

Communiqué

Fall 2006

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-COLUMBIA

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

To Tackle Tough Issues



Religious studies faculty members, from left, Sharon Welch, Robert Baum and Patricia Beckman represent the department in a national project to train professors in facilitating tough conversations. A \$100,000 grant from the Ford Foundation supports MU's Difficult Dialogues project. Alumnus and former Rhodes Scholar Antwaun Smith, not pictured, is working with the faculty.

How do professors engage students in constructive dialogue about tough issues such as contentious political, religious, racial and cultural differences?

The Department of Religious Studies, with other MU units, is part of a national project to promote the open discussion of sensitive subjects. Mizzou is one of only 27 institutions of higher education selected to receive a

\$100,000 Ford Foundation grant to promote pluralism and academic freedom on campus. More than 675 colleges and universities submitted proposals.

The Ford Foundation created the Difficult Dialogues program in response to reports of growing intolerance and efforts to curb academic freedom at colleges and universities. **(Continues on Page 2)**



(Tough Issues continued from Page 1)

At MU, religious studies faculty are working with the theatre department, the law school's Dispute Resolution Program and education's Counseling Psychology Program to train professors in methods of facilitating tough conversations. Roger Worthington in the College of Education is coordinating MU's efforts.

Fifteen Ford Fellows who were trained in fall semester 2006 will use deliberative dialogue techniques in their winter 2007 classes.

Deliberative dialogue and dispute resolution techniques investigate the range of perspectives in complex issues and help groups reach consensus. "These are the basic skills of civil participation," says Sharon Welch, chair of the religious studies department. "We teach faculty and students not to run from differences but to engage them."

Welch speculates that MU was chosen to participate because of its diversity of strengths in conflict resolution, and she welcomes the opportunity to teach students that their differences can enhance each other.

"Many MU students come without experience in diversity and don't know how to interact with people of different political and religious backgrounds," she says.

Religious studies faculty members conducted a religious literacy workshop that used their expertise in these areas: Robert Baum, African indigenous religions and Islam; Patricia Beckman, history of Christianity; and Welch, multiculturalism and religion and politics. MU law student and former Rhodes Scholar Antwaun Smith, BA '98 religious studies, provided training in First Amendment issues and on religion and civil discourse.

In related training, theatre Professor Susanne Burgoyne taught interactive-theater techniques; a series of open forums modeled public discourse for undergraduate students; and the Center for Religion, the Professions and the Public offered forums for the professional schools.

Throughout the two-year initiative, MU's education faculty is evaluating the project and sharing results with the participating universities.

Difficult Dialogues is part of an effort by the Ford Foundation to understand and combat anti-Semitism, fear of Islam and other forms of bigotry in the United States and Europe.

Celebrate 25 Years

The Department of Religious Studies invites alumni, students, faculty and friends to participate in the department's 25th anniversary celebration Nov. 8 to 10, 2007.

Keynote speaker will be David Chidester, professor of religious studies at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. Chidester also directs the Institute for Comparative Religion in Southern Africa and is a research associate with the Social Cohesion and Integration Program of the Human Sciences Research Council in South Africa.

He is the author or editor of more than 20 books, including *Salvation and Suicide: Jim Jones, the Peoples Temple and Jonestown*. Please contact the department by e-mail at smithcr@missouri.edu, or phone (573) 882-4769 for more information.

Communiqué is published annually by the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Editorial Office

Department of Religious Studies
221 Arts and Science Building
Columbia, MO 65211-4140
Phone: (573) 882-4769
Fax: (573) 884-5438
E-mail: rsinfo@missouri.edu
Web site: www.missouri.edu/~religwww

Editorial Board

Sharon Welch
Jill Raitt
Nancy Moen
Dan Glover

The department welcomes news from alumni and friends. Send announcements or milestones to the address listed above.

Milestones

By Sharon Welch, Department Chair

The Department of Religious Studies has undergone some significant changes in the past year. Steve and Janice Friesen have moved to Austin, where Steve was appointed the Louise Farmer Boyer Professor in Biblical Studies at the University of Texas. The position will allow Steve to pursue his archaeological research, as well as his teaching. While he is sorely missed in Columbia, we are happy for him and the new opportunities this position will bring.

Three adjunct faculty, Nancy Weatherwax, Dennis Kelley and Hemchand Gossai, also have moved to other positions, Weatherwax at the University of North Dakota, Kelley at Iowa State University and Gossai at Georgia Southern University. We are thankful to them for their excellent teaching and collegiality and wish them well.

We welcome two full-time faculty members, Robert Baum and Nate DesRosiers (See story on page 7). Baum, who received a doctorate from Yale University, joined us in November 2005 after five years as an associate professor of religious studies at Iowa State University. He specializes in the history and religions of Africa. His teaching interests include African religions, American Indian religions and history, Islam, religion and society, and religion and politics. His book *Shrines of the Slave Trade: Diola Religion and Society in Precolonial Senegambia* received the American Academy of Religion's award for Best First Book in the History of Religions. Nate was an instructor of Latin and religious studies at Stonehill College in Massachusetts and completed a doctorate at Brown University. He has teaching and research interests in New Testament, early Christian literature and history, Greco-Roman religions, art and archaeology and the Bible, and theories of religion. The topic of his dissertation is *The anti-Oath Polemic in Antiquity: Moral Philosophy, Judaism and Matthew*. DesRosiers began teaching in fall 2006.

We are also pleased that Bob Flanagan has been promoted to resident instruction assistant professor. As all of you know who have taken his courses, he is a master teacher. We are delighted that his exemplary work as a teacher and a colleague is being recognized.

The department has been involved in two interdisciplinary initiatives on campus, the Difficult Dialogues project (See story on page 1) and the Center for Religion, the Professions and the Public. The Ford Foundation awarded \$100,000 grants to 27 colleges and universities for projects that promote academic freedom, religious toleration and the open discussion of controversial public policy issues. Roger Worthington, associate professor of counseling psychology, leads the MU project, and co-investigators include faculty from theatre, religious studies and law. Religious studies faculty involved in the project include Baum, Patricia Beckman and myself. Alumnus Antwaun

Smith, BA '98, an MU law student, is also a member of the team. We will provide training for 40 faculty fellows that includes three components: conflict resolution and deliberative dialogue, religious literacy and interactive theatre. For more information, visit our Web site at difficultdialogues.missouri.edu.

Jill Raitt founded the Center for Religion, the Professions and the Public in conjunction with faculty from medicine, law, journalism, nursing, health sciences, engineering, social work and business. The current director is Debra Mason, the executive director of the Religion Newswriters Association. The center received a \$1.5 million, 3-year renewal grant from the PEW foundation. The grant will allow the center to continue four interdisciplinary projects:

examination of the journalistic coverage of issues involving religion; research into the relationship between religion/spirituality and healthcare; interdisciplinary collaboration on professional ethics; and campus and community colloquies on public-policy issues. Faculty from business, health professions, journalism, law, medicine, public affairs, religious studies and university extension are involved. Religious studies faculty members working with the center are Baum, Flanagan, Dan Cohen, Beckman, Phillip Clart and myself. For more information, visit <http://rpp.missouri.edu/news-events/renewal-grant.html>.

We encourage you to follow our progress online, and we invite you to return to campus Nov. 8 to 10, 2007, to help us celebrate the department's 25th anniversary. Please save the date, and stay tuned for more information.



Sharon Welch

Faculty Kudos

Trish Beckman spent academic year 2004-05 on research leave to work on her manuscript "Writing Religion and Performing Piety in Medieval Women's Mysticism: Mechthild of Magdeburg's Flowing Light of the Godhead." As a Heckman Fellow at Hill Monastic Library in Collegeville, Minn., she studied 13th- and 14th-century German manuscripts.

Beckman has contracted with Cambridge University Press to co-edit *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, which will explore historical interpretations of mysticism and contemporary analytic categories and canons. She co-wrote an entry on Mechthild of Magdeburg for *The Yale Guide to Medieval Holy Women in the Christian Tradition* and is currently revising an article for *Church History* on a 14th-century letter exchange between a Dominican nun and a priest. She contributed a review essay on studies of medieval mystical women to *Church History*.

With MU's Global Scholars program in 2004, Beckman went to Russia to develop Russian-orthodox materials for her history of Christianity sequence. As a senior fellow in Religion, the Professions and the Public, she drafted an article on teaching history of Christianity from a global perspective. She is a member of the religious literacy team on the Ford Foundation Difficult Dialogues project for the next two years.

Chip Callahan spent the year on research leave to explore the religious worlds of 19th-century whaling. He is investigating religious practices and expressions of whaling men who sailed from New England ports to the Pacific Ocean on voyages often lasting three to four years. In pursuit of his own white whale perhaps, Callahan spent much of the 2005-06 academic year reading through whaling men's journals and ship's logs, mainly at the New Bedford Whaling Museum in Massachusetts. He presented his work in progress at a May meeting of the Mid-Missouri Colloquium on Religious Studies.

Along the way, he found time to finish his book on religious responses to industrial coal mining in eastern Kentucky and to move ahead on publishing a volume of papers resulting from "Moving Boundaries: American Religion(s) through the Louisiana Purchase," a conference organized by the MU religious studies department in 2004. He was a panelist in the Chancellor's Global Issues Forum on the historical impacts of the Tennessee Scopes Trial, and he attended the final meeting of his fellowship with the Young Scholars in American Religion. Callahan is co-chair of the Religion and Popular Culture Group of the American Academy of Religion, a position he will hold for three years. He continues in his position as chair of the Religion and American Culture Section of AAR's Midwest Region.

After receiving tenure in summer 2005, **Philip Clart** is now an associate professor. He published several articles during the past two years and is currently seeing a book manuscript through the final stages of production. *The Story of Han Xiangzi: The Alchemical Adventures of a Daoist Immortal*, which is the first-ever translation of an early 17th-century Daoist novel, will be published by Seattle-based University of Washington Press in late 2006 or early 2007.

Another project is the publication of a collection of articles in honor of Clart's doctoral adviser, Daniel L. Overmyer of the University of British Columbia. Based on presentations from a 2002 conference in Vancouver, B.C., this festschrift consists of 15 essays on various aspects of Chinese religions, with a strong emphasis on popular religion, which is Overmyer's main field of research. The collection, which is titled *The People and the Dao: New Studies of Chinese Religions in Honour of Prof. Daniel L. Overmyer*, will be published in 2007 in the monograph series of the *Institute Monumenta Serica*, a well-established and respected China research center associated with the Catholic missionary order Societas Verbi Divini.

Signe Cohen completed her book *Shattering Heads and Singing Dogs: Text and Authority in the Older Upanishads*. She continues her work on the ancient Indus Civilization and its undeciphered script. She organized a panel on the Indus script at the South Asia Conference in Madison in fall 2005, where she presented a research paper on the topic. In her article "The Indus 'Seal of Divine Adoration' and the Khasi Myth of Origins," published in *Acta Orientalia* 2005, she proposed a new solution to the riddle of the Indus Civilization. Scholars have argued that the Indus culture may have been the precursor of the Dravidian civilization in South India, or alternatively, the forerunner to early Vedic culture. Cohen suggests instead that there is some linguistic, cultural and archaeological evidence indicating that the Khasi, a Mon-Khmer speaking tribe of northeast India, may be the descendants of the Indus population.

Jill Raitt prepared news for this issue of *Communique* and urges alumni to send updates to the department. As she continues to publish and research, she is teaching her general honors course, Religion and the Professions, for the fifth time. Last year she participated in conferences at Calvin College in Grand Rapids and at the University of Geneva, Switzerland, for the 400th anniversary of the death of Theodore Beza, John Calvin's successor as moderator of the Company of Pastors. Her papers were parts one and two of a jaunt into the 17th century and the relation of Rene Descartes to Reformed Roman Catholic eucharistic debates. The mayor of Geneva welcomed the group, and the concluding banquet took place in a room that dated to the 13th century, with food that was not so ancient.

Raitt's recent and forthcoming publications include: "Metonymy and Relation in the Eucharistic Theology of Theodore Beza and its Reception in the 17th Century" in *Théodore de Bèze, Réformateur et Homme de Lettres*, Institut d'Histoire de la Réformation, Université de Genève; "A Matter of Substance: From Theodore Beza to René Descartes" for proceedings of Calvin Studies Society; "Delivery with a Difference: Religious Pluralism and Professional Practice" for The Center for Religion, the Professions and the Public's book of essays by distinguished lecturers; "Christian Feminism and Globalization" for the Villanova Institute 2006; and "Christianity and Politics" for the *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd Edition.

In the past two years, department Chair **Sharon Welch** has completed a book on religion and peacemaking, *After Empire: The Art and Ethos of Enduring Peace*. She has presented lectures on the topic of "Making Peace in an Age of War" for the Gender, Religion and Politics Lecture Series at Hobart and William Smith Colleges; and "Beyond Empire: Sustaining Alternatives to Violence," for the American Academy of Religion.

Welch has written several essays and book chapters: "The Art and Ethos of Enduring Peace," *Tikkun*, March/April 2006; "Artisans of Hope, Artisans of Wonder," in *Theology That Matters: Ecology, Economy and God*; "Beyond Theology of Religions: The Epistemological and Ethical Challenges of Inter-religious Engagement," in *The Oxford Handbook on Feminist Theology*; and "Learning to Teach with Theatre of the Oppressed," co-written for *Advances in Research on Teaching*, Vol. 11. Welch has completed a term as a member of the board of Meadville Lombard Theological School. She continues as president of the U.S. committee of Global Action to Prevent War and as a member of the International steering committee of the organization.

STAFF

Cheryl Smith and husband moved to Missouri in 2001 from the state of California, where their two married children and six grandchildren live. She began work at Mizzou in engineering and transferred to the Department of Religious Studies in June 2001. Smith says she loves the department and the people she works with, especially the students.

Former Faculty Remain Friends

Former MU faculty member **Steve Friesen** has been working on issues related to economic inequality in the early Roman Empire. He is researching this issue: if most of our information comes from the small wealthy fraction of the population, what can we find out about the majority of the people who lived below the aristocratic level? How do we research their lives? In pragmatic terms, this has meant research for a book manuscript about poverty in the churches of the apostle Paul, as well as some smaller projects, such as a plenary address for a conference on Wealth and Poverty in Early Christianity at the Pappas Patristic Institute in Brookline, Mass.

Friesen's work on economic inequality has fostered involvement with archaeologists and physical anthropologists in an interdisciplinary project on ancient diets. Using stable isotope analysis of bones from the 1st through 3rd centuries CE, he seeks a better understanding of who had access to what kinds of nourishment. Friesen also has planned an international conference, "Corinth in Context: Comparative Perspectives on Religion and Society," at the University of Texas, Jan. 8 to 12, 2007.

Ronald L. Farmer is the Irvin C. and Edy Chapman Dean of the Wallace All Faiths Chapel, and associate professor of religious studies at Chapman University, Orange County campus, Calif. He became the first dean of the chapel in August 1997. In 1992 Professor Farmer left MU and moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, where he and his wife, the Rev. Patricia Adams Farmer, served as co-ministers of the Walnut Hills Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Under their leadership, this inner-city congregation doubled in size in less than five years. Drawing upon his experience at the University of Missouri, Farmer helped to create and then chaired the religious studies program at the University of Cincinnati.

He has served on the board of Ecumenical Campus Ministries of Greater Cincinnati and is a past chair of the Bible and Contemporary Theologies Group of the Society of Biblical Literature. He serves on the advisory board of the Center for Process Studies and the advisory council of the Process and Faith Program. His publications include *Beyond the Impasse: The Promise of a Process Hermeneutic*, the first book-length exposition of this promising interpretive method.

Alumni News and Notes

Gay Albers, BA '88 religious studies, biology, and husband Greg Roberts, MD, celebrated Gay's 40th birthday by welcoming their new baby into the world, which is already populated by their adopted son, Daniel, and their birth-son, Joel. The family lives in Craig, Colo., a small mountain town near Grand Junction.

Justin Arft, BA '00, MA '03, has been teaching for William Woods University and Westminster College in Fulton, Mo., since he graduated and will soon start at Columbia College in Columbia. He also has taught a religious studies course, *Got Religion!?*, at the 2005 and 2006 Missouri Scholars Academy. He plans to continue working on a doctorate and has a particular interest in religious studies in secondary education. Arft has been exploring his entrepreneurial side. He is co-founder of Certified Local (www.certifiedlocal.com), an Internet service for locally owned and operated businesses. Arft is testing the service in Columbia and has ambitions of going national.

Monica Cawvey, BA '94 religious studies, English, recently said good-bye to Chicago after 12 years and moved to the East Coast. In May she accepted the position of vice president of development at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia. In her new role, Cawvey will direct all fundraising operations for the Constitution Center and hopes to take advantage of the "national" part of the center's name to travel around the nation.

Thomas Finan, BA '89, is assistant professor of history and interim director of the Center for International Studies at St. Louis University. Continuing from his days as a Mizzou student, Finan's interests have centered on the topic of the church in medieval Ireland. He is director of the church and settlement in the Medieval Diocese of Elphin project and project director of the archaeological excavations at Kiltasheen, County Roscommon. Kiltasheen is a high-medieval, Gaelic ecclesiastical settlement that includes a bishop's palace, a medieval cemetery and more than 200 examples of Neolithic



Thomas Finan, pictured with wife Marti and their son, directs one of the largest research and training excavations in Ireland.

stone tools. Finan is working on volume one of the site publication and a history of medieval Ireland for the Cambridge University Press Medieval Textbook Series. He lives in St. Louis with his family. His Web site is at www.tjfinan.com.

Rich Gleba, BJ, BA religious studies '94, is director of external affairs at MU's School of Medicine. After graduation he worked as a reporter and editor of a daily newspaper before returning to Mizzou for his current job in public relations. Working with the medical school during a period of growth has reinforced his appreciation for the leadership of the religious studies department. Gleba credits current and former faculty members, including Jill Raitt, Ron Farmer, Steve Friesen, Joel Brereton, Sue Crowley, Phil Arnold and Bill Green, for some of his most valuable Mizzou memories.

Jodi Letterman, BA '93 religious studies, English, recently received the Chancellor's Distinguished Fellowship Award for postgraduate studies at the University of California-Riverside. She will pursue a master's degree in religious studies there. Letterman spent a year in Japan as part of the Japan Exchange and Teaching program (JET), where she taught junior-high school students on the island of Hokkaido. To satisfy her wanderlust, she traveled to such destinations as Southeast Asia but now lives in northern California, where she enjoys photography and identifying wildflowers on forgotten paths.

Jawad Qureshi, BA '00, received a master's degree from the University of Georgia, followed by a Fulbright to study in Damascus, Syria, in 2002. In Damascus he studied Arabic, theology and Sufism. While there he met and married Jameela Jafri, a Pakistani-American student. Qureshi currently is doing graduate work at the University of Chicago's Divinity School, where he works with Micheal Sells in the history of religions division. After four years abroad, Qureshi was eager to return to the Midwest.



Robert Baum, left, and Nathaniel DesRosiers are the department's most recent faculty additions. Their expertise includes African and Native American religions, Islam, biblical studies and witchcraft in the ancient world.

New Faculty, New Expertise

Baum teaches two new courses

With expertise in the history of indigenous African religions as well as Native American religions and Islam, Associate Professor Robert Baum has been teaching in the department since summer 2005. He moved to Mizzou after teaching at Iowa State University for seven years.

During the past year, Baum has focused on becoming acquainted with the students and faculty, while teaching two new courses: West African Interpretative Communities and Indigenous Religions.

As part of the Ford Foundation's Difficult Dialogues Initiative (See story on page 1), he is working on methods of promoting a better understanding of Islam and Judaism. Baum also has been involved in the Pew Center for Religion, the Professions and the Public, particularly in outreach on Islamic issues.

Baum's research focuses on the history of Diola women prophets in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau. He continues to work on a book-length manuscript on that subject. Future plans include another trip to Senegal in summer 2007 and work on a continent-wide history of African religions.

Baum's wife, Peggy, is a grant writer for the Center for Religion, the Professions and the Public.

DesRosiers appreciates the quality of students

Assistant Professor Nathaniel (Nate) DesRosiers describes himself as an accidental biblical scholar. DesRosiers began as a classicist but found interests in areas where classicists don't usually wander.

"I like the questions that religious studies asks that situ-

ate the study in social-literary contexts," he says. "I like the integration of different methods and contexts, for example, archaeology, literary criticism and sociology as well as philology."

DesRosiers received a bachelor's degree in history and religion — mostly western religions — at Stonehill College in Easton, Mass., a master's in theological studies from the Harvard Divinity School and a doctorate in early Christianity with an emphasis in biblical studies from Brown University. While studying, he also taught classics and religious studies at Stonehill, from 1999 to 2006.

"I like the way the department is organized, and I especially like its collegiality," DesRosiers says of Mizzou. He's impressed with the balance between teaching and research and pleased to work with master's students as well as bright undergraduates.

DesRosiers studies the prohibition of oath-taking in Greek and Roman philosophers, as well as in Christianity from Matthew to Justin Martyr, to Augustine through the religious prohibition of oath-taking in the 21st century. Along the way, he studied witchcraft in the ancient world and from the 14th to 17th centuries. He is currently engaged in a critical edition of Jean Bodin's *Demonology of Witches* (1580).

Linguistically equipped for such research, DesRosiers has a reading knowledge of Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Coptic, Egyptian hieroglyphic (he would like to teach a course on ancient Egyptian religion), German, French (the Bodin book is in French) and Italian. He is primarily teaching biblical courses this academic year.



University of Missouri-Columbia
College of Arts and Science
317 Lowry Hall
Columbia, MO 65211

Non Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Columbia MO
Permit No. 31

Lessons from Layke

Marie (Overstreet) Reynolds, BA '87 (honors) biology and religious studies, and her husband, Kyle, have two children and an amazing story to tell.

Bryce, 7, is a bright, active boy, who loves reading and math, but their son Layke, who is afflicted with mitochondrial disease, was not supposed to live past his first year. He is now 5.

Reynolds has become an expert in his care. She learned and now teaches from her experience with Layke, who continues to baffle his doctors as he shows improved strength and immunity.

"Every day is an adventure, and I wouldn't change my experiences for anything," she says. The two-year-old boy who didn't even recognize his mother is pointing to pictures in books at age five.

Layke's hearing loss and peripheral blindness have

vanished, possibly because the optic and auditory nerves have healed. He began walking this spring and is now climbing stairs. Though he once had terrible chewing and swallowing problems, he now feeds himself and drinks from an open cup.



Marie (Overstreet) Reynolds holds her two sons, Layke, at left, and Bryce. Layke's improving health baffles his doctors.

Reynolds is pursuing a doctorate in naturopathy at Clayton College of Natural Health in Birmingham, Ala. For years she has worked as a consultant in lifestyle and nutrition for other special-needs families and their children, as well as some individuals with other challenges.

Reynolds intends to do additional studies in metabolism and nutrition, and she has taken some pastoral classes. She has no intention of being a "preacher," but she believes in the need to "pastor" those whom she is called to help.

"Layke is a superb teacher, and I intend to make all we have learned serve those who cross our path and need a hand up," she says.