its meaning and implications are ambiguous, religion demands the most thorough analysis we can give to it. Whether we are studying our own religion or the religions of others, we need to be aware that we are in a sense playing with fire. The religions we study and those we practice can provide warmth and light, but they can also burn and even destroy.

As scholars of religion we are well aware that no religion is self-authenticating or self-justifying. All religions point beyond themselves to something or someone more, to a reality greater than our words and concepts. Ultimately, the world's hope does not lie in fallible human beliefs and practices but in that greater and more comprehensive reality that is alone worthy of our trust.

ARTISTS, AESTHETICS, AND THE NATURAL WORLD

Dr. Kate Barush, Assistant Professor of Art History & Religion at the GTU & the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University will be part of an afternoon symposium exploring the spiritual aspects of Olivier Messaien's *Des canyons aux etoiles* ("From the Canyons to the Stars"), a work steeped in his deep Catholic faith. The symposium will be on January 30, from 1:00-5:00 at the David Brower Center in Berkeley; Messaien's work will be performed by the St. Louis Symphony with an associated visual accompaniment by Deborah O'Grady the following day, at 3:00 pm on Sunday, January 31, at Zellerbach Hall.



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BERKELEY JOURNAL OF RELIGION AND THEOLOGY: CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

The primary mission of the Berkeley Journal of Religion and Theology (BJRT) is to be an international and diverse forum for original, cutting-edge scholarship in religious studies, philosophy, and theology that reflects the GTU's endeavor to be a nexus for "where religion meets the world." In fulfillment of this aspect of the mission, the BJRT is committed to publishing and making accessible, on at least an annual basis, original research by scholars throughout the world that is representative of the various religious expressions and theological traditions and

perspectives within the GTU community.

Students, faculty, and alumni (as well as those outside the GTU community) are welcome to submit articles for consideration to be included in the regular issue of the journal. Submissions are due to bjrt@ses.gtu.edu by February 1, 2016. The instructions and style guide are available on the BJRT website at <http://gtu-bjrt.wix.com/bjrt>

SAVE THE DATE, SPRING STUDENT FORUM, MARCH 16.

JANUARY BIBLICAL HEBREW AND GREEK EXAMS

The Biblical Hebrew and Greek exams will be held on Tuesday and Wednesday, January 13-14, 2016, respectively, from 9:00 a.m. to noon each day.

INTENT TO GRADUATE

Forms for Spring, 2016 graduates are due on Friday, January 15 to the GTU Dean's Office for MAs and for PhD/ThDs. Submit to the GTU Receptionist.

CENTER FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES: NEWS AND EVENTS

December 2

Panel on the Paris Attacks

Booth Auditorium, 5-7pm

Speakers include Prof. Saba Mahmood and Prof. Judith Butler and many others
Organized by iGov Program at UC Berkeley, in partnership with several co-sponsors

December 11, 2015

Islamophobia and Eroding Civil Society

Islamophobia Research and Documentation Project UC Berkeley 3rd Annual International Conference in Paris, France, held at IREMMO. Cosponsored by the CIS.

January 4-15, 2016

Understanding and Countering Islamophobia

Dr. Munir Jiwa and Dr. Hatem Bazian

A public engagement course and leadership symposium at the GTU. Participants will include students and faculty at CIS/GTU and UC Berkeley, Bay Area Muslim leaders, and various other religious, interfaith, education, civic, media and arts leaders.



PHOTO CREDIT: RICARDO YAMAMOTO

CARE NEWS AND EVENTS

Brown Bag Lunch Series

Friday, December 4, 2015

CARE's Doug Adams Gallery | 12:00pm

Ancient Garment, Dried Plant: The Theological Imagination in Stanley Fung's Contemporary Photographic Icons

Su-Chi Lin (Graduate Theological Union Student)

Biblical scenes in contemporary settings, blurring the boundary of past and present, can be seen in the history of church painting. But when it is expressed in a photographic form, how can different layers of narratives come to play in stimulating our theological imaginations? This project is about how Stanley Fung's uses of object, light, and story engage the viewer's imagination on time and memory, life and death, demonstrating a model of inculturation manifested in the diverse expressions of Asian Christian photography.

CARE's Brown Bag Lunch Series will continue to be held the first Friday of every month February through May 2016 in CARE's Doug Adams Gallery.

The Erosion of Memory: Works by Anne Tait

Closes Friday, December 11, 2015

Regular Gallery Hours: Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, 10am-3pm

Tait's work is influenced by vernacular 19th-century memorials and the influence of industrialized printmaking on images of memory and domesticity. Prints, paintings, glass etchings, and embroidery pieces combine cemetery grave imagery with monograms.

Promised Lands: Intersecting Race, Religion, and Sexuality in an Age of Migrations by Hugo Córdova Quero

Please join us at Starr King School for the Ministry for another 10 Years of MASC Event - Promised Lands: Intersecting Race, Religion, and Sexuality in an Age of Migrations, a presentation by Dr. Hugo Córdova Quero. An interdisciplinary approach can help us to understand the manifold aspects of the migratory patterns of different populations within the modern capitalist World-System. Among those aspects, race/ethnicity, gender, and religion constitute pivotal elements in the daily life of im/migrants. They give meaning to the hopes and dreams of individuals and populations. Promised lands are places where the struggles of im/migrants are tested against reality.

Where: Starr King School for the Ministry 2441 LeConte Avenue, Berkeley CA

When: December 8th, 7:00pm



Mid-year Orientation for Doctoral Students

There will be a required mid-year “orientation” for doctoral students who started in the program during fall semester, 2015. The orientation will be Wednesday, January 27, 2016 from 12:30 to 2:00 p.m. in the Dinner Board room. A tasty lunch will be provided!



FASPE: FELLOWSHIPS AT AUSCHWITZ FOR THE STUDY OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

Summer Ethics Fellowship for Seminary and Divinity School Students

Fellowships at Auschwitz for the Study of Professional Ethics (FASPE) is now accepting applications for its 2016 program.

FASPE Seminary uses the conduct of the clergy during the Holocaust and in Nazi Germany as a launching point for an intensive course of study on the contemporary ethical challenges facing religious leaders. FASPE is predicated upon the power of place. Fellows visit Auschwitz and other sites in Germany and Poland where they consider how to apply the lessons of history to the ethical issues of today.

FASPE Seminary is open to all seminary and divinity students. Ten to 15 Fellows will be chosen for the 2016 program, which will run from Friday, June 17

through Thursday, June 30. All program costs, including travel to Europe from New York and back, European travel, lodging, and food are covered. FASPE Seminary is part of a program offering fellowships in several professional fields. Seminary Fellows travel and share some seminars with Medical Fellows.

FASPE programs are non-denominational. Candidates of all religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds are encouraged to apply.

Completed applications are due by December 22, 2015.

To apply or to learn more about FASPE, please visit: www.FASPE.info.

DIGITIZATION PROJECT: E.T. EARL LECTURES—THE FIFTIES

Special Collections and Archives at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley has posted online many of the E.T. Earl Lectures from the 1950s

The Earl Lectures have been sponsored by Pacific School of Religion almost every year since 1902. In 1950, the lectures were first recorded on audio tape, when the event was also broadcast on the radio. Very few have heard any of these lectures since then.

The lecturers include some of the best known religious scholars and advocates of the day:

Stephen Neil, Walter W. Van Kirk, Harry Emerson Fosdick, Roland Bainton, George Buttrick, James Muilenburg, Nels F.S. Ferre, Emil Brunner, Roger Shinn, Robert J.

McCracken, Rajah B. Manikam, Daniel Day Williams and Norman Cousins.

The project documents Christian and religious thinking and activities in the Fifties and is a predecessor to our oral history collections on religious education in the Sixties, which is also on the GTU Digital Library site.

David Stiver
Special Collections Librarian

SUPPORT THE GTU WITH YOUR ONLINE SHOPPING

Doing holiday shopping online? Purchasing textbooks for next semester? Through the AmazonSmile program, every online purchase from Amazon can support the GTU! Simply sign in to smile.amazon.com, choose the GTU as the group you'd like to support, and then shop on Amazon as you normally would—and AmazonSmile will donate 0.5 percent of all eligible purchases to the GTU! For future purchases, simply bookmark smile.amazon.com and access Amazon via that address, and you'll support the GTU with every purchase. Let your online shopping support religious education that engages the world's critical issues!



PACIFIC SCHOOL OF RELIGION: 2015 NATIONAL CHANGEMAKER PERFORMANCE

Racism. Hate Crimes. Love. Islam. Culture. Language. Life.

UNVEILED

Written and performed by Rohina Malik

Thursday, December 10

At Pacific School of Religion

6:00pm Reception in the Bade Museum

7:00pm Performance and Q&A in the Chapel of the Great Commission

Rohina Malik, a Pakistani American is a Chicago based performing artist, and in this play, she portrays 5 different Muslim women from five different Muslim contexts. It is a powerful play that you do not want to miss!

Reserve your free tickets at www.psr.edu/unveiled.



LIBRARY NEWS

New library art exhibit!

A new exhibit is coming to the library in early December. The exhibit will feature a wide variety of devotional objects and coincides with an exhibit at DSPT's Blackfriars Gallery titled ARS MYSTICA: Dreams, Devotions, Magic & Miracles. Be sure to check out these two fascinating exhibitions. The GTU library exhibit will run through early February; the exhibit at DSPT runs through July.

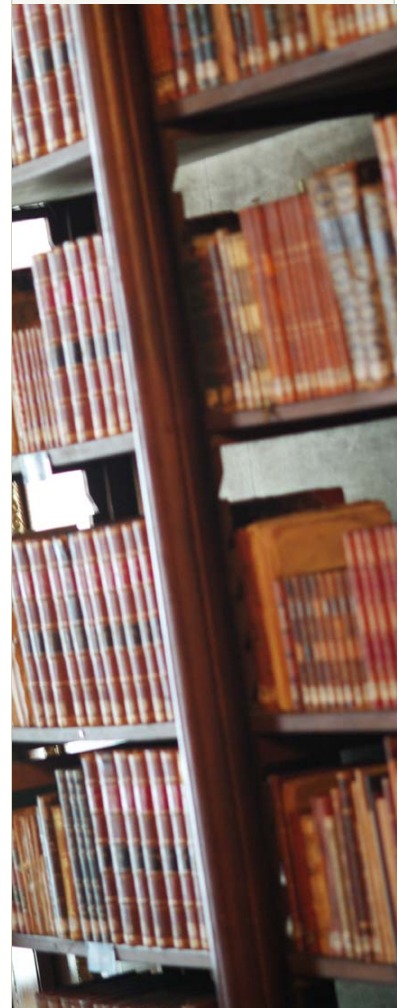
Coming in 2016....

We will be rolling out our new library guides with the Spring Semester. These customized interactive guides are being created by the GTU Library staff and will be on a variety of research topics including language learning resources, sacred text re-

search, and more. We hope the guides make your library experience better whether you live in the neighborhood or are completing your studies on the other side of the globe, as they will be available wherever and whenever you work.

Sacred Texts lecture

Mark your calendars now for the GTU annual Sacred Texts lecture. The lecture will take place on February 25 at 7pm in the GTU Dinner Board Room and will be given by Rita Sherma, Ph.D., Director of Hindu Studies and Associate Professor of Dharma Studies at the GTU. More information to come in the February Dean's newsletter.



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
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HONORABLE MENTION

MA STUDENTS

Kevin Creamer, JST*

* approved with honors

PHD STUDENTS

Comprehensive Proposal Approved

Hyun Ho Park, BIBL

Sunghyun Lee, THEO

Taeck-Dong Lim, SPRT

Oral Comprehensive Exams Passed

Levi Checketts, ETHC

Oral Dissertation Successfully Defended

Wendy Arce, IDS

Advanced to Candidacy

Matthew Boswell, SPRT

Christina Fetherolf, BIBL

Veronica Goines, IDS

Amanda Kaminski, SPRT

Sungrae Kim, IDS

Stephen King, SPRT