



Florida State University

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION

SPRING 2023

DEPARTMENT ALUMNI IN LOCAL POLITICS



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Please consider donating to The Department of Religion Foundation Fund. This helps us continue to provide programs for our graduates and undergraduate students:

<https://one.fsu.edu/foundation/donate/college/arts-sciences/donation-form>

Kristin Dozier (above left) graduated from FSU with a BA in Religion in 2001, and received an MA in 2004. After spending time working at Mad Dog Construction, she was elected to the Leon County Commission in 2010, and is now serving her third term on the commission. In 2022, she ran for Mayor of Tallahassee. See page 3.

Jack Porter (above middle) was born and raised in São Paulo, Brazil. Jack Porter moved to south Florida as a child, and attended FSU, graduating with a BA in religion and philosophy in 2015 and master's degrees in urban and regional planning, and public administration and policy, in the second half of the decade. While pursuing her master's degrees, she spent three years serving as a commissioner on Tallahassee/Leon Commission on the Status of Women & Girls, and was elected to her current seat on the Tallahassee City Commission in 2020. See page 5.

Thomas Whitley (above right) received his PhD in the department in 2016, writing a dissertation under Prof. Nicole Kelley on the

Thomas Whitley "Gnostic" heresy of Carpocratianism. After serving as the Assistant Director of FSU's Office of Graduate Fellowships and Awards for almost two years, he became an aide to Leon County Commissioner John Dailey, and then chief of staff when Dailey was elected mayor of Tallahassee.

Currently, he serves as Director of Strategic Innovation to the City of Tallahassee. See page 6.

UPCOMING EVENTS

02/17/2023: The Graduate Student Symposium.

03/30/23: The Priest Lecture with Michael Penn (Stanford University).

04/13/23: The Wellborn Lecture with Melani McAlister (George Washington University).

April 2023: The Sheng Yen Lecture with David Mozina (Boston College).

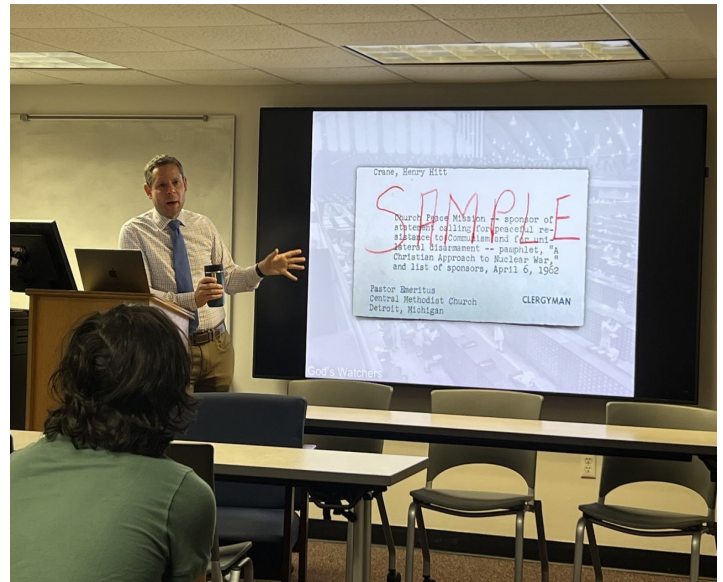
Spring 2023: Bartholomeusz Lecture with Dennis Washburn (Dartmouth College).

Further details available at: <https://religion.fsu.edu>

UNDERGRADUATE SYMPOSIA

Each year, the Religion Department sponsors two undergraduate research symposia, in collaboration with our undergraduate religion club, Students Organized for Religious and Cultural Exploration (SORCE).

In the spring of 2022, SORCE president Alana Zimath, vice-president Anna Auchter, and Prof. Joseph Hellweg organized the semester's undergraduate religion symposium on "Religion & Knowledge – Divine, Secular, and Contested." Prof. Laura McTighe gave the keynote, "Abolition is Sacred Work." Ashley Douglas, Rachel Heinbockel, Kyra Johansen, Ray Ketterman, Devin Wayand, and Alana Zimath presented.



Under new SORCE president Janeen Green, the fall 2022 symposium addressed “Religion on the Move: Adaptation, Change, Migration & Mobility.” Prof. Michael McVicar’s keynote explored “Religion & Surveillance,” and Miguel Gonzalez, Janeen Green, and A. J. Miguel presented.

ALLISON ELIZABETH OVERHOLT MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

Every year, the Religion Department awards the Allison Elizabeth Overholt Memorial Scholarship, named after the brilliant religion major who passed away in 2019 while a student at FSU. Kayla Halsor and Emily Kern received the 2022 awards. Kelsey is focusing on the study of Japanese Buddhism and plans to earn a doctorate in the field. Emily is pursuing an honors in the major thesis in which she analyzes Genesis 12.

UNDERGRADUATE AWARDS

Each spring the department awards two undergraduate prizes: (1) The Academic Achievement Award goes to students who have done outstanding academic work. (2) The Betty Phifer award takes its name from a beloved former religion instructor and goes to students who have sustained a superb academic record while also dedicating time to community service.

In the spring of 2022, Devin Wayand and Alana Zimath received the Academic Achievement Award. Devin completed his honors in the major thesis with Prof. Martin Kavka and began studying for his master's degree in religious studies at the University of Colorado Boulder last fall. Alana Zimath presented her research at the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature Southeastern Annual Conference and helped proofread Prof. Matthew Goff's edited volume, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices*. Last fall she began work toward her Master of Arts in Religion degree at Yale Divinity School.

Anna Auchter and Emily McGinn both received the Betty Phifer Award. At FSU, Anna was active in the ACLU, Florida's Democratic Party, the Episcopal Church, and Tallahassee's Refuge House. Last fall, she began her master's work in heritage studies at the University of Cambridge. Emily was active in the United Methodist Church (UMC) while at FSU and completed an honors in the major thesis with Prof. Sonia Hazard on controversies surrounding queer membership in the UMC. As of last fall, she is a graduate student at the Candler School of Theology at Emory University.

DEPARTMENT ALUMNI IN LOCAL POLITICS: KRISTIN DOZIER

What are your best memories of the department?

The first thing that comes to mind is being in an environment that was very supportive. I felt comfortable really digging into the subject matter and asking questions, whether with professors or with my fellow students. That was really exciting; I had not been in an environment like that before. That excitement started for me while I was an undergraduate major, but definitely solidified during my time as a graduate student in the department.

Everyone who goes through the Department of Religion has their own unique experience, but I was a student in the early days of looking at human-rights ethics, since FSU's Center for the Advancement of Human Rights (CAHR) had just opened. I was in an early cohort, when there was a lot of experimentation going on. I was able to do courses in international law with Terry Coonan, alongside students in the College of Criminology, the School of Law, and the Department of Religion. One of the most extraordinary classes was team-taught by Prof. John Kelsay, alongside Prof. Joe Travis (Biology) and Prof. Michael Ruse (Philosophy) on evolution, with equal numbers of students from each department. They recognized the different disciplines that the students were in, and we interacted with subject matter in different ways. But the religion students were always asking different types of questions. I remember John Kelsay standing in front of us leading us in a chorus of "Give Me That Old-Time Religion"! I don't even remember the context any longer, but I was privileged to take these just extraordinary courses within the Department of Religion. The interdisciplinary work was really eye-opening.

Was it the content of those classes that excited you, or the people around the table?

Oh, it absolutely was both. I wasn't thinking of running for office at that time, but I had gotten my AA and been out of school for some time before finishing my undergraduate degree. I thought I would major in political science, but as I read through the course bulletin—back then, you'd have a printed brochure listing all the courses being offered each term—I found I'd circled nearly everything in the religion department. I had an interest in public policy, but I also had this sense that if we could get to core moral religious values that we share, we could get past the talking points in our culture wars and find some commonality. That stayed with me throughout, and it's why I was excited by CAHR and my coursework in comparative religious ethics.

Has that search for commonality stayed with you in your political career?

I find myself looking for commonality all the time. I say pretty frequently that working in construction and having a degree in comparative religious ethics are a perfect background for being in elected office. You have to know what's happening on the ground with land-use, but you also have to interact with all kinds of people and know what their values might be. The Department of Religion just provided more space to have a dynamic view of all parts of our personal and social civic life. All of the different components of ourselves as persons come together in the discussion of religion and ethics. It's about how people feel and operate in the world, and the history of that. Those are things that you cannot get from a statistical study.

What are your strongest memories of teaching in the department (which you did from 2003 to 2006)?

I had a few years on my colleagues in the graduate program at that time, and was 27 or 28 when I started teaching. I was quite comfortable having a rigorous discussion in the classroom as a result. I got so much more out of teaching; I could have really open-ended discussions and push students. If a student went down one path, I could challenge them no matter what they said. My job teaching REL 3170, the department's course on "Religious Ethics and Moral Problems," was not to convince anyone one way or the other, but to make them think critically, and to look at the various perspectives on issues.

We often think of critical thinking as a kind of skepticism that can produce cynicism. For you, how does it produce the commonality you were talking about earlier?

Critical thinking does not mean that one isn't rooted in their beliefs, whether religious or political. Critical thinking, to me, is the exercise of always being open to learning something new and understanding someone else's perspective even if you disagree with them, so that you can dialogue and be open to finding common ground. That doesn't always work! But if we don't try that, it's too easy to fall into our own little bubble, and that is a slippery slope to missing a lot of the details and not being able to engage with others.

Continued on page 5

FULBRIGHT AWARDS

Amanda Propst Conway was awarded a Fulbright U.S. Program Study/Research Grant to spend 2020–21 academic year in Oman, doing research for a dissertation on law in Ibadi Islam. Amanda is focusing on the practice of *waqf*, by which Muslims can bequeath their property, as charitable gifts, for benevolent purposes beyond state appropriation. The practice has a long history in Oman.



Marah Litchford spent the fall of 2022 in Dharamsala, India, on a Fulbright-Nehru Student Research Fellowship, researching the roles that Buddhism plays in political protest in Tibet. She has worked with both mainstream and more activist protest movements, with a focus on controversies surrounding the practice of self-immolation. While doing her research, she also planned to teach English to reciprocate her hosts' hospitality.



Jesse Miller is spending the 2022–23 academic year in the city of Soubré in Côte d'Ivoire, West Africa, after his J. William Fulbright Open Study/Research award for research in Burkina Faso was interrupted in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In Soubré, Miller is doing doctoral dissertation fieldwork on how immigrant Mossi and indigenous Bété communities participate in each other's funerals in order to form cross-cultural and cross-religious alliances.



Rebecca Peters spent 2022 in Mumbai, India on a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship, awarded in 2020 and interrupted due to COVID-19. She is studying how women directors challenge stereotypes about Indian women by depicting a range of women characters in their films who offer alternative visions of gendered potential.



OUTSTANDING TEACHING ASSISTANT AWARDS



James Waters

Each year, Florida State University selects only six graduate students from across the university as recipients of the Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award.

In 2020–2021, Religion doctoral student **James W. Waters** received this award for his teaching in REL3170, "Religious Ethics and Moral Problems." Jim is in his fifth year at FSU, and will soon complete a dissertation on theories of animism in Christianity and Native American religions, and the role that animism has played in recent climate-change activism.



Rebekah Gordon

In 2021–2022, Religion doctoral student **Rebekah J. Gordon** received this award for her teaching in REL3112, "Religion and 20th-Century Fantasy Literature." She is at work on her dissertation, which deals with ideas of childhood in Christian theology and the role that they have played in contemporary moral panics about Satanic influences in American culture.

GRADUATE ALUMNI NEWS

Yonatan Binyam, who received his PhD from FSU's Department of Religion in 2017 with a dissertation on the medieval reception of the first-century Jewish historian Josephus in medieval Hebrew, Arabic, and Ethiopic Literature, is spending the 2022–23 year as a postdoctoral fellow at the famed Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, NJ, after having held positions at Coastal Carolina University, Pennsylvania State University, and UCLA.

At the Institute for Advanced Study, he is one of a number of postdoctoral scholars working on a project entitled "Interactive Histories, Co-Produced Communities: Judaism, Christianity, Islam," spearheaded by David Nirenberg, the director of the Institute, and Katharina Heyden of the University of Bern. Binyam's project focuses on the role that apocalyptic ideas in antiquity played in the construction of premodern notions of the racialization of Jews.



Yonatan Binyam

ALUMNI IN LOCAL POLITICS: KRISTIN DOZIER

Continued from page 3

Kristin Dozier: When I taught REL 3170, the last day of the semester was always a wrap-up, with an open discussion about what we'd learned over the course of the semester. One term, I had one student, a young woman who always sat at the front of the room and spoke frequently. I knew, and the class knew, that she was a Hispanic lesbian. She said, "This class makes you a liberal!" I controlled my face, but I let her speak, and she asked her fellow students "How could you not be a progressive when you learn about the diversity of religious views?" Then, a woman in the back who hadn't spoken the entire semester suddenly piped up: "I was a Christian conservative when I started. I'm one now. But now I know my parents lied to me. They told me things were in the Bible that weren't there, and now I've read it for myself and I now own my faith." These two young women, different in every demographic bit, *got* each other because of the critical thinking that they'd done over the course of the semester.

DEPARTMENT ALUMNI IN LOCAL POLITICS: JACK PORTER

How did you find your way to FSU, and then to the Department of Religion?

We moved to South FL when I was in middle school, and I just found myself at FSU because I thought it was a really pretty campus. The second day of my first term, I found myself in Prof. Aline Kalbian's class on religious ethics and moral problems, and I exclaimed to myself, "People do this! And they get paid to do this!" I thought it was so cool. A friend at the time said "Go where people are asking the questions that matter to you," and that's how I felt about the questions being asked in the Department of Religion.

What kinds of questions were those?

They were questions about who we are, and about our responsibility to others. They were questions about power and control. Having been raised by missionaries led me to those questions, but I knew I didn't want to be a minister.

Were your classes in the department the equivalent of looking under the hood of your religious upbringing?

You could say that. But I had never experienced religion in an academic context, and it was almost like hearing people talk about you without their knowing who you are. And I've always been a deep thinker, and the department was the place where deep thoughts happened — I also majored in philosophy, but what I wanted from that department I ended up finding in the Department of Religion.

I also fell in with a group of grad students who wanted a woman to play on their flag football team! There was a strong community in the department, and I appreciated that.

Do you have any other strong memories of the department?

Prof. Joseph Hellweg was an experience! His class on shamanism! I thought I was a well-traveled person who had seen a lot, but that class pushed me. Studying religion made me realize that everything around me was not to be taken for granted as natural or normal, but that someone had planned it in a certain way. *Everything* was planned—your environment, your culture, your sense of self.

You graduated in 2015, and then...

I worked for two years as a legal assistant in a public defender's office. And then I went to FSU's Department of Urban and Regional Planning to get a Master's of Public Administration degree, and also an MS in planning.

Why did you pursue those degrees?

I had a family that always did what they loved, and finding a job in 2015 was a tad heart-wrenching. I wanted to open more doors to the public sector, and I never had a plan beyond getting those degrees.

How did the department stay with you during your pursuit of those degrees, and in your current job on the city commission?

The point that nothing is normal has stayed with me ever since I left the Department of Religion. I realize how much of my life and my culture and my policy has been taken for granted. Nothing is value-neutral, including the way we talk about the role of government, or how the public and the private spheres relate.

In your current position on the city commission, you are known as someone who resolutely asks for the reasons behind city policy.

The Department of Religion taught me to do that! It taught me that you can take seriously what other people believe, and respect them, and their reasons. But that doesn't mean that you don't question them, or don't ask them to justify themselves.. And that is important in public life, when people's lives are at stake. I'm elected for my judgment, after all, to hear different sides of a story and decide what values are important and how I fit the values of the community with the resources we have, within the parameters of the law.

DEPARTMENT ALUMNI IN LOCAL POLITICS: THOMAS WHITLEY

How did you get to the Department of Religion?

I was living in Columbia, SC. I was adjuncting at Gardner-Webb University while my wife was working at a church there. I applied to schools during that year, and we moved to Tallahassee so I could start the PhD program at FSU.

Who in the department attracted you to the PhD program?

Profs. Nicole Kelley and David Levenson were big attractions because of the work they did. And I also liked how broad the orientations of the department as a whole, and of the Religions of Western Antiquity track in particular, were. It was that balance of breadth and specialization that attracted me in my work about how groups and individuals built and maintained identities.

How did you make the transition to working in politics?

I had been friends with John Dailey at Faith Presbyterian Church, where my wife currently works. We were close, and we talked a lot about religion and politics. His former aide left to take another job, and he called and offered me the position in March of 2018. A week later he called to tell me he was running for mayor. And I started on 1 April — I knew I had job security through the election! After he won, I became his chief of staff.

Do you feel like you live in a different universe now?

Totally. Even in interacting with FSU and President Richard McCullough's chief of staff, it seems totally different from when I was a student, or a staff person working at FSU's Office of Graduate Fellowships and Awards. The world I occupy is very different. Constituents call about garbage, traffic concerns — my students never did that!

So in that difference— you live with far fewer books than you used to — what perdures from your time in the department?

A lot. Research skills, and analytical and critical thinking skills — particularly in the academic study of religion — are useful. What I'd learned while teaching the department's Introduction to World Religions class was that nothing *had to be* taught. (The potential content of that class is basically endless!) While thinking about what my students should get from that class, I didn't want to teach them facts that they would forget in six months and look up on Wikipedia later. I wanted them to learn about claims of authority, power dynamics, sex and sexuality — larger concepts — and tie that into asking the right questions. That's important in politics too.

My time in the department also taught me to talk about what we do in a way that matters to other people. Teaching is a kind of translation, and during my time in the mayor's office, we took complex policies and explained them to random people on the street, telling them about how those policies would improve their lives. Critical thinking matters too. What I'm always looking for in policy discussions is talk about unintended consequences of policy. Some of that you can only learn from experience. But some of it is about interpreting the policy that exists and trying to figure out all the potential situations down the road, so that you can reshape the policy to eliminate negative unintended consequences. It's always important to think about who will be impacted and how. And the work I did in my dissertation on how early Christian communities built and maintained their identities is completely relevant to the political world. Look, we all have identities. How we identify ourselves and where we find value should affect our community leaders and how they address certain challenges.

I can see that. But in the study of religion, identity is something we try to show is malleable. In politics, taking that approach seems dangerous. People are committed to their identities!

But we see how identity isn't fixed in issue polling. Political registration doesn't always line up with citizens' views on issues, especially local ones. I'm a big believer in letting people identify themselves. When I was dissertating, I could analyze the identities of the people I wrote about, but I wouldn't gainsay their claims. And now, I don't doubt the claims of the people I meet. But constituents can be flexible. I just want them to find a way to talk about what matters to them. That's how I ensure that representative democracy works on a local level. It makes government agile.

RICHARD L. RUBENSTEIN, 1924-2021



Richard Rubenstein

When **Richard Rubenstein** died in June of 2021, a notice was posted on the Department of Religion website. Here, we add a brief recollection of Richard's many contributions during twenty-five years of service at FSU. When he joined our faculty, Rubenstein brought with him an international reputation as a scholar, particularly with respect though increasingly his work turned to social and political to his work *After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism*. As the subtitle suggests, that

on the religious implications of the Holocaust. At Florida State, Richard continued to explore these issues, modes of analysis, as in *The Cunning of History: The Holocaust and the American Future* and *The Age of Triage: Fear and Hope in an Overcrowded World*. A second edition of *After Auschwitz*, this time with the subtitle *History, Theology, and Contemporary Judaism* appeared in 1992 and reflected this turn, not least through the inclusion of a wide-ranging interview dealing with the emergence of political Islam.

Along the way, Rubenstein produced a number of other significant scholarly books. He also developed a course on the Holocaust and, with John Roth, produced *Approaches to Auschwitz*, which served as a text for similar courses around the country. A popular teacher, Richard is also remembered by colleagues as a good conversation partner, interested in the scholarly projects and careers of others. When he moved to the University of Bridgeport, Rubenstein kept in touch with developments in the Department of Religion, and made the journey to Tallahassee for an event celebrating the Department's fiftieth anniversary in the Fall of 2015. With gratitude for the life and work of our colleague and all good wishes to his family, we remember Richard.

SUMNER B. TWISS RETIREMENT

In September 2022, the Department of Religion hosted a reception honoring Prof. Sumner B. Twiss, who retired in December 2021. Jung Lee of Northeastern University gave a lecture entitled "*Comparative Religious Ethics and the Long, Irony History of a Misreading*", and there were also remembrances from Twiss's colleagues and students, including Professors John Kelsay and Terry Coonan of FSU, Prof. Kate Temoney of Montclair State University, and Rebekah Gordon, a current doctoral student in the Department of Religion.



**Sumner Twiss, Jung Lee, & Patricia
Twiss**

LEO SANDON, 1935-2022

Prof. Leo Sandon, who taught in the Department of Religion from 1969 to 2003, passed away after a long illness in March of 2022, at the age of 86. At the time of his retirement, he had attained the rank of University Distinguished Teaching Professor. On campus, Leo was known for his popular classes on American religious history, as well as on sports and religion. And throughout the state, he was known for increasing the public's understanding of religion through his weekly column on religious matters. It ran at the *Tallahassee Democrat* for twenty-six years, often reprinted in other Florida newspapers; many of his columns were collected in the 2002 book *Religion and...*

FSU would not look as it does were it not for Leo. As president of the Faculty Senate in the late 1980s, he got his colleagues to support the construction of the University Center around Doak Campbell Stadium, one of the most notable landmarks in Tallahassee. He seemed to sit on, or chair, every possible faculty committee, and his role on Academic Committee of the Athletic Board was perhaps the most influential. In that role in the 1990s, he led initiatives to show better academic and personal care for FSU's student athletes, regardless of the sport they played. Leo was an especial fan of women's soccer.

There are few faculty members who loved FSU—as an institution, and its faculty, staff, and students—as deeply as Leo did. Through his teaching, research, and service, he positioned the Department of Religion as an integral part of campus life.



Leo Sandon

PROF. MCTIGHE RECEIVES LUCE FOUNDATION GRANT



Laura McTighe

Assistant Professor **Laura McTighe**, along with her fellow principal investigators Elayne Oliphant (New York University) and Daniel Vaca (Brown University), has been awarded a \$250,000 grant from the Henry Luce Foundation for a project entitled "Creating The World Anew: Religion, Economy, and Mutual Aid." She and her colleagues describe the grant as follows:

"The grant will bring together a group of scholars, activists, teachers, artists, and others working together in mutual-aid traditions, in which members of a community collectively—through cooperation, reciprocity, and solidarity built through care—meet each other's needs outside of governmental structures."

This project is devoted to identifying and fostering connections between religious and economic dimensions of human flourishing. We will explore the fertile ground of action between religion and mutual aid by funding local mutual aid experiments. We will build these experiments collectively, through a series of meetings devoted to imagining and understanding how the practice of mutual aid and the academic study of religion collaboratively can help create a world otherwise, in which we learn how to be and build together differently.

FACULTY UPDATES

Elizabeth Cecil has been pursuing research for her new book project on Hindu temple sites in Southeast Asia. After a long delay, she resumed travel and spent the summer in Indonesia visiting archeological sites and temples to study religious imagery and inscriptions. The highlight of her summer's fieldwork was hiking to the top of Mount Agung, an active volcano in eastern Bali, and visiting the many temples on its slopes. She is currently at work learning Old Javanese, an ancient Indonesian language, and preparing for her next trip.

Over the last two years, **John Corrigan** published *Religious Intolerance, America, and the World: A History of Forgetting and Remembering* (University of Chicago Press, 2020), *Making Deep Maps*, coedited with Trevor Harris and David Bodenhamer (Routledge, 2021), and *Global Faith, Worldly Power: Evangelical Internationalism and U.S. Power*, coedited with Melani McAlister and Axel Schäfer (University of North Carolina Press, 2022). In 2022 he finished two monographic studies: Center for Antiracist Research. In 2022 he is a Fulbright Specialist for Australia (University of Sydney, University of Melbourne, Macquarie University, Australian Catholic University) and keynote speaker for the Australian Research Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions 2022 meeting. He also is a participant in three German Clusters of Excellence projects (respectively, on emotion, violence, and secularity) at the Universities of Erlangen, Munster, and Mainz. His current spatial humanities project is a codirected construction of a deep map of Muncie, Indiana, the city analyzed in the classic sociological study, Middletown. That project involves joining phenomenological deep immersion virtual reality in a CAVE (Cave Automatic Virtual Environment) to one of the richest American databases of sociological information, per capita, on race, religion, and deindustrialization.

Bryan Cuevas published his extended study and catalogue of over three hundred rare Tibetan Buddhist manuscripts recently discovered in Mongolia and Tibet entitled *The Rwa pod and Other 'Lost' Works of Rwa lo tsa ba's Vajrabhairava Tradition* (University of Vienna, 2021). He also published an article related to these same manuscripts in the volume *Primary Sources and Asian Pasts* (De Gruyter, 2021), edited by Peter Bisschop and Elizabeth Cecil. In July 2021, he participated in a workshop on "Buddhism and the Senses" sponsored by the Smithsonian, Freer Gallery of Art, and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery. Publication of the paper he delivered, "Infectious Touch and the Buddha's Seven Zombies Spell," is forthcoming in a volume edited by Donald S. Lopez and Robert DeCaroli. In July 2022, he was set to deliver a paper at the 16th Conference of the International Association of Tibetan Studies (IATS) held in Prague, Czech Republic, but his travels were disrupted at the last minute due to lingering pandemic restrictions.

Professor **Matthew Day** is looking forward to his book—*No Bosses, No Gods: Marx, Engels, and the Twenty-first Century Study of Religion*—appearing in De Gruyter's selective series on theory in the study of religion in April 2023. He is also restoring a 1977 John Deere 212 to its original, pristine condition for the family farm in Downeast Maine.

As of Fall 2022, Professor **Andrew Durdin** has moved out of his role as specialized teaching faculty and into a new position as assistant professor. While he will continue advising and mentoring REL 1300 graduate students, Professor Durdin is excited to refocus on his book manuscript titled *When No Magic Dwells: Alterity, Empire, and Ritual among the Romans*. Professor Durdin is also editing a volume titled *Ancient Religion in Five Minutes*, which is under contract with Equinox Publishing.

Dr. **Adam Gaiser** finished a book entitled *Sectarianism in Islam: The Umma Divided*, which was published with Cambridge University Press in early 2023. He spent the latter part of the summer teaching at FSU's Valencia campus, and he continues to work on his next book, which is an *Introduction to Ibadi Islam* (under contract with Cambridge University Press).

Matthew Goff: In 2022 I published an edited volume with Dylan Burns, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices*, which is a proceedings volume for a conference on this topic we organized in Berlin, Germany in 2018. In 2021 I published two other co-edited volumes, *Notions of Time in Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature* (with Stefan Beyerle) and *Sirach and its Contexts: The Pursuit of Wisdom and Human Flourishing* (with Samuel Adams and Greg Schmidt Goeing). I am close to finishing a book with Oxford University Press, an introduction to the Apocrypha for a popular audience.

Sonia Hazard is at work on several projects related to print media and technology in the nineteenth-century US. Her first book *Building Evangelical America: How the American Tract Society Laid the Groundwork for a Religious Revolution* is under final contract with Oxford University Press. It bridges methods from book history, bibliography, STS, and new materialisms to provide a "media infrastructuralist" account of evangelical power before the Civil War. Questions about media and its consequences continue to inform her new book project on Cherokee Christian printing, which parses how the material qualities, meanings, and uses of print in Cherokee Nation changed across the ruptures of removal. An NEH summer stipend allowed her to conduct research for the project in Tulsa and Tahlequah, Oklahoma, and continue to pursue her study of Cherokee language. Her article, "How Joseph Smith Encountered Printing Plates and Founded Mormonism" recently won the Pollock Best Historical Article Award from the John Whitmer Historical Association.

FACULTY UPDATES—continued

Joseph Hellweg has become a deputy editor of the *Journal of Religion in Africa* (Brill) and an editor of the journal, *Mande Studies* (Indiana University Press). He was recently invited to attend, with funding from France's *Ecole militaire*, an upcoming conference commemorating the twentieth anniversary of Côte d'Ivoire's attempted coup d'état, through which Hellweg lived, in Abidjan, in the shelter of a friend's apartment. He is currently drafting one book on post-war Côte d'Ivoire and co-authoring another on human rights in West Africa.

Aline Kalbian published the article "Community, Complicity, and Critique: Christian Concepts in Secular Bioethics," with Courtney Campbell and James F. Childress in the *American Journal of Bioethics* (2020) and was invited to participate in the *Spring 2021 Flannery Webinar* at Gonzaga University in 2021 on the topic of "COVID-19: Perspectives from Theology, Bioethics, and Population Health." In August of 2021, she took a position as Associate Dean in the College of Arts and Science at FSU.

Martin Kavka became chair of the department in August 2021. He continues to publish in the subfields of method and theory in the study of religion (with several essays in the edited volume *What Is Religion?* [Oxford University Press, 2021]), Jewish studies (co-editing *Unsettling Jewish Knowledge*, forthcoming with the University of Pennsylvania Press in 2023), and religious ethics (with an article on the ethics of conscription forthcoming in the *Journal of Religious Ethics* in 2023).

Prof. **Nicole Kelley** has been teaching courses on the New Testament, ancient gnostic groups, forgeries and fakes, and cultural images of Jesus. She has also been working on essays exploring intellectual impairment in the ancient world, punitive miracles in Christian narratives, and misogyny among late antique authors.

John Kelsay continues to teach and write about the relationship between religion, ethics, and the use of armed force. He presented two papers to the International Ethics Section of the International Studies Association in March, one taken from a book-in-progress tentatively entitled "The Anatomy of Private War", and the other summarizing the results of over thirty years' study of "Islam and War in a Comparative Perspective".

David Levenson: In the past two years David Levenson has presented two papers at international conferences on the medieval manuscripts of the Latin translations of the first-century historian Josephus' *Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities* and published an article in *Medievalia et Humanistica* on how the over 100 manuscripts he has been studying are related to one another. In addition to his on-going work on the first critical editions of the Latin texts of *Books from the War* and the *Antiquities* and a translation and commentary for the Greek text of Book 6 of the *War*, he is completing a study of the extensive use of the Latin translations of Josephus in the Hebrew Book of Yosippon, a history of the Jews from the biblical period to the fall of Masada, which has been widely read throughout the Jewish world from the time it was written in tenth-century Naples.

Since joining the department in 2019, **Laura McTighe** has launched a community-directed research program on religion, race, gender, and abolition, with a particular focus on the American South and Gulf Coast. Her first book project, *Fire Dreams: Making Black Feminist Liberation in the South* (Duke University Press, forthcoming 2023) is a social movement ethnography, collectively-authored with her longtime research partners at *Women With A Vision* in New Orleans, which tells the story of southern Black women's major contributions to harm reduction, mutual aid, and transformative justice. Her next book project, "Moral Medicine," employs similarly rigorous, community-driven methods, engaging formerly incarcerated women as experts in excavating the histories of gendered criminalization and abolition feminism in the South today. She has also translated her research into practice as a founding member of the Tallahassee Bail Fund and a core member of "The First Seven" project on criminalization in Florida. For her work to bring these commitments to bear in her undergraduate and graduate classrooms, Dr. McTighe was recognized with a 2021–2022 University Teaching Award for Community Engaged Teaching. She has also been selected as a member of the 2022–2024 cohort of Young Scholars in American Religion, and continues to serve on the Steering Committees for the African-American Religious History Unit and North American Religions Unit of the American Academy of Religion. Her most recent writings appear in the *Journal of the Academy of American Religion*, the *Journal for the Anthropology of North America*, *Radical History Review*, the Society for Cultural Anthropology's *Fieldsites*, *Southern Cultures*, and *The Immanent Frame*. She has also been an invited speaker at numerous academic institutions and community organizations, including the Haverford College Distinguished Visitors Program.

Mike McVicar is completing work on his second book, tentatively titled *God's Watchers: Domestic Surveillance and Religious Activism from the Civil War to the War on Terror* (under contract with UNC Press). He published some of the preliminary research for the project as "Charts, Indexes, and Files: Surveillance, Information Management, and the Visualization of Subversion in Mainline Protestantism," *Religion and American Culture* 30, no. 3 (2020): 1–54.

Dr. **Jimmy Yu's** second monograph, *Reimagining Chan Buddhism: Sheng Yen and the Creation of the Dharma Drum Lineage of Chan*, published in 2022, is the first academic study of the late Chinese Buddhist cleric Sheng Yen (1931–2009) and one of the most influential Buddhist organizations in the Chinese speaking world. The Dharma Drum Lineage is also the most represented Chan (Zen) Buddhist lineage in the West. Jimmy also continues to serve as the editor for Columbia University Press' Sheng Yen Series in Chinese Buddhist Studies and the *Journal of Chinese Buddhist Studies*.

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Religion Undergraduate Symposium—November 12, 2022

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