

Communiqué

Winter 2004

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-COLUMBIA

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Moving Boundaries Conference

Looking at religion in the Louisiana Purchase

The boundary of the United States moved west to include the Louisiana Purchase on April 30, 1803. For the bicentennial of that event, the religious studies department will host a three-day conference, *Moving Boundaries: American Religion(s) through the Louisiana Purchase*. Scholars nationwide will attend the conference from Feb. 19 to 21 to examine the transformations of religion in this region as a crucial aspect of the narrative of American religions. The event is free and open to the public.

"The idea for *Moving Boundaries* began when we realized that the Louisiana Purchase region has a rich religious history, but that American religion has never been described in terms of the developments that have taken place in this territory," says conference Director Richard "Chip" Callahan. "Most accounts of the Louisiana Purchase and its subsequent history have neglected to explore its impact on the religious history of the nation. *Moving Boundaries* seeks to reveal that history in relation to the larger context of the United States and its global interactions."

The goal of the conference is to establish a critical engagement and analysis of religion and culture in relation to this specific landscape.



Scholars from across the nation will participate in the Moving Boundaries Conference to explore the effect of the Louisiana Purchase on American religions. Assistant Professor Richard "Chip" Callahan is directing the project.

Moving Boundaries will cover the variety of religious bodies that have inhabited or passed through the region, including the influence that these groups and ideas had on the region and the influence the region had on their religious expression and communities. It will consider, for instance, the shifting meanings of land and its relationship to religion, identity and value as understood by the Native Americans who initially inhabited the region, the French and Spanish cultures that occupied it and gave it a different set of meanings prior to the Louisiana Purchase, and the Americans who sought to explore and settle the "frontier."

Moving Boundaries will include keynote addresses by Charles H. Long and Amanda Porterfield, both senior scholars of American religion. Conference presentations will deal with a range of topics from the history of the Louisiana Purchase territory, including: "How the Purchase Legally Reformed Religion," "Crossroads, the Cosmos and Jazz in the Southwest," "Conflicting Destinies: Religion, Gender and Violence in the Louisiana Purchase," and "The Spiritual Journey of Buffalo Bill."



Of special interest to current and former MU religious studies students, the department also will hold a session dedicated to discussing the teaching and learning of American religion through the Louisiana Purchase, including the use of local history research in religious studies courses. Finally, the conference will include entertainment as well as scholarship. A concert of traditional sacred and secular music from the Louisiana Purchase area, organized by folklorist Howard Marshall, will be held on Friday evening, and storyteller and geographer Larry Brown has organized a session of storytelling from the traditions of the region for Saturday evening.

Funding for Moving Boundaries comes from a variety of sources: MU, the Missouri Humanities Council, the American Academy of Religion (Midwestern Region), and the Rufus Monroe and Sophie Paine Lectureship in Religion. For more information, including the schedule and list of participants, please see the conference Web site at <http://web.missouri.edu/~religwww/lpconf/conf.html>.

Significant Books

The American Academy of Religion has bestowed on Paul Johnson's book *Secrets, Gossip, and Gods: The Transformation of Brazilian Candomblé* (Oxford University Press, 2002) its Award for Excellence in the Study of Religion for the year 2003. The award category is analytical-descriptive studies.

Signe Cohen produced a massive collection of Norwegian translations of Vedic scriptures in her *Vediske skrifter. De eldste indiske skriftene*, published by De norske Bokklubbene in 2003.

Philip Clart co-edited, with Charles B. Jones of the Catholic University of America, a book on *Religion in Modern Taiwan*, which was published by the University of Hawaii Press in September 2003.

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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

Steve Friesen
Nancy Moen
Dan Glover

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

Center Examines Professions

A new center at MU is exploring issues in the professions that arise because of America's increasing religious and cultural diversity. The Center for Religion, the Professions and the Public, which was established in April 2003 with a grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts and additional support from MU, aims to strengthen relationships between professionals and the people they serve.

Jill Raitt, the center's founding director, has long had an interest in the relationship between religion and the professions. She says the increasing pluralism in the United States makes the time right for such a center.

"We want to talk about the kinds of situations that arise when professionals are not aware of cultural and religious differences," Raitt says. "We hope to foster discussions among faculty and professionals who will be teaching young people going into various professional careers."

Faculty and fellows will conduct research and develop curricular materials that will help prepare professionals to serve diverse clientele.

"Every day, nurses care for patients who are in situations births, illness or death that can involve religious traditions or rituals," says Glenda Nickell, a clinical instructor in mental health nursing at MU. "Once you understand the spiritual needs of patients, often you can find simple ways to accommodate them."

Faculty members representing engineering, business, health professions, journalism, law, medicine, nursing, religious studies and social work are participating in a semester-long faculty seminar. The seminar is examining the history of the professions, considering the current educational curriculum, and identifying research and curricular development opportunities for the center. Professor Sharon Welch is representing religious studies in the seminar.

To mark the National Gandhi Day of Service in early October, the center organized a round-table discussion focusing on ethics in business and religion. Professor Signe Cohen, one of the participants, discussed Gandhi's use of the Bhagavad Gita when solving ethical problems and constructing ideas about living an ethical life.

In a public lecture titled "Naked Fitzies and Iron Cages: Individual Values, Professional Virtues and the Struggle for Public Space," Chicago attorney Barry Sullivan examined the relationship among various sources of values, including religion and the professions. He and wife Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, who has a law degree and doctorate from the University of Chicago Divinity School, also led a faculty seminar during their visit to MU.

The center will host research fellows beginning in January 2004 and will organize conferences, lectures and public outreach initiatives. The center also welcomes the submission of scholarly articles, essays and book reviews for its online academic journal, which will debut in 2004.

Educating for Justice

How do people learn to see economic and political injustice? How do they become aware of power imbalances between social groups? And more important, where do people find the courage and creativity to rectify injustice whenever and however it occurs?

Professor Sharon Welch has long been interested in the relationship between religion and social change. For the past 10 years, this interest has led her to explore the ethical, political and spiritual challenges of multiculturalism in her research and teaching.

She has been involved for the past three years in a research project with an interdisciplinary team of scholars: Suzanne Burgoyne in theatre; Helen Neville in counseling psychology; Karen Cockrell and Peggy Placier in educational leadership and policy analysis; Meghan Davidson, Tamara Share and Brock Fisher, graduate students in theatre; and Jite Eferakorho and Esteban Alejandro Renaud, graduate students in educational leadership and policy analysis. The team examined the efficacy of Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed in eliciting greater awareness of oppression and enabling creative responses to oppression.

Theatre of the Oppressed is a technique for enhancing both awareness of injustice and creativity in rectifying injustice. Boal, a Brazilian author, director and activist, developed Theatre of the Oppressed in the late 1960s and early 1970s as a technique to help workers and peasants clarify the nature of their oppression and to help them imagine ways of challenging that oppression.

Boal began by having actors portray a dilemma that was facing a community, then took suggestions from the audience about actions to try in response. During one such performance, the woman in the audience who had posed the problem for the actors to resolve was not satisfied with any of their solutions. She asked if she could try something. Boal agreed, and Forum Theatre was born. In Forum Theatre people enact a dilemma being faced by the community, and members of the audience (spect-actors, rather than spectators) take over the role of the protagonist and try different responses.

Boal himself was arrested, tortured and sent into exile for his work. In exile his work continued, and he has developed further techniques to address issues of racism, sexism, class exploitation and homophobia. He returned to Brazil



Professor Sharon Welch and collaborators are studying Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed as a method of spreading awareness of and challenging oppression.

in the 1990s and served from 1993 to 1996 as a member of Parliament for Rio de Janeiro.

The MU research team assessed the efficacy of Boal's techniques in three related classes. The first section of the project involved collaboration between two courses: a seminar on Theatre of the Oppressed, taught by Burgoyne, and a seminar on the relationship among schools, community and society, taught by Placier. The third class studied was Theory and Practice of Multicultural Education, taught by Welch.

The team found dramatic changes. The education students in Placier's class said Theatre of the Oppressed helped them gain a greater sense of social and institutional oppression, but few changed their understanding of the possible social significance of their role as educators. The theatre students, on the other hand, found the semester-long seminar to be transformative, with 64 percent of the students saying they gained a deeper understanding of oppression. Others indicated they had become aware of the complex ways in which oppression and power interact. One student wrote: "I now know that oppression occurs to me and I have oppressed others, not knowing I was."

In addition to developing greater awareness about the pervasiveness of oppression, Burgoyne says many students found themselves able to imagine ways of challenging oppression, indicated by this student observation: "...when I am in a situation where I am feeling oppressed or I feel like there is some injustice going on in my life, I have caught myself now stopping and thinking...there are solutions, there are things that I can try, there are things that I can say, tactics I can take."

The team recorded these results: All of the subjects in Welch's class demonstrated a profound transformation in their understanding of injustice and the possibilities of their work as professionals; each teacher ended the course with a greater understanding of the structural dimensions of oppression; each teacher was better prepared to continue the lifelong, the generations-long, work of social justice.

For more information on Theater of the Oppressed, refer to these books by Boal: *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Urizen, 1979), *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (Routledge, 1992), *Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theater and Therapy* (Routledge, 1995) and *Legislative Theatre* (Routledge, 1998).

Faculty Kudos

Trish Beckman participated in a weeklong summer seminar with teachers at Rock Bridge High School in Columbia to develop materials and approaches for their world studies curriculum. She led a seminar on "The History and Interaction of Judaism, Christianity and Islam from the 7th–19th centuries" and presented with a representative from Columbia's Islamic Center. In addition, she provided tips for teaching about religion from a religious studies perspective. Her article "Swimming in the Trinity: Mechthild of Magdeburg's Mystical Play" is forthcoming in the spring 2004 volume of *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality*. She presented two papers: "The Experience of Books in Southern German Mysticism," for the Hill Monastic Library session at the Congress of Medieval Studies in Kalamazoo, Mich.; and "Authority and Performance with/in Medieval Women's Mystical Texts," for the Women and Religion section of the American Academy of Religion conference in Atlanta. She serves as part-time organist at Peace Lutheran Church in Salisbury, Mo., and works to include inclusive language liturgies and world music into this rural and adventurous church. She will, however, keep her day job.

Chip Callahan presented a paper, "Working with Mountain Work: Images and Intersections of Idleness, Labor and Religion in Pre-Industrial Eastern Kentucky" at the Appalachian Studies Association annual meeting in Richmond, Ky., in March. A week later he responded to a panel of papers on "Borderland Identities: Religion, Immigration, and Tourism in the Contemporary United States" at the annual meeting of the Midwest Region of the American Academy of Religion in Chicago. He spent his summer revising parts of his dissertation, "Working with Religion: Industrialization and Resistance in Eastern Kentucky's Coal Fields, 1910–1932," which is under review at an academic press. His essay on "Sacred Time" and two shorter entries on "The Fourth of July" and "Vacations" were published in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and American Cultures*. He has focused much of his time lately on two major projects at MU. The first, with graduate student Johannes Strobel in the School of Information Science and Learning Technologies, involves creating a Web-based constructivist learning environment and case-study resource for use in his course History of Religion in Post-Civil War America. The second project is the planning of the conference Moving Boundaries: American Religion(s) through the Louisiana Purchase. See the related article for details.

After a year's research leave, **Philip Clart** returned to teaching in fall semester 2002. He has been working on the story cycle of a Daoist immortal in Chinese literature, Daoism and popular religion (ninth century to 19th century). He presented first results of this project at a confer-

ence at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign, at the annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies in New York and at Washington University in St. Louis. He completed a new article, which is to appear in the *Journal of Ritual Studies* in 2004. The book *Religion in Modern Taiwan*, which he co-edited with Charles B. Jones of the Catholic University of America, was published by the University of Hawaii Press in September 2003. At the beginning of fall semester 2002, Clart also assumed new duties as the department's director of undergraduate studies, and in December 2002 he accepted an invitation to serve as the book review editor of the *Journal of Chinese Religions*, the main outlet for scholarly manuscripts in that field.

Signe Cohen presented a paper, "Like Oil in Sesame Seeds: Upanishadic Views on the Vedanta within the Veda" at the American Academy of Religion conference in Toronto. She presented a paper on foreign loan words in the *Rigveda* at the American Oriental Society meeting in Nashville. In the spring, Cohen presented a talk at the University of Iowa about her ongoing work on the ancient undeciphered script of the Indus Valley, and she delivered a lecture at Washington University in St. Louis on the somewhat different topic of robots and mechanical beings in Sanskrit literature. Cohen's article "Romancing the Robot and Other Tales of Mechanical Beings in Ancient Indian Literature" will appear in *Acta Orientalia* this year. She also wrote an article in German about the concept of eternity in religions with a cyclical worldview, "Ewigkeit im zyklischen Weltbild," which will appear in a volume of essays edited by O. Reinke, *Ewigkeit – was ist damit gemeint? Beiträge aus Natur- und Geisteswissenschaften*. Cohen also recently published a book on Vedic religion in Norwegian, *Vediske skrifter*, which includes her verse translations from the Vedas and Upanishads.

During the last year **Steve Friesen** finished several publications. Two journal articles in press should appear before summer: "Revelation 13: Myth as Symbolic Resistance," in the *Journal of Biblical Literature*; and "Poverty in Pauline Studies: Beyond the So-called New Consensus," in the *Journal for New Testament Studies*. In addition, he has several chapters that have been or are to be published: "High Priestesses of Asia and Emancipatory Interpretation," in *Walk in the Ways of Wisdom: Essays in Honor of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza*; "Prospects for a Demography of the Pauline Mission: Corinth Among the Churches," in *Urban Religion and Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches*; "The Beast from the Earth: Revelation 13:11–18 and Social Setting," in *Readings in the Book of Revelation: A Resource for Students*; "Sarcasm as a Socio-literary Strategy in Revelation," in *The Reality of the Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of Revelation*; and "The Hawaiian Lei on a Voyage through Modernities: A Study in Post-Contact Religion," in *Beyond 'Primitivism': Indigenous Religious*

Traditions and Modernity. In November, he was inducted into the Golden Key International Honour Society as an honorary member by the organization's Mizzou chapter.

Paul Johnson earned tenure and was promoted to associate professor, with much relief and rejoicing. His book *Secrets, Gossip and Gods: The Transformation of Brazilian Candomblé* received a best book award from the American Academy of Religion in the descriptive-analytical category. Now on a leave of absence, he spent fall 2003 at Princeton University's Center for the Study of Religion. He will teach courses on Brazil and African Diaspora religions at the University of Michigan this winter as a visiting faculty member. Johnson received a National Endowment for the Humanities fellowship to continue work on another religion of African descent, the Garifuna of the Caribbean. His project is on transnational migration to U.S. urban centers such as New York and the effects cyclical migration has on their traditional religious practices and self-understanding. Despite this wanderlust, Johnson can be tracked down at his same MU e-mail address, JohnsonPC@missouri.edu.

On April 1, **Jill Raitt**, professor emerita, opened the Center for Religion, the Professions and the Public (see article on Page 2) with Trish Love as office manager and Tim Hill as outreach director. Love was secretary for the religious studies department from 1982–90. A grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts made the center possible. Raitt agreed to four "for publication" assignments during 2002–03. In August 2002, she lectured at Fordham University on the importance for Vatican II of theological developments from 1450 to 1700. In June 2003 at Villanova University, participants at the Theology Institute heard her lecture, "Globalization and Christian Feminism: God's Embrace of the World." Both lectures are in press. Also in June 2003, she gave one of three plenary lectures at the annual meeting of the Catholic Theology Society of America: "The Vocation of a Theologian: Crossing Boundaries" will appear in the winter 2004 issue of *Theological Studies*. Her essay "Western Christian Spirituality from 1450–1700" will be published in the new encyclopedia, *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*.

Sharon Welch, Suzanne Burgoyne, Lisa Flores and Peggy Placier have received an Alumni Association Faculty Development Incentive Grant for 2003 to continue research on the effectiveness of interactive theatre in multicultural education. Welch has also written a chapter about her previous interdisciplinary research in multicultural education: "Ceremonies of Gratitude, Awakening, and Accountability: The Theory and Practice of Multicultural Education," in *To Do Our First Works Over*. She gave two presentations at the November meetings of the American Academy of Religion: "Global Action to Prevent War: Ethical and Spiritual Challenges," and "Educating for Social Responsibility." In 2002, she received an Internationalizing the Curriculum Course Development Award to prepare a new course on Religion, Peace and War. The course will be taught for the first time in winter 2004.

Eyes Wide With Discovery

By Tom Smith

Smith is in his second year with Teach for America in Arkansas.



Tom Smith

"Mr. Smith," my second-graders ask, "can we breathe today?"

"After lunch and if we earn the privilege," I tell them.

I made my fair share of first-year teaching mistakes last year, but I was by no means so cruel as to withhold breathing from my students as a punishment for their behavior. The "breathing" they speak about and at times

practically beg for is actually some simple visualization meditation that we do once a week or so.

This is certainly not the everyday classroom experience for elementary school children in West Helena, Ark., but maybe that's the point.

Almost two years removed from graduation, I have been fortunate to be a part of Teach for America, a national program that places teachers in underfunded schools in the extreme rural and urban parts of our country. Because the gap in achievement between those with access to an excellent education and those disadvantaged economically is staggering, teachers in the program commit to two years in the classroom before pursuing other careers.

Last year, I was blessed with a self-contained second-grade classroom, and I don't know if there is a better job than being surrounded by 7-year-olds all day. Sure, they got on my nerves some days. But even my worst days were still rewarding because they were learning and because they had such deep pride in that. Watching the light bulbs above their heads turn on and their eyes widen with discovery was quite a privilege.

This year, my second, I am teaching fifth-grade social studies and science. I find that those three years in a child's life can make quite a difference in terms of individual ability and focus. Next year, my commitment will be fulfilled, and I hope to be back in the classroom, but this time as a student. I've applied to a couple of graduate peace studies programs, but realizing the competitive nature of such programs, I am looking into internships with nongovernmental organizations, with the hope of returning to school down the road.

Meanwhile, I am thankful every day for my professors in the department, as I now realize just how hard teaching can be. But then again, they never let us "breathe."

STUDENTS AND ALUMNI MAKE NEWS

Josephine Butler is working on her honors thesis on the use of Christianity and Buddhism in therapy for rape and sexual assault survivors. Butler analyzes the influence these religions have had on people's perceptions and opinions of women. Sharon Welch is adviser for this project. Butler volunteers at the Rape Education Office on campus and was recently nominated to be a Peace Corps volunteer after graduation in May 2004.

Tish Duncan, BA '98, received a master of divinity degree at the University of Chicago in June and is a doctoral student in biblical studies at the University of California. She and husband Brandon Cline enjoy being part of the Disciples Divinity House community and are beginning to feel more at home in the big city. She enjoys lakefront running in the summer and was pleased to finish her second Chicago marathon this fall in less than four hours.

Brandon Cline, BA '98, graduated in spring 2003 with a master of divinity degree from the University of Chicago. He is a doctoral student in the Department of New Testament and Early Christian Literature at the University of California. He has been approved for ordination in the Christian Churches, Disciples of Christ, and he recently completed his second Chicago marathon [editor's note: no time reported].

Noah Earle, BA '03, will continue his avocation of songwriting and performing (country, blues and folk influences), which began when he was a pre-

schooler at family jam sessions in his grandpa's living room. He is seeking employment as a Spanish-English interpreter to pay the rent.

Amanda Sherry is a junior undergraduate in religious studies at MU with a focus on Native American traditions. This summer, she will be looking into the meanings different tribes attribute to the Four Directional Colors: red, white, black and yellow. She hopes to work in a museum, perhaps a natural history museum, and is looking for museum internships related to Native American religions.

Travis Tamerius, BA '92, reports: "On the first day of my first religious studies course at Mizzou in fall 1990, Dr. Raitt told our History of Christianity class that education is simple: 'Be curious about it, pursue it, communicate it.' That educational philosophy was put into practice and expressed in Dr. Raitt's love of learning, passion for teaching, and genuine interest in her students. It wasn't too long before I was hooked. I changed my major and graduated with a degree in religious studies." After graduate study, he and his wife, Kris, returned to Columbia, where he is pastor of Christ the King Presbyterian Church.

Erin Williams will be in London from January through April studying abroad through the Missouri-London program. She will take classes in British culture, British literature, Shakespeare and United Kingdom-American relations. After she returns, she will apply to graduate school to pursue a doctorate in rhetoric and composition.

Attend a Colloquium

The Mid-Missouri Colloquium on Religious Studies will meet in Columbia April 16, with Assistant Professor Philip Clart discussing "Daoism, Popular Religion and Narrative Literature: The Example of the Immortal Han Xiangzi." Details about location and time will be announced. Since the founding of the department in 1981, the religious studies faculty has been meeting with the "T" Society, re-christened in recent years as The Mid-Missouri Colloquium on Religious Studies. The group is unique in central Missouri.

Professor Richard Gelwick of Stephens College created the "T" Society in 1975. He was inspired by the collegial discourses on religion among the colleges at Cambridge University, where he had been

on sabbatical. The group continues to grow as representatives of schools meet for presentations of papers and conversation.

In spring 2003, MU's department Chair Steve Friesen presented "Poverty in the Study of Paul's Churches, or Is Capitalism The Normal Human Condition?" at Sue Crowley's home in Columbia. In October, Professor W. Michael Ashcraft of Truman State University spoke on "Writing the History of the Study of New Religious Movements: How Cults are Defined, How Scholars Become Topics and Why All That Matters." Bill Young of Westminster College hosted the meeting.

Those interested in participating in the semianual colloquium may contact Cheryl Smith by e-mail at smithcr@missouri.edu.

Students Selected For Scholarships

The department announces four of its scholarships for academic year 2003-04.

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The George Landes Scholarship goes to outstanding students entering the master's program. The new Landes Scholars are Missourians Christian Current and Marshall "J.R." Madill. Current hails from O'Fallon and completed a bachelor's degree at Truman State University in Kirksville, Mo. He is interested in the religious traditions of south Asia and plans to pursue doctoral work in Hinduism. Madill grew up in Lee's Summit, Mo., and did his undergraduate work at Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Mo. After completing his master's, he plans to enroll in a doctoral program in biblical studies.

The Paula and Larry Chapman Scholarship is awarded annually to outstanding undergraduate majors in the department. The new Chapman Scholars are Silas Allard and Linda Russell. Careful readers of *Communiqué* will remember that both Allard and Russell have earned several other awards while at MU, including the department's Community Service Award and the campus Hesburgh Award. Russell is finishing a double major in religious studies and journalism and plans to complete her bachelor's degree in May. She hopes to find employment in magazine layout and design or in Web design in the St. Louis area. Allard is spending winter semester 2004 at Karls-Eberhard University in Tübingen, where he continues in religious



Newly announced recipients of the Paula and Larry Chapman Scholarships are Linda Russell and Silas Allard, both active students in the department and winners of multiple honors. Russell is an Honors College Ambassador, treasurer of the Religious Studies Club and president of From the Four Directions Native American Student Organization. Allard served as president of the Religious Studies Club and treasurer of Students for a Free Tibet, and was active in several other groups. The Peace Studies Program named him a Student Peacemaker of the Year for 2001.

studies while working on his German. He will then return to Mizzou to finish his last undergraduate semester and to begin applying for scholarships to study in Nepal.

Three Finish Master's Work

Three master's students completed the program in 2002-03.

Justin Arft wrote his thesis on "Luke 19:41-48 and the 'Cleansing' of the Temple: A History of Scholarship and Redactional Analysis of the Temple Incident." He examined the way the author of the Gospel of Luke and modern commentators have all used the story of the cleansing of the Jerusalem temple to express their biases about the destruction of that temple in 70 Common Era. He argued that the use of the metaphor of cleansing by commentators has often suggested that Jewish religion was a defilement. A close look at the ancient author's version of the story led Arft to the conclusion that Luke was concerned not with cleansing but with the image of Jesus as the prophet who is accepted by some and rejected by others.

Kris Grice wrote her thesis on "Re-mything the Goddess: Using Foucauldian Reciprocal Elucidation to Revision Criticism of Contemporary Goddess Spirituality." She noted that critiques of contemporary goddess theology are usually done in a way that eliminates the possibility for further dialogue. In her thesis, Grice used Michel Foucault's idea of reciprocal elucidation as a way of creating a discursive situation that allows all sides of the academic debate to participate in an ongoing fashion.

In his thesis, "The Drink and the Serpent: A Comparative Investigation of two Connected Motifs in Scandinavian and Vedic Mythologies," Thad Horrell compared the motifs of the winning of the drink of the gods and the slaying of the great serpent in Vedic Indian and pre-Christian Scandinavian mythologies. He argued for the structural similarities of the motifs in these two different cultures and for the connection of these motifs to a larger mythic cycle in both contexts.



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

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Et Cetera

by Steve Friesen, Department Chair



We're a little behind schedule on this issue of *Communiqué*. We usually get this out to you in fall, but this year we haven't been prompt. You can see from the contents, however, that there are lots of exciting things going on in the department, so at least we can claim that our procrastination was not caused by lethargy or sloth.

Since the last issue of *Communiqué*, we have made plans for a major conference at MU on American religion, established a new international center to examine the roles religion plays in the practice of several professions, undertaken interdisciplinary research on pedagogy that alleviates injustice, and published several books and shorter studies on many topics.

Meanwhile, our teaching has expanded as never before. The master's program has 11 students enrolled, even after three students graduated in spring 2003. We also have more undergraduate majors than ever before. I just received the official University statistics: There are 41 declared majors in religious studies, which is almost double the 21 majors we had five years ago in fall 1998.

So religious studies is alive and growing at Mizzou, and you are a part of that growth. Whether as a graduate of our programs or as a friend of the department, your

support has helped us get to this point. We have a strong foundation to build on, and our goal is to make the most of that heritage.

There are several opportunities available to those of you who want to make financial contributions to support the work of the department. The following options are tax deductible and can be applied to membership in the Jefferson Club and Mosaic Society:

- Gifts earmarked for a specific purpose. In the past we used such donations to purchase instructional computer equipment and fund important courses that are missing in the curriculum, as well as for student scholarships.
- Gifts to increase the Jill Raitt Fund for Opportunities for Excellence endowment. During the past year this endowment reached \$10,000, and it will begin generating income next fall. The fund provides crucial flexibility for the department by allowing the faculty to designate the annual income for current projects.
- Gifts to create new endowments. The department has two endowments that support scholarships and one, the Rufus Monroe and Sophie Paine Lectureships in Religion, that supports several lectures annually. Because of curricular needs, we are seeking new endowments to enhance current teaching positions and create new positions.

Alumni and friends who are interested in receiving more information about any of these opportunities, may contact me by phone at (573) 882-0033 or e-mail at FriesenS@missouri.edu. Prospective donors may also contact Bill Sheehan, executive director of advancement for the College of Arts and Science, by phone at (573) 882-2818 or e-mail at BSheehan@missouri.edu.

Thank you for your contributions to our ongoing, collaborative work.