Greetings from the lofty heights of Mount Oread! 2016 has been a challenging but productive year for Religious Studies, with many new developments afoot.

First to be congratulated are professors Jacqueline Brinton and Molly Zahn, both of whom passed the tenure hurdle and were promoted to Associate Professor with flying colors. Hearty kudos to both! Hamsa Stainton, meanwhile, underwent pre-tenure review, and is solidly on his way toward tenure. Department faculty, on the whole, have been busy.

In addition to exciting new courses and pedagogical innovations, two of our key undergraduate courses are now offered online: Dr. Mirecki’s REL 124, Understanding the Bible, and Dr. Brinton’s REL 350, Islam. Plans are also underway to do the same for REL 107, Living Religions of the West (also to be renamed Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), REL 104, Introduction to Religious Studies, and (in the not-too-distant future) REL 360, Buddhist Traditions of Asia. This will enable KU students with heavy work schedules, as well as students from other universities, to complete a good portion of our requirements for the Religious Studies major and minor online.

Faculty have been busy with research and professional duties as well. Research completed by faculty this year covers a wide range of topics: Dr. Hamsa Stainton is finishing revisions on his book manuscript, Poetry as Prayer in the Sanskrit Hymns of Kashmir; Dr. Lindsey completed a contribution for the upcoming book, The Tokugawa World, published by Routledge. Molly Zahn is working on two major projects, a book on the various forms of scribal rewriting in early Jewish texts and a commentary on the Qumran Temple Scroll. Dr. Paul Mirecki is preparing for publication his research on both “Papyrus Kellisi Coptic 7” and the Kansas Torah scroll, and Sam Brody, our specialist in Judaism, received a coveted, year-long research grant as a Fellow of the Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. His book, This Pathless Hour: The Theopolitics of Martin Buber, has been accepted for publication by Indiana University Press.

Our faculty is greatly involved in professional duties, representing our department at the national level in a number of capacities. Hamsa Stainton has been elected Co-Chair of the South Asian Religions Group/Unit of the American Academy of Religion (AAR), the premier professional unit for his field of expertise. Molly Zahn continues as secretary for the International Organization of Qumran Studies and the book review editor for Dead Sea Discoveries. (Formerly, one might recall, she served on the Society for Biblical Literature’s Committee for the Status of Women in the Profession.) Mike Zogry continues as Co-Chair of the Steering Committee, Native Traditions in the Americas program unit of the AAR, and is in great demand for his developing research on James Naismith’s contributions to basketball and the Muscular Christianity movement. Tim Miller continues as a member of the Executive Board of the journal, Nova Religio, and the organizational board for the International Communal Studies Association. Continued on next page.
Dan Stevenson, who previously served two terms (six years) as Co-Chair of the Chinese Religions Group, as well as one term as member of the Buddhism Unit Steering Committee, continues as Co-Editor of the Journal of Chinese Buddhist Studies. This represents a high level of professional visibility and service for a relatively small department such as ours. Our eleven graduate students have also been busy. On top of attending classes and participating in rigorous academic work, many of our students serve as graduate teaching assistants for our popular undergraduate courses. Yohong Roh presented papers at the AAR Midwest Conference and at the AAR Mid-Atlantic Conference. Ben Ale-Ebrahim presented a paper at the conference “I Love Pop: An Interdisciplinary Conference” hosted by the Department of Comparative Literature at the CUNY Graduate Center, and Olivia Groff presented at the graduate student conference, “Magic, Miracles, and the Paranormal in Religious Imaginaries” at the University of Texas at Austin.

In August of 2015, Melissa Fisher-Isaacs, our Archivist Associate for the Moore Reading Room and Kansas Religious History Project left KU for an exciting and new, full-time position with the Lawrence Public Library. Budget challenges compelled the University to place a moratorium on recruitment of her replacement, with the possibility that the line might be eliminated altogether. The impact on the Department, the Reading Room (formerly the Kansas School of Religion library, first founded/opened in the early 1900s), and the developing Kansas Religious History archival initiative would have been devastating, to say the least. However, with the gracious support of the College, that moratorium was eventually lifted, and in the spring of 2016, the Department was able to redefine and expand Trish Baudino Cecil’s existing position, as our Administrative Associate, to make use of her talents in Museum Studies and library administration. Trish is now our new, full-time Archivist Administrator. Congratulations, Trish! She has hit the ground running, and the MRR is now back to full hours and full function. Exciting new plans are in the offing, details of which you will hear shortly.

The Department of Religious Studies hosted several engaging events this past year. Of special note was our 2016 Friends of the Department of Religious Studies Speaker Dr. Robert Orsi, presenting on aspects of the clergy sexual abuse scandal. The department also held a few several smaller events, including a colloquium with Dr. John F. Schwaller, a book talk by Dr. Jackie Brinton, and a talk by Religious Studies Department lecturer Dr. Joshua Lollar. Speakers to note for the future -- don’t miss our 2017 Friends of the Department of Religious Studies Speaker, Tomoko Masuzawa on May 1st of 2017. Dr. Masuzawa will present her current research into the “western-modern-secular complex” of the university. We invite you to read more on the exciting developments in the Department of Religious Studies in the following pages, and hope to see you at coming events!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS! 2017 FRIENDS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES ANNUAL AWARDS RECEPTION AND SPEAKER

Monday, May 1st, 2017

5:30pm  Annual Friends of the Department of Religious Studies Award Reception and Banquet
Malott Room, Kansas Memorial Union
Please join us as we celebrate the achievements of our undergraduate and graduate students in Religious Studies
RSVP to pbcecil@ku.edu

7:00pm  Annual Friends of the Department of Religious Studies Speaker
Jayhawk Room, Kansas Memorial Union
Tomoko Masuzawa, Professor of History and Comparative Literature at the University of Michigan
Open to the public

For further details regarding upcoming events, please visit our department website, religiousstudies.ku.edu
ACTIVITIES OF DEPARTMENT FACULTY AND STAFF, 2016

Jacqueline Brinton (Associate Professor, Islam, Director of Middle East Studies, Center for Global and International Studies) received tenure this year, promoted to Associate Professor. She was also featured on the panel, “Law, Sharia and National Identity: The Case of Modern Egypt” at the Third Annual Conference of the British Association for Islamic Studies. She contributed an article to Comparative Islamic Studies, issue 10:1, “Religion, National Identity and Nation Building: Muhammad Mitwalli Sha’rawi’s Concept of Islam and Its Ties to Modern Egyptian Politics” in Fall of 2016, as well as a chapter, “Rethinking the Distinction between Popular and Reform Sufism in Egypt: An Examination of the Mawlid of Muhammad Mitwalli Sha’rawi” in Practicing Sufism in Africa, Routledge Press.

Samuel Brody (Assistant Professor, Judaism) is spending the year embarking upon a research fellowship in Philadelphia, at the Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies. The theme for the year is “Expanding Jewish Political Thought,” and in that vein Brody is beginning a new project on Jewish thought and political economy. His book, This Pathless Hour: The Theopolitics of Martin Buber is due out next year from Indiana University Press, and he has also undertaken to edit a second volume for the Martin Buber Werkausgabe in Germany, this time on Buber’s Zionist politics and his views on the conflict between Zionists and Palestinians. In September, Brody was fortunate to attend a conference at Arizona State University on “The Future of Jewish Philosophy,” and in October headed to Omaha to discuss Judaism and democracy at the Klutznick Symposium. It’s a busy, but rewarding season!

Continued on next page.

PAST EVENTS, 2016

2016 Annual Friends of the Department of Religious Studies Speaker
The Department of Religious Studies welcomed Dr. Robert Orsi (Professor of Religion, Grace Craddock Nagle Chair in Catholic Studies, Department of Religious Studies, Northwestern) as our annual FODORS speaker on Monday, April 25th, 2016. “What is Catholic about the Clergy Sexual Abuse Crisis” examined the abuse of children by priests and its consequences—in particular its religious consequences—in relation to the Catholic worlds within which the abuse occurred and asked what these evil acts say about these worlds. As the full extent of the sexual abuse of children and adolescents by priests and the cover-up of these crimes by diocesan officials became apparent, in the United States and around the world, church officials sought to build a wall between the reality of what happened and Catholicism itself. These were crimes, pathological acts, no different from the abuse of children by other adults, such as sports coaches, or so it was asserted. From this perspective, the crisis has nothing to say about Catholic history or contemporary practice. Orsi’s talk specifically considered how many survivors of clerical sex abuse understand what happened to them, its effects on their lives, and its impact on their faith and practice.

Colloquium with Dr. John F. Schwallier
The department hosted a colloquium on Thursday, September 29th, 2016 with Professor of History, University at Albany, SUNY, John Schwallier. Dr. Schwallier studies the Catholic Church in colonial Latin America and also works on several topics related to the Aztecs and the Aztec language, Nahuatl. The colloquium was held in the Moore Reading Room, attended by Department of Religious Studies faculty, graduate and undergraduate students.

“Preaching for the Nation: Media and Religion in Modern Egypt” Book talk by Dr. Jacqueline Brinton
Dr. Jacqueline Brinton delivered a talk on her book, Preaching Islamic Renewal, on October 27th, 2016 in the Alderson Auditorium of the Kansas Union. The talk focused on Muhammad Mitwalli Sha’rawi, one of Egypt’s most beloved and successful Islamic preachers. Through his weekly television appearances he popularized long held theological and ethical beliefs and became a scholar-celebrity who impacted social and political life in Egypt.

“The Poetics of Error: Giacomo Leopardi’s Theory of Religion”
Talk by Dr. Joshua Lollar
Dr. Joshua Lollar spoke on October 31st, 2016 in the Moore Reading Room on Giacomo Leopardi. Giacomo Leopardi was the greatest of the Italian romantic-era poets and was a prolific thinker and man of letters. His views on religion, and on Christianity in particular, are at once often scathingly critical and strikingly productive philosophically and aesthetically. Lollar presented Leopardi’s theory of religion and suggested ways of understanding it as a function of his practice of poetry.
Aaron Ketchell (Lecturer, American popular religion, religious tourism) taught courses in American religious life and Christian history this past year. He also reviewed manuscripts in these subject areas for Routledge, CAB International, Oxford University Press and Pearson Publishing. Additionally, he continued research on the relationship between ethnicity and religion in the Strawberry Hill neighborhood of Kansas City, KS, with emphasis upon preserving oral histories of eastern European Catholics in the area. Aaron is also Chair of the Department of History at The Barstow School in Kansas City, Missouri.

Bill Lindsey (Associate Professor, Japanese religions) Continuing his work on children as subjects of religious discourses and practices in Japan, William Lindsey completed a contribution for the upcoming book called The Tokugawa World. Published by Routledge, the book is part of a continuing series of deep dive studies into select historical cultures. The chapter’s title is “Growing Small Bodies At the Point of Skin: Young Children’s Bodies and Health in Sacred Skinscape.” In addition, he delivered a talk at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Lawrence on ritual innovation in aging Japan, focusing on the growth of “pre-funerals.” These are individualized late life celebration events that pull significantly from funeral ritual, and serve to highlight and affirm the life and life choices of the person being feted while also acknowledging the preciousness of the limited time he or she has left and how the celebrant hopes to spend it. The talk was also broadcast in August on KKFI community radio station.

Joshua Lollar (Lecturer, Greek Patristics, religion and literature, Eastern Orthodox Christianity) continues to work on a translation and commentary of a 7th c. Greek Christian text of philosophical theology by Maximus the Confessor (d. 662). This year, he completed 3 scholarly reviews of books in the field of Eastern Christianity. Lollar also gave a lecture on The Contemplation of Nature in Eastern Christianity for KU’s Center for Russian, Eastern European and Eurasian Studies Brownbag Lecture series and a lecture on Giacomo Leopardi’s theory of religion for the Religious Studies department. He is developing a course on Religious Themes in Film for Spring 2017.

Tim Miller (Professor, new religious movements and religion in America) continues his research in new religious movements and the history of American intentional communities. In the past year he has published two articles in books, including one in the major Wiley-Blackwell survey Religion and Politics in the U.S. He gave two invited scholarly lectures at California Polytechnic University and delivered the keynote address at the annual meeting of the John Whitmer Historical Association in Unity Village, Missouri. He delivered three papers at academic conferences, two of them in Portugal, and gave several public service talks in Lawrence and Los Angeles. At its annual conference in Salt Lake City the Communal Studies Association gave Tim its Distinguished Service Award for his work on academic editorial boards, mentoring young scholars, reviewing manuscripts for publication, and other such things. And, oh yes, he taught his usual load of classes in American religion and American intentional communities.

Paul Mirecki (Associate Professor, Ancient Mediterranean Religions, Adjunct Associate Professor in Classics, Jewish Studies Program Executive Committee) taught the course “Understanding the Bible” in the Spring and Fall semesters 2016, his new online version of the same course in the Spring and Summer semesters, and “Early Christian Literature and History” in the Fall semester. Also in 2016 he read academic papers at four conferences: “An acrostic omen list from Egypt” at the meeting of the American Schools of Oriental Research (St. Louis); “A ritual handbook text from Roman Egypt” at the Sixth International Conference of the Association for Esoteric Studies (University of California-Davis); “A Sephardic Torah Scroll: features distinct from the Tiberian Masoretic tradition (Kansas MS J 1:2)” at the 41st European Studies Conference (University of Nebraska-Omaha); and delivered the invited plenary paper “Dream divination in late Roman Egypt (Papyrus Kellis Coptic 7)” at the conference “Religious Imaginaries” (University of Texas-Austin). He also created the new course “The Bible Then and Now” tracing the history of the diverse Bible formats and methods of interpretation from the earliest periods to the present day to be taught in Spring 2017. He is currently preparing for publication his research on both “Papyrus Kellis Coptic 7” and the Kansas Torah scroll in KU’s Spencer Research Library.

Andrew Morgan (Lecturer, 19th century religious thought, law and religion) is finishing his first year of lecturing in the Department of Religious Studies. He teaches two courses of his own design: Religion & the Supreme Court (U.S. Supreme Court cases in which the Establishment Clause of the Constitution is at issue), and Religion & Society in Tension (Freud, Nietzsche, and P.T. Anderson films). He will return as a lecturer for the department for the 2017-2018 academic year.

Hamsa Stainton (Assistant Professor, religions of India and South Asia, Undergraduate Director) in the spring taught our capstone Seminar in Theories and Methods and an introduction to Hinduism. In the fall
Stainton has been on research leave, finishing revisions on his book manuscript currently entitled *Poetry as Prayer in the Sanskrit Hymns of Kashmir*. In the spring he presented at the American Oriental Society Annual Conference, and in the fall presented at the Annual Conference on South Asia in Madison and at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion on a panel Stainton co-organized. Throughout the year he has continued to offer an advanced Sanskrit course to graduate students, both from our department and the University at large. As the Director of Undergraduate Studies Stainton has also been very involved in substantial and exciting revisions to our undergraduate curriculum.

Daniel Stevenson (Professor and Chair, Chinese religions, Buddhism) is currently completing his final year as Department Chair, due to end in June of 2017. In March of 2016 he was scheduled to give a workshop and series of lectures at Oslo University in Norway. However, the event was postponed due to intervening circumstances. In October, he gave a three-day workshop at Yale University on the literatures and “logic” of early Tiantai Buddhist ritual. It was attended by graduate students and faculty from seven US and Canadian universities. Come November he will serve as a panelist for a roundtable discussion on Teaching Chinese Religions, which will be held at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in San Antonio. Two book manuscripts are in the final stages of revision, one on the multifarious lives of the Buddhist *Lotus Sūtra* as engaged holy text in medieval China; the other, a study of Buddhist social and cultural practice in Song dynasty China (960-1279) as envisioned through the major sites and media of public encounter with Buddhist motifs. He continues to serve as co-editor of the *Journal of Chinese Buddhist Studies* (formerly, the *Chung-hwa Buddhist Journal*). A Croatian translation of his *Hoof-print of the Ox*, authored jointly with Sheng-yen (Oxford, 2001), was published in late-spring of this year.

**Molly Zahn** (Associate Professor, Hebrew Bible and early Judaism, Graduate Director) has been busy this year with two major ongoing projects: a book on the various forms of scribal rewriting in early Jewish texts, and a commentary on one of those texts, the Qumran Temple Scroll. She has also been working on several scholarly articles that are due to appear this winter. She traveled to Leuven, Belgium, in July for the 10th triennial meeting of the International Organization of Qumran Studies, and came away with new administrative duties, having been elected Secretary of that organization! She has been teaching this fall at both ends of the department’s spectrum of students: in her First-Year Seminar, Apocalypse!, she helps new students navigate their transition to KU, and in her Graduate Seminar on Scripture and Interpretation she gets to facilitate the development of a new generation of Religious Studies scholars.

**Paul Zimdars-Swartz** (Lecturer, 19th century German philosophy/theology, modern theories of religion) taught REL 374 Religious Perspectives on Selfhood and Sexuality in spring of 2016, and REL 341 Mysticism in fall of 2016.

**Sandra Zimdars-Swartz** (Lecturer, Humanities Program Director, religious experience and popular religion with Christian traditions) taught the introductory course for Religious Studies this fall and spring, REL 104 Introduction to Religious Studies.

**Michael J. Zogry** (Associate Professor, Native American/First Nation Religions, ritual, sport, play and games) After last year’s newsletter went to press, Michael J. Zogry announced publically that he had discovered the only known audio recording of James Naismith, the inventor of basketball. Zogry discovered the recording in the Library of Congress with the aid of his research assistant Katie Hobson (M.A., Religious Studies, 2016) while researching his book in progress, *Religion and Basketball: Naismith’s Game*. On December 15, 2015, the New York Times broke the news in an exclusive feature article. The news then went viral, being reported by every major U.S. media outlet, as well as many international outlets. In late 2015 and the first months of 2016, media interviews with Zogry included: Associated Press; BBC World Service Radio “Sportshour”; NPR’s nationally syndicated “Only a Game”; Slate.com’s “Hang Up and Listen”; the Canadian television news network Global National News and the Weather Channel. Television and radio coverage included “Newshour Shares,” on the PBS NewsHour, the national NPR broadcast; TNT’s “Inside the NBA”; The Dan Patrick Show; and Colin Cowherd’s The Herd. Several KU publications featured the discovery, including the KU Chancellor’s Report, the CLAS KU Collegian, and the KU Alumni Magazine. In addition to making the discovery, Zogry negotiated with the attorney for the firm who owns the rights to the recording so that it could be made available to the public, free of charge, on the KU Libraries website. The recording also is now permanently a part of the Original Rules of Basketball exhibit in the DeBruce Center. In August 2016, Zogry presented a paper on his Naismith research at the Inaugural Global Congress on Sport and Christianity. In 2016 he completed his five-year term as Director of the KU Indigenous Studies program, and his second three-year term as a co-chair of the national Steering Committee, Native Traditions in the Americas program unit, American Academy of Religion.
RELIGION IN KANSAS PROJECT

Professor Tim Miller continues to offer regularly his course on *Religion in Kansas* as the first step in a long-term project to preserve and study all manner of documents, memorabilia, oral lore and information concerning the wide spectrum of religious traditions and communities that have been active in the state, past and present. The course has a sizeable fieldwork component which is designed to train students in oral historiography and archival research by sending them out into the state to gather documents and conduct interviews with persons who have had long-term involvement with religious communities in Kansas. Materials gathered and processed by participants in the course are made available to the public in digital form on the Religion in Kansas Project website, [http://ksreligion.omeka.net/](http://ksreligion.omeka.net/).

Our long-range objective is to create a comprehensive information center on religion in Kansas, past and present, which will be administered by the Moore Religious Studies Reading Room in Smith Hall, with digital access through the Religious Studies website. We invite our friends and supporters to join us in the project. We depend heavily on public collaboration. Our documentation of Kansas religious history is only as rich as the knowledge and insight that persons who are heirs to this living history are willing to provide us. If you know of materials that should be preserved for posterity, or of persons with long involvement in one or more of the many religious organizations in the state who would be willing to be interviewed, please get in touch with Tim Miller at tkansas@ku.edu or 785-864-7263. All suggestions are welcome, and we will follow up to the extent that our limited resources permit.

---

SUPPORT

The William J. Moore Reading Room

The Moore Reading Room is a one-of-a-kind institution. A collection in development for over one hundred years on a site promoting the study of religion for one hundred and fifteen years, the Moore Reading Room is dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the betterment of our communities both locally and regionally. When you contribute to the Moore Reading Room, your gift benefits student learning, the development of the collection, and the preservation of a unique facility in the state of Kansas. In the coming year, your gift will expand digital learning software and increased technology for research available to KU students, the department, and the general public.

The Department of Religious Studies is creating a space where not only the mission of the Moore Reading Room thrives for another one hundred years, but where we endeavor to transform our community and the lives of our students. We invite you to be a partner in our success. Together, we are making the Moore Reading Room a dynamic place for student learning and faculty research in the twenty-first century.

Make a gift today.
OUR AWARD WINNING STUDENTS

Department of Religious Studies Graduate Teaching Assistants for 2016-2017:

Ryan Goeckner, REL 107 Living Religions of the West
Aspen Grender, REL 171 Religion in American Society
Olivia Groff, REL 104 Introduction to Religious Studies
Jennifer Navarro, REL 124 Understanding the Bible
Lyndsey Shelton, REL 106 Living Religions of the East

Graduate Teaching Assistant in East Asian Languages and Cultures for 2016-2017:

Yohong Roh

Recipients of Friends of the Department of Religious Studies Scholarships:

Ben Ale-Ebrahim, Summer 2016
Jessica Bohanon, Fall 2016-Spring 2017
Craig Hemphill, Fall 2016-Spring 2017
Matthew Leveille, Summer 2016
Yohong Roh, Spring 2017
Kyle Schofield, Fall 2016-Spring 2017
Siji Wang, Fall 2016-Spring 2017

Department of Religious Studies Prizes for Student Research, 2015-2016:

Undergraduate
Ginny Helgeson, “Gendered Rhetoric and the Identities and Sexualities of Female American Faith Healers”
Rebekah Sheridan, “Methods and Ethnographies”

Graduate
Olivia Groff, “Accounts of the Strange: Return-from-Death Narratives and Encounters with Ghosts in Early Medieval China”
Benjamin Ale-Ebrahim, “Islam, Authority, and Electronic Media in Contemporary Tajikistan”

MOORE READING ROOM NEWS AND NOTES, CONTINUED

the mission of the University of Kansas. Our Strategic Development Plan builds upon shared goals and past accomplishments of the Moore Reading Room and aligns closely with university priorities. The Moore Reading Room is setting high-level goals for the coming years, and our Strategic Development Plan will serve as a touchstone for decision-making and a guide for committing resources for our impactful strategic efforts and initiatives. Highlights of the plan include: fulfilling our mission in the 21st century through a Collection Development Plan, revitalizing the MRR’s second floor to create a space for active learning, and fostering inclusiveness and cross-campus collaboration. Indeed, the first few months with our plan in place have proven productive; we have weeded and assessed the collection for duplicate and damaged materials, created the Kansas Bible Chair Collection (a special, standalone collection of the books comprising the original library holdings of the Kansa Bible Chair, formed in the early 1900s), and are currently preparing the second floor for coming changes, including increased space for collaborative research and learning!

The Moore Reading Room remains dedicated to its mission, but is poised to provide a dynamic space for learning and research on the north-east side of KU’s campus. To read the Strategic Development Plan in its entirety, please visit http://religionstudies.ku.eduategic-development-plan.
MEET OUR RELIGIOUS STUDIES GRADUATE STUDENTS

**Ben Ale-Ebrahim** is a second-year MA student in Religious Studies. His main areas of interest include religion and digital media, Islamic studies, and anthropology of religion. He is working on a thesis this year, focusing on the discursive construction and performance of Islamic normativity on digital media platforms like Twitter, Snapchat, and Facebook. He hopes to continue his studies next year in an anthropology PhD program.

**Jessica Bohanon** is a first year MA student who graduated from the University of Rochester in 2011 with a dual degree in Anthropology and Religion. After living abroad and working in college admissions, Jessica decided to pursue her real passion: studying religion. Her interests include South Asia, minority Islamic populations, the Hindu epics, and performance of gender in religious contexts.

**Ryan Goekner** is a first year MA student with interests in American Indian religious traditions and Afro-Caribbean syncretic religions. He graduated from KU with his BA in Anthropology and American Studies in 2014. In the interim, he has worked with the American Indian Health Research and Education Alliance, Inc. on a variety of projects through the Center for American Indian Community Health at the University of Kansas Medical Center. His primary appointment was as Project Manager for a nationwide American Indian ethnic identity study titled Native 24/7. He is currently a teaching assistant for the course Living Religions of the West and is proud to serve as one of two graduate representatives in the department.

**Aspen Grender**, a second-year MA student, has been focusing on religious life and recent activity in the US. Currently, he is researching the authority of interpretation at the Creation Museum in his home state of Kentucky. He’s been working on gathering oral history contributions related to experiences with communal living in America, focusing mostly on communalism in Kansas and Kentucky so far. He is also working on interviews for the Religion in Kansas Project.

**Olivia Groff** is a second year graduate student in Religious Studies. This year, she is working on her master’s thesis on the Native American religious aspects of powwows. In addition to the M.A. degree, she has completed the requirements for a graduate certificate in Indigenous Studies. Olivia is currently the GTA for REL 104 Introduction to Religious Studies with Dr. Sandra Zimdars-Swartz.

**Matthew Leveille** is a third year M.A. student with a focus in Sanskrit Kōvyā and devotional literature, and Bhakti in South Asia. He recently studied Sanskrit in Pune, Maharashtra, India this summer and continues to read the *Devūṭtra*, a devotional poem of Yaśāśkara with his advisor Hansa Stainton as a part of his thesis work. Leveille’s thesis examines this text and its context in Kashmir as well as its relationship with an earlier text on poetics. In the past he was a GTA for both REL 106 and REL 104, and enjoyed interacting with the students in these classes. He will be applying to Ph.D. programs in Religious Studies and Asian Studies in the fall and will defend his thesis in the spring.

**Jennifer Navarro** is a first year M.A. student. She graduated last fall from the University of Texas at El Paso with a B.A. in Psychology and a minor in Religious Studies. She is currently the GTA for REL 124 Understanding the Bible with Dr. Paul Mirecki. Her research areas include early Judaism, the Hebrew Bible, and Christianity.

**Yohong Roh** is a third year graduate student. This year, he presented papers at the AAR Midwest Conference at Ball State University, “Won Buddhism: An Alternative Buddhism for Laity in the Post-modern and Capitalistic World” and at the AAR-Mid-Atlantic Conference in New Jersey, “Self-immolation: The Most Altruistic Body-centered Buddhist Ritual”. In October, he attended the seminar *To Meet the Buddhas Face to Face: Ritual Penance, SamNgä, and Self-Cultivation in Early Tiantai* taught by Dr. Daniel Stevenson at Yale University.

**Kyle Schofield** is a first-year MA student in Religious Studies. He graduated from Brigham Young University with a BA in Humanities and Ancient Near Eastern Studies in April 2015. He and his wife, both from the west coast, love Kansas. His main areas of interests include ancient Judaism and the Hebrew Bible. He is currently researching and writing about the history of the field of Jewish Studies, and about Jewish ritual purity in second temple period.

**Lyndsey Shelton** is a first year MA student. She graduated from Georgia Southern University with a BA in International Studies and minors in Religious Studies and German Language. Her Capstone Thesis focused on the representation of religion and the religious in comic books and video games. Her research interests include Native American religious traditions, non-mainstream religions, and religion in popular culture and media. She is currently the GTA for *Living Religions of the East* with Dr. Lindsey.

**Siji Wang** is a third year graduate student in the Department of Religious Studies. She has been interested in Chinese folk culture and lay Buddhist society of Ming-Qing China, the period on which she is basing her thesis topic. Wang has developed a variety of focuses on literature, ritual and theory, which prepares her well for this interdisciplinary field of interest.
CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2016 GRADUATES!

Undergraduate Students:
Mary Fluker
Rebecca Levine
Rebekah Sheridan
Jan Downing
Tyler Kerr
Camie Mitchener
Marah Schlingensiepen
Anthony Schmiedler

Graduate Students:
Katie Hobson

News from our Alumni

Sarah Dees, (BA, 2007) Accepted a postdoctoral fellowship (2016-2018) in the Department of Religious Studies at Northwestern University. In addition to revising her first book, she will be involved in a two year research project, "Politics of Religion: At Home and Abroad," sponsored by the Buffett Institute for Global Studies.

Phillip K. Goff (MA, 1988) was named as Indiana University-Perdue University Indianapolis’ newest Chancellor’s Professor, the most distinguished appointment at IUPUI. Goff is nearly finished writing a new book focusing on religious programing during the golden age of radio.

Rachel Myslivy (MA, 2013) was named one of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences’ 2016 Hawks to Watch. Myslivy is currently the Statewide Coordinator for the Double Up Food Bucks program and board member of the Climate + Energy Project.

Paul Olson (MA, 1999) is leaving Briar Cliff College to become Vice President for Academic Affairs at Jamestown University.
STAY IN CONTACT!

It is always a pleasure to have our friends and former students of the department stop by Smith Hall for a visit when they are on campus. Should you be further afield, please don’t hesitate to drop us a letter or email with your latest news. We will gladly pass it along. We are also pleased to include you on our mailing list for lectures and special programs. Just let us know how to reach you. Thanks for the many things you do to advance the cause of the academic study of religion. We look forward to hearing from you. For regular updates on Religious Studies courses and activities at KU, please see our website, religiousstudies.ku.edu.

We’re on social media, too!

Find us on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/KUReligiousStudies

Follow us on Twitter: @SmithHallKU

NEW RESOURCE ONLINE

The Department of Religious Studies now provides a list of religious observance dates on our website. Visit the page by going to religiousstudies.ku.edu/religious-observance-dates-religion. Please email Moore Reading Room Archivist, Patricia Baudino Cecil, to have a religious observance added. We appreciate your input as this list continues to grow!

“HAVE INTEREST, WILL TRAVEL”: FACULTY LECTURE/WORKSHOP OPPORTUNITIES

Our faculty members like to share their research and interests with groups in Kansas and nearby areas. In most cases, a speaker will give a single, illustrated lecture, although other arrangements can easily be accommodated. Department faculty members already carry full-time loads of teaching, research, and service at KU, so we cannot promise to fill all requests. In some cases well-qualified graduate students are also available for presentations. Travel expenses are subsidized, where necessary, by the Friends of the Department of Religious Studies. For contact information and details regarding faculty expertise, please consult our website (religiousstudies.ku.edu) or the department office:

Department of Religious Studies
1300 Oread Avenue
109 Smith Hall
Lawrence, Kansas 66045
785/864-4663

On the Horizon:

50th anniversary of Smith Hall

October 2017 will herald the fiftieth year of Smith Hall. Smith Hall marks the site of the study of religion in Kansas for over one hundred and fifteen years. It retains its bold mid-century modern architecture, its iconic Moses sculpture by Elden Tfelt, and beautiful burning bush stained glass window. Join us next year as we celebrate this meaningful building. Visit religiousstudies.ku.edu to stay abreast of events.
Support Religious Studies at the University of Kansas

Visit KU Endowment to donate to Religious Studies!

The Department of Religious Studies at the University of Kansas offers degree programs leading to Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of General Studies, and Master of Arts degrees. We are the only dedicated Religious Studies Department in a public university in Kansas, and one of only six such departments in public universities between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains, Canadian border and Gulf of Mexico that offers a graduate degree in the academic study of religion. The department is housed in Irma I. Smith Hall on the main KU campus in Lawrence and is a unit within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. It marks the latest incarnation in a tradition of academic study of religion on Mount Oread that dates back to the turn of the twentieth century.

The generosity of private gifts supports much of our work in the Department of Religious Studies. We are grateful to the many donors who contribute to the work of our department and to the legacy of religious study at the University of Kansas.

Scholarship support and other types of private assistance are vital to the success of the KU College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the Department of Religious Studies. To make a gift, create an endowed fund, set up a planned gift, or to find out more about the impact of private gifts, please contact Jenna Goodman, CLAS Development Team Lead, 785-832-7417 or jgoodman@kuendowment.org.

You can also mail a check made payable to KU Endowment to:
  
  Gift Processing Department
  
  KU Endowment
  
  PO Box 928
  
  Lawrence, KS 66044-0928

Save a stamp and contribute online or by phone! Visit www.kuendowment.org/give to make a contribution to the Department of Religious Studies online or call 785-830-7576 to make a contribution over the phone.

Please make sure to note that your gift should benefit the Department of Religious Studies — and thank you for your support!

The Department of Religious Studies would like to take this opportunity to thank the Friends of the Department of Religious Studies for their support of scholarships, faculty research, the Moore Reading Room, and special programs.
November 28, 2016

Dear Friend of Religious Studies in Kansas:

The field of Religious Studies is especially crucial at this time of current events that call for deep understanding and respect of the great variety of religious traditions and communities that influence local, national, and world affairs. Therefore, the Friends of the Department of Religious Studies at KU is very appreciative of the generous support of benefactors. Private donations are crucial for supporting ongoing educational and community service activities of the Department of Religious Studies and for encouraging innovation and excellence. Public support through the state is not sufficient for all of these activities. Indeed, ongoing reductions in support for higher education make our challenge greater. Thankfully, this year, our private supporters (including those of past years, whose endowments continue to provide resources) provided $64,000 for departmental programs. As always, student scholarships were our largest budget item, at $23,000, and support for the departmental reading room (including acquisitions and student salaries) was second, at $15,000. Lesser amounts supported faculty research, conferences and lectures, faculty outreach, our annual banquet, and many more things.

We are very pleased that outstanding graduate students continue to seek us out. But we always have trouble providing them with as much support as we would like. Solid support for students is important for recruitment, retention, and recognition of excellence. As the percentage of state support within the university’s budget continues to decline, we need to offset these differences through the private sector.

Please help support the academic study of religion with a contribution directly to the KU Endowment Association. Please indicate clearly that you want to earmark your donation for the Department of Religious Studies, or donate online via one of the links provided on Religious Studies’ website. More information on how to contribute to KU Endowment can be found inside this newsletter.

Thank you for your support in the past and the future. We welcome you to attend our Religious Studies Annual Awards Reception and Public Lecture scheduled for Monday, May 1st, 2017 as described in this newsletter. Otherwise, please feel free to stop by the department anytime you are on the KU campus. Attendance at our annual banquet comes free to those who make a donation to the Department of Religious Studies.

Sincerely,

Edward R. Canda, Ph.D.
President, Friends of the Department of Religious Studies