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DIVINITY SCHOOL

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Criterion



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
DIVINITY SCHOOL



FROM THE DEAN



“**A**nd furthermore, my son, be admonished: [of] making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.”

This enigmatic verse near the end of the biblical book Ecclesiastes had a surprisingly uniform interpretation in Jewish tradition. It was understood as a proscription against writing—and also reading—books beyond the traditional corpus. The fact it was a warning against books seemed clear to everyone, but the object changed over time. For the Rabbis it connected with canonization: keep yourselves from producing, and reading, those apocryphal texts, stick to the “24 books” of Scripture. In the Middle Ages the concern shifted to philosophy and science—beware of the writings of Aristotle or Galen or Ptolemy—or even to “foreign” writings in general: read nothing but the Bible, the only book worth reading.

Only one authority I know about—the eleventh-century rabbi, philosopher, poet, Talmudic commentator and biblical exegete named Isaac ibn Ghiyath, writing in Judeo-Arabic in eleventh-century Lucena, in Islamic Spain—who went against the grain, turning this tradition on its head. His interpretation? Be enjoined, my son: Make books without end! And though much study is a weary for the flesh (it is nourishment for the soul!).”

And just like that, with a few tweaks to grammar and syntax, Rabbi Isaac ibn Ghiyath created a perfect motto for the golden age of Jewish culture he embodied—a rabbinic leader with universal interests and ambitions, learning in many languages, a master of many fields with an insatiable thirst for knowledge. What a perfect motto for our own time as well, in this Divinity School with strong bookish focus and an amazing capacity of faculty and alumni to write many books without end, to create new knowledge, continually enriching and nuancing our understanding of religion in all its forms, in history and literature, thought and lived experience.

See our website page focused on these many books (divinity.uchicago.edu/facultybooks)—over 40 from the past few years alone (and please send us news of your publications too!). We are also working to create more meaningful frameworks to appreciate and celebrate these achievements, from the revival of the Dean’s Forum to the initiation of a book party with giveaways, to the Sem Co-op partnership run with the Marty Center, to working to rethink the more traditional ways of discussing books in reviews and review essays, as in our in-house periodicals: *History of Religions* and *Journal of Religion*. This also includes an event last past fall celebrating a new philosophical reading (with commentary) of this same biblical book Ecclesiastes, itself published with illuminations, which emphasized not only the words of our bookish books but the visual culture that creates meaning with and against the text and uses text to explain the images (as in our new *Sightings* series in partnership with Smart Museum).

As you read these opening remarks and peruse the pages that follow, contemplating the text, appreciating the photos and images, the art and artistry, may you begin to realize that eleventh-century motto in 2024 and beyond: make—and read—many books without end!

Warmly,

JAMES THEODORE ROBINSON
DEAN OF THE DIVINITY SCHOOL; NATHAN CUMMINGS PROFESSOR OF JEWISH STUDIES;
PROFESSOR OF THE HISTORY OF JUDAISM, ISLAMIC STUDIES, AND THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS
IN THE DIVINITY SCHOOL AND THE COLLEGE

Dean
James T. Robinson

Director of Communications
Terren Ilana Wein

Editorial Assistant
Adam DeSchraver

Design
Amy Charlson Design

Photography
Lloyd Degrane
Charissa Johnson
Photography
Lauren Pond
Jason Smith
Joe Sterbenc

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The University of Chicago
Divinity School
1025 E. 58th Street
Chicago, IL 60637
773.702.8200
divinity.uchicago.edu



What Are We Talking About When We Talk About Religion?

RELIGION ENCOMPASSES EVERYTHING FROM A SHIMENAWA WRAPPED AROUND A TREE IN JAPAN TO A MUEZZIN'S CALL TO PRAYER JUST AFTER SUNSET, from a coronation ceremony in ancient Persia to a prayer for justice from a Black Baptist pulpit. When we talk about religion, we're talking about Tibetan hairstyles, Minoan human sacrifices, and Indian romance movies. Asking what all of these religious phenomena have in common is a worthwhile question, even though we will never find a satisfactory answer. If I had to put it in one word, though, I'd say belonging. Religious traditions address questions of whether we belong in this world and why, whether we belong together, who belongs and who is excluded, and how to live in a natural world that does not fully belong to us. Religions' political aspects, whether oppressive or liberating, emerge from our desire to feel at home. The same could be said of religions'

poetic and philosophical aspects. If anything connects the taste of freshly baked challah to the dog-eared volumes of St. Augustine, it's the need to belong to something bigger than ourselves. If anything unites the fanciful stories of the Zhuangzi to the movement for prison abolition, it's a conviction that there is a truth about human nature that challenges prevailing social norms.

In the Divinity School, we stress that religious traditions are social and existential, constraining and freeing, felt and believed, inherited and contested, profound and mundane. Students rarely leave the last day of class with a single, clear definition of religion. But they often walk away with an understanding of how rituals and stories provide people with a sense of orientation, order, and ownership. Directly or indirectly, these courses help students think critically about the rituals and stories that have shaped their own lives. Talking about religion helps them develop new spaces where they and others feel like they belong.



RUSSELL JOHNSON (PHD '19)
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, UNDERGRADUATE
RELIGIOUS STUDIES PROGRAM AND
CORE SEQUENCE



STAY IN TOUCH with our quarterly e-newsletter for alumni and friends, *Swift Matters*. Email Madison McClendon at mmclendon@uchicago.edu to subscribe.

EVERY GIFT MATTERS

Philanthropy is a key part of supporting the stories in *Criterion*. Your gifts provide aid to students in need of fellowship support, enable scholarly work at critical hubs of research and academic exploration, and maintain the classrooms and facilities in which professors and students work together to expand knowledge of the world and its religious traditions. Your gifts matter. Help us continue to flourish as a community where important questions are pursued with tenacity and care.

YOU MAY MAKE A GIFT IN SUPPORT OF OUR WORK by calling 888.824.4224, or give online at bit.ly/givediv. If you would like information on planning an estate gift, giving securities, or making a major gift, please contact Madison McClendon at mmclendon@uchicago.edu or 773.702.8248.

SELECT COURSES

Every year our faculty develop new courses across the range of our curriculum.

[Anthropology of Food and Cuisine](#)

[Money and Morality](#)

[Priestly Texts in the Book of Numbers](#)

[The Acts of Paul and Thecla and the Pastoral Epistles](#)

[Li Zhi and 16th Century China: The Self, Tradition, and Dissent in Comparative Context](#)

[The Ecumenical Church Councils and the Making of Christian Doctrine](#)

[Readings in Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed](#)

[Major Trends in Islamic Mysticism](#)

[Islam Beyond the Human: Spirits, Demons, Devils, and Ghosts](#)

[Religion and American Capitalism](#)

[Becoming Modern: American Religion in the 1920's](#)

[Reading Your Neighbor's Scripture: Comparative Reading and the Logic of Scripture](#)

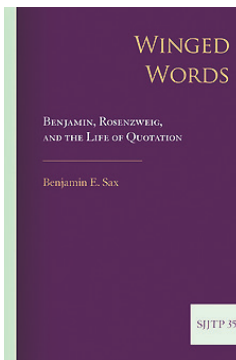
[Greek Tragedy and Philosophy](#)

[Evil: Myth, Symbol, and Reality](#)

[Memory, Identity, and Religion](#)

Alumni Books

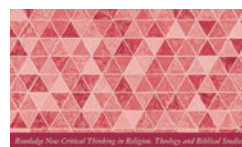
Have you recently published a book or do you have other alumni news? We'd love to hear from you. Please write to Madison McClendon at mmcclendon@uchicago.edu.



BENJAMIN E. SAX (PHD'08)

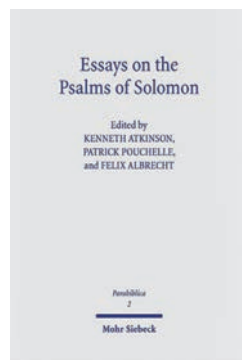
Winged Words: Benjamin, Rosenzweig, and the Life of Quotation

This is the first book to explore the role of quotation in modern Jewish thought. Weaving back and forth from Benjamin to Rosenzweig, the book searches for the recovery of concealed and lost meaning in the community of letters, sacred scripture, the collecting of books, storytelling, and the life of liturgy. It also explores how the legacy of Goethe can be used to develop new strata of religious and Jewish thought. We learn how quotation is the binding tissue that links language and thought, modernity and tradition, religion and secularism as a way of being in the world.



KENNETH ATKINSON (MDIV'94) has coedited and contributed to two recent works.

Misusing Scripture: What are Evangelicals Doing with the Bible? offers a thorough and critical evaluation of American evangelical scholarship on the Bible. This strand of scholarship exerts enormous influence on the religious beliefs and practices, and even cultural and political perspectives, of millions of evangelical Christians in the United States and worldwide. The book brings together a diverse array of authors with expertise on the Bible, religion, history, and archaeology to critique the nature and growth of "faith-based" biblical scholarship.



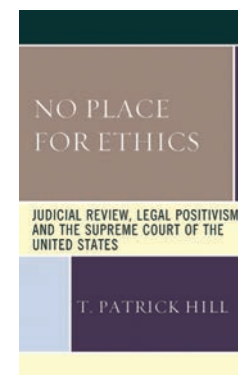
The edited volume *Essays on the Psalms of Solomon: Its Cultural Background, Significance, and Interpretation* examines the *Psalms of Solomon*, a collection of 18 psalms from the Second Temple period. Eleven articles in English and French offer new insights into the context, style, and reception history of these psalms, making this book an indispensable resource for anyone interested in Jewish and early Christian literature.



JOHN ADDISON DALLY (PHD'94)

The Master Is Here: Stories Christian and Gay

The Master Is Here comprises a collection of short stories by author John Addison Dally. In this work of fiction, Dally weaves together the Christian and gay experience. With compelling characters and daring tales, Dally invites the reader to explore the complexities and conundrums of the human experience, with stories that chronicle the reckonings that none of us can avoid.



T. PATRICK HILL (PHD'02)

No Place for Ethics: Judicial Review, Legal Positivism, and the Supreme Court of the United States

In *No Place for Ethics*, Hill argues that contemporary judicial review by the U.S. Supreme Court rests on its mistaken positivist understanding of law—law simply because so ordered—as something separate from ethics. Further, to assert any relation between the two is to contaminate both, either by turning law into an arm of ethics, or by making ethics an expression of law. This legal positivism was on full display recently when the Supreme Court declared that the CDC was acting unlawfully by extending the eviction moratorium to contain the spread of the Covid-19 Delta variant, something that, the Court admitted, was of indisputable benefit to the public. How mistaken, however, to think that acting for the good of the public is to act unlawfully when actually it is to act ethically and must therefore be lawful.

[History of Death](#)

[The Biography of the Prophet Muhammad](#)

[Chinese Thought and The Good Life](#)

[Religion and Human Rights](#)

[Reading Augustine's Confessions](#)

[Queering God](#)

[Judaism, Medicine, and the Body](#)

[Women and Islam](#)

[The End is Near: The Bible and Apocalypse](#)

[God of Manga: Osamu Tezuka's "Phoenix," Buddhism, and Post-WWII Manga and Anime](#)

[Religion and Revolution](#)

[The Book of Ezekiel](#)

[Language Contact: Greek and the World's Languages](#)

[Hannah Arendt's Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy](#)

[The Christian Right](#)

YOUR ALUMNI COUNCIL

The Alumni Council is a small group of alumni who advise the Dean on alumni matters, help select the Alumni of the Year every year, and provide other support to the School through their engagement and commitment. If you would like to serve on this council, or know of someone who would be a good fit for the role, please let us know!





This year, [Pauline Lee](#), Associate Professor of Chinese Thought and Cultures at Saint Louis University, joins us as Visiting Associate Professor of the Philosophy of Religions. Lee’s research focuses on ethics in Chinese thought, placing her work at an intersection of disciplines including religious studies, philosophy, and literature. Her current book project, provisionally entitled *Play in China: The Trifling, the Wicked, and the Sacred*, examines changing views of play in China through a study of religious and philosophical classics, commentaries on these works, as well as paintings and playthings.

What’s the class about?

Of the courses I have taught through the years, “Chinese Thought and the Good Life” is one of my very favorites to teach. Each time, I begin by promising my students that at least one of these great classics will alter their lives for the even better. And I’m pretty certain I’ve kept true to my promise so far. The course examines the ideas of thinkers with vastly different responses to the question: What is the life well lived? We focus on early China (5th century to 221 BCE), an influential

and vibrant period in Chinese thought. We read early classical texts from the Daoist, Confucian, Mohist, and Legalist traditions and more, and follow arguments where the thinkers expand upon, dispute with, and respond to each other in regard to questions that are still important to us today. Some thinkers (such as the mythical “Laozi”) argue the good life is the simple one, others (Xunzi, or Master Xun) insist that it is the life of great intellectual, aesthetic, or moral achievement. Yet others argue that central to the life well lived are rich, nuanced, and strong ties to family and community (Confucius, or Kongzi), acting on one’s developed intuitions (Mengzi), or developing one’s capacity to play in the moment whatever the circumstances (Zhuangzi). Two thinkers we study focus not on the good life, but means for making the social world supportive of one. Hanfeizi first envisions and then argues for the importance of a system of well-defined, objective, enforced laws. Sunzi illuminates the art of war. Through the course we also explore issues such as notions of the self, conceptions of the greater cosmos, the role of rituals, ideas about human nature, and the tension between tradition and self-expression. I want the students to

take the works seriously in and of themselves, anchored in the specific historical time and place, and also to reflect on how these works can be powerful intellectual conversation partners for us when we think about how we choose to live our lives.

Who should take this class?

I am of the admittedly biased view that everyone should take this course. Not only is each of the classics we study—whether the *Daodejing* of “Laozi,” or the great Confucian text the *Mengzi*, or the impossibly imaginative Daoist classic the *Zhuangzi*, and more—an extraordinary piece of literature and religious-philosophical work of itself, the sustained disputations amongst these thinkers over a period of 300 or so years gives us one window through which to see how thinkers can take each other absolutely seriously and passionately and fruitfully disagree over important questions regarding how to live well. The course can be taught well in multiple ways depending on the level of the students. The available English language translations are elegant, effective, and exceptional.

What was your inspiration for the class?

Back when was I in college, one of my professors suggested I just might take a course entitled “Early Chinese Thought.” So I did. And every work we studied fascinated me.

This course directly led to my application for doctoral studies. I still remember how the intellectual world opened to me through these early Chinese classics and now every time I teach my version of this “great works” course, I find it terribly exciting to have this chance to introduce or read anew these classic with my students.

What do you hope students take away from the class?

There is a wonderful book on early Chinese thought entitled *Disputers of the Tao*. That title, especially the term “disputers,” captures well one of the exciting aspects of studying this period, early China or what is also often referred to as the period of the Hundred Schools of Thought. I want the students to leave the course with an appreciation of the rich diversity of religious-philosophical voices in *disputation* with each other. I don’t expect every one of the books we read to speak to each student. Rather, I aim to teach the course in a way that each student will find at least one of the extraordinary works we read in the quarter to truly challenge their way of thinking about or living in the world, to be a piece of literature, an intellectual companion, that they pick up and read and re-read after the course is long over.

READING LIST

- Burton Watson, tr., *The Analects* (Columbia UP, 2010).
- Brook Ziporyn, tr., *Daodejing* (Liveright, 2023).
- Philip, J. Ivanhoe, tr., *Master Sun’s the Art of War* (Hackett, 2011).
- Bryan Van Norden, tr., *Mengzi* (Hackett, 2008).
- Burton Watson, tr., *Mo Tzu* (Columbia UP).
- Brook Ziporyn, tr., *Zhuangzi: Complete Writings* (Hackett, 2020).
- Eric L. Hutton, tr., *Xunzi: The Complete Text* (Princeton UP, 2016).
- Burton Watson, tr., *Han Fei Tzu* (Columbia UP, 1964).
- Benjamin I. Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (Harvard UP, 1985).

“Of the courses I have taught through the years, “Chinese Thought and the Good Life” is one of my very favorites to teach. Each time, I begin by promising my students that at least one of these great classics will alter their lives for the even better. And I’m pretty certain I’ve kept true to my promise so far.”

PAULINE LEE

CLASS:
Chinese Thought and the Good Life
先秦哲學

INSTRUCTOR:
Pauline Lee

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Sarah Levenstam is a PhD student in the Anthropology and Sociology of Religion and the recent recipient of a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship. Using this grant, Sarah will conduct research in India and the United Kingdom on the histories of dogs' place-making in colonial Calcutta, now Kolkata. Below, Sarah describes what got her interested in this project.

In late January of 2020, I was in Kolkata, India, meeting with a professor who was generously offering her guidance on a different project. While we were meeting in her home, her dog walked over and rested his chin on my knee, redirecting our conversation from the project at hand to our shared experiences in dog care. I learned that this dog was once a neighborhood street dog, but this professor had taken him in after an injury had made him vulnerable to attacks by other dogs. The professor explained that, as the companion of a dog with the indistinct features shared by the innumerable dogs who live in public spaces across the city, "people often ask, 'what breed is he?' and I always reply, 'well, what breed am I?'"

When I returned from Kolkata to Chicago in early 2020, the pandemic was beginning to spread. With the isolation of quarantine, dog adoptions increased sharply across the country. In Chicago, a local animal rescue organization asked those of us who had fostered dogs previously for help "training" the massive influx of people who had become interested. Despite our social isolation (actually, because of it), I became more connected with the work of this animal rescue organization and the communities, campaigns, and advocacy orbiting it. And I stayed connected with online networks that coordinate care for street dogs in Kolkata, too. Popular English idioms like "Adopt don't shop!" circulate on social media pages for people in both Kolkata and Chicago who care for and work with dogs—even if dogs seemingly inhabit and traverse these cities very differently.

The question posed by the professor in Kolkata—"Well, what breed am I?"—ridicules the modern institution of dog breeds—a Victorian invention that classed and "refined" dogs by aesthetics and pedigree, and which exemplifies a broader racialized paradigm organized

around bloodline, the "purity" of lineage, that is inextricable from histories of British imperial violence and civilizational discourses. By identifying with her beloved dog—I heard this professor saying, in other words, "whatever he is—whatever category he belongs to—I belong there, too." These sentiments are familiar to me—they resonate with sentiments I've heard expressed in animal rescue communities. In Chicago, I've come across countless instances of people connected to animal welfare work who define dogs by their status as "rescues" and subvert the primacy of the category of "breed"—I've heard and seen written on t-shirts, bags, and bumper stickers, "Rescued is my favorite breed" along with "my dog rescued me!"

But imperial animal welfare organizations in colonial India would not have recognized these attitudes toward free-roaming dogs. In colonial India, imported pedigree dogs were symbols of social status for the colonial classes, but free-roaming dogs were, to these same pet owners, representations of an unruly and diseased city. It's clear that colonial humanitarian concern was based on aesthetics and productivity for the empire. In fact, Kolkata, formerly Calcutta was the site of the first Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals outside the UK—the first British imperial animal welfare institution. The Calcutta SPCA rehashed civilizational narratives that were thinly veiled as concern for animals' welfare, targeting and policing what it interpreted as "Indian custom," while circulating racialized stereotypes about Indian people. Any proximity between animals and humans was also fodder for dehumanizing analogies.

To read more about Sarah's project, please visit divinity.uchicago.edu/lev



"In colonial India, imported pedigree dogs were symbols of social status for the colonial classes, but free-roaming dogs were, to these same pet owners, representations of an unruly and diseased city." SARAH LEVENSTAM

The Divinity School 2023 Convocation Address Yusef Casewit

YUSEF CASEWIT IS ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF QUR'ANIC STUDIES.
THIS ADDRESS WAS DELIVERED ON JUNE 3, 2023, IN ROCKEFELLER MEMORIAL CHAPEL.

Good afternoon graduates, faculty, and esteemed guests. Today is a momentous day in the lives of all who are present here. Congratulations to the class of 2023! Your hard work and dedication over the past few years have culminated in this hard-earned achievement, and it is indeed an honor to be a part of this joyous ceremony.

As we gather today, I would like to reflect upon the nature of knowledge, and the pursuit of knowledge, from an Islamic perspective, and how it can transform our lives individually and collectively. It has been an agonizing process trying to put something meaningful together for this day, so bear with me.

One of my favorite *hadiths*, or sayings of the Prophet Muḥammad reads: “Whoever travels a path in search of knowledge, God will ease for him the path to Paradise.” What is implied here is that the pursuit of knowledge is an act of worship; it’s a core exploration and search for beauty; and it is complex because God’s creation is complex. Note that there’s no guarantee that “the path in search of knowledge” (*ṭalab al-ilm*) will be easy. It’s the path to Paradise that would be made easy by virtue of the arduous journey in pursuit of knowledge. Because knowledge mandates the exertion of the intellect and a long and arduous struggle—I’m sure you’ve had that!



It’s messy work. It’s not just hard. It’s agonizing, it’s exhilarating, it’s depressing, it’s fraught with emotions. But over time you come to realize that the journey itself, and that the search, is more important than the results. It’s about the journey itself. So if you’re looking for shortcuts, you’re kind of veering off that path. If you’re prioritizing just efficiency, or just productivity, or just relevance, you’re not really on that journey in pursuit of knowledge.

Knowledge will change you, and I trust that over time you’ll see how studying here has changed you. You should be a different person now than when you came. There’s no easy, or evidenced-based criteria for measuring that transformation, but something in the way you understand, interpret, and make sense of the world has changed. And I trust that you will continue to understand and appreciate that privilege of having been changed in the pursuit of knowledge, and that others will see that as well as they interact with you.

I’d like to share a personal anecdote that speaks to the complex but enriching path in search of knowledge. When I was in graduate school, I took a year off and spent time studying in a remote *madrasa*—essentially a small law college—located in Mauritania, West Africa. The village where I studied was called Nubbaghiyya. It had no running water or electricity. There were about fifteen hundred residents, one thousand of whom were students or teachers, or



both. There was a great, erudite scholar, called Shaykh [Muḥammad Fal] ‘Bāh, whom I would consider one of the top ten Sunni scholars and experts of Islamic law, who had a mastery of a startling range of the religious sciences. He presided over this *madrasa* and was recognized by leading authorities as possessing this type of knowledge, although he had never published [m]any books.

Students hailed from all over the world (from Thailand to Nigeria, North Africa, the Middle East, and everywhere in between). They were drawn to this tiny village, Nubbaghiyya, because it offered a wide range of religious sciences. It was a little city of knowledge. You could learn advanced Islamic legal reasoning, legal theory, Arabic grammar, pre-Islamic poetry, theology, and so on. To give you a sense of how specialized some of these texts that are studied there are, completing the grammar curriculum in Nubbaghiyya takes at least 7 years of intensive study, and that’s one of many different disciplines. I was just there for one year, so I didn’t complete the grammar curriculum, but I enjoyed asking questions to my teachers because it allowed me to understand

how these desert scholars juridically reason through complex problems.

I once told a young student of Islamic law that I had a Christian convert to Islam who used to recite the Qur’anic *Surat Maryam*, the Chapter of Mary, on Christmas Eve. He had a certain love for the Virgin and wanted to honor that love for her within his Islamic ritual space by reading a chapter from the Qur’an devoted to the Virgin. The young student that I was speaking to responded that that practice was an unacceptable religious innovation—it was a *bid’a* (a strong word)—because celebrating the holy days of other traditions is not acceptable within the [Islamic] legal tradition. There are red lines that have to be drawn and maintained. So you can honor a holiday, but not ritually partake in it, and so that act verged on what was unacceptable.

I wasn’t fully satisfied with the answer, so I asked a more advanced teacher of Islamic law who had a decade of Shariah studies under his belt. I posed the same question, and after some deliberation, this teacher of mine who was from Algeria explained



at length that indeed the younger had a point, it's an unwarranted religious innovation because it appears to sanctify a Christian holiday. And he had some nuanced legal proofs to explain not its impermissibility, but the fact that it was discouraged. So he discouraged it but didn't deem it to be impermissible. And he appealed to longstanding, well-known traditions about the Prophet Muḥammad who discouraged his followers from imitating "the People of the Book;" the Christians and the Jews.

Are you uncomfortable yet? Good.

So my Algerian teacher discouraged the practice, but didn't forbid it. Still, I was eager to hear a different point of view or at least another explanation. So I asked the most senior teacher that I could access in the village, Shaykh Mukhtār, who had twenty-five years of very intense legal study and was perhaps the most seasoned jurist in the *madrasa* after Shaykh 'Bāh (that leading Sunni authority in the village). Shaykh Mukhtār—this very senior expert in Islamic law—told me that he wasn't so sure about whether or not it would be discouraged or just permissible, but he felt that reciting the Chapter of Mary on Christmas was acceptable, but it was just an intuition. He didn't quite have a sound basis for making a non-binding legal opinion. So he said: "You should talk to the Shaykh. Talk to Shaykh 'Bāh."

By now, in this little village, which is like a little law school, everybody is very curious about this case. The word spread around the village: what would Shaykh 'Bāh say to this? Everybody was sort of debating it, more as a theoretical question really. This friend, who

still recited the Chapter of Mary on Christmas Eve, doesn't even know about this whole thing. So one day, I had the opportunity to ask the venerable Shaykh 'Bāh over lunch about whether or not it is permissible to read the Chapter of Mary on Christmas Eve according to the Islamic legal tradition. He stopped eating and gave me his full attention when I began posing the question; then after a few seconds of reflection, he said: "We don't like to be rigid (*lā nuḥibb al-tashaddud*). This practice is not an unwarranted innovation."

It stunned the entire village. Shaykh Mukhtār the next senior legal expert, was almost pleased and reassured, that this great learned shaykh had confirmed what he had intuited, and he asked about the legal reasoning, and I said I couldn't get that part. The Algerian teacher was a bit frustrated, and the student who forbade it was almost in disbelief. But they all accepted Shaykh 'Bāh's authority and erudition.

Sacred knowledge, across traditions, tends to be considered rigid, pedantic, and narrow. But Shaykh 'Bāh's journey in search of knowledge led him to the most compassionate answer. Erudition and authority at their best are full of mercy, flexibility, humility, and wisdom.

There's a saying in Arabic that "People's knowledge tends to increase, but a true scholar's knowledge tends to decrease over time." In other words, the pursuit of knowledge increases you in intellectual humility, in an appreciation of pluralism of thought and multivocality, and a scholarly life is one that can accommodate contradictory and competing understandings of texts, of scripture, of social reality, of political reality, without compromising core virtues and core values. It is a process of learning to raise and refine the level of disagreement without collapsing discussions and debates.

So never stop learning, keep an open heart, keep an open mind. Use knowledge that you have gained to serve humanity with compassion and integrity. Remember the privilege that it is to pursue this path. And once again, congratulations to the graduating class of 2023. May you have a bright and prosperous future. Thank you.

*Above: John Gray Rhind Award winners Shannon Page (left) and Shradha Jain
Right: Prize for Excellence in Service award winners (l-r) Hajra Zaid, Landon Wilcox, Derek Buyan*

STUDENT PRIZES

The Divinity School recognizes student achievements through a variety of prizes. Some of our prizes are awarded annually; others on a cyclical or ad hoc basis. Our 2023 recipients are named here.

ALMA WILSON TEACHING FELLOWSHIP
Kristi Del Vecchio and Ranana Dine

THE ANTHONY C. YU DOCTORAL STUDENT FELLOWSHIP
Aslan Cohen Mizrahi, Emily Thomassen, Matthew Vega, and Colin Weaver

THE DIVINITY SCHOOL PRIZE FOR EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE
Derek Buyan, Landon Wilcox, and Hajra Zaid

THE DIVINITY SCHOOL PRIZE FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING
Allison Kanner-Botan, Matthew John Peterson, and Colin Weaver

MARTIN MARTY CENTER JUNIOR FELLOWSHIP
Miriam Bilsker, Marielle Harrison, Kelly Holob, Mendel Kranz, Loriane Lafont, Akshara Ravishankar Parmeswaran, Matt Peterson, Shaahin Pishbin, Tzvi Schoenberg, and Colin Weaver

JOHN GRAY RHIND AWARD
Shradha Jain and Shannon Page

INTERNATIONAL MINISTRY STUDY GRANTS
Lilia Ellis, Hayley Haruta, Buki Ogunseitan, Maeve Orlowski-Scherer, and Charlie Platt





EMILY D. CREWS

We are delighted to announce that **Emily D. Crews, PhD'21**, has been named the Executive Director of the Martin Marty Center for the Public Understanding of Religion.

SEMINARY CO-OP AUTHOR TALK SERIES
Series created in partnership with the Seminary Co-op Bookstore featuring intimate conversations with authors of recent books on religion or religious studies.

OCTOBER 15, 2023

DIANE WINSTON

Righting the American Dream: How the Media Mainstreamed Reagan's Evangelical Vision

JANUARY 9, 2024

GRACE Y. KAO

My Body, Their Baby: A Progressive Christian Vision for Surrogacy

FEBRUARY 9, 2024

GREGORY D. SMITHERS

Reclaiming Two-Spirits: Sexuality, Spiritual Renewal, & Sovereignty in Native America

MARCH 26, 2024

KATRINA DALY THOMPSON

Muslims on the Margins: Creating Queer Religious Community in North America

APRIL 23, 2024

AALIYAH BILAL

Temple Folk

MAY 8, 2024

SARAH ILES JOHNSTON

Gods and Mortals: Ancient Greek Myths for Modern Readers

Opposite: Menachem Fisch and Debra Band at a discussion of Qohelet: Searching for a Life Worth Living. See page 29 for more information.

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

In Charles Hirschkind's *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics*, Hirschkind argues that our ideas about religion are incomplete if we haven't listened attentively to the soundscapes—the tapestry of voices, notes, echoes, and silences in a particular time and space—that make up our world.

This idea has long captured me. As I write this from my office in Swift Hall, I'm struck by how much the current soundscape of the UChicago campus is interwoven with religion: a professor and her advisee chat about Christian theology just outside my door; on the quad, the chants of students protesting the violence in Palestine clash with others' singing in Hebrew in support of Israel; farther off, the bells of Rockefeller Chapel play their mid-day song.

This is what it means to study religion: to encounter at every moment an idea, a practice, a possibility that invites reflection and analysis. The work of the Marty Center is rooted in precisely such encounters and the opportunities they provide to think about religion (however we might define it) with a public eager to make sense of the world.

This year our work builds on past successes including The Chicago Commons Project, a mentoring program for early-career clergy, and our Author Talks series, co-presented with Hyde Park's legendary bookstore, the Seminary Co-op. Upcoming Author Talks will feature retellings of Greek mythology, a history of Indigenous

American spirituality, an analysis of queer Muslim community building, and short stories about Black Muslims in the United States.

We have also begun new programs and research initiatives, including a film series on false preachers hosted at Doc Films; a new focus on art and religion through "Smart Sightings," a series of essays published in *Sightings* in partnership with The Smart Museum of Art; and an annual "Reflections" series, which this year considers the theme of Judaism and Jewish Life.

In each of these programs, established and newly begun, we endeavor to listen closely to the world around us, with the hope that our work and ourselves will be transformed. We invite you to join us in the process by visiting us in Swift Hall or at martycenter.org.

EMILY D. CREWS (PHD'21)
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE MARTIN MARTY CENTER FOR THE PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING OF RELIGION



SENATOR REVEREND RAPHAEL WARNOCK DELIVERS 2023 NATHANIEL COLVER LECTURE

The Georgia senator addressed the mass incarceration crisis and the responsibilities of faith communities to enact change.

In a rousing speech at the University of Chicago this spring, Senator Reverend Raphael Warnock of Georgia addressed the American mass incarceration crisis, its ties to white supremacist ideology, and the responsibilities of faith communities to be leaders in reform efforts. He spoke as part of the historical Nathaniel Colver Lectureship, presented in partnership with the Divinity School and the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University, with support from the Marty Center and the Crown Family School of Social Work, Policy, and Practice.

“I submit that there is no more significant scandal belying the moral credibility of the American churches than their conspicuous silence as this human catastrophe has unfolded now for more than four decades,” he told an audience of more than 250 people at the David Rubenstein Forum on April 29.

Senator Warnock’s speech served as the re-inauguration of the Colver Lectureship, which began in 1915 to recognize “persons of eminent scholarship or other special qualification, on religious, biblical or moral, sociological, or other vital subjects.” The lectureship is rooted in the legacy of Nathaniel Colver, a 19th century Northern Baptist pastor, reformer, educator, and avowed abolitionist. Colver also served as the first professor at the theological school of the Baptist Theological Union (BTU), an independent educational endowment that supports the Divinity School.

A graduate of Morehouse College and an ordained minister, Senator Warnock has served as Senior Pastor at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta—which Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once led—for more than 16 years. He joined the U.S.



Senate in January 2021 after winning a special runoff election in Georgia. Larry Greenfield, President of the Board of Trustees of the Baptist Theological Union, explained that the senator’s background made him ideal to deliver the 2023 Colver Lecture.

“Given the original terms of the Nathaniel Colver Lectureship, the extraordinary witness of Colver himself as minister, educator, and social reformer in the cause of abolition, and the compelling importance of racial justice today, Senator Reverend Warnock was the obvious choice for re-inaugurating the Colver Lectureship, based on his own public and religious standing, expertise, personal experience and deep commitments,” he said.

Prior to Senator Warnock’s speech, James T. Robinson, Dean of the University of Chicago Divinity School; Rev. Dr. Reginald W. Williams, Jr., Pastor of First Baptist Church of University Park; and Dr. Marshall E. Hatch, Pastor of New Mount Pilgrim Missionary Baptist Church, provided introductory remarks. Rev.

Susan Johnson, the former minister of Hyde Park Union Church, offered concluding remarks for the event.

“With a named lecture, one hopes that the lecturer honors a particular past, in such a way that it directs the audience toward a glimpsed and provocative future,” said Johnson, who is also part of the BTU. “Senator Warnock has met and exceeded that hope this evening.”

Story by Lauren Pond, Digital Media Manager, Martin Marty Center



“

There’s a vast difference between offering pastoral care and spiritual guidance to the incarcerated and formerly incarcerated, and challenging, in an organized way, the public policies, laws, and policing practices that lead to the disproportionate incarceration of people of color in the first place. That is the work of justice.”

“

Jesus had a record. Not surprising, given his start. Of course he had a record. Look at the neighborhood he was born in. Born in a barrio called Bethlehem, smuggled as an undocumented immigrant into Egypt, raised in a ghetto called Nazareth. But he came saying, ‘The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor, to open the eyes of the blind, to preach liberty to those in captivity.’”

FROM THE 2023 COLVER LECTURE “LET MY PEOPLE GO: THE SCANDAL OF MASS INCARCERATION IN THE LAND OF THE FREE” BY SENATOR REVEREND RAPHAEL WARNOCK

SELLING THE GOSPEL OF POSITIVE THINKING

BY WILLIAM SCHULTZ | OCT 5, 2023

IT'S THE EVERYDAY NATURE OF THE FAILURES IN "SALESMAN," A FILM ABOUT BIBLE SALESMEN, THAT MAKES THE FILM SO POWERFUL AND RELATABLE.

The salesman is an American icon—and not in a good way. American culture is filled with salesmen, almost every one of them a loser, a creep, or some combination of the two. Think of the sweaty, foul-mouthed failures of *Glengarry Glen Ross*. Or Gil Gunderson, the wheedling salesman of *The Simpsons*. Or the most iconic of them all, Willy Loman, who has lived out his heartbreaks over and over again in countless productions of *Death of a Salesman*.

The title figures of *Salesman*, the classic 1969 documentary directed by Albert and David Maysles and Charlotte Zwerin, are not as theatrically pathetic as their fictional counterparts. There's neither sturm nor drang in this film. The omnipresent camera of Albert Maysles follows four Irish-American salesmen as they go door-to-door in Massachusetts and Florida, trying to sell expensive Bibles to working-class Catholics. We watch as Paul Brennan, the salesman with the most screen time, grows increasingly frustrated with his inability to close a sale. Nothing else happens and nothing much changes.

So why does *Salesman* regularly bring viewers (including me) to tears? Why does this movie, so clearly a product of a vanished world, a world populated by chain-smoking men with nicknames like "The Gipper" and "The Rabbit," reach across the decades to touch us in the present? Why do viewers—including those at a special screening held in Chicago this week—continue to connect with these salesmen?

I think it's because *Salesman* is about failure. Failure is never an exhausted topic, because we never stop failing—every day, at every thing, in countless ways. Indeed, it's the everyday nature of the failures in *Salesman* which makes the film so powerful and relatable. We might not fail like Willy Loman, our life in ruins, our family strangers to us. But we certainly fail like Paul Brennan: trying to do a job that we have to do, yet feeling overmatched by the task itself and overwhelmed by a million small frustrations besides.

What elevates *Salesman* from a sad story into a tragedy is the nature of Paul's work. He and his coworkers might be selling Catholic Bibles, but the religion which matters in *Salesman* is not Catholicism but positive thinking: the notion that you can achieve anything with a cheery disposition and optimistic mindset. As Paul tells the camera: "In this life, if you have a desire for anything, you'll get it." This was the gospel once preached by Norman Vincent Peale, the minister whose best-selling *The Power of Positive Thinking* (1952) begins with the command: "Believe in yourself! Believe in your abilities!" And it's the gospel now embodied by Joel Osteen, pastor of America's largest church, who encourages his tens of thousands of congregants to chant "I'm getting better and better every day!"

Lured on by the promise of success, Paul flattens his identity into a brand; his Catholic faith and Irish-American identity become nothing more than sales tactics. "Most of the people that I do place [Bibles] with are Irish people, because they're very devout Catholics," he tells one potential customer who he thinks (wrongly, it turns out) is also an Irish-American Catholic.



“Failure is never an exhausted topic, because we never stop failing—every day, at every thing, in countless ways. Indeed, it’s the everyday nature of the failures in “Salesman” which makes the film so powerful and relatable.” WILLIAM SCHULTZ

Yet as the film goes on, and as Paul knocks on door after door without success, the shadow side of positive thinking begins to swallow up his sunny optimism. Paul’s manager puts this darkness into words, exhorting the salesmen: “If a guy’s not a success, he has no one to blame but himself.” If you can achieve anything you desire, then your failure is nobody’s fault but yours. Even the filmmakers can’t help taking this perspective. In his commentary on the film, Albert Maysles remarks: “There’s something in Paul that welcomes failure.”

It’s a cruel assessment, but it rings true. Salesmen are selling themselves as much as their products, and so their work demands a relentless positivity. Salesmen for DuPont in the 1920s were warned: “You are not dressed for work until you put on a smile.” Dale Carnegie used his experience as a door-to-door salesman to write the self-help classic *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (1936), which advised readers that a warm smile “will bring a good price in the marketplace.” Paul can’t put on this front. With potential clients, he lives up to his nickname “The Badger,” giving a sales pitch that seems more about pestering the customer than persuading them. On the director’s commentary, Charlotte Zwerin watches Paul at work and sighs: “The thing he’s not doing is putting on any charm, at all.” When he’s with his fellow salesmen, he lapses into silence, staring blankly into the distance as cigarette smoke curls around his face.

It’s that look, the face exhausted by the fixed smile, which resonates today. Social media has made us all salespeople. We all manage our image, real and digital, as we sell our “brand.” And that’s why Paul’s failure affects us (or at least affects me) so deeply.

IT’S NOT BECAUSE HE CAN’T SELL BIBLES. IT’S BECAUSE HE’S TRAPPED IN A CULTURE WHICH EQUATES SMILING WITH SUCCESS AND CONDEMNS THOSE WHO CAN’T ACCOMPLISH EITHER.

Salesman played recently at the University of Chicago’s Doc Films as part of a series on “False Preachers.” The salesmen aren’t above a little fraud to sell their product—at one point, Paul pretends to be a district manager in hopes of making a sale—but that’s not what makes them “false preachers.” Their falsehood is the smile which promises a happiness that never existed.

William Schultz is Assistant Professor of American Religions; also in the College. Schultz is a historian of American religion with an interest in the intersection of religion, politics, and capitalism. He is currently finishing his first book, Evangelical Capital: The Spiritual Economy of Colorado Springs (under contract with UNC Press), which explains how the confluence of evangelical Christianity and free-market capitalism transformed the city of Colorado Springs into an epicenter of American conservatism. His next project, The Wages of Sin: Faith, Fraud, and Religious Freedom in Modern America, uses cases of financial fraud between the 1920s and 1990s to explore how Americans have struggled with questions of religious authority and authenticity.

FALSE PREACHERS



FALSE PREACHERS

With support from our new Public Scholarship Fellows Program this autumn, Divinity School PhD candidate Hannah Ozmun partnered with Doc Films to create “False Preachers,” a series exploring the trope of the false prophet in American film. The weekly screenings at Ida Noyes Hall have provided “a window into the entanglement of money, morality, and ecstatic faith that characterizes the American religious landscape,” as Ozmun writes in the series description. Turn the page to learn more about Hannah and her work.

September 26

The Night of the Hunter
Directed by: Charles Laughton

October 3

Salesman
Directed by: Albert and David Maysles, Charlotte Zwerin

October 10

Wise Blood
Directed by: John Huston

October 17

Body and Soul
Directed by: Oscar Micheaux

October 24

Marjoe
Directed by: Howard Smith and Sarah Kernochan

October 31

Buck and the Preacher
Directed by: Sidney Poitier

November 7

Miracle Woman
Directed by: Frank Capra

November 14

Night of the Iguana
Directed by: John Huston

November 28

The Apostle
Directed by: Robert Duvall

We spoke with **Hannah Ozmun**, a PhD student in Religions in the Americas, about the “False Preachers” film series she organized this autumn in partnership with Doc Films and the Marty Center: the inspiration, the experience, and visual media as a form of public scholarship.

Could you start by telling us about your time at the Divinity School, what you’re studying, and how that led you to create this series?

I just started my fourth year in the PhD program here at the Divinity School, studying American Religious History. I’m especially interested in the intertwining histories of Protestantism and capitalism in the 20th century. The US has a long history of entrepreneurial Protestants who start new sects and movements, create media empires, and make enormous profits from religious ventures. Like some of their historical counterparts, many of the “false preachers” in this series combine their charisma, knowledge of the Bible, and business acumen for their own personal gain. I was interested in exploring the false preacher as a trope in American film because it provides a window into the entanglement

of money, morality, and ecstatic faith that characterizes religion in America.

How did you approach Doc Films, and what was it like working with them on this program?

One of the things that made me excited to come to UChicago was Doc Films. It’s a theater on campus that’s run by UChicago undergrads, and all of the series are programmed by students and community members. I started my PhD program during the COVID-19 pandemic when Doc Films was closed. When it reopened, I started going to screenings, and then I started going to programming meetings, which are open to the public. You don’t have to be affiliated with the university to propose and program a series!

At programming meetings, people share their series ideas, get feedback and film suggestions, and learn about the process of planning screenings. All series proposals have to include information on

the theatrical rights for each film, the available formats for each film (16 or 35mm is preferred over digital formats), and a budget for rights and shipping costs. Doc Films also has rules governing what can be screened. Toward the end of each quarter, the people who come to programming meetings vote on upcoming series. I actually proposed the “False Preachers” series twice before it passed the vote on my third attempt!

There were several films I wanted to include in my series but couldn’t due to licensing restrictions. I wanted to screen John Sayles’s *Matewan*, a film set during the West Virginia Coal Wars of the 1920s. I also thought about expanding the scope to include international films like *Corpus Christi*, a Polish film about an ex-convict who is barred from entering the Catholic priesthood due to his criminal record.

As part of the series in October, Doc Films screened *Salesman* and hosted a discussion with Divinity School Professor William Schultz afterward. Could you tell us a little about this?

Salesman is a 1969 documentary about men who go door-to-door in working-class Catholic neighborhoods selling large, ornate Bibles that cost \$50 (over \$400 in today’s currency). The camera follows them as they enter peoples’ homes and go through the paces of their sales pitches. One salesman in particular, Paul Brennan, is having a hard time closing sales, and the documentary highlights his growing desperation. After the film, Professor Schultz and I had a good conversation about religion and consumerism with the audience members who stuck around.

One of the themes that runs through the whole “False Preachers” series is the intertwining of money, profit-making, and religion. Many of the false preachers in this series are using religion to make money off of people. *Salesman* is a bit of an outlier because obviously the salesmen aren’t technically preachers. And although they sometimes resort to shady sales tactics and even outright lies, the salesmen do, at some level, believe in what they are selling and



“I was interested in exploring the false preacher as a trope in American film because it provides a window into the entanglement of money, morality, and ecstatic faith that characterizes religion in America.”

HANNAH OZMUN

see themselves as making an honest living. I decided to include this film in the series because I thought that it presented this juxtaposition of profit and religion in an interesting, nuanced way.

One of the questions Professor Schultz and I discussed after the film was, “Is selling the Bible different from selling anything else?” If the salesmen in this documentary were selling vacuum cleaners or encyclopedias, they would likely highlight the item’s

practicality and efficiency. Selling the Bible opens up a whole new register of persuasion, which the salesmen exploit by making moral and ethical appeals to their potential customers. The salesmen argue that purchasing a Bible will have spiritual and even eternal significance, and that children will benefit simply by their physical proximity to the Bible. Professor Schultz and I talked about how uncomfortable it is to

watch these sales pitches, especially because many people in the film couldn’t afford such an expensive purchase.

One of the things I like about this film is that the salesmen are neither villains nor heroes. They are just ordinary guys who have good days and bad days, who are trying to make a living. And even though some of their tactics are exploitative, the film does a great job of portraying the mundane ways people experience religion in a consumer culture like the US. The buying and selling of mass-produced religious commodities is a major component of religious life in our commercialized society. In the film’s commentary



track, director Albert Maysles says, “Selling and religion, if you have both of those in a film, I think you’ve got it all about America.”

By Lauren Pond

To read the full interview with Hannah, please visit us online at <https://martycenter.org/articles/hannah-ozmun-on-creating-false-preachers-film-series>

A CONFERENCE IN HONOR OF MICHAEL FISHBANE

On October 22 & 23, the Divinity School hosted Varieties of Hermeneutical Experience: A Conference in Honor of Michael Fishbane, co-sponsored by the University of Chicago's Joyce Z. and Jacob Greenberg Center for Jewish Studies and the Aronberg Lectures in Judaica Fund.

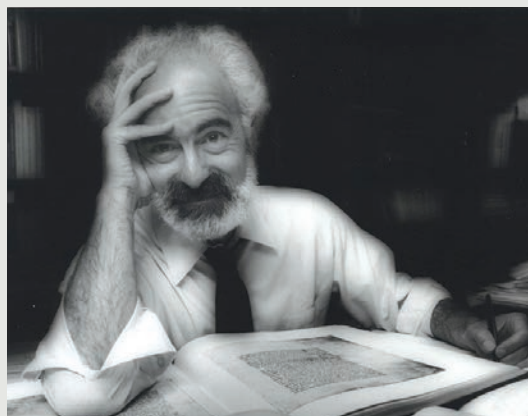
Colleagues and former students gathered to explore and build upon methods and insights at the heart of Fishbane's work. Among the conference participants were alumni Sam Shonkoff, Deborah Green, Dov Lerner, David Gottlieb, Laura Lieber, Benjamin Sommer, Natalie Dohrmann, Joanna Weinberg, Omer Michaelis, and Ora Wiskind. Current Divinity School faculty members James T. Robinson, Jeffrey Stackert, Margaret M. Mitchell, and Sarah Hammerschlag and associated faculty member Ken Moss chaired sessions engaging with Fishbane's work spanning the length of his career.

Arthur Green (Brandeis University) delivered the plenary address entitled "Celebrating a Deep-Sea Diver in Yam ha-Talmud, 'The Sea of Learning'" and Prof. Fishbane reflected on his academic career in his address, "The Teacher and the Hermeneutical Task: Reflections after 50 Years."

The Nathan Cummings Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus of Jewish Studies, Michael Fishbane retired in 2022 after over thirty years of service on the Divinity School faculty. His scholarship has spanned the range of Jewish history—from the Hebrew Bible and classical Midrash through medieval Kabbalah and modern Jewish thought—and he has also pressed contemporary Jewish theology forward in astonishing ways through his own constructive writings.

Throughout the various branches of Fishbane's academic explorations, there is the continuous thread of hermeneutics, his enduring interest in how human beings are always already interpreting at the intersection of tradition and presence. For Fishbane, hermeneutics animates the core of Jewish religious culture, where boundaries between text and life melt into the most fertile wellsprings.

To view the conference, view our YouTube channel (bit.ly/DivinityVideo).



"This was a profoundly meaningful way to celebrate our teacher and friend, Michael Fishbane. The majority of speakers were his former students, and it was so powerful for us to return to Swift Hall together and to continue to think with our professor. In his scholarship and teaching alike, there is something downright enchanting and transformative about Professor Fishbane's hermeneutical insights, and this conference manifested how richly his approach continues to reverberate in the countless hearts and minds he has touched."

SAM SHONKOFF, PHD'18
TAUBE FAMILY ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
OF JEWISH STUDIES AT THE GRADUATE
THEOLOGICAL UNION

DEAN'S FORA

The Dean's Forum is a long-standing Divinity School tradition. This event puts Divinity School faculty members from across disciplines into conversation with each other. Alumni are welcome to attend the Fora!

This past Autumn we were pleased to hold two Dean's Fora. In October, Karin Krause and Richard B. Miller discussed Krause's recent *Divine Inspiration in Byzantium*, examining conceptions of divine inspiration and authenticity in the religious literature and visual arts of Byzantium. And in November, the MacLean Center for Clinical Medical Ethics cosponsored discussion of Laurie Zoloth's *Second Texts and Second Opinions: Essays Towards a Jewish Bioethics*, about the private discussions that arise when ordinary people confront life and death choices and struggle with decisions in a world of medical and scientific complexity. Prof. William Schweiker and UChicago Medicine's Scott D. Moses, MD, joined the discussion.

UPCOMING DEAN'S FORA

WINTER QUARTER 2024

January 31

Joint event: The Hiram Thomas Book Event and Dean's Forum with Bruce Lincoln on *Secrets, Lies, and Consequences: A Great Scholar's Hidden Past and his Protégé's Unsolved Murder*

SPRING QUARTER 2024

April 17

Kevin Hector: *Christianity as a Way of Life*

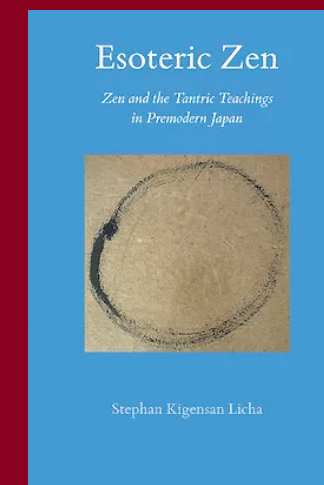
May 1

Margaret M. Mitchell's *John Chrysostom on Paul: Praises and Problem Passages*

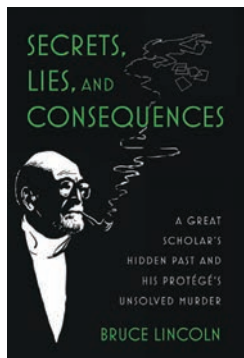


Stephan Kigensan Licha, who joined the faculty this year, has published his first monograph: *Esoteric Zen: Zen and the Tantric Teachings in Premodern Japan*.

In *Esoteric Zen*, Stephan Licha demonstrates tantric teachings and Zen were closely entwined movements that often developed within the same circles of thinkers and texts. Drawing on newly discovered manuscript materials, he shows how medieval practitioners constructed a unique form of Zen by drawing on tantric doctrinal discourses.

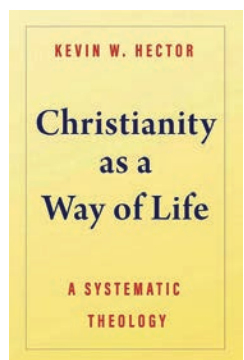


Recent Faculty Books



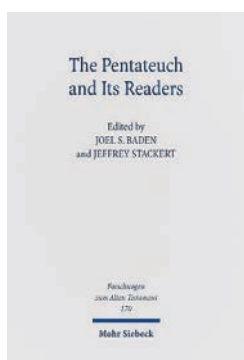
BRUCE LINCOLN

In *Secrets, Lies, and Consequences: A Great Scholar's Hidden Past and His Protégé's Unsolved Murder*, Prof. Emeritus Bruce Lincoln explores Mircea Eliade's ties to a Romanian fascist movement in the 1930's and the unsolved murder of his mentee, Ioan Culianu, in 1991.



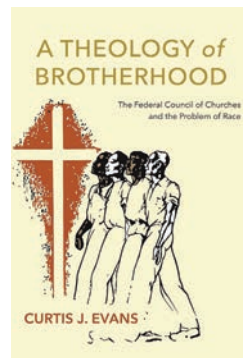
KEVIN HECTOR

Focusing on Christianity's core practices, Kevin Hector imagines *Christianity as a Way of Life* oriented toward wisdom, arguing that Christianity can be understood as a set of practices designed to transform one's way of perceiving and being in the world.



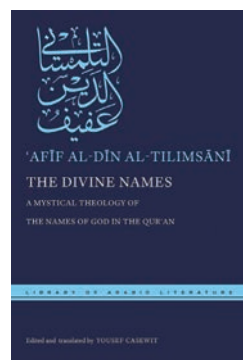
JEFFREY STACKERT

The Pentateuch and Its Readers, edited by Joel Baden and Jeffrey Stackert, celebrates the contribution of Baruch J. Schwartz to the field of biblical studies through essays that treat the major foci of his research. These include the Pentateuch and its composition; priesthood, cult, and Priestly texts; major religious ideas expressed in the Hebrew Bible; and the reception of biblical texts and ideas (especially those related to the Pentateuch).



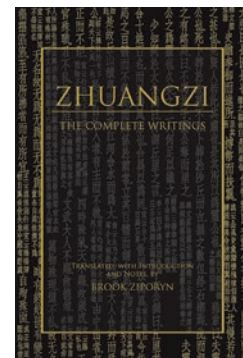
CURTIS EVANS

A Theology of Brotherhood: The Federal Council of Churches and the Problem of Race by Curtis J. Evans explores how the national umbrella Christian organization, the Federal Council of Churches, acted as a crucial conduit and organizational force for the dissemination of "progressive" views on race in the first half of the twentieth century.



YUSEF CASEWIT

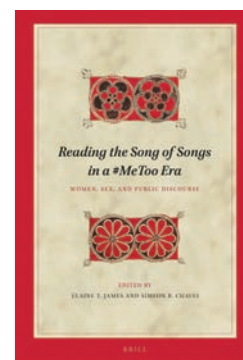
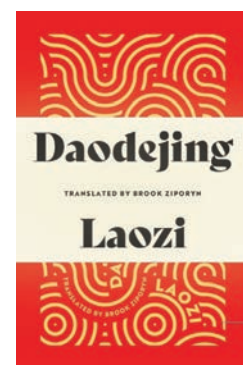
The Divine Names: A Mystical Theology of The Names of God in the Qur'an, edited and translated by Yusef Casewit, is a philosophically sophisticated commentary on the names of God. Penned by the seventh-/thirteenth-century North African scholar and Sufi poet 'Afif al-Din al-Tilimsani, *The Divine Names* expounds upon the one hundred and forty-six names of God that appear in the Qur'an, including The All-Merciful, The Powerful, The First, and The Last. In his treatment of each divine name, al-Tilimsani synthesizes and compares the views of three influential earlier authors, al-Bayhaqi, al-Ghazali, and Ibn Barrajān. *The Divine Names* shows how a broad range of competing theological and philosophical interpretations can all contain elements of the truth.



BROOK ZIPORYN

In *Zhuangzi: The Complete Writings*, Brook Ziporyn's carefully crafted, richly annotated translation of the complete writings of Zhuangzi— including a lucid introduction, a glossary of essential terms, and a bibliography— provides readers with an engaging and provocative deep dive into this magical work.

Brook Ziporyn's translation of *Daodejing* is a transformative new edition of Taoism's central text that overturns its reputation for calming, gnomic wisdom, revealing instead a work of "philosophical dynamite."



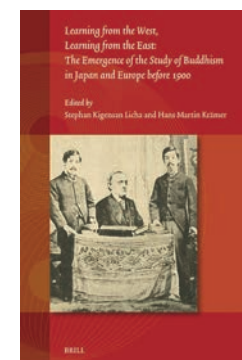
SIMEON CHAVEL

Reading the Song of Songs in a #MeToo Era, edited by Simeon Chavel and Elaine James. *The Song of Songs* is the only book of the Bible to privilege the voice of a woman, and its poetry of love and eroticism also bears witness to violence. How do the contemporary #MeToo movement and other movements of protest and accountability renew questions about women, gender, sex, and the problematic of the public at the heart of this ancient poetry? This edited volume seeks to reinvigorate feminist scholarship on the *Song of Songs* by exploring diverse contexts of reading, from Akkadian love lyrics, to Hildegard of Bingen, to Marc Chagall.



LAURIE ZOLOTH

In *Ethics for the Coming Storm: Climate Change and Jewish Thought*, Laurie Zoloth reexamines the usual narratives of Eden to consider how Biblical narratives and rabbinic commentary create a new language to understand and act in times of crisis. She considers how the classic analysis of creating doubt—seen as the ultimate sin in the Hebrew Bible— helps us to understand and critique the extraction industry. Zoloth argues for a creative exploration of philosophic and historical arguments for social ethics and social action, seeking a collective and not only an individual solution to global warming.



STEPHAN KIGENSAN LICHA AND HANS-MARTIN KRÄMER, EDITORS

Learning from the West, Learning from the East: The Emergence of the Study of Buddhism in Japan and Europe before 1900 This volume foregrounds the fundamental role Asian actors played in the formation of scholarly knowledge on Buddhism and the emergence of Buddhist studies as an academic discipline in Europe and Asia during the second half of the 19th century.

2023 NUVEEN LECTURE

The Divinity School is pleased to announce that [Ada Palmer](#), Associate Professor of Early Modern European History, delivered the 2023 John Nuveen Lecture: “Why We Censor, from the Inquisition to the Internet.”

THE LECTURE WAS HELD THURSDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2023 IN SWIFT LECTURE HALL.



Palmer’s work in intellectual history explores how history and thought shape each other over time. She focuses on the Italian Renaissance, a time when ideas about science, religion, and the world that had developed in the Middle Ages met those of the ancient world, reconstructed from rediscovered sources.

Professor Palmer’s current research focuses on patterns in the history of the real motives of censors over space and time, from antiquity to the digital age, especially the Inquisition and early modern censorship, and 20th century censorship of popular media, with special interest in how innovations in information technology trigger waves of new censorship.

The author of numerous scholarly articles and two monographs, including *Reading Lucretius in the Renaissance* (Harvard University Press, 2014), Palmer is also a novelist and a composer, whose creative projects explore the relationship between ideas and historical change. Palmer has a number of forthcoming and current projects, including scholarly papers, two novels, and a popular press book (*Why Renaissance? Invention of a Golden Age*), which aims to present to a general audience how and why the ideas of a golden Renaissance and dark Middle Ages were invented.

John S. Nuveen was one of Chicago’s most influential business leaders and an active civil and cultural leader with ties to many educational institutions. At the University of Chicago, he served as chairman of the University’s Alumni Association and as a trustee of the Baptist Theological Union, which established the Nuveen lecture in 1972 and manages an endowment that supports the University of Chicago Divinity School. Each year, a prominent member of the University’s faculty is invited by the Divinity School to deliver the lecture. Past lecturers have included Wu Hung, Janet Rowley, Jonathan Lear, and Leon Kass.

Please view Prof. Palmer’s 2023 Nuveen Lecture on our YouTube channel (bit.ly/DivinityVideo).



Reflections on Judaism and Jewish Life: A Marty Center Series

Created in partnership with the Greenberg Center for Jewish Studies, this three-part public program aims to enrich and expand conversations about Judaism and the traditions of thought and practice that surround it.

Programming kicked off in November with a discussion of *Qohelet: Searching for a Life Worth Living* by Menachem Fisch and Debra Band, published by Baylor University Press in July 2023. This discursive commentary and illustrated work aims to bring *Qohelet* to the wider public, by offering a novel interpretation of the book that is neither esoteric nor marginal to the point of self-negating, but comprehensible to the public and meant for them.

On March 27, Zev Eleff, President of Gratz College and professor of American Jewish history will be on hand for a discussion of his *Dyed in Crimson: Football, Faith, and the Remaking of Harvard’s America* (University of Illinois Press, 2023).

Visit us online for more information: martycenter.org/events/reflections-judaism-jewish-life



BY TORI LEE, NEWS WRITER

FRANKLIN I. 'CHRIS' GAMWELL (1937-2023)

Former dean of UChicago's Divinity School known for precise thinking, deep commitment to political participation

Franklin I. "Chris" Gamwell, the Shailer Mathews Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus of Religious Ethics, Philosophy of Religions, and Theology and Dean of the Divinity School from 1980-1990, died Sept. 8 at the University of Chicago Medical Center. He was 85.

Gamwell, an ordained Presbyterian minister, studied the intersection of philosophy, Christian theology, and political theory. His work centered on 20th-century thinkers, such as Alfred North Whitehead, Iris Murdoch, Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr. "For those who had the opportunity to listen to him lecture or to read his many books," said former student Brett Wilmot, AM'94, PhD'02, "it was also abundantly clear that he was equal in capacity to the intellectual giants with whom he engaged in his work."

A prolific writer of the philosophy of religions, Gamwell argued for the importance of God and religion within democratic debate. He also was an ardent believer in political participation as an integral part of religious ethics. Throughout his life, Gamwell was deeply involved in economic and racial justice work. He participated in the historic March from Selma to Montgomery during the height of the Civil Rights Movement. Later, his work with Protestants for the Common Good sought to address issues of poverty. Gamwell joined the Divinity School as a faculty member in 1979 and led the School as dean for a decade. A beloved teacher and generous mentor, he is remembered by many of his colleagues and former students for his meticulous care to understand others' arguments and his remarkable clarity of thought. "Recognizing the difficulties that come with trying to think clearly, Chris nonetheless was never content with anything less," said former student Joe Pettit, MA'92, PhD'98. "As a teacher, I found him to be unmatched in his ability to present ideas clearly. As a scholar, I have found none more careful in presenting the ideas of others." "Chris Gamwell was an extraordinary leader as dean, professor, mentor and friend," said his colleague, Professor Margaret M. Mitchell. "His intellectual precision, eloquence, dignity and respect for persons animated everything he did."

A SERVANT OF IDEAS

Gamwell was born Dec. 25, 1937. He received his BA in economics in 1959 from Yale University. He then pivoted to theology, earning his BD from Union Theological Seminary in 1963. That same year, he was ordained a Presbyterian minister.

In 1965, Gamwell, then a young pastor at Chicago's West Side Christian Parish, drove down to Selma, Alabama, to march with thousands of protesters led by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He would join the third attempt to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge—only two weeks after the horrific violence of Bloody Sunday shocked the nation.

"Moral appeal to the democratic promise was vindicated by the awesome courage of people long debased," remarked Gamwell during the Divinity School's 50th commemoration of Selma, "even while the movement also confirmed that social advantage will not yield to justice without a contrary exercise of power." Continuing his studies at the University of Chicago Divinity School, Gamwell obtained his MA in 1970 and his PhD in 1973 with a focus on religious ethics. He joined the faculty of the Divinity School in 1979 as the Director of Field Work and Assistant Professor of Ethics and Society.

Gamwell served as dean of the Divinity School from 1980 to 1990 and remained on the faculty until his retirement in 2011. That same year he was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

As a scholar, Gamwell made major contributions to the field of religious ethics, particularly applied to politics and issues related to the common good. "Chris's own scholarship combined a commitment to rigorous metaphysics with a deep consideration of democratic ideals in the service of racial and economic justice," said colleague Professor Richard A. Rosengarten. "As a result, he was equally well-versed in the writings of Charles Hartshorne and of Abraham Lincoln."

He authored many books including *The Divine Good: Modern Moral Theory and the Necessity of God* (1990); *The Meaning of Religious Freedom: Modern Politics and the Democratic Revolution* (1995); *Democracy on Purpose: Justice and the Reality of God* (2000); and most recently *Religion Among We the People: Conversations on Democracy and the Divine Good* (2015).

"His is the strongest argued intellectual challenge to the common misbelief that, in the modern world, religion is merely private, and the equally unfortunate misbelief of the Christian political right that Christianity (or any other religion) should dominate public discourse," said Professor Emeritus David Tracy in the announcement of a 2011 conference held in honor of Gamwell's retirement. "He has provided a third and persuasive way of thinking about religion in the public realm beyond these blind alleys."

A CONSCIENTIOUS MENTOR

Beyond his extensive scholarly achievements, Gamwell was known as a generous, kind teacher and conscientious mentor. Many fondly recall the parties he and his wife, Fran, held for students at their Hyde Park home. Gamwell applied the same rigorous attention to the arguments of his students as he did to the great minds he studied. He was known for both charitable readings and thoughtful comments on his students' work. "Whether one was a new student or the most senior of scholars, he would try his best first to make sure that he understood what one was arguing, and only then to appreciate both the insights and the oversights of what was said," said Pettit.

"As a lecturer and a writer, he induced a kind of orderliness and lucidity you could only hope to muster on your own," said former student Ken Bigger, AM'94, PhD'05. "As a mentor, he conveyed respect for what you brought to the table, and made you feel as though he felt he was learning from you. You wanted to lift your game in that kind of feedback environment." In 2004, Gamwell was awarded the Faculty Award for Excellence in Graduate Teaching. Upon receiving the honor, he said, "One of the joys of teaching at this university and, specifically, the Divinity School, is that the students so quickly become peers, in the sense of independent critics of and contributors to the intellectual projects with which one is engaged." "In so many ways Chris exemplified the best of the Divinity School and the University of Chicago," said Mitchell. "He is already greatly missed."

A lifelong fan of the Brooklyn Dodgers, Gamwell was often seen walking his dogs in Hyde Park wearing a Dodgers jacket from which the "LA" had been removed. Gamwell was preceded in death by his wife, Frances, and daughter, Lisa. He is survived by his son, Christopher Snider.



BY TORI LEE, NEWS WRITER

**BERNARD 'BERNIE' O. BROWN
(1930-2023)**

Former dean of Rockefeller Chapel
who fostered community

The Rev. Bernard "Bernie" O. Brown, retired dean of Rockefeller Memorial Chapel and associate professor in the University of Chicago Divinity School and the College, died peacefully Oct. 7 at his home in Hyde Park. He was 93.

A Divinity School alumnus (DB'55, AM'65, PhD'73), Rev. Brown joined the faculty in 1973, teaching courses in the Divinity School and the College.

An active member of the University and Hyde Park community for over 60 years, Brown is remembered for his leadership as the fourth dean of Rockefeller Chapel. From 1979-1995, Brown guided the historic building through several renovation projects and strengthened the chapel's diverse community through his personal relationships and steadying presence.

As dean, Brown had an instrumental role in shaping the religious, musical and ceremonial life of UChicago. A central hub of university life, all students pass through the doors of Rockefeller as they reach key milestones.

Please read the full story on Rev. Brown at news.uchicago.edu

SWIFT ONLINE

Make sure to visit our YouTube channel (bit.ly/DivinityVideo) throughout the year.



Follow us on Instagram (@UChiDivinity) for more updates, including from PhD student Sarah Levenstam. See page 8 to learn about her project.



KATE LEBOEUF

We welcome [Kate LeBoeuf](#) as our new Director of Development. She will be assisting in securing philanthropic support for our faculty and students, as well as connecting alumni and friends to the work and mission of the Divinity School.





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1025 E. 58th Street
Chicago, IL 60637
773.702.8200
divinity.uchicago.edu



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