

GTU DEAN'S NEWSLETTER



The gifts of earth are brought and prepared, set on the table. So it has been since creation, and it will go on.

Joy Harjo, [Perhaps the World Ends Here](#)

In this poem, U.S. Poet Laureate Joy Harjo (Muscogee Creek Nation) evocatively describes the magnetism of the kitchen table, where so much of family life is centered. We enact the poem's words on Thanksgiving, as we gather around that table with generations of family and networks of friends. Thanksgiving is sometimes thought of as **the** American holiday, since it's celebrated by people of so many different cultural backgrounds and faith traditions. The holiday, however, remains tied to the mythology of the "first Thanksgiving" when Native Americans and English Pilgrim settlers dined together, as the story goes.

Rather than reiterating the traditional narrative, which heralded Euro-American expansion across the North American continent and upended the lives of Native Americans who had lived in these lands since time immemorial, at Thanksgiving time my thoughts turn toward the Native Americans who lived in the places we now call home, and to those who continue to live here, *since creation, and it will go on.*

As stated in the GTU's land acknowledgement: The Graduate Theological Union values the world's diverse religions and wisdom traditions. In a spirit of appreciation and respect, we acknowledge that our Berkeley campus stands on the ancestral land of the Chochenyo-speaking Ohlone people, in the territory of Xyčun (Huichin), previously the land of the sovereign Verona Band of Alameda County. Today, the land continues to be important to our neighbors from the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe, as well as Verona Band descendants. The GTU makes this Land Acknowledgement Statement to recognize the Indigenous Peoples as traditional stewards of this land, and to affirm the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories.

Happy Thanksgiving to all,



Elizabeth S. Peña, PhD
Interim Dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs

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Dean Search

Student Search Committee

Some of you may know that the GTU is beginning its search for a new Academic Dean. A Search Committee will undertake the work of interviewing and selecting candidates. The search has been determined to be internal to the GTU. To ensure that the student body has representation in that search, the Administration provided the members of the Student Advisory Committee the opportunity to choose a student representative to serve on the Search Committee.



We selected Joshua Garcia to serve in this position. Joshua is a second-year Ph.D. Student in the Sacred Texts Department; he identifies as Filipino-American. As your student representative, Joshua's role on the Academic Dean Search Committee will be to share your voice and present your questions and concerns to the interviewees, candidates, and the other members of the committee. The members of the SAC want to be as transparent as possible about how Joshua can serve students in this role, so here are some important points to note.

This role is confidential, so while Joshua will be able to receive your concerns and communicate them with the rest of the committee, he will not be able to communicate anything back to students during or after the search.

Joshua and other members of the committee will not be able to disclose who has applied for the position.

Some things you may wish to share with Joshua are:

1. Recommendations or nominations of GTU faculty members for the position.
2. Particular skill sets or qualifications you feel are important.
3. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion considerations you feel are important.
4. Concerns you have about representation, availability, or anything else.
5. Concerns about any faculty member who may be applying.

To submit your recommendations, please reach out to Joshua directly at jgarcia@ses.gtu.edu

The Search Committee will begin assessing applications in mid-October and hopes to conclude its search by the beginning of the Spring 2022 semester.

Thank you all for your input on this important issue.

Best regards,
Student Advisory Committee

Joshua Garcia, Mwaambi Mbui, Lwan May Oo, Emily Pothast, Victoria Price and Pamela Stevens

Announcements

NOVEMBER PDP WORKSHOPS

NOVEMBER 3, 2021, 11 AM

How to Prepare Conference
Presentations?

Facilitated by Dr. Kathryn Barush

NOVEMBER 17, 2021, 11 AM

Jobs in Academia and Beyond

Facilitated by Drs. Alyssa Nickell,
Bill Lester, and Henry Kuo

All workshops will be held on Zoom

Zoom ID: 978 6840 4257

RSVP: cmotupalli@gtu.edu

<https://www.gtu.edu/students/professional-development>

Academic Achievements & Deadlines

Comprehensive Proposal Approved

Jane E. Smiley, ETHC

Kevin Sneed, THET

Advanced to Candidacy

Young Park, THET



2021 GTU Alumni Reception

Monday, November 22 | 5pm (Pacific) | Online Event

The GTU's Annual Alumni Reception will be held virtually on Monday, November 22, from 5:00-5:30 PM (PST). This reception is offered concurrent with the 2021 Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion and Society of Biblical Literature. Since this year's event will be held virtually, registration is required. If you have any questions, or need additional information, please email advancement@gtu.edu

From the Registrar's Office

Intersession 2022 Registration and Spring 2022 Early Registration will be available via SONIS from Monday, November 8th through Friday, November 19th, 2021.

Digital Learning Department

Introducing Panopto

The GTU Digital Learning Department is excited to announce that the GTU consortium now has access to [Panopto](#), a robust and user-friendly video platform that provides extensive features for recording and editing videos. Panopto is the leading Video Platform for higher education and can serve as an excellent platform for producing higher quality online, hybrid, and flipped classroom courses.

The Panopto training team will offer us a training session on Wednesday, Nov. 10th at 1pm. If you would like to attend, please email Diandra Erickson (derickson@gtu.edu), and she will send you the link.

Fall 2021 Workshop List for November

Each workshop will be provided remotely through Zoom. Please RSVP for each workshop by emailing derickson@gtu.edu to receive the Zoom link.

Moodle's Intermediate and Advanced Features

Tuesday, November 2 | 11am

Wednesday, November 3 | 11am

Community Building and Collaborative Learning in a Remote Course

Tuesday, November 9 | 11am

Wednesday, November 10 | 11am

Developing Remote Learning Content for Diverse Learning Styles

Tuesday, November 16 | 11am

Wednesday, November 17 | 11am

Fall 2021 Student Awards

Newhall Fellowship

Applications due Friday, November 12, 2021

Newhall Fellowships are competitive awards for GTU Doctoral students to collaboratively teach or conduct research with faculty mentors. Newhall awards offer an opportunity to work closely with professors whose interests and approaches parallel the student's on projects that often would not be possible under other circumstances. The awards are designed to support both students (through grants) and faculty (through offering assistance to their research and teaching). Applications must come from both the student and the professor for a project involving both of them. Applications for the Newhall Fellowship must be submitted to the GTU Dean's Office.



2021 Distinguished Faculty Lecture: Dr. Valerie Miles-Tribble

Wednesday, November 17 | 6pm (Pacific) | Online Event



Dr. Valerie Miles-Tribble will present the 46th annual Distinguished Faculty Lecture titled, “Our Pedagogical Charge: Weaving Hope and Justice into the Gossamer-thin Fabric of Religious Democracy” on November 17, 2021 at 6:00 PM PST.

Each November, the GTU faculty honors a [distinguished professor](#) who embodies the scholarly standards, teaching excellence, and commitment to ecumenism that define the GTU. Nominations are made by GTU faculty and are then considered by the Council of Deans, which selects the lecturer.

Dr. Miles-Tribble is Associate Professor of Ministerial Leadership and Practical Theology at Berkeley School of Theology (BST) and is a member of the Core Doctoral Faculty. She is also the Chair of the Women’s Studies in Religion Steering Committee. Her book *Change Agent Church in Black Lives Matter Times: Urgency for Action* was published by Lexington Books/Fortress Academic in 2020.

[RSVP to the lecture here.](#)

Student Spotlights

Every month, the Dean's Newsletter will feature a selection of incoming students representing a range of GTU departments. Welcome to all!



Gilbert Duah Otu-Acheampong

PhD Sacred Texts and Their Interpretation

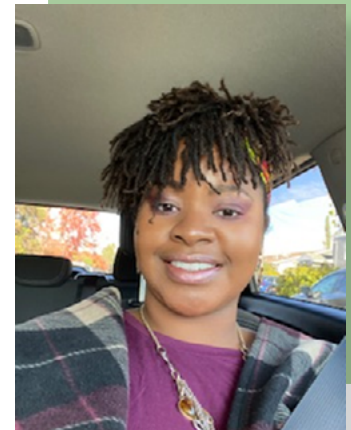
I am a Ghanaian by birth and nationality. I am currently registered as a PhD student in the Department of Sacred Texts and Their Interpretation. However, I intend to change to the Department of Theology and Ethics. My proposed research topic is: "The Theology of Agriculture and Ecology in the Book of Deuteronomy: The Role of Theology in Contributing to Sustainable Agriculture and Ecology." The research tries to produce a Systematic Theology of this ancient pre-Christian material (the book of Deuteronomy), which is now part of Christian Scripture, and explores why the theology of that book should still be significant for thought and action today. I believe that the outcome of this research holds hope for global development. I hope to draw inspiration from my advisor and professors while at the GTU.

Shannon Jones

MA Sacred Texts and Their Interpretation

Shannon's research interests lie in Black/African-American and Ethnic Jewry, with particular interests in Sacred Jewish Music and the connections it has to the Black/African-American Church and Sephardic Judaism. Shannon is also a Music Therapist and the chair of the Cultural Educational Committee that specializes in education and instruction to clinical staff, better techniques, approaches, and communication skills when working with Black Indigenous Patients/People of Color (BIPOC).

Additionally, Shannon is currently studying Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) and Trauma Informed Care (TIC) with hopes to combine the skill set of DBT, TIC, Music Therapy, and Chaplaincy to help heal and address any issues people may need support with in their lives.





Cindy Lin

MA Theology and Ethics

Hello! I'm a first-year MA student focusing on literary polyphony and its implications on how Christian ethics are communicated in a contemporary, inter-religious context. I also work as an engineer on the Google cryptography team and hold BS/MS degrees from Stanford University.

Patrick Reimnitz

PhD Sacred Texts and Their Interpretation

Patrick was born in Brazil and is a retired Air Force officer. Married to his theology graduate school sweetheart, Joyce, they have two young children, Rachel and Nathaniel. Patrick loves to travel, hike, and scuba dive. In his free time, he is an amateur herpetologist and musician.



Chang In Sohn

PhD Theology and Ethics

I am Chang In Sohn, a first-year doctoral student with a theology and science concentration. My current goal is to facilitate interdisciplinary dialogue between Christian theology and science, especially in morality and ethics. I am currently working as an office assistant at the Center for Theology and Natural Sciences. Look forward to meeting you all.



Center for the Arts and Religion

The Power of the Center: Pictorial Space as Dynamic Force

Saturday, November 6 & Sunday, November 7 | 1-2pm (Pacific)

Instructed by Louise Victor



Henri Matisse, The Conversation

There is a direct connection between forces in human nature and composition in art. The same relationships that exist between “the one” and “the other” in human experiences can be transformed into a visual language through meaningful structure.

This relationship is recognized through the powerful forces that interact within a work of art, be it a painting, a building, a sculpture, or something else entirely.

We will be taking a deep dive into these ideas, looking at forces in art that draw attention: the concept of centric and external centers and the interactions of these systems both in art and as we experience them in life.

Learn more and sign up: www.gtu.edu/careworkshops

Center for Islamic Studies

Madrasa-Midrasha Program

Join us for two upcoming Madrasa-Midrasha Program events in the weeks ahead:

Wednesday, November 10 | 12pm (Pacific) | Zoom



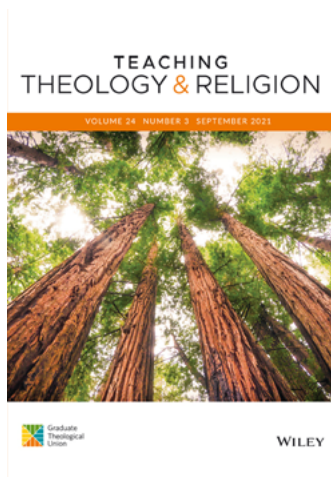
This event is co-sponsored by CARE and will feature artists Liat Berdugo (University of San Francisco) and Pantea Karimi (Santa Clara University), and will be moderated by Carol Bier (GTU Center for Islamic Studies). [Please visit the event page](#) for more information and to register.

Wednesday, December 1 | 1:30pm (Pacific) | Zoom



This event will feature a conversation between Charlotte Fonrobert (Stanford University) and Mark Fathi Massoud (UC Santa Cruz) and will be moderated by Madrasa-Midrasha Program Director Mahjabeen Dhala. [Please visit the event page](#) for more information and to register.

Congratulations to Dr. Mahjabeen Dhala on the following and gratitude for her leadership:



Publication: Mahjabeen Dhala and Sheryl Johnson, “Taking bell hooks on Zoom: Embodying Feminist Pedagogy in a Graduate Theological Classroom,” in *Teaching Theology & Religion*, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1111/teth.12593>

Papers and presentations at the AAR-SBL Annual Meetings

“African Muslim Women in Early Islamic History: A Shi’i Counter-Storytelling Amidst Patriarchal, Racial, Sectarian, and Secular Biases.” Study of Islam Unit. Theme: Sociopolitical Contexts of Scholarly Knowledge Production.

“Handmaiden of Empire?” Re-thinking Women’s Studies in Islam. Women of Color Scholarship, Teaching, and Activism Unit. Theme: Models of Resistance: Women of Color Challenging and Creating Religious Epistemologies.

Dr. Dhala will also serve as co-respondent to papers presented at a Women’s Caucus panel on the theme of **Biographies of Women in the Parliament of the World's Religions: Addressing Issues of Equity.**

Congratulations and gratitude to Carol Bier, CIS Research Scholar on the following:

We are delighted to share that on November 10, Carol will be moderating the Madrasa-Midrasha Program, “**Active Art**,” with participants Liat Berluogo and Pantea Karimi, each discussing their art as a means of addressing contemporary and historical concerns.

We are also delighted to share that Carol has submitted terminological contributions, *suzani* and *ikat*, for *Khamseen: Islamic Art History Online*, a free and open-access online platform of digital resources to aid the teaching of Islamic art, architecture, and visual culture, sponsored by the [Digital Islamic Studies Curriculum \(DISC\)](#) at the University of Michigan through the support of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

AAR-SBL Annual Meetings



CIS is pleased to share the Dr. Munir Jiwa will be chairing, moderating and presenting at the following sessions at the AAR-SBL Annual Meetings (virtual) as the AAR Chair of the Committee on Racial and Ethnic Minorities (please see the program book for details):

Joint special topics forum with all 4 AAR status committees, “**Telling the Truth of Our Lives 2.0: Deepening Intersectional Coalition Building as Scholars, Educators, and Activists.**”

Special topics forum by the Committee on Racial and Ethnic Minorities, “**Covid-19, Precariousness, Interconnectedness, Justice.**”

The CIS is delighted to share that this month’s **Islamic Studies@GTU** presentations will be held on **Fri Nov 12th at 4pm**. All welcome to attend to learn from and with students, scholars, alums

Center for Jewish Studies

The Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies

Last month, CJS co-sponsored an event with the Center for Dharma Studies on Jai Chakrabarti's new novel *A Play for the End of the World*. The book, which takes place during the Warsaw Ghetto and 1970s India, is a provocative exploration of the role of art in times of political upheaval, and a moving reminder of the power of the past to shape the present. The event featured a conversation between author Jai Chakrabarti and Dan Schifrin where they discussed the intersections of Indian and Jewish culture, and the complicated ethics of literary channeling vs. cultural borrowing, among other important topics. If you missed this event, you can watch the recording on the CJS Playlist on:

[GTU's YouTube page here.](#)

CJS is also excited to co-sponsor upcoming events in November:

Madrasa-Midrasha Webinar "Active Art"

Wednesday, November 10 | 12:00pm (Pacific) | Zoom

[Register Here](#)

CTNS Webinar "Transhumanism as Contemporary Idolatry: A Judaic Critique"

Wednesday, November 17 | 5pm (Pacific) | Zoom

[Register Here](#)

The Center for LGBTQ and Gender Studies in Religion (CLGS) at Pacific School of Religion

Building Your TDOR Toolkit with The CLGS Transgender Roundtable

Tuesday, November 2 | 12:15pm (Pacific) | Zoom

The CLGS Transgender Roundtable with Angel Collie, Ezra Fairley-Collins, and Rev. Jakob Hero-Shaw

[Join via Zoom](#)



Queering Latinx Liturgy

Thursday, November 4 | 12pm (Pacific) | Zoom

A CLGS Queer & Latinx Faith Conversation with Rev. Juan M. C. Oliver

[Join via Zoom](#)



The Future of Church for LGBTQ+ People and Their Allies

Tuesday, November 9 | 12:15pm (Pacific) | Zoom

A CLGS Lavender Lunch with Benjamin Brenkert

[Join via Zoom](#)



Conservative Impulses: Queers, Interfaith Couples, and Jewish Continuity

Thursday, November 18 | 1:00pm (Pacific) | Zoom

A CLGS Jewish Roundtable Queeries Series Event with Samira Mehta

[Join via Zoom](#)

Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences

Transhumanism as Contemporary Idolatry: A Jewish Critique

Wednesday, November 17 | 5pm | Zoom



A CTNS Public Forum with Dr. Hava Tirosh-Samuelsan and Respondents

[Register Here](#)

Transhumanism is a social and intellectual movement that promotes the use of technoscience to shape the evolution of the human species. Transhumanism calls for the engineering of the human body to enhance physiological and mental capacities, radically expand the duration of human life, and even attain (digital) immortality. Although secular in tone and style, transhumanist discourse is rife with utopian, apocalyptic, and eschatological motifs that invest technoscience with spiritual and even salvific meanings. For transhumanists, transcendence is to be attained through technoscience. Engaging transhumanism from a Judaic perspective, this lecture argues that transhumanism is a contemporary case of what the Bible understood as "idolatry," namely, the veneration of human-made artifacts as if they were divine. Instead of making us "better humans" and "perfecting" our world, the transhumanist idolatry has made us and our world less just, less equitable, and less caring. The harm inflicted by the massive technologization of life demands a critical examination of transhumanism.

Dr. Hava Tirosh-Samuelsan is Regents Professor of History, Irving and Miriam Lowe Professor of Modern Judaism, and Director of Jewish Studies at Arizona State University in Tempe, AZ. Tirosh-Samuelsan is a Jewish intellectual historian who focuses on the interplay of philosophy and mysticism, Judaism and science, and Judaism and ecology. Within the field of science and religion, Tirosh-Samuelsan explores the interplay of religion, science and technology with a focus on transhumanism and the relationship between Judaism, science and medicine. In addition to over 50 essays and book chapters, she is the author of *Between Worlds: The Life and Work of Rabbi David ben Judah Messer Leon* (1991) which received the award of the Hebrew University for the best work in Jewish history for 1991, and the author of *Happiness in Premodern Judaism: Virtue, Knowledge and Well-Being in Premodern Judaism* (2003), and *Religion and Environment: The Case of Judaism* (2020). This virtual event is free and open to the public. Please email Matthew Hartman mhartman@gtu.edu with any questions.

Wilmette Institute

JOIN
THIS
TALK

Reimagining the Construction of Blackness From Anti-Blackness to Unity

Exploring the construction and vitality of Blackness from a uniquely Bahá'í perspective

Join an engaging Zoom presentation and discussion centering on constructions of Blackness. While Black life has been regarded as aberrant and disposable in the context of Western modernity, in the Bahá'í worldview Black people are likened to the "pupil of the eye," an indispensable feature of the metaphorical body of humanity. Explore the implications of this metaphor, so at odds with prevalent racial symbolism and so crucial to a Bahá'í reconceptualization of social order.



Speaker Dr. Derik Smith

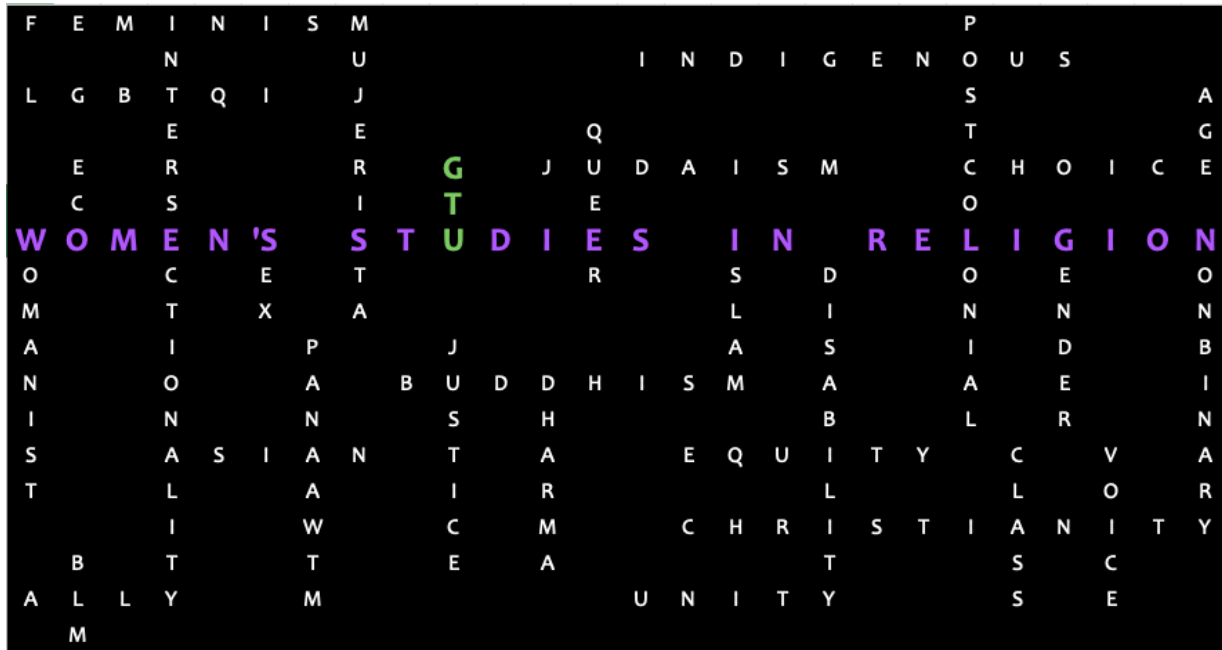
Tuesday, November 9th at 6pm



**Register for
Zoom Talk**

bit.ly/GTU-WI-Talk

Women's Studies in Religion



WSR SPEAKS WITH DR. INESE RADZINS

ABOUT FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY & SIMONE WEIL

November 5, 2021 from 12-1pm PT

ZOOM

[Click Here to Register](#) or check out our FB page: [GTU Women's Studies In Religion](#)

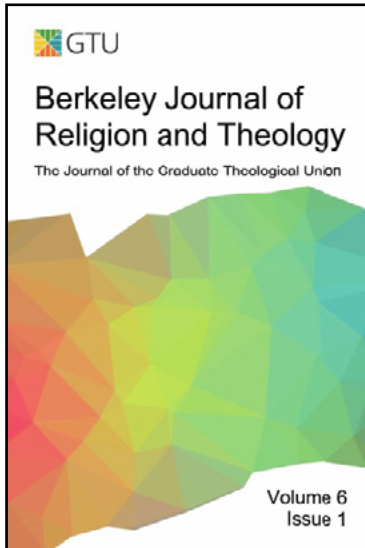
Join us for a discussion with Dr. Inese Radzins, Assistant Professor of Philosophy at California State University, Stanislaus.



Graduate
Theological
Union

Women's Studies in Religion 2 Co-Curricular Units

Berkeley Journal of Religion & Theology (BJRT)



Open Positions

The BJRT editorial team has multiple positions currently open:

Peer Review Board – The BJRT Peer Review Board is made up graduate students and established scholars who review articles in the Journal’s double-blind review process. Reviewers are typically assigned no more than 2 articles per volume. The Peer Review Board is comprised of volunteer positions.

Department Editors – Department Editors facilitate the Peer Review process, deciding which articles to submit to reviewers based on matching research interests and expertise and coordinating communication with Peer Reviewers. Department Editors are volunteer positions.

Copy Editor – The Copy Editor is part of the Executive Editorial Board and is in charge of final edits and formatting accepted lectures, articles, book reviews, and special projects according to the BJRT Formatting Guide. The Copy Editor position comes with a stipend, and must be filled by a current GTU student.

Managing Editor – The Managing Editor facilitates the publishing process for the BJRT, making final editorial decisions and bringing BJRT volumes to publication. The Managing Editor position comes with a stipend, and must be filled by a current GTU student.

If you are interested in any of these positions, please email current Co-Managing Editor **Matthew Hartman** mhartman@gtu.edu We will accept inquiries until **November 15**.



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 skennedy@gtu.edu
Sabrina Kennedy, Executive Assistant to the Interim Dean

Graduate Theological Union Office of the Dean

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