

CIRCA

News *from* the University of Chicago Divinity School

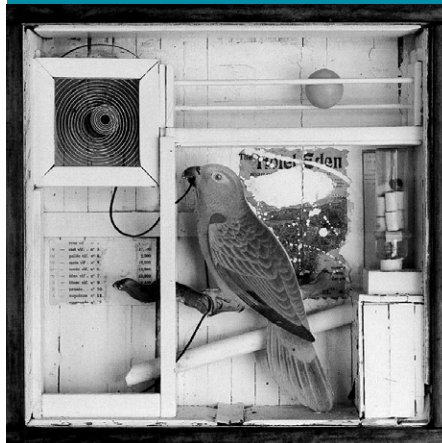
THE DIVINITY SCHOOL IS NOT JUST THE PEOPLE WITHIN ITS WALLS AND HALLS or classrooms and coffee shop at any one time, but it is a network of those who, marked by this place, sustain a living conversation the world over about religion and a commitment to conjoining serious intellectual inquiry and human flourishing (as our University's motto puts it). But the alumni do also come back! In striking ways this academic year has been the year of Swift returns.

At the AAR/SBL meeting we had nearly three hundred alumni and friends sojourn back to Swift on Sunday night, November 18, for a reception with current faculty and students spread over four floors of the building. Our worries that alumni might not, after a long day of conferencing (and schlepping in frustration around the cultureless cavern that is McCormick Place), board buses for the six-mile ride to campus were happily unfounded. At its peak the Third Floor Lecture Hall was packed tightly, elbow to elbow, in a cross-generational, cross-disciplinary, and cross-degree program casserole of animated conversation.

The Craft of Teaching program, formally launched in September 2012, this year brought back over fifteen alumni who are teaching in state universities, liberal arts colleges, seminaries, research universities and other contexts (including, inter alia, the Chicago Police Department), to explicate their contexts (geographical, institutional, methodological, legal, disciplinary, pedagogical) for teaching the study of religion, to workshop one of their syllabi (from "New Religious Movements," to "Mythology, Science and Creation" to "War and Peace in 20th Century Theology and Literature"), and to speak frankly with current faculty and students about the ways in which the Divinity School did and did not prepare them for the transition into full-time teaching (see inset on the Wabash Consultation, page 6). At that consultation current students heard many sage and hard-earned pieces of advice about how to negotiate the challenges and joys of teaching, while also seeing admirable skills, ingenuity, aptitude, and uncompromising dedication for teaching on display in the Third Floor Lecture Hall in Swift, even as these educators on any given day are at work in California, Louisiana, Indiana, Texas, New Hampshire, and many places in between.

Other Swift Returns included several stellar Wednesday lunch talks on topics as varied as our delicious vegetarian menu, including Wesley Sun, MDiv'08, together with his brother, Brad Sun, the founders of Sun Bros Studio, which produced its first graphic novel, *Chinatown*, this year; Kelly Hayes, PhD'04 (History of Religions) on "Intergalactic Space-Time Travelers: Anticipating the Third Millennium in Brazil,"

Letter from the Dean



**"In striking ways this
academic year has been the
year of Swift returns."**

Analisa Leppanen-Guerra, AM'94, on the handling of astral phenomena in Joseph Cornell's complex, untitled book-object, of which she has co-edited a magnificent facsimile edition under the title *Joseph Cornell's Manual of Marvels* (2012), and Tom Willadsen, MDiv'90, "It Could Be Wurst: Franz Bibfeldt: The Lost Years of Gastronomic Theology."

And May 2 was a capstone event, a marvelous all-day celebration of the 2013 alumnus of the year, Michael Kinnamon, PhD'80 (Religion and

Literature), who gave the Craft of Teaching seminar at noon over lunch, and the lecture, "A Report from the Front Lines of a Renewal Movement Under Siege," later that afternoon that sprang from his decades in Christian ecumenical work. It was also a day of transition in our Alumni Council, as one long-serving class of councilors completed their terms [David Clairmont, AM'00, PhD'05 (Ethics); Lois Daly, AM'80, PhD'84 (Ethics); Wesley Kort, AM'61, PhD'65 (Religion and Literature); Bonnie Miller-McLemore, AM'80, PhD'86 (Religion and Psychological Studies); and Amy Zietlow, MDiv'99] and another joined for the next phase of work [Benjamin Dueholm, MDiv'07; John Holt, PhD'77 (History of Religions); Pamela Jones, MDiv'97, PhD'10 (History of Christianity); Ralph Keen, PhD'90 (History of Christianity); Laura Lieber, PhD'03 (History of Judaism); Clare Rothschild, PhD'03 (Bible); and Wesley Sun, MDiv'08]. Even though no one at the table knew all those present when we began at 8:30 in my office, by the time we adjourned a couple of hours later the Swift Hall conversation — always somehow joined in medias res — had been well established in the group.

And yet there are also quieter Swift returns. One of my memorable encounters this year was visiting a lawyer in New York City who told me that he draws daily on his learnings in the Divinity School back in the 1960s, in particular Alfred North Whitehead's process thought and Aristotelian ethics, even as his career has (apparently) brought him far from the field of the academic study of religion. He told me that when he visits Chicago he often returns to Swift Hall and walks around the building, peering into the classrooms where he studied, treating himself to a sandwich and cup of coffee in "Grounds of Being" (in his day here, "The Swift Kick").

Alumni of the Divinity School are the powerful presence of the School in the world. We love to see you back in Swift Hall, presenting a luncheon or participating in a conference, or attending a lecture, or just enjoying a cup of coffee. And we love to see you online, on our Facebook page or contributing a *Sightings* column. And if you didn't come back this year, we'd love to see you in the future — anytime.

— Margaret M. Mitchell, Dean

Divinity News and Notes



Stay up-to-date with news at the Divinity School, bookmark our website at divinity.uchicago.edu — join us on Facebook too! Find us at: <https://www.facebook.com/ucdivinityschool>.



Marion Receives Humboldt Research Award

Jean-Luc Marion was elected the recipient of a Humboldt Research Award from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation.

The award is granted in recognition of a researcher's entire achievements to date to academics whose fundamental discoveries, new theories, or insights have had a significant impact on their own discipline and who are expected to continue producing cutting-edge achievements in the future. Award winners are invited to spend a period of up to one year

cooperating on a long-term research project with specialist colleagues at a research institution in Germany.

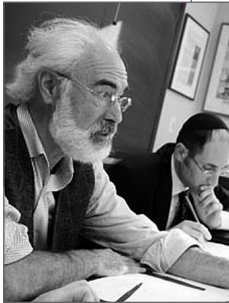
Marion is the Andrew Thomas Greeley and Grace McNichols Greeley Professor of Catholic Studies and Professor of the Philosophy of Religions and Theology. He studies both the history of modern philosophy and contemporary phenomenology; Professor Marion has also worked in the areas of Greek and Latin patristics; the history of medieval and modern philosophy; aesthetics; and constructive theology.

Fishbane Named American Academy of Arts and Sciences Fellows

The American Academy of Arts and Sciences recently announced its 2013 class of fellows. Four scholars and one distinguished trustee from the University of Chicago have been elected to the prestigious Academy. **Michael Fishbane**, the Nathan Cummings Distinguished Service Professor of Jewish Studies in the Divinity School and the College is one of the

faculty members elected to this honor, and joins one of the nation's most prestigious honorary societies and a leading center for independent policy research.

Fishbane studies the ancient Near East, biblical studies and rabbinics (the history of Jewish interpretation), as well as Jewish mysticism and modern Jewish thought. He is currently completing a book that incorporates modern critical and traditional Jewish interpretations of the Song of Songs. Among his many honors, Fishbane has received a Guggenheim Fellowship and a Lifetime Achievement Award in Textual Studies from the National Foundation for Jewish Culture.



Hammerschlag Joins Faculty

Effective July 1, 2013, **Sarah Hammerschlag** will join the faculty of the Divinity School as Assistant Professor of Religion and Literature. Hammerschlag, a PhD graduate of the Divinity School, joins us from Williams College.

Hammerschlag is a scholar of modern Jewish thought and continental philosophy. Her research has focused on the position of Judaism in the post-WWII French intellectual scene, a field that puts her at the crossroads of numerous disciplines and scholarly approaches including philosophy, literary studies, and intellectual history.

She is the author of *The Figural Jew: Politics and Identity in Postwar French Thought* (University of Chicago Press 2010), which received an honorable mention in Philosophy and Jewish Thought from the Association for Jewish Studies when they announced their 2012 Jordan Schnitzer Book Award. She has written essays on Jacques Derrida, Emmanuel Levinas, and Maurice Blanchot, which have appeared in *Critical Inquiry*, *Jewish Quarterly Review* and *Shofar*, among other places. She is currently working on a manuscript entitled *Sowers and Sages: The Renaissance of Judaism in Post-war Paris*.

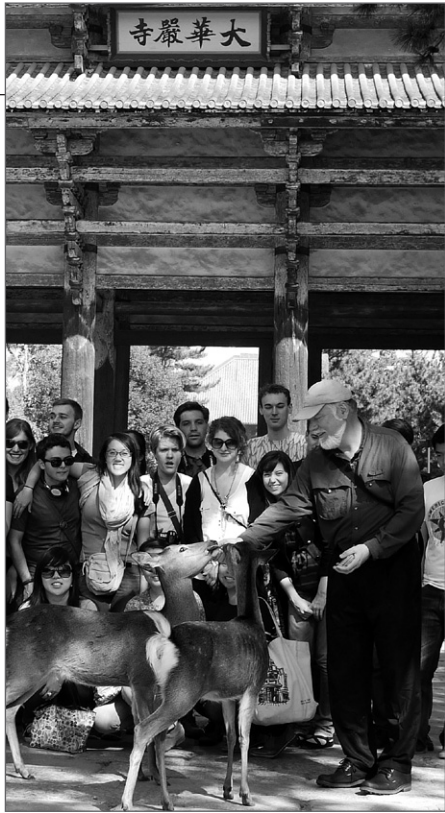


Changes to AMRS Program

The Divinity School is pleased to announce recent changes to our Master of Arts in Religious Studies (AMRS) program. The AMRS, a concentrated program in the academic study of religion is for those in other fields or professions (e.g., law, medicine, business, journalism, the arts) — or those who seek greater knowledge in the study of religion.

The degree can be completed in one focused year of study — or one course at a time. And we are now offering rolling admissions, so students can begin their studies when they are ready — autumn, winter, or spring. Tuition for this program is now charged on a per-course basis, making this option especially attractive for working professionals.

AMRS students choose and create their own course of study, in consultation with the Dean of Students and the Director of MA studies. For some, the goal is focused study in one area; others study broadly. Like all our students, AMRS students may take advantage of related coursework across the University and of the vibrant student life in Swift Hall. Recent alumnae have focused on Jewish history, law, and philosophy; on foreign diplomacy in the Middle East vis-a-vis the history and current context of the Abrahamic traditions in the Middle East; religion, politics, and Islam; and philosophy and theology in a global context.



New Associated Faculty

Two new Associated Faculty members join the Divinity School in the History of Religions area.

Paul Copp, is Associate Professor in Chinese Religion and Thought, East Asian Languages and Civilizations, and the College. Copp's research focuses on the history of religious practice in China during the eighth through the twelfth centuries. **James Ketelaar**, Professor of Japanese History of East Asian Languages and Civilizations, (*above*), specializes in religious and intellectual history of Japan, especially during the Tokugawa and Meiji periods.



Davidson Enters Ordre des Palmes Academiques

In recognition of his contribution to the promotion of French culture, **Arnold I. Davidson** has been named to the rank of Officer in the Ordre des Palmes Academiques. Entering with the rank of Officer means that Prof. Davidson enters this prestigious chivalric order with special distinction.

The Ordre des Palmes Academiques (Order of Academic Palms) is an Order of Chivalry of France for academics and cultural and educational figures, comprised of three ranks (Knight, Officer, and Commander). It was founded by the Emperor Napoléon as a reward for devotion and accomplishment in the realm of teaching, scholarship, and research. Later, it was extended to non-French citizens to acknowledge their promotion of French language or significant achievement in the field of education.

Davidson is the Robert O. Anderson Distinguished Service Professor in the Departments of Philosophy, Comparative Literature, Romance Languages and Literatures, and in the Divinity School (Philosophy of Religions and History of Judaism). He is also on the Committee on the Conceptual and Historical Studies of Science. He is interested in the historical and systematic relationships between philosophy and theology and has written about twentieth-century European philosophy and theology, as well as on the history of philosophy and theology. He is especially interested in the tradition of spiritual exercises and the related ideas of philosophy and religion as a way of life and moral perfectionism.

Neubauer Family Collegium Projects Announced

The Neubauer Family Collegium for Culture and Society at the University of Chicago has selected an inaugural cohort of eighteen faculty research projects that tackle complex questions through cross-disciplinary collaboration.

The Divinity School is pleased to announce that among the faculty represented are **Paul Mendes-Flohr**, the Dorothy Grant Maclear Professor of Modern Jewish History and Thought, as well as several of our associated faculty members: Professors **Omar McRoberts** (Sociology), **Philip V. Bohlman** (Music), **Daniel Brudney** (Philosophy), and **David Schloen** (Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations).

Mendes-Flohr will be a member of the "Working Group on Political Theology." This project will bring faculty from classics, political science, sociology, anthropology, divinity, Germanic studies, and English together with invited visiting scholars to define and refine a coherent agenda for a long-term, trans-disciplinary research project on political theology, which is a modality of inquiry that has recently re-emerged across the social



sciences and humanities. Political theology examines the orientation of politics to guiding values, and searches for the enduring historical influence of theological ideas on political concepts and the formation of political institutions.

David Nirenberg, the Deborah R. and Edgar D. Jannotta Professor of Medieval History and Social Thought, is the founding faculty director for the program. He commented that "whether or not religious values should provide a foundation or an orientation for politics is a burning question in many societies, including our own. With the Divinity School at its center, and a wide array of faculty across the

campus who study the influence of religion on political concepts and the formation of political institutions, the University of Chicago is a natural place to think about these questions, so we are particularly excited about the potential of the Working Group on Political Theology to focus our many parallel inquiries in this crucial field."

The Collegium is named in honor of Joseph Neubauer and Jeanette Lerman-Neubauer, whose landmark \$26.5 million gift to the University is among the largest in support of the humanities and social sciences in the institution's history.

From Grounds to Gifts: The Divinity Students Association and the Religion Collection



The Divinity Students Association (DSA) recently donated \$1,000 to the Library for the purchase of new titles in Religion. The funds were used primarily to purchase patron requests from Divinity students.

In order to celebrate the gift, a special exhibit on the Fourth Floor of Regenstein Library was created; the books featured in this exhibit represented the eleven areas of study in the Divinity School. They were selected by Anne K. Knafl, Bibliographer for Religion and Philosophy (and, of course, an alumna of the Div School), who chose works that reflect the interdisciplinary nature of the academic study of religion, especially as it has been and continues to be practiced and taught here at Chicago.

The DSA receives the bulk of its funding from the student-run and -operated café, Grounds of Being, operating since the 1960s in the basement of Swift. Included in the exhibit are two coffee shop t-shirts, one a "special edition" design on loan from the Special Collection Research Center and the other donated by Grounds of Being.



Divinity School Events

What’s the best way to find out about events at the Divinity School? Online. Our online calendar can be found on our homepage — <http://divinity.uchicago.edu> — as can detailed information about conferences, lectures, and workshops. You can also join our Facebook community. Find us under “University of Chicago Divinity School.” Alumni are most welcome to join the conversation!



Upcoming Events

Throughout the academic year the Divinity School hosts or cohosts a wide variety of lectures, symposia, graduate workshops, and more. These events are announced on our website and our electronic newsletter (At the Divinity School).

Of special note: the annual John Nuveen Lecture. The lecture will be delivered by **Daniel P. Sulmasy**, the Kilbride-Clinton Professor of Medicine and Ethics and Associate Director of the MacLean Center for Clinical Medical Ethics in the Department of Medicine. Join us on Thursday, October 31st, for Professor Sulmasy’s lecture.

The Mellon Islamic Studies Initiative

The Mellon Islamic Studies Initiative, a three-year project funded by a generous grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, is designed to support the expansion and enhancement of the study of Islam at the University of Chicago.

Administered by the Divinity School, the Initiative is a cross-divisional collaboration, intended to create a sustained campus conversation about the future of Islamic Studies.

The Initiative brings distinguished visiting scholars, representing a wide range of topics in Islamic Studies, to the University. With one visitor per quarter, the result is a substantive, sustained discussion about both specific topics in Islamic Studies and the more general role of the study of Islam in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Each visitor brings to the community a unique area of expertise, which they share with the campus by giving a public lecture, teaching a course, and organizing a workshop on their topic of study.

In the past academic year, we saw three visiting scholars. **Angelika Neuwirth** joined the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations in the Fall quarter 2012. Dr. Neuwirth teaches at the Seminar for Semitic and Arabic Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin, and is widely considered to be one of the world’s leading experts in the study of the Qur’an and Qur’anic exegesis. On October 12,

Conference

**Jean Bethke Elshtain: The Engaged Mind
Just War against Terror:
International Relations, Gender and
the Challenges of Ethics**

October 17–18, 2013

The fourth and final conferences in the series “The Engaged Mind,” reflecting on themes drawn from the work of Jean Bethke Elshtain. The series is underwritten by the McDonald Agape Foundation.



WEDNESDAYS

Wednesday Worship

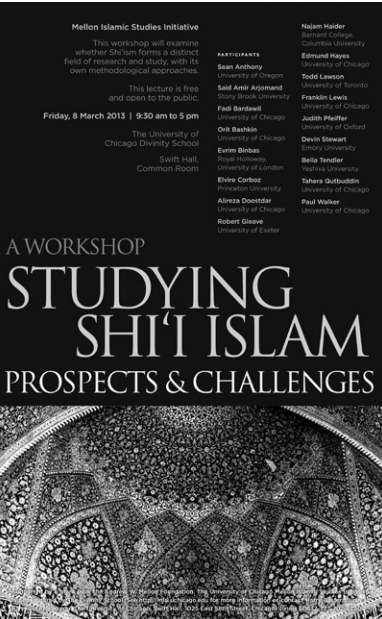
Eight Wednesdays per Quarter
11:30 a.m. – 12 noon

Wednesday Community Luncheons

Eight Wednesdays per Quarter
12 noon – 1:15 p.m.

Join us in Swift Common Room for a delicious meal, a speaker, and conversation.

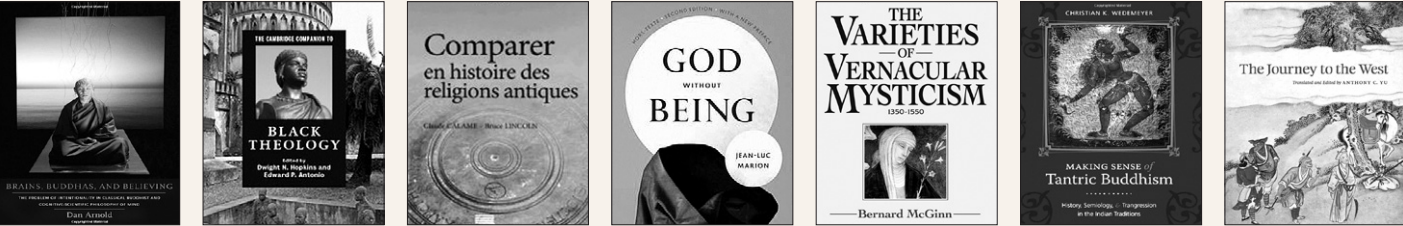
Please visit <http://divinity.uchicago.edu/news/wednesdays.shtml> to see upcoming date and speaker information.



knowledge, courtly love poetry, and the engagement of medieval Islamic philosophy with western views of that philosophy (particularly those of Leo Strauss). Capezzone jointly taught a class with Professor David Nirenberg entitled “Love, Law and Exile: the Philosopher and Society in Medieval Islam.” He delivered a lecture April 26 entitled “Notes for a History of Nostalgia in Classical Arabic Culture,” and his work was the subject of a workshop on May 24 entitled “Leo Strauss, Islamic Philosophy, and the end of the pre-modernity.”

Please visit <http://misi.uchicago.edu> for additional news about Mellon Islamic Studies Initiative programming and our visiting scholars.

2012 Books by Faculty



Dan Arnold

Brains, Buddhas, and Believing: The Problem of Intentionality in Classical Buddhist and Cognitive-Scientific Philosophy of Mind
Columbia University Press

By characterizing the philosophical problems commonly faced by Dharmakirti and contemporary philosophers, Arnold seeks to advance an understanding of both first-millennium Indian arguments and contemporary debates on the philosophy of mind.

Hans Dieter Betz, Don S. Browning, Bernd Janowski and Eberhard Jüngel, eds.

Religion Past and Present: Encyclopedia of Theology and Religion, vol. 12 (“Sij”–“Tog”) and vol. 13 (“Tol”–“Zyg”)
Leiden: Brill

A complete, updated English translation of the 4th edition of the definitive encyclopedia of religion worldwide, the German *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. This year saw the publication of the 12th and 13th volumes in English. The final volume (Index) is forthcoming.

Hans Dieter Betz

“Jesus’ Baptism and the Origins of the Christian Ritual,” in *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism: Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity*, David Hellholm et al., eds.
Berlin & Boston: De Gruyter, 2011

This volume is the result of an international collaboration of researchers who met for two conferences to discuss the significance of rites of ablation, initiation, and baptism, and their interpretation in Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity. Hans Dieter Betz’s chapter investigates the narrative tradition of Christian baptism found in the Gospels.

Dwight N. Hopkins and Edward P. Antonio, eds.

The Cambridge Companion to Black Theology
Cambridge University Press

This volume discusses normative theological categories from a black perspective and argues that there is no major Christian doctrine on which black theology has not commented.

Bruce Lincoln

‘Happiness for Mankind’: Achaemenian Religion and the Imperial Project (Acta Iranica, vol. 53)
Louvain: Peeters

The product of twenty years’ research, this is the first book to study the way religious concerns permeated Achaemenian culture, deeply influencing such varied things as categories of space, time, number, and causality; constructions of nature, humanity, and moral order; institutions of law, education, and kingship; practices of diplomacy, tribute, irrigation and gardening (including the sumptuous royal gardens designated as “paradises”).

Gods and Demons, Priests and Scholars: Critical Explorations in the History of Religions
University of Chicago Press

A collection of essays making a case for a critical religious studies that stands on skepticism but is neither cynical nor crude. Lincoln

demonstrates that historians of religions should take religious things — inspired scriptures, sacred centers, salvific rites, communities graced by divine favor — as the theories of interested humans that shape perception, community, and experiences.

Bruce Lincoln and Christopher Faraone, Guest Editors

Imagined Beginnings: The Poetics and Politics of Cosmogonic Discourse in the Ancient World (special issue, *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 13)
Princeton University Press

Based on a conference held at the University of Chicago, this issue focuses on how poets, prophets, priests, and magicians made creation stories and why ancient cultures found them so attractive and useful.

Bruce Lincoln and Claude Calame

Comparer en histoire des religions antiques
Liège: Presses Universitaires de Liège

Through examining examples of phenomena that we place under the banner of religion, these contributions aim to rehabilitate a comparative approach that is both rigorous and critical in order to rebuild a productive comparative analysis.

Jean-Luc Marion

Figures de phénoménologie: Husserl, Heidegger, Levinas, Henry, Derrida
Paris: J. Vrin

The studies that make up this book relate to the great figures of phenomenology whose reading has fueled the work of Jean-Luc Marion and concludes with a discussion between Marion and Jacques Derrida which took place in 1997.

La rigueur des choses. Entretiens avec Dan Arbib
Paris: Flammarion

This work evokes the milestones and main issues of Marion’s philosophy, and returns him to some of the great figures in his life. He also offers a new and original light on the state of the Church and Jewish-Christian dialogue.

In the Self’s Place: The Approach of Saint Augustine, trans. by J. L. Kosky
Stanford University Press

This work presents an original phenomenological reading of Augustine that considers his engagement with notions of identity in *Confessions* and establishes striking connections between accounts of selfhood across the fields of contemporary philosophy, literary studies, and Augustine’s early Christianity.

Being Given. Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness, trans. by J. L. Kosky, Second edition, revised and enlarged
Stanford University Press

A classic work of phenomenology in the twentieth century.

God without Being: Hors Texte, Second edition, trans. by T. Carlson (first 1992)

University of Chicago Press

Marion challenges a fundamental premise of traditional philosophy, theology, and metaphysics: that God, before all else, must be.

Bernard McGinn

The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism, 1350–1550
New York: Herder-Crossroad

This volume is the fifth of McGinn’s ongoing history of mysticism under the general title of *The Presence of God, A History of Western Christian Mysticism*. The compilation incorporates more than a century of new research from around the globe, demonstrating how this period gave rise to many mystical writers who remain influential even today.

Françoise Meltzer

“Introduction” to *Signature Derrida*
University of Chicago Press

With an introduction by Françoise Meltzer that provides an overview of the oeuvre of this singular philosopher, *Signature Derrida* is the most wide-ranging, and thus most representative, anthology of Derrida’s work to date.

James T. Robinson

Asceticism, Eschatology, Opposition to Philosophy: The Arabic Translation and Commentary of Salmon ben Yeroham on Qohelet (Ecclesiastes)
Karate Texts and Studies, volume 5
Brill

Salmon b. Yeroham (fl. 930–960) — foundational figure in the Jerusalem school of Karate exegesis — produced a substantial and influential corpus of polemical writing and biblical interpretation. This volume presents a first critical edition of the Judaeo-Arabic Qohelet commentary together with an annotated English translation.

Daniel P. Sulmasy

Privacy and Progress in Whole Genome Sequencing, President’s Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues
US Government Printing Office

The Commission offers a dozen timely proactive recommendations that will help craft policies that are flexible enough to ensure progress and responsive enough to protect privacy.

Christian K. Wedemeyer

Making Sense of Tantric Buddhism: History, Semiology, and Transgression in the Indian Traditions
Columbia University Press

This book fundamentally rethinks the nature of the transgressive theories and practices of the Buddhist Tantric traditions, challenging the notion that the Tantras were “marginal” or primitive and situating them within larger trends in mainstream Buddhist and Indian culture.

Anthony C. Yu, trans. and ed.

The Journey to the West, revised edition, 4 vols
University of Chicago Press

The Journey to the West has always been a complicated and difficult text to render in English while preserving the lyricism of its language and the content of its plot. In this new edition Yu has made his translations even more accurate and accessible. The explanatory notes are updated and augmented, and new material has been added to his introduction.



From Here to There
The Transition to the First Years of Teaching

On Friday, April 12, ten recent Divinity School alums, representing a wide range of institutions and areas of study, returned to Swift Hall as part of the Divinity School’s participation in the Wabash Center’s Graduate Programs Teaching Initiative.

Moderated by the Wabash Center’s Eugene Gallagher (PhD 1980) and Dean Margaret M. Mitchell, panelists focused on the biggest challenges faced when moving from graduate education to full-time teaching — and what current students should be doing now to ensure they thrive during the first years of teaching.

The Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion supports teachers of religion and theology in higher education through meetings and workshops,

grants, consultants, a journal, and other resources that make the scholarship on teaching and learning accessible. All Wabash Center programs are funded by the Lilly Endowment Inc. To the alums who returned to Swift Hall to serve on the panel and share their valuable insights with current students, we extend thanks.

Nadine Pence (PhD 1992, Theology), Executive Director of the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion.

Eugene Gallagher (PhD 1980, History of Religions), Rosemary Park Professor of Religious Studies at Connecticut College, where he has taught since 1978. He was the college’s founding director of its Center for Teaching and Learning and served for many years as a faculty fellow in the center. He received the AAR’s Excellence in Teaching Award in 2001 and was

named the Case/Carnegie Professor of the Year for Connecticut in 2003.

David Albertson (PhD 2008, Theology), Assistant Professor of Religion at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles.

Kristin Bloomer (PhD 2008, Theology), Assistant Professor of Religion at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, and currently Visiting Assistant Professor at Harvard University.

Spencer Dew (PhD 2008, Religion and Literature), Assistant Professor of Religious Studies and Mattie Allen Broyles Inaugural Year Research Chair at Centenary College of Louisiana and a summer instructor for the BA program of the Chicago Police Department.

Amanda J. Huffer (PhD 2010, History of Religions), Assistant Professor at University of California, Riverside.

Annette Bourland Huizenga (PhD 2010, Biblical Studies), Assistant Professor of New Testament at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary.

Sarah Imhoff (PhD 2010, History of Judaism), Assistant Professor in the Religious Studies Department and Borns Jewish Studies Program at Indiana University-Bloomington.

Rory Johnson (PhD 2010, Anthropology and Sociology of Religion), Heanon Wilkins Fellow and Visiting Assistant Professor at Miami University in Ohio.

Elizabeth Pérez (PhD 2010, History of Religions), Assistant Professor of Religion at Dartmouth College.

Rebecca Raphael (PhD 1997, Religion and Literature), NEH Distinguished Teaching Professor and Associate Professor of Philosophy at Texas State University.

Lea F. Schweitz (PhD 2008, Philosophy of Religion), Assistant Professor at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago.

A Gift You Can Count On

Did you know that you can make a gift to the Divinity School and receive income for life in return?

You can ensure new generations of students can afford to pursue religious studies in our programs and answer fundamental questions about humanity. A charitable gift annuity allows you to support the future needs of the Divinity School—and accomplish even more.

A gift annuity provides you and another loved one (if you desire) with benefits in return, such as an income tax deduction and a fixed income stream for life backed by the University’s endowment. To help determine if a gift annuity is a wise decision for you, here are answers to some frequently asked questions.

Is a gift annuity difficult to set up?

No. Gift annuities are one of the easiest planned gifts to arrange. You can fund your gift annuity with cash or appreciated securities, and our Office of Gift Planning can easily provide you and your financial advisors with

sample contracts and payout illustrations. You may designate the residual of your annuity to support a purpose that is meaningful to you or where it is needed most.

What about the tax implications?

You receive an immediate tax deduction for the amount of the contribution less the present value of the payments. In addition, a portion of the income you receive from a charitable gift annuity is tax-free. If you choose to fund your gift annuity with appreciated securities, you will also save on capital gains taxes.



Sample Current Charitable Gift Annuity Rates

Age	60	65	70	75
Immediate	4.4%	4.7%	5.1%	5.8%
Deferred 10 Years	7.0%	7.9%	9.3%	10.7%

From the American Council on Gift Annuities, effective 1/1/2012



In my judgment, the syllabus is the most important piece of writing one does in the academic field.” With this declaration, Prof. Jonathan Z. Smith, Robert O. Anderson Distinguished Service Professor of the Humanities, Associate Faculty in the Divinity School, and author of *On Teaching Religion* (Oxford Press, 2012), commenced the winter Dean’s Craft of Teaching Seminar, in which a distinguished alum or faculty member reflects on a recently taught course.

This popular series has become the flagship program of the Divinity School’s innovative program, the Craft of Teaching in the Academic Study of Religion, a year-round curriculum designed to prepare graduates to be thoughtful and effective educators in religious studies. The program has brought together students, faculty, and alums for events including seminars, presentations, small group discussions, panels, and student-faculty conversations, all focused on various aspects of the teaching of religion. Student coordinators and faculty conveners have developed sessions on topics as diverse as contemplative pedagogy, teaching and learning as embodied practices, syllabus construction for introductory bible courses, and mentorship as a pedagogical model — to name a few.

Alums have made an especially important contribution. This year’s Craft of Teaching Seminar invitees included Rebecca Raphael, (PhD 1997) Associate Professor of Philosophy and Distinguished Teaching Professor in the

Humanities at Texas State University-San Marcos, and Michael Kinnamon, (AM 1976, PhD 1980), Spehar-Halligan Visiting Professor of Ecumenical Collaboration in Interreligious Dialogue at Seattle University’s School of Theology and Ministry and the Divinity School’s 2013 Alumnus of the Year. Others who have contributed programs include Charles Mathews, (AM 1992, PhD 1997), Professor of Religious Studies and Director of the Virginia Center for the Study of Religion at the University of Virginia, Anne Knafl, (AM 2002, PhD 2011), Bibliographer for Religion and Philosophy at the University of Chicago, Jennifer Oldstone-Moore, (AM 1987, PhD 2000), Associate Professor of Religion at Wittenberg University, and Elizabeth Wilson, (AM 1984, PhD 1992), Professor in the Department of Comparative Religion at Miami University of Ohio. In April, over sixty graduate students and faculty gathered for a panel discussion featuring ten recent alums discussing the transition from graduate school to the first years of teaching. The panel, part of a pedagogy consultation made possible by the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion, also featured alums Nadine Pence, (PhD 1992), Executive Director

of the Wabash Center, and Eugene Gallagher, (PhD 1980) Rosemary Park Professor of Religious Studies at Connecticut College. The panelists, representing different institutional contexts and research specializations, offered wide-ranging advice and encouragement on everything from improving student motivation to balancing teaching with research and other life commitments.

The Craft of Teaching Program has helped make pedagogy an especially conspicuous topic of conversation between faculty and students. Student-faculty discussions have featured Dan Arnold, Associate Professor of the Philosophy of Religions, Kevin Hector, Assistant Professor of Theology and of the Philosophy of Religions, Paul Mendes-Flohr, Dorothy Grant Maclear Professor of Modern Jewish History and Thought, and James T. Robinson, Associate Professor of the History of Judaism. In addition, panel events have included Simeon Chavel, Assistant Professor of Hebrew Bible, Kristine Culp, Associate Professor of Theology and Dean of Disciples Divinity House, Cynthia Lindner, Director of Ministry Studies and Clinical Faculty for Preaching and Pastoral Care, Lucy Pick, Director of Undergraduate Studies and Senior Lecturer in the History of Christianity, and Jeffrey Stackert, Assistant Professor of Hebrew Bible.

This robust faculty involvement, together with the invaluable contributions of alums and current students, has made the inaugural year of the Craft of Teaching Program an auspicious start to a program that will facilitate the Divinity



School’s ongoing efforts to educate the next generations of scholars and teachers of religion.

Brandon Cline, Area Assistant for Pedagogical Initiatives and coordinator of the Craft of Teaching Program.

For more information, as well as for audio and video recordings of select past events, including Prof. Smith’s winter Craft of Teaching Seminar, please visit the program website (<http://divinity.uchicago.edu/teaching>), or email Brandon Cline (bdcline@uchicago.edu), Area Assistant for Pedagogical Initiatives and coordinator of the Craft of Teaching Program.

“The Craft of Teaching Program helped make pedagogy an especially conspicuous topic of conversation between faculty and students.”

An Interview with Alireza Doostdar



Alireza Doostdar is Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies and the Anthropology of Religion. He spoke with us recently about his work and his teaching—in Chicago and beyond.

CIRCA: Your degree was in Anthropology, but your work seems tremendously interdisciplinary, drawing on Anthropology, Islamic Studies, History of Science—how do you find U of C, and the Divinity School, as a place to interact with faculty in other disciplines?

AD: One of the most valuable benefits of being at the Divinity School is the wealth of opportunities for interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary conversation and collaboration. In the brief few months that I have been at the Divinity School, I have had the opportunity to participate in an extremely stimulating interdisciplinary conference on Shi’ism sponsored by the Mellon Islamic Studies Initiative, speak at a Midwest Faculty Seminar on Islam in/and the West, offer comments on Professor Dan Arnold’s new book on Buddhist philosophy of mind and cognitive science at a Wednesday Dean’s Forum, and participate in weekly student presentations at the Islamic Studies club or “Majlis.” This is to say nothing of the many opportunities for intellectual engagement beyond the Divinity School, at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, the Anthropology Department, and elsewhere. As a graduate student at Harvard, I felt blessed to be able to engage fruitfully with scholars in anthropology, history, Islamic studies, Middle Eastern studies, and history and sociology of science. At U of C and the Divinity School, the opportunities for such engagement are no less vast.

CIRCA: Your work has focused on the production of the category of superstition, and on what you call the ‘scientific imaginary.’ Can you tell us a bit more? How do these ideas interact?

AD: I have been interested in the work of boundary maintenance through which certain forms of knowledge and practice are set apart as valuable and legitimate while others are cordoned off as illegitimate and worthless. The category of superstition has been one concept that has aided such boundary policing in Iran since the late nineteenth century. Since that time and to varying extents up to the present,

modernists have found it necessary to promulgate science as a means of social transformation and progress, and to eradicate or at least weaken certain beliefs and practices as well as the social formations that sustain them and that they in turn help to reproduce. In part, the production of superstition has depended on its demarcation from legitimate forms of knowledge: primarily science, but also (among modernists who did not harbor animosity toward religion) a reformed Islam (and sometimes other religions) cleansed of illegitimate popular accretions. This demarcation has itself often depended on what I call a scientific imaginary—a constellation of attitudes born of the widespread prestige accorded to science. These attitudes include the privileging of empirical observation and testing, trust in the judgment of European and American scientists (even, or perhaps especially, when these judgments are not themselves about science), and the deployment of modern scientific concepts and models outside of their immediate context of use. But different modernists have had different conceptions of science and hence of the range of its relevance and application. Hence while some thinkers have seen modern science as a panacea for all social ills, others have suspected that science may breed its own forms of superstition. On the other hand, while many of science’s champions have held strong materialist commitments, others have defended avowedly spiritual uses for science. Thus I write about early twentieth century modernists who attacked popular superstitions while attaching their hopes to French-imported Spiritism as the high road to achieving a universal scientific ethics. Or on the other hand, Muslim leaders trained in the *hawza* in Qom who attacked popular spiritist séances as baseless and dangerous, while accepting the validity of European scientific Spiritism. Or modernist Muslim intellectuals who argued for readings of the Qur’an that would be hospitable to contemporary scientific discovery and attempted to popularize the use of scientific and technological models to understand matters of Islamic doctrine such as human striving toward God, and

the nature of heaven and hell. As I see it, the scientific imaginary also includes an element of utopianism: an optimistic faith in some future ideal condition of humankind that will have spiritual-scientific progress as a key feature. This is an optimism that inspires people as different as the Constitutionalist politician Khalil Khan Saqafi (1863–1944), the interim Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic Mehdi Bazargan (1907–1995), the current President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (born 1956), and many of the ordinary people that I came to know during my fieldwork.

CIRCA: In your courses here, how have you found it working with a mix of students, students who approach religious studies from a variety of disciplinary commitments?

AD: A delight as well as a challenge. This is only my second quarter teaching, but I have already worked with MA, MDiv, AMRS, and PhD students from the Divinity school, master’s students from the MAPSS and CMES programs, and other doctoral students from anthropology, NELC, and elsewhere, as well as a few undergraduates. As a teacher, I always have a set of issues I want to get across in my classes: These of course include specific concepts and facts (historical, anthropological, and so on), but more importantly they have to do with refining certain social-scientific ways of looking at the world and grasping the ethics and politics of this kind of “theoretical practice.” Different students will bring diverging backgrounds and commitments to my classes, and hence to the questions we discuss as a group. The challenge for me is partly to understand and recognize these differences and to try to adapt my own teaching as best I can. But in part, this also involves a recognition of the truism that people will come away from class with very different fruits, which should instill at least a bit of humility about my goals. One way I try to promote this diversity of learning goals, interests, and disciplinary perspectives is to encourage conversation among the students themselves, both inside and outside of class. There is nothing I find more delightful than to see that students are already engaged in debate when I step inside the classroom, and to hear them continuing the conversation as we leave.

CIRCA: What do you like best so far about life in Chicago, after Cambridge and Iran?

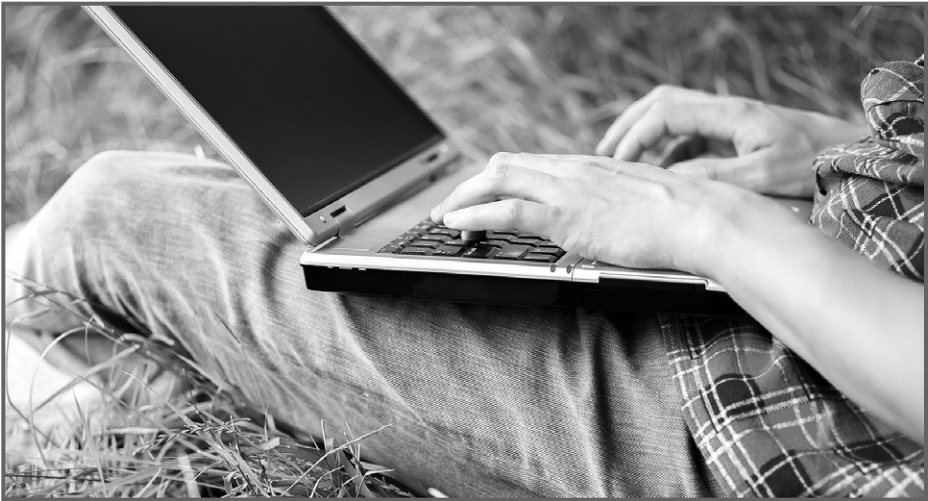
AD: Chicago has all the benefits and excitement of a major city (along with its problems, of course) while it also allows for a calm academic lifestyle. At least this is how I have found Hyde Park so far. It is nice to have the full range of cultural offerings in Chicago within our reach (to say nothing of the range of cuisine, which we have not yet really begun to explore much), but also to be able to walk to campus, the Museum of Science and Industry, or the lake. And of course, there are few cities in the U.S. from which you can so easily fly all over the world. That is, I appreciate what Chicago offers, but also that it makes it easy to escape once in a while.

Marty Center News and Events

Religion and Culture Web Forum



The Martin Marty Center builds on a long-standing conviction of the Divinity School that the best and most innovative scholarship in religion emerges from sustained dialogue with the world outside the academy. In all of its projects, the Center aims to serve as a robust circulatory system that strengthens, deepens, and extends scholarly inquiry by moving it through the deliberating bodies of the students, faculty, and public. — William Schweiker, *Director of the Marty Center*



The Martin Marty Center’s *Religion and Culture Web Forum* brings together scholars from a wide array of academic disciplines for a lively, informed conversation about the manifestations of religion in societies and cultures, past and present. The forum is a place where scholars can refine ideas, and where academic work is presented to the broader public.

This academic year we have been pleased to feature contributions that are diverse in both subject matter and disciplinary approach. The fields represented include theology, ethics, history, art history, ethnography, and more. The contributors, papers, and respondents to date have included a wide range of countries and topics.



September 2012 Isomae Jun’ichi (International Research Center for Japanese Studies, Kyoto), *Discursive Formation around “Shinto” in Colonial Korea*—with responses by Galen Amstutz (Institute of Buddhist Studies), Klaus Antoni (University of Tübingen), Frederick R. Dickinson (University of Pennsylvania), Chul Kim (Yonsei University, Seoul), Naoki Sakai (Cornell University), and Peichen Wu (National ChengChi University, Taiwan).

October 2012 Naomi Davidson (University of Ottawa), *“Culture” and “Religion”: Immigration, Islams and Race in 1970s Paris*—with responses by M. Christian Green (Emory University), M.J.M. (Marcel) Maussen (University of Amsterdam), and Tara Zahra (University of Chicago).

November 2012 Katja Richters (University of Erfurt), *Pussy Riot, the Media, and Church-State Relations in Russia Today*—with responses by Bryce E. Rich (University of Chicago) and Catherine Wanner (Penn State University).

December 2012 Rebecca Davis (University of Delaware), *“My Homosexuality Is Getting Worse Every Day”: Norman Vincent Peale, Psychiatry, and the Liberal Protestant Response to Same-Sex Desires in Mid-Twentieth Century America*—with responses by Amy DeRogatis (Michigan State), Kathryn Lofton (Yale University), and Heather White (New College of Florida).

January 2013 Michelle Harrington (University of Chicago), *Medicalized Death as a Modus Vivendi*—with responses by Lydia Dugdale (Yale University), Autumn Alcott Ridenour (Boston College), and Jeffrey Bishop (Saint Louis University).



Join the conversation

The Web Forum welcomes contributions from established scholars; please send inquiries and potential submissions to the managing editor, Vince Evener, at vevener@uchicago.edu.

February 2013 Cécile Fromont (University of Chicago), *Under the Sign of the Cross in the Kingdom of Kongo: Religious Conversion and Visual Correlation in Early Modern Central Africa*—with responses by John Thornton (Boston University) and Robert Young (New York University).

March 2013 Noah Toly (Wheaton College; Martin Marty Center Senior Fellow), *The Macondoization of the World: Global Environmental Governance and Christian Ethics*—with responses by Roger S. Gottlieb (Worcester Polytechnic Institute), Sallie McFague (Vancouver School of Theology), Michael Northcott (University of Edinburgh), and Willis Jenkins (Yale University).

April 2013 Ellen Schattschneider (Brandeis University), *Adopting the Fetish: War Memory and Uncanny Kinship in Modern Japan*—with responses by Stephan Feuchtwang (London School of Economics) and Robert A. Paul (Emory University).

May 2013 Michael Allen Gillespie (Duke University), *The Anti-Trinitarian Origins of Liberalism*.

June 2013 Roger S. Gottlieb (Worcester Polytechnic Institute), *Spirituality and Healing*.



Ministry Program Update



Cultivating Vocations

The Divinity School’s ministry program attracts students who are committed to seeking the common good as they cultivate vocations in public religious leadership. When they leave Swift Hall, graduates lead congregations and work in a variety of faith-based organizations; they serve as chaplains in hospitals and prisons and on university campuses.

As religious community in our culture takes on new forms, so our alums develop new forms of ministry—they staff college diversity offices, advocate on Capitol Hill, organize in communities around the country, and lead brand-new congregations that meet in coffee houses or around dinner tables. And some of these adaptive leaders engage their vocation as public theologians through ministries of writing. Any one who has spent much time in Swift Hall reading texts both ancient and modern might be surprised to hear writing described as an innovative form of contemporary ministry. Certainly, members of religious communities have always been writers, as have the scholars whose vocation it is to study their texts. This new wave of authors has much in common, in fact, with those religious writers whose purpose it was to communicate the insights of their faith and practice to a wider audience in plain and public language. Like the best of those, whose powerful prose spoke a fresh word into complicated times and places, today’s writers mine the rich resources of their traditions in conversation with the challenges of our contemporary context.

In early April, on the eve of the annual student-organized ministry conference, current students, program alums, friends and colleagues gathered at Swift Hall to celebrate the publication of the first book by two Divinity School ministry alums. Authors Lee Hull Moses and Bromleigh McCleneghan graduated with MDiv degrees in 2004 and 2005. Lee is currently the pastor of First Christian Church in Greensboro, North Carolina; Bromleigh is the associate for congregational life at Rockefeller Chapel. Each is the mother of two small children, and it was the experience of becoming parents within weeks of one another—and the lively, thoughtful conversations that sustained them in their

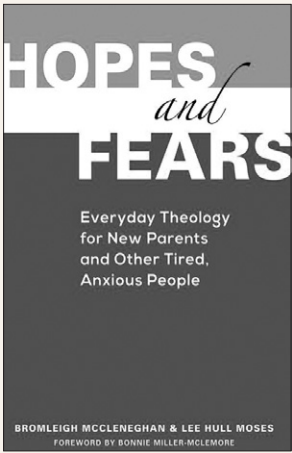
sleep-deprived early months of motherhood—that launched their shared work, *Hopes and Fears: Everyday Theology for New Parents and Other Tired, Anxious People* (Alban Institute, 2012). Like many new parents, the women and their partners had been avid readers of parenting literature as they awaited the births of their first children, volumes by pediatricians, psychologists, and child development specialists. Few books offered theological reflection on the parenting task (Moses and McCleneghan named the work of alumna Bonnie Miller McLemore as a significant exception to this rule), and so they determined to bring their theological reflections on motherhood to a broad audience.

A panel of respondents described their experiences of *Hopes and Fears* at the book event. Current student Thandiwe Gobledale (who spent last year as a full-time intern at First Christian Church in Greensboro) noted that the book put in her mind of Augustine’s *Confessions*, which she had also read recently: “In my read, when we practice confession, we use our own stories or stories from our lives to point beyond the specific and particular of ourselves to more general notions about human experience and also beyond human experience towards God, to whom we relate in humility (confessing our fallibility and sin), in reverence and gratitude (confessing God’s glory and grace), and in trust and faith (confessing just this). McCleneghan and Hull Moses do just this in *Hopes and Fears*. They confess to their own

shortcomings as partners, pastors, people of faith and as parents. They confess the grace and glory of God in the midst of intimate relationships, changes in their bodies with pregnancy, and the birth of their children all in the context of a world that holds both the possibility of destruction and the potential for transformation. They confess their own faith as they both struggle with and take refuge in their relationship to God and how to live into their sense of faith and calling as both pastors and parents. Within this mode of confession, they grapple with theological questions that have long challenged Christians: discerning God’s call in our lives; bodies, embodiment and incarnation; justice and in particular the gap between rich and poor; suffering and evil; naming and the desire to be unique while also belonging; anger; and trust and faithfulness among other topics.”

Katherine Willis Pershey, Associate Minister of the First Congregational Church in Western Springs, Illinois and herself an author (*Every Day a Beautiful Change: A Story of Faith and Family*) pointed to the crucial need for resources that offer practical theological reflection on life experiences from a classical or liberal perspective. She plans to use the book to stimulate theological conversation among parenting groups in her congregation. But it may have been the response of a third panelist which confirms the promise and power of practical theological writing. Jessica Sipos is a member of the Rockefeller Chapel worshipping community, an Anthropology student, and a mother. Asked to describe her experience of the book, she said “...It is a conversation I have yearned to be a part of since I became a mother nearly five years ago... As an anthropologist, I know that at the core of many human beliefs and practices is a desire to control the inexplicable and unpredictable. What is more inexplicable and unpredictable than a human infant? ...I know we read and learn so desperately in order to get a grip on this overwhelming responsibility. ...I am wary and uncertain in conversations about God. I don’t know the language, I don’t even know how to understand it anymore. My comprehension of faith, the nature of God, the meaning of Jesus, has halted at a child’s level of depth and insight. But while reading the book, I felt I was in a conversation I could keep up with. ...I have not used the same language. But when Lee talks about the Celtic idea of life’s holiness shining through in certain places, at certain times, I know. I call it “sublime,” those moments with my family when time seems to stand still and the only thing I feel is the incredible presence of love. They both use the word “grace” to describe moments when we or someone else rises above everyday limitations (like exhaustion) to be generous, understanding, compassionate. I am not sure I have a word for those moments, but I know them, and I like the thought of calling it “grace.”

Cynthia Gano Lindner, Director of Ministry Studies



Martin Marty Center’s Sightings

This year, *Sightings* sighted and analyzed religion as it touched lives not just in the United States but in Afghanistan, Germany, Russia, Rwanda, and across the globe.

Besides publishing, every Monday, the indefatigable Martin Marty’s reliably perceptive essays, *Sightings* published, on Thursdays, essays written by UChicago alums, MA and MDiv students, PhD students and candidates, and faculty as well as essays written by scholars and commentators from a variety of other institutions. These scholars brought their education, expertise, and unique perspectives to bear on Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Islam, and other religions, sometimes hop-scotching across the centuries as they did so.

Sightings didn’t blink at tragedy: criminal lawyer Jeanne Bishop, whose sister and brother-in-law were murdered by an armed robber a decade ago, explored the role of guns in Sandy Hook Elementary School murders. *Sightings* spotted religion’s influence on the political process: Courtney Wilder, (AM 2000, PhD 2008), who teaches at Midland University, focused on the US Senate and its failure to ratify the UN’s treaty on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Sightings highlighted religion in peacebuilding: Pamela Couture, a Professor of Church and Community, and Mande Muyombo, Executive Secretary for Africa for the Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church, noted that religion has been ignored by scholars of the Congo in spite of studies showing that religious leaders, whether Protestant, Roman catholic, Pentecostal, Muslim, Kimbanguist, and indigenous, are deeply invested in peacebuilding efforts and have established fruitful channels of dialogue.

Sightings identified opportunities for inter-religious exchange: James T. Robinson, Associate Professor of the History of Judaism, reported on Judah Halevi’s Kuzar, a foundational work of medieval Judaism still studied by Jews today. Its 2012 publication in Arabic script made the Kuzar accessible to millions of Arabic-speaking Muslims, pointing to a possible trend of sharing-by-translating key Jewish texts into Arabic (the Talmud) and vice-versa (the Qur’an).

And *Sightings* even looked at that most Inter-

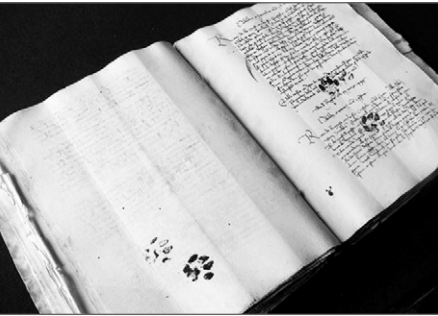
net of topics: cats. This issue’s featured *Sightings*, “Cat and Clerics: A Medieval History,” by Julian Hendrix, assistant professor of Classics and History at Carthage College, takes as its jumping-off place a medieval image that “went viral” to explore the bond between monks and companion animals.

Sightings will continue to follow these local and global events, investigating the role of religion in these and other areas of public life, and providing critical analysis and commentary on intersections of faith and politics, the arts and education, as we welcome a new managing editor: Myriam Renaud is a PhD Candidate in Theology, a 2012–13 Junior Fellow in the Martin Marty Center and a 2012–13 Lecturer in Theology at Meadville Lombard Theological School. An ordained Unitarian Universalist minister, she is Community Minister of the DuPage Unitarian Universalist Church and a regular contributor of theology columns to the *UU World* magazine.

Many, many thanks, and many best wishes to our outgoing editor, Shatha Almutawa, a PhD graduate (2013) in the History of Judaism who is taking a position as Assistant Professor of History at Qatar University.

Sightings: Cats and Clerics: A Medieval History

Across the pages of a fifteenth-century manuscript track the paw prints of a cat who has first stepped into the ink, then sought to plant itself in the middle of its owner’s attention. Snapped by the medievalist Emir Filipovic, the image went viral, an instantly recognized example of “a long and glorious historical movement” of cats walking across work. In this case the writer was a bureaucrat, working on a collection of government correspondence.



The Dubrovnik manuscript is not the only example of the casual mayhem cats created for medieval writers. Medievalist Thijs Porck points to another fifteenth-century manuscript from what is now the Netherlands. The scribe angrily indicates where the page has been damaged: “Cursed be the pesty cat that urinated over this book during the night in Deventer and because of it many others [other cats] too” (translation by Porck).

Both writers probably had the cats around for the practical purpose of rodent control. Yet as a routine part of daily life, cats might have also served an important role for the Dutch copiest in his or her pursuit of a more realized spiritual practice: the Dutch scribe was creating a particular collection of devotional material, one aimed at those who aspired to a higher level of piety and were interested in the whole range of Christian efforts in this

regard, from the earliest flowering of Christian asceticism in the fourth-century Egyptian desert to the latest trend of the Devotio Moderna.

The lesson that might have been learned by the Dutch copiest can be seen in a poem from a ninth-century manuscript from the monastery of Reichenau (now in Germany), which celebrates a feline companion named Pangur Ban:

I and Pangur Ban my cat,
‘Tis a like task we are at:
Hunting mice is his delight,
Hunting words I sit all night.
(translation by Robin Flower)

By the ninth century, Latin was a foreign language to many Christians and was certainly not the mother tongue of the author of the poem, which is written in Old Irish. To study Christianity required the study of Latin. But language was not the only challenge. In addition to mastering Christian theology and doctrine, at the end of the day the Benedictine monasticism of Reichenau was an activity, a continual effort that sought to align the entire world around the worship of God. Pangur Ban proved a loyal assistant:

Practice every day has made
Pangur perfect in his trade;
I get wisdom day and night
Turning darkness into light.

While the bond between poet and cat

flows through the poem, Pangur Ban is ultimately a daily lesson for the poet on the practice of monasticism. In this final stanza of the poem, the hunting for words invoked in the opening of the poem is replaced by the ultimate goal of a monk: wisdom. This wisdom is freely available at any time to the monk who has learned how to look for it and the author celebrates what he has found in his feline companion.

The bond between monk and companion animal captured in the poem is not limited to the medieval world. If you have ever trained a dog, it is very likely that you have drawn upon techniques developed by the monks of New Skete monastery in Pennsylvania. Their classic dog-training manual, *How to be your Dog’s Best Friend*, is one element of the various businesses the monastery relies upon to support itself. The manual opens by acknowledging that many might find the idea of monks breeding and training dogs to be an odd combination, but what follows suggests the extent to which the fruit of monastic training manifests itself in the continual effort to perfect all relationships, even those of the humble household pet.

Perhaps this is why Michael Walsh, commenting on the retirement of scholar-pope Benedict XVI, suggested that the pope wished to “get back to his books and his cats.”

Julian Hendrix is assistant professor of Classics and History at Carthage College. His current research focuses on the origins of monastic commemoration and the early history of liturgical books.

Review references online at http://divinity.uchicago.edu/martycenter/publications/sightings/archive_2013/0328.shtml.

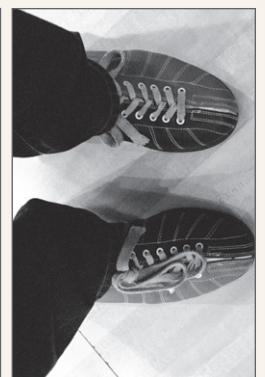


Go Green! *Circa* is also available online as a PDF document, which you can download to your desktop. You can read current and past issues of *Circa* by visiting <http://divinity.uchicago.edu/martycenter/publications/circa>. If you would prefer not to receive *Circa* via postal mail, please let us know by emailing Sara Bigger, Associate Director of Development, at sfbigger@uchicago.edu. We will send you a link when *Circa* is available for viewing online!

Please help us improve our communication with you. Update your email address at <http://divinity.uchicago.edu/alumni>.



student life



Divinity School faculty and students took an evening to bowl and, perhaps, drink beer, at the Seven Ten Lounge in Hyde Park.

Photography: Collin Soderberg-Chase

