

Communiqué

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-COLUMBIA

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Welcome to Newest Faculty

Rabia Gregory joins religious studies

By *Jill Raitt*

“Plexed, bothered and bewildered,” that’s how Rabia Gregory felt when, as a freshman at Duke University, she read Marjory Kempe’s account of her wedding with Christ. It bewildered her even more when she discovered that there is a long tradition in both male and female Christian spirituality called “bridal mysticism.” Gregory’s curiosity about this phenomenon stayed with her through graduate school at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where, in April 2007, she successfully defended her dissertation: “Marrying Jesus: Brides and the Bridegroom in Medieval Women’s Religious Literature.”

Gregory began teaching the History of Christianity sequence at MU in fall 2007, something that she thoroughly enjoys.

Gregory has an unusual history herself. According to her father, “Rabia” means “a little green hill by the sea with a nice view.” Her father is Lebanese; her mother was born and raised in California. Gregory was born in California, but the family moved to Lebanon five weeks later. She attended International College, a Lebanese school that taught in French, English and Arabic, until 1984 when her family was evacuated to California and then to Virginia. From 1989 to 1994, Gregory attended an American school, but this time in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Next she attended high school until 1997 in Beirut, Leba-

non. Since then, she has remained in the United States, graduating from Duke University in 2000. At Duke, she took a variety of courses in and out of religious studies, majoring in medieval and early modern studies with forays into biblical studies and early Christianity.

The group of women that Gregory studies stems from the lowland movement called “Devotio Moderna.” The bridal experience that many women claim to have experienced includes a ceremony with a ring or crown and is based on a tradition stretching back to the early church that utilizes the biblical Song of Songs. By the 14th and 15th centuries, some 300 women had written or dictated to scribes experiences of marriage

to Jesus although only a few of them were recognized as saints. Church authorities were more comfortable with accounts of charitable activities such as the seven works of mercy: visiting the sick and imprisoned, clothing and feeding the poor, serving in hospitals and the like. Gregory expects to return to Holland to study more texts and to find original manuscripts hidden in archival collections. “There is much to do to understand these accounts,” she says, and she wants to be one of those doing that research.

Gregory is well equipped to do so: her languages are French, German, Dutch, Latin, some Old Norse and some Old High German as well as some Arabic.



Rabia Gregory hails from all over the world, but she’s making Columbia and MU her new home.



Exciting Changes in the Graduate Program

By Signe Cohen

As the new director of graduate studies, I am delighted to report that the master's program — a small, but efficient graduate program — is thriving, and that exciting things are happening. We have 13 full-time graduate students and are able to offer full funding to most of them in the form of teaching assistantships.

Because our graduate students get extensive teaching experience early in their graduate careers, they are generally very strong applicants for doctoral programs elsewhere. Graduates from our program have been accepted into excellent doctoral programs in religious studies and other fields at schools such as Oxford University and the University of Texas at Austin. We will continue to assist our students as they apply to some of the best programs in the country. The director of graduate studies will offer an annual workshop for doctoral program applications beginning this fall. We also hope to establish a new annual graduate teaching-assistant award in order to encourage our teaching assistants to strive for further excellence in their endeavors.

Other new initiatives underway this year include a graduate-student colloquium series where students can

present their research to faculty and peers, a new graduate-student handbook with up-to-date information and, of course, some fun social events for the students. A reading group for graduate students and faculty members will meet regularly to read and discuss important new books in religious studies.

The graduate program has received more applications this year than ever before, and we have a terrific group of students enrolled. In the future, we hope to expand our efforts to recruit exceptional students into our program.

We plan to design new information packets about the program and distribute these widely, especially to the best undergraduate religious studies programs.

How can alumni and friends of the department help in our efforts to make the master's program better than ever? You can help by spreading the word about our excellent program, and if you can afford a small contribution to the program, it could work wonders. Gifts of \$100 or more would enable us to give out our first annual teaching award to a graduate student. Gifts of larger amounts would enable us to give funding or scholarships to more of our best applicants.

Visiting Professor Studies Intersection Between Culture and Religion

Dan Cohen is a visiting assistant professor in the Department of Religious Studies and a research associate at the MU Center on Religion & the Professions. Cohen holds a doctorate in anthropology, is a scholar of South Asian religions and is interested in the intersection between culture and religion.

Cohen has conducted extensive research in India on the use of Hindu religious narratives in traditional healing rituals. Fascinated by the use of religious rituals in human healing strategies, he has studied the way people use religious narratives to help interpret and resolve physical, mental and social problems. Traditional healing practices

in India provide a striking example of the use of cultural and religious resources in dealing with a wide array of problems where the resources of modern Western medicine, psychiatry and psychotherapy are not available (nor often relevant) to a large majority of the population.

At the Center on Religion & the Professions, Cohen participates in research on the relationship among religion, spirituality and physical and mental health. Additional interests include religious literacy and cultural values, the entanglement of religion and legal systems and the increasing role of film in the social construction of religion.

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

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

Faculty Accomplishments

Bob Baum continues to serve as coordinator of the MU vice provost's African Initiatives Group, and he serves on the advisory board of the Center for Arts and Humanities and the advisory committee to the University's chief diversity officer. He is senior fellow of the Center on Religion & the Professions, and a project leader of the Ford Foundation Difficult Dialogues project. He has published two book chapters: "Indigenous Religious Traditions," in *A Concise Introduction to World Religions* (Oxford University Press), and "Tradition and Resistance in Ousmane Sembene's 'Emitai' and Ceddo," in *Black and White in Color: African History on Screen* (Ohio University Press). He has lectured widely, giving two papers at international conferences and a paper presentation at a national conference. Baum also has received three grants to support his research: a grant from the UM Research Board, a research leave grant to support research for a book on Senegalese women prophets and a research travel grant from the Department of Women's & Gender Studies to present a paper on the most famous of these prophets at the University of Texas conference on Popular Culture in Africa.

Chip Callahan has two books under contract: *Moving Boundaries: American Religion(s) through the Louisiana Purchase* will be released by the University of Missouri Press in spring 2008, and *Subject to Dust: Religion and Work in Eastern Kentucky's Coal Fields, 1910–1932* has been accepted by Indiana University Press. He also published an essay, "Walter Benjamin and Religious Studies," in *Epoché: the University of California Journal for the Study of Religion*. He presented a lecture at the University of Texas at Austin, "Examining Religion as Performance by the Industrial Workers of the World," and a paper at the American Academy of Religion (AAR), "Religion as Street Fight." He led a panel at the AAR meeting on "Museums, Monuments and Memory." He also serves as co-chair of the steering committee for the Religion and Popular Culture Group of the AAR. He chaired a session on "Inclusions and Exclusions: Diversity in American Religion" at the Midwest AAR annual meeting in Chicago. He serves as chair of the Religion and American Culture Section of the Midwest AAR and attends the regional board meetings. Callahan led "How to Give a Successful Lecture," a session for new teaching assistants at the MU College Teaching Seminar and another session at the graduate assistant teaching orientation. He has received two grants: the Office of Research and Center for Arts and Humanities Grant Writing Seminar in summer 2007, and he was awarded a \$500 travel grant from the Center for Arts and Humanities for travel to the Midwest AAR conference.

Philip Clart spent the 2006 fall semester on research leave and worked on several article and book publica-



tions. He traveled to Taiwan twice to present papers at conferences and to lecture at local universities. One of his conference presentations, "The Image of Jesus Christ in a Chinese Inclusivist Context: I-kuan Tao's Christology and its Implications for Interreligious Dialogue," was published in December 2006 in a volume of conference proceedings in Taiwan. In March 2007 his annotated

translation of a 17th-century Chinese Daoist novel was published by the University of Washington Press under the title *The Story of Han Xiangzi: The Alchemical Adventures of a Daoist Immortal*. In June 2007, he attended a conference on the bodhisattva Guanyin, which was held on the sacred island of Putuoshan in the People's Republic of China. In the academic year 2007–08, Clart takes over as department chair from Sharon Welch.

Signe Cohen's book *Text and Authority in the Older Upanishads* is under contract with the Dutch publishing house Brill. She also published *Ramayana*, a verse translation of the Indian epic with a scholarly introduction. In addition, her article "Was the Indus Civilization Matrilineal?" has been published in *Acta Orientalia*. She has also taken on new responsibilities this term as director of graduate studies.

This April, **Rabia Gregory** successfully defended her dissertation: "Marrying Jesus: Brides and the Bridegroom in Medieval Women's Religious Literature." She then presented a paper titled "Raptured in the Kitchen?" at the 42nd International Congress on Medieval Studies at Kalamazoo this May. The paper investigated the presentation of seemingly mystical episodes in chronicles from the women's communities of the Devotio Moderna. Her paper "Obedient Cats and Other Not-quite-miracles in Sisterbooks from the Devotio Moderna" will be published in volume 22 of *Medieval Perspectives*. This November, Gregory will co-present "Born Digital," a paper and digital poster session on religion in virtual gaming worlds, at the American Academy of Religion–Society of Biblical Literature's annual meeting in San Diego. Most important, she moved to Columbia, Mo., to teach History of Christianity at MU. In addition to teaching and exploring Ellis Library, she hopes to discover a new barbecue tradition, observe the Midwest's giant orange fox squirrels and possibly take up gardening.

Jill Raitt, professor emerita, continues to teach in the Honors College. To the fall course Religion and the Professions she has added Are the Mysteries Histories?

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Where Can Religious Studies Take You?

The stories of two alumni, Monica Cawvey and Alan McClure, illustrate the varied benefits of a religious studies degree

From Divinity School to Development

Interview by Jill Raitt

Cawvey: I set myself the goal of being a vice president for development by the time I was 35, and I achieved it.

Raitt: How did your work in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Missouri–Columbia contribute to your success? What is the connection between the study of religion and successfully raising money for a prestigious not-for-profit institution?

Cawvey: I came to MU from Moody, a small town in southeastern Missouri, and graduated with honors in English and honors in Religious Studies in 1994. In 1996 I received a master's from the Divinity School of the University of Chicago and continued toward a doctorate in antebellum American history. I enjoyed returning to MU to teach in the Missouri Scholars Academy in the summers. In fall 1999 I returned to teach several courses in the Department of Religious Studies. In spring 2000, I was a teaching assistant for you, Jill, and tutored in the Writing Center. That fall, I began work across the street from the Divinity School in Chicago as a development officer at Meadville-Lombard, one of two Unitarian-Universalist seminaries in the United States. I liked the work so much that I turned to it full time, even though by then I had only my dissertation to write at the Divinity School, but I had found what I loved doing.

Raitt: When you got the call to interview for the job at the Constitution Center, you were a development person at the Field Museum, right?

Cawvey: Yes, I had been there for about two years, serving as the director of individual giving and working on the museum's capital campaign. But that wasn't my first museum job. After the seminary, I went to work at the Museum of Science and Industry. Working at two large, world-class museums prepared me for running my own department.

Raitt: And you landed this marvelous job. Now just how did religious studies help you to achieve your goal?

Cawvey: Development staff at Meadville-Lombard have to be cognizant of the special concepts that govern the Unitarian-Universalist openness to people of many faiths and of no faiths. Such concepts become practical in the development office with regard to holiday greeting cards at times like Christmas and Easter. As assistant director of development and alumni relations, I had to be able to talk to alumni of the seminary and to members of the congregation. I was prepared to set aside my own religious experience and convictions in order to listen with a kind of warmly objective engagement because of my studies at MU.

Raitt: How so?

Cawvey: I had taken courses in world religions, Buddhism, Native American religions, Judaism, Biblical studies, the history of Christianity, and theology. Graduation requirements in religious studies made all of these courses necessary.

Raitt: And it paid off?

Cawvey: Absolutely! Religious studies prepared me in two ways: I knew how profoundly religion affects cultural and personal world views, and that proved to be the best background possible for understanding people, no matter what their beliefs or cultures. I got as close to a classical education as possible. I learned about art, music, literature, ritual and philosophy as well as the different religious beliefs and practices. So I can talk to a wide variety of people about a wide variety of subjects.

Raitt: And the second way religious studies helped you?

Cawvey: It is hard for some people to talk about money; it's a sensitive subject. It is so central to the lives of people when they are wealthy. Religious studies is about what is essential to peoples' core being, their world. Money defines how wealthy people live in a way it doesn't for the rest of us. It is a substantial reality in itself that imposes responsibilities and entails rituals. Both religion and money define the worlds one lives in and how one conducts oneself. Seeing that connection has been fundamental to my work.

Raitt: Explain that connection, please.

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Monica Cawvey coordinated an October 2006 black-tie gala at the National Constitution Center. Presidents Clinton and Bush were presented medals honoring their humanitarian efforts.

Alumnus Creates Heavenly Chocolate

By Jill Raitt

Patric Chocolate and religious studies — what have they in common? More than you might think, says Alan McClure, BA '05 *summa cum laude*, and owner of Patric Chocolate, a fine dark chocolate-bar manufacturing company based in Columbia, Mo. You may visit his impressive Web site at <http://www.patric-chocolate.com>.

He was first drawn to religious studies when he attended Webster University from 1998 to 1999 and again when he matriculated at MU in 2002. He studied eastern religions, primarily Buddhism, with Professor Philip Clart and wrote his honors thesis on "The Necessity of Compassion in Buddhism." Of course, as most religious studies majors, McClure also took courses in more than his primary field: he studied world religions, Christianity and Native American religions. So what has all that to do with his passion for chocolate and the resulting career choice to make fine dark chocolate?

For one thing, McClure's passion has led him to Mexico and Central and South America in attempts to arrange special processing and delivery of the very best cacao (cocoa beans) that he could find. "Religious studies made me sensitive to different cultures and world views," McClure explains. "Central Americans don't do business the same way that Americans do business. Mexicans do business differently from both." Another help in the establishment of his business was the demand in religious studies course work for rigorous research, analysis and a questioning mind. "In a business like this, where the focus is on creating the highest-quality dark chocolate, I have to question some of what even the most well-known experts on chocolate manufacture claim. However, questioning blindly can be an amazing waste of time and resources. It really takes the ability to think critically about different issues to narrow the focus for further analysis. I use these intellectual skills every day, and they also marked my work in religious studies courses."

In this way McClure has been studying every aspect of chocolate making: the components of fine chocolate, what creates the best flavors, consistency or mouth feel and

aroma. He has felt it necessary to study organic chemistry as well. "Chocolate making is a science and an art," he explains. "Without a scientific understanding of the processes that occur from the growth of the cacao tree, to harvest, fermentation and drying to the roasting and refinement process, it is not really possible to understand all the changes that need to be made in order to impact the flavor of the chocolate in a positive way. On the other hand, without vision and imagination, one can become like a robot and the chocolate just becomes another mass-manufactured product, not a special work of art."

In his travels, McClure talks to individual farmers, co-operatives and brokers in various cacao-growing regions.

Cacao grows within about 20 degrees of the equator, north and south, where coffee also thrives. But cacao grows in valleys and lush lowlands and coffee in the highlands, so the two crops do not ordinarily compete for the same space. Requirements of fine cacao are genetics, proper climate, soil type, shade, humidity and the care the farmer gives to his plants. Like fine wine and whiskey, single-origin chocolate is generally considered more interesting than blends. As a result, his chocolate bars will be labeled according to the origin of the cacao beans. Alan has also tasted the finest chocolate bars in the world, most of which come from France and Italy, and studied where they obtained their cacao, so he could more easily decide where to travel.

Although some chocolate makers use machines to sort their cacao beans, McClure does it by hand; machines can miss tiny holes that indicate the bean has begun to germinate, changing its flavor and quality. Then he roasts the beans on perforated trays in a large convection oven, removes the skin and grinds the cacao into a liquid, like a thin nut

butter. One of his 70 percent dark chocolate bars contains 70 percent pure cacao "nibs" and 30 percent cane sugar only — no flavorings of any type, as the focus is on the flavor of the cacao. This particular bar, and others, are for sale at World Harvest, the Root Cellar and Super Suppers in Columbia, and will soon be on sale online at the Patric Chocolate Web site. McClure generally will not add cocoa butter to his chocolate, as many makers do, because it detracts from the power of the aroma and taste of the cacao. However, he is having a small-batch cocoa-butter press built to give him more flexibility in lower-

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Cawvey

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Cawvey: I can talk to people about money and ask for it without seeming to make assumptions. I can talk about this personal topic without being personal just as a religious studies person can talk about faith and practice without being personal because religious studies is academic and allows for a respectful distance. That rolls over into a respectful distance regarding money. It makes me an informed observer and a good listener so that I can catch the signals that people are unwittingly sending about themselves. Listening is the most important part of development.

Raitt: Monica that's awesome. I've never been able to make that connection so that I could ask for money.

Cawvey: Giving is a kind of meaning. People give to things that matter to them and that they want to share. For example, religious studies is about a quest for meaning and values. The Constitution Center is about the meaning and value of freedom, that people are willing to die to defend that freedom. People want everyone to value civic responsibility. The Constitution is citizen developed, citizen written and citizen lived. It is kept alive by citizens.

Raitt: Anything else that the Department of Religious Studies contributed to your present position?

Cawvey: Every day I use the research skills I learned there. I have to write about everything in the building, every exhibit, the people who work here, people who visit, and all of that requires research, going through files, looking up historical points, looking through old newspapers. I research people I intend to talk to about money — most of them are public figures, and I want to be well prepared when I meet them. Research is about picking up clues, following threads. I learned from the writing-intensive program, too. The best way to learn to write is to have to write well in different disciplines.

Raitt: I see why you love your work, and now I can see how religious studies prepared you for it. Tell me something about the Constitution Center.

Cawvey: It opened in 2003, but it really began with The Constitution Heritage Act of 1988, the year after the 200th anniversary of the Constitution. The act called for the establishment of a museum dedicated to the Constitution.

Raitt: Besides the fabulous displays and interactive opportunities for younger and older visitors, what does the center do?

Monica: For example, in 2004, the center provided a voter hot line to report voting fraud or problems people had voting. So it is active behind the scenes as well as on the floor of the museum.

Raitt: Who is on the board now?

Cawvey: Former President George H. W. Bush is the president of the board, and all living past presidents and their spouses are honorary chairs. A sitting president is not on the board.

McClure

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chocolate-percentage ranges that must have additional cocoa butter to reduce the chocolate's viscosity.

So what are cacao "nibs"? They are the bits of un-ground chocolate that remain after the beans have been broken and the thin, light shells winnowed out in a large odd-looking contraption called, of course, a winnower. Then the nibs, together with sugar, are ground between granite rollers for three days, a process that creates about 125 Fahrenheit degrees of heat so that the natural fat (cocoa butter) in the nibs melts into liquid form. I tasted some nibs, 100 percent cacao, and found them less bitter than some of the 80 percent commercially sold bars that I have bought; the difference is the quality and kind of cacao bean that is used. McClure let me taste two kinds of finished 70 percent chocolate, and I could tell the difference, subtle but real, in their flavors; as with fine wines, one can speak of nuttiness and fruitiness as well as aroma and mouth feel when speaking of fine dark chocolate. After refining, the liquid chocolate is molded into blocks and then aged for at least two to three months, but it could be kept for much longer because of the high level of antioxidants that keep it from oxidizing and turning rancid. The white discoloration — fat bloom — that one sometimes sees on old chocolate is simply harmless cocoa butter that has recrystallized on the surface of the bar. The last steps are melting the chocolate blocks, recrystallizing the chocolate in a special way, molding it into small bars and packaging them for retail sale.

Some of the books that I saw in McClure's office are *Understanding Natural Flavors*, *Sensory Analysis*, *Food Flavor Technology* and scads of books on chocolate making. McClure also reads about fine wine, whiskey, coffee and tea because they often share some similar flavor components and chemical make-up.

We all know that religious studies is challenging and a good preparation for many careers; now we know that it can help at least one dedicated chocolate maker to realize his passion for making fine dark chocolate bars.

Faculty Accomplishments

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The DaVinci Code and the *Name of the Rose*, offered winter 2007 and 2008.

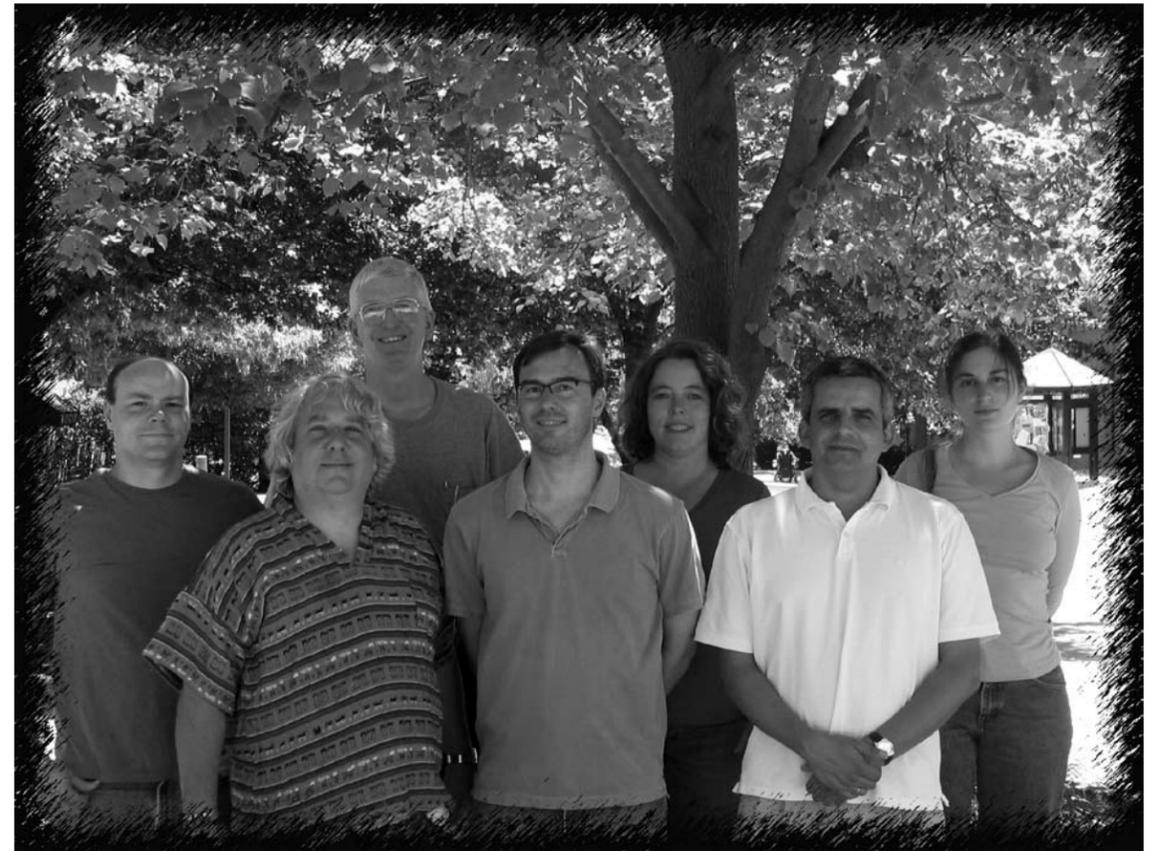
She continues also to lecture and to publish. Raitt is working on "Theodore Beza and Augustine," scheduled for 2008 publication in *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*, edited by Karla Pollmann. Two invited lectures given in 2005 have been published: "Metonymy and Relation in the Eucharistic Theology of Theodore Beza and its Reception in the Seventeenth Century" in *Théodore de Bèze, Réformateur et Homme de Lettres* (Presses Universitaires de France, 2006) and "A Matter of Substance: From Theodore Beza to René Descartes" in *Calvin, Beza and Later Calvinism: Calvin Studies Society Papers 2005*.

In January 2007, Raitt enjoyed participating on a panel discussing "Is the Reformation Over? An Evangelical Assessment of Roman Catholicism" with authors Mark Noll and Carolyn Nystrom at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association in Atlanta. While in Atlanta, she met the beautiful family of Marie Overstreet Reynolds (see *Communiqué* 2006). Another lecture

that was fun to prepare and to give was "Elizabeth I, Catholic or Protestant?" for the "Elizabeth I, Ruler and Legend" exhibit at Ellis Library in November 2006.

Sharon Welch gave the keynote address at the Symposium on Violence in the Biblical Tradition at Florida Southern College in February 2006; in October 2006 she presented "Politics After Empire: Dangerous Memories, Cultivated Awareness and Enlivening Engagement" at the Athens and Jerusalem on the Polis conference at Villanova University.

She published two book chapters and a journal article: "Beyond Theology of Religion" in *The Oxford Handbook on Feminist Theology* (Oxford University Press, 2006), "Artisans of Hope, Artisans of Wonder" in *Theology That Matters: Economy, Ecology and God* (Fortress Press, 2006) and "Learning to Teach with Theatre of the Oppressed" in *Advances in Research on Teaching*. Welch will be on leave 2007–08, working on the design of educational programs at Meadville Lombard Theological School.



Department of Religious Studies faculty 2007–08: Nate DesRosiers, Bob Baum, Bob Flanagan, Chip Callaban, Signe Coben, Philip Clart and Rabia Gregory. Not pictured: Dan Coben and Jill Raitt.



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Milestones

A quarter century of religious studies at MU

By *Philip Clart*



The Department of Religious Studies was founded in August 1981 by Jill Raitt, who had come to MU from Duke University. It was designed after the Chicago model as a center for the study of religion in all its diversity, and

the first faculty members included specialists in Christian, South Asian and indigenous religions.

Since then the department has grown by adding positions in the areas of women and religion, religions in America and East Asian religions. Professors and instructors have come and gone over these years, but the general outlook of the department has remained the same: It still strives to prepare students for life in a religiously diverse world by offering courses in many religious traditions, dealing with many aspects of the impact of religion on history, society and culture.

As the department begins its 27th year, we seek to continue our strong traditions, even while striking out in new directions. We are actively trying to broaden our coverage in research and teaching by establishing a new position in Islamic studies (an ongoing struggle in the current difficult

budget situation of the University). Another innovation is the establishment of an annual lecture series, Religion and Public Life, for which we will invite high-profile speakers to address the role of religion in important issues of current public debate. As part of this lecture series, we plan to organize parallel events that will provide opportunities for students and alumni to exchange ideas and experiences. The first lecture will be given in April 2008. Check our Web page for details in the coming months. Individual invitations will also be sent to all alumni.

Finally, we would like to strengthen our institutional and financial support system by establishing a stipend fund for undergraduate and graduate students. We must appeal to our former students to help our current students. You can do so by providing tax-deductible donations to the Religious Studies Student Excellence Fund, which will provide an annual prize for the best undergraduate senior thesis in religious studies, an annual award for the best graduate teaching assistant and grants to support graduate students' foreign language study in intensive summer programs. If you would like to support this initiative, please use the enclosed return envelope. For any questions about alumni support for the department, please contact me at clartp@missouri.edu, or at 573-882-8830.