

A full-page photograph of a sunset over a body of water. A person stands on a rocky shore on the left, looking out at the horizon. The sky is filled with vibrant orange and pink clouds, and the water reflects these colors. The right side of the image is partially covered by a dark red overlay containing text.

A PUBLICATION OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
DIVINITY SCHOOL

SPRING 2022

Criterion



THE UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO | Divinity School



FROM THE INTERIM DEAN

At the end of my first year as interim dean, there is much to reflect on. For me especially — a medievalist with strong leanings toward the historical and philological, towards the solitary life of library research, a life devoted to rediscovering lost manuscripts and translating them for a new generation — this year has been a revelation. If I were to express my previous idea of the university in UChicago t-shirt speak, I would choose: “that’s all well and good in practice, but how does it work in theory” (with “where fun comes to die” and “Survivor: Hyde Park Island” as useful descriptors). What I have learned over the past year is a very different side of the University: the institution of the university, the administrative framework that holds it all together, the fundraising and allocation of resources that make our mission of teaching and research possible, helping us do the best work while reaching the people who can benefit from it most.

The “engaged University of Chicago” is a motto introduced this year by the president. It expresses another side of the university mission, that of impact, and is an especially apt way to capture the shifting nature of higher education in this increasingly complicated and contested world (and world of ideas) in which we live. Throughout the year I have experimented with adapting this term, and combining it with one from earlier days, to help express our hybrid, syncretistic nature, the Divinity School that houses both academic Masters and PhD programs and a Master of Divinity program. We might say we train the engaged scholar and learned religious leader.



This focus on ideas and practice, research and institution, in other words, is not new with the contemporary moment, and in fact the question of how they relate goes back even beyond the Divinity School. Though there is the tension expressed so clearly in Aristotle between the “life of action” and “life of contemplation,” the attempts to combine them are far more common, from Plato’s Republic and Laws to Aristotle’s Politics and constitutions (and his tutoring of Alexander). Even the Neoplatonists fantasized of creating a “Platonopolis,” and while the Epicureans are depicted as giving up the other world for this, it is the ideal of creating a true community of learning that motivated them most. Perhaps the Rabbis expressed the reflexive nature of the two worlds best in the debate: “Which is preferable, study or practice?” in response to which Rabbi Akiva won the day: “Study, because it leads to practice.”

So what does all this mean for us in the Divinity School during this exciting moment of transition? As I move to my second year as interim dean, opportunities abound. Several esteemed senior scholars are retiring, yet new professors are joining our ranks, bringing fresh insights to our life of teaching and research. The curriculum continues to evolve with more undergrad offerings and an increased emphasis on the way religions, in every sense, course through every aspect of the contemporary world. We continue to build up the Marty Center with focus on new programming and outreach, engaging with and contributing to the many diverse publics inside and outside the university. The Colman Program for Teaching, Leadership, and Service continues to prepare students for a life inside and outside of the academy.

With all this change, it is important that we appreciate continuity with the past even as we shape the future. We must trust in the power of learning, which itself can transform lives in the most radical ways. Recovering and preserving knowledge, challenging it and sharing it, are all a part of working toward the ideal balance of research and practice, prized today as it was in the past. And so I end with those voices from the past, the medieval masters of aphoristic wisdom: “the goal is not only to know,” said one sage, “but to know and to do.” “Knowledge and practice together,” said another, “are what allows conjunction with the world above.”

Warmly,

JAMES THEODORE ROBINSON
INTERIM DEAN OF THE DIVINITY SCHOOL
CAROLINE E. HASKELL PROFESSOR OF THE HISTORY OF JUDAISM,
ISLAMIC STUDIES, AND THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS

Criterion

SPRING 2022
VOLUME 57, ISSUE 1

Dean
James T. Robinson

Director of Communications
Terren Ilana Wein

Editorial Assistant
Emma Sternberg

Design
Amy Charlson Design

Photography
Joe Sterbenc
Charissa Johnson

Criterion is published for alumni and friends of The University of Chicago Divinity School. We welcome your feedback. Please email terren@uchicago.edu.

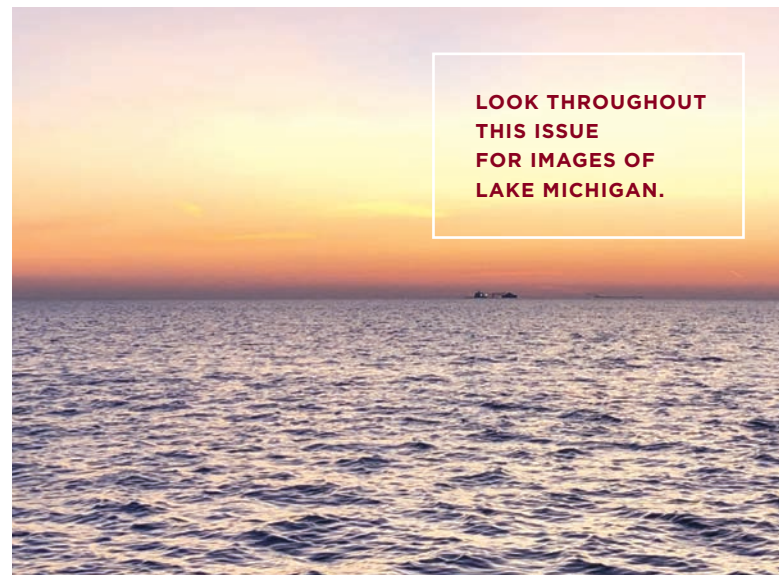
Prefer to receive *Criterion* by e-mail? You can share your contact preferences and update contact information by going to bit.ly/criterioncontact.

© 2022 The University of Chicago Divinity School

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



STAY IN TOUCH with our quarterly e-newsletter, *Swift Matters*.
Sign up online at bit.ly/swiftmatters



LOOK THROUGHOUT
THIS ISSUE
FOR IMAGES OF
LAKE MICHIGAN.

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 mmcclendon@uchicago.edu or 773.702.8248.



ON THURSDAY, APRIL 28, SWIFT HALL 207 WAS DEDICATED AS THE WENDY DONIGER SEMINAR ROOM.

Wendy Doniger, the Mircea Eliade Distinguished Service Professor Emerita of the History of Religions, retired in 2018 after 40 distinguished and exciting years on the faculty of the Divinity School; room 207 was her office.

A gift from Dr. Anne Wedemeyer, a friend of the School, and a long-time admirer of Dr. Doniger and her accomplishments made it possible for the Divinity School to reimagine the room as a unique space for small groups to meet, learn, and work together.

The room retains several works of art that Wendy herself collected and has donated to what is now a collective space. A statue of the celestial musician Vidhyadhari was also donated by Matthew Kapstein, the Numata Visiting Professor of Buddhist Studies. The statue, which looks a little like the angels in our Lecture Hall, was a gift in honor of Matthew's mother, Dorothy Kapstein Hammer.



What Are We Talking About When We Talk About Religion?

THE WAY I SEE IT, WHEN WE TALK ABOUT “RELIGION,” WE GENERALLY MEAN THE TWIN OF WHAT THE HISTORIAN JOHAN HUIZINGA CALLED “PLAY” (1938).

Play is the human ability and penchant for doing things “as if,” for constructing a virtual reality and acting within it while not losing sight of it as a fabricated simulation. Huizinga considered play something more than a specially marked off event or a transparent overlay; it is a basic element of culture, a thread of its weave. Examples range from sports to fashion, whose commercialization obscures their essence. I believe that what powers play we can call the imaginative faculty — the mind’s process of taking in from the world, manipulating into new forms, and putting back into the world again — and that the imaginative faculty powers play’s twin, religion. Religion would be when what is produced by the imaginative faculty is experienced and treated as part of the real world, “as is” not “as if.” To be specific, religion is any and all of the things we do, think, or say that are oriented towards or around any force that is described as superhuman or supernatural (and often personified) and considered essential or pivotal

to life, be it all life as such, one’s individual situation, or anything in between. This sense of religion applies to humanity as a

species. *Homo sapiens* comes about through, or with, an imaginative faculty that produces the twinned faces of *homo ludens* and *homo religiosus*.

We also use “religion” to refer to particular groupings. Often “religion” refers to specific sets of ideas and norms as having conceptual or historical coherence, as belonging together and representing a tradition, like “Judaism.” Scholars have come to appreciate that this use hides the fact that such sets are a selective abstraction that does not reflect what all the people who identify with that religion or who are identified with it actually think and do, clear-eyed surveys of which show striking variety and incompatibility. To capture that, one trend is to use the plural, like “Judaisms.” But this too presupposes that the set of ideas and norms at any given time and place will have consistency, which, again, is not the case. Recognizing the mismatch between this use of “religion” and the grouping it aims to describe helps bring out yet another use of “religion,” to refer to groups of people, like “Jews.” But — to continue the example — Pew study after Pew study shows that Jews who do not identify with Judaism can still identify strongly as Jews, not like “lapsed Christians,” but in another way. It is common to call that other way “ethnic,” but any look at Jews around the world shows that “ethnicity” can be just as mismatched as “religion.” Religion in these grouping senses, sets of ideas and norms or groups of people, is common and has its uses, but it hides the dynamism of people’s lives and identities.

SIMEON CHAVEL, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF HEBREW BIBLE

The Divinity School recognizes student achievements through a variety of prizes.

Please visit divinity.uchicago.edu/our-community/current-students/prizes to learn more.

GEORGE FITCHETT 2022 ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR

Upon recommendation from the Divinity School’s Alumni Council, the Board of Trustees of the Baptist Theological Union has named **George Fitchett**, MTh 1970, DMin 1974, the Divinity School Alumnus of the Year for 2022.



PROFESSOR AND DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH IN THE DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION, HEALTH, AND HUMAN VALUES AT RUSH UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER, Dr. Fitchett has played a central role in pioneering research in and locating chaplaincy as an evidence-based field. An expert on spiritual assessment whose research examines the relationship between religion and health in diverse clinical and community populations, Dr. Fitchett is the field’s pre-eminent leader in developing a research-informed approach to chaplaincy.

Dr. Fitchett received his Master of Theology in 1970 and his Doctor of Ministry degree in 1974. He received his PhD, in Epidemiology, in 2007 from The School of Public Health at The University of Illinois at Chicago and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the University for Humanistic Studies in The Netherlands in 2019. He has been a certified chaplain (Association of Professional Chaplains) and chaplain supervisor (Association for Clinical Pastoral Education) for over 35 years.

The author or editor of several important works focusing on healthcare chaplaincy and spiritual care, Dr. Fitchett is also the author or coauthor of more than 100 scholarly articles and book chapters. His book on spiritual assessment, *Assessing Spiritual Needs* (1993) is widely used in academic and clinic training programs around the world. His most recent work, *Evidence-Based Healthcare Chaplaincy: A Research Reader* (Jessica Kingsley Publishers), of which he was a coeditor, was published in 2018. In 2021 *Transforming Chaplaincy: The George Fitchett Reader* was published, bringing together some of Dr. Fitchett’s most important spiritual care research.

The first chaplain to receive a Career Development Award from the NIH, Dr. Fitchett has been one of the Principal Investigators for a recently completed 5-year, NIH-funded clinic trial regarding Dignity Therapy (believed to be one of the first times the NIH has funded a study that included chaplaincy care). Supported by grants of \$4.5M from the John Templeton Foundation, in 2015 he co-founded Transforming Chaplaincy, a program to advance spiritual care research and chaplain research literacy.

“Dr. Fitchett’s achievements in his field, and his contributions to professional chaplaincy, are profound, with far-reaching implications,” said James Theodore Robinson, Interim Dean of the Divinity School, of the award. “His career, in which rigorous inquiry engages and informs practice, greatly embodies the values of The Divinity School.”

Dr. Fitchett delivered his Alumnus of the Year address, entitled “Transforming Chaplaincy: Developing Evidence-Based Spiritual Care” on Thursday, April 7th, 2022, at 4:30pm, in Swift Lecture Hall. This lecture can be viewed online at bit.ly/DivinityVideo

ALUMNI AWARDS

Know an outstanding alumnus/a? Nominate them for an alumni award today.





We are pleased to announce that as of July 1st, **Karin Krause** will be Associate Professor of Byzantine Art and Religious Culture. We asked Professor Krause, a specialist in the Christian visual cultures of Byzantium and the premodern Mediterranean region, to talk about her recent class on icons.

CLASS:
The Veneration of Icons in Byzantium: History, Theory, and Practice

INSTRUCTOR:
Karin Krause

What's the class about?

We examine the foundations of icon veneration in the Eastern Mediterranean area from the very beginnings of the phenomenon in the early Christian period through the Middle Ages. Understanding how the veneration of icons developed in the Byzantine Empire is crucial for making sense of religious practices that continue to be common, basically unchanged, among

present-day Orthodox Christians. Icons play an indispensable role for private and public devotion; they are regarded as mediators between humans and the divine realm, and thus as powerful agents of salvation.

The ways in which icons are designed respond directly to the needs of the faithful, who use them for prayer and in other rituals, such as communal

processions. In this class we study examples of Byzantine icons of varying subject matter depicting Christ, saints and scenes from their lives, or stories told in the Gospels, among other themes. Aside from identifying typical elements of their iconography across a range of artistic media and techniques, we also pay attention to the icons' specific formal and stylistic traits. For students unfamiliar with Byzantine art or visual analysis in general, the course offers an excellent opportunity to learn how to approach the investigation of images in an informed manner, and to explore them as primary sources in their own right.

The course also has a strong theoretical component focusing on key writings about icons and their merits that were composed by intellectuals like John of Damascus and Theodore the Studite. The nuanced theories of art developed by Greek orthodox thinkers are unparalleled elsewhere during the entire period of the Middle Ages.

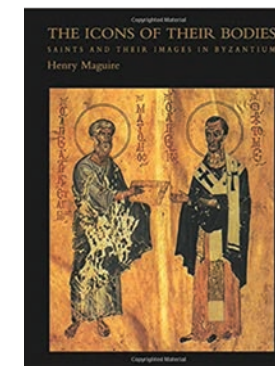
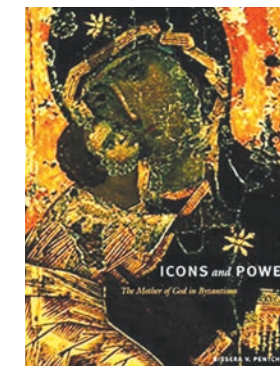
What was your inspiration for the class?

I am fascinated with the interdisciplinary nature of the subject, the intertwining of theological, philosophical, art historical, and anthropological

approaches that help make sense of the phenomenon of icon veneration in its *longue durée*. Icons and their perception are also a key subject in my recently published book on *Divine Inspiration in Byzantium*. Teaching this class several times and writing the book have been mutually inspiring processes, and discussions in the classroom have enriched my thinking.

I enjoy examining the development of cultural phenomena over a longer period of time and across cultural boundaries. The Christian cult of icons has strongly been influenced by beliefs and practices encountered in ancient Judaism and polytheism. For example, the study of Greco-Roman portraiture and the aims that governed it sheds light on the emergence of the earliest Christian icons. Typical pre-Christian approaches to the veneration of images representing pagan deities or emperors have been highly formative for the veneration of icons in Byzantium.

For someone interested in studying the various intersections of Byzantine visual culture and religious thought, icons are a particularly rewarding subject. Their veneration was guided by theological and philosophical reasoning developed in medieval Constantinople and other places in the Eastern Mediterranean,



particularly during the period of Iconoclasm in the eighth and ninth centuries. During that period, religious icons and the legitimacy of their veneration were much disputed, and their production and use was suppressed forcefully over the course of several decades. This period turned out to be enormously productive among intellectuals developing sophisticated arguments to defend icons against their opponents.

Who should take this class?

Because the subject has so many interesting facets, it requires a willingness to venture outside one's intellectual comfort zones. Students should arrive with a serious interest in studying historical subject matter, and be open-minded toward analyzing both texts and images. I recommend this course particularly to those who would like to learn more about the history of Christian thought and

practice, premodern visual culture, historical theology, patristics, ancient and medieval Greek philosophy, and anthropology. I have seen students arrive with a very pronounced interest in one particular aspect of the course, only to then discover fascinating new areas of inquiry that they wanted to explore more.

All readings on the syllabus are in English, including primary sources, so no knowledge of ancient languages is required. About half of the participants are usually graduate students from the Divinity School. However, enrollment in this course over the years suggests that it is of interest to students representing a broad range of academic majors and programs on campus. Each course has a different composition of students, and discussions benefit from its students' diverse areas of interest and expertise.

READING LIST:

Robert S. Nelson and Kristen M. Collins (eds.), *Holy Image, Hallowed Ground: Icons from Sinai*

Thomas F. Mathews, *The Dawn of Christian Art in Panel Paintings and Icons*

Henry Maguire, *The Icons of Their Bodies: Saints And Their Images in Byzantium*

Bissera V. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium*

Katherine Marsengill, *Portraits and Icons: Between Reality and Spirituality in Byzantine Art*

Charles Barber, *Figure and Likeness: On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm*

A Qur'anic studies scholar whose interests include the intellectual history of North Africa and al-Andalus, Muslim perceptions of the Bible, and medieval commentaries on the ninety-nine divine names, **Yousef Casewit** joined the faculty of the Divinity School in 2016. We are pleased to announce that as of July 1st, Prof. Casewit will be Associate Professor of Islamic Studies. We asked Professor Casewit to answer some important questions about his work and time in Chicago.

How did you come to do the work you do?

While traveling across northern Argentina as an undergraduate sophomore, I visited a small town that was built around a distinctly Andalusian garden. My eye was irresistibly drawn to the unique leitmotif adorning the central fountain: a wedding of the Christian cross and stylized Qur'anic calligraphy. This intermingling of sacred art forms reminded me of the Islamic world where I grew up and awakened my interest in studying Islamic thought as well as the interactions between Islam and other religions. Moreover, I realized that the design was an echo, however faint, of a sporadic discourse between Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Medieval Spain that transcended the much-touted "tolerance" to reach some level of mutual understanding.

One of my research interests is to reconsider current accounts of the religious history of Andalusia in light of the unexamined writings of 12th-13th century medieval scholars such as Ibn Barrajan, Ibn al-Mar'a, and al-Tilimsani.

What have you been working on most recently?

I have recently completed an English translation and parallel Arabic critical edition of a major Sufi metaphysical treatise on the divine names, entitled *The Names of God: A Mystical Theology of the Divine Names in the Qur'an by al-Tilimsani* (d. 1291). My book is the first study of a key Sufi treatise on the divine names, and it sheds much light on our understanding of the full flowering of Islamic learned discourses under the Mamluk Sultanate in Egypt and Syria in the pivotal thirteenth century. Working closely on this major text by 'Afif al-Din

al-Tilimsani, who was a celebrated North African poet and a student of Ibn 'Arabi, has allowed me to reconstruct the social and intellectual history of Ibn 'Arabi's circle of core disciples in Mamluk Cairo and Damascus.

My future research projects bring together a number of my areas of interest in virtue ethics, Sufi theology, and philosophical theology. I am currently working on a monograph entitled, *Beyond Virtue: The Sufi Ash'arite Ethics of Ibn al-Mar'a of Malaga* (d. 1214). This study is one of my most exciting discoveries to date, as it fills a major lacuna in our understanding of the so-called "Shudhiyya school of Sufism" that developed in Almohad al-Andalus in the absence of Ibn 'Arabi and other like-minded mystics who had already settled in the Islamic East.

I am currently also exploring the renewal and continuity of Sufi thought in contemporary Morocco, having translated a number of works by the contemporary Moroccan Shadhili Sufi master Mohamed Faouzi al-Karkari.

What do you enjoy about teaching and living in Chicago — now that you've been here for a few years to experience all the seasons and gotten to know the city?

Chicago is the most diverse city I've ever lived in. It has a very large, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural Muslim community, and there are wonderful community initiatives and opportunities.

I have loved teaching my daughters how to swim in Lake Michigan, and we enjoy going ice skating and horseback riding too. There are such beautiful neighborhoods in the city as well as world class museums to explore. I have also appreciated teaching in the University's study abroad programs, which has afforded me the chance to take my family to Morocco, Spain, and Vienna.



"I devote great attention to the doctrinal substance of the texts that I study and the curve of development in the thought of particular figures or schools of thought."
YUSEF CASEWIT

How are you approaching your work these days?

The combination of historical-contextual analysis, synthetic and exegetical interpretation, and meticulous philological work that characterize my research has led me to articulate arguments that help to reconfigure and refocus the field's understanding of the history of medieval Islamic thought in al-Andalus.

First, in all my work I seek to engage, analyze, and present abstract ideas

and complex religious and philosophical worldviews that are steeped in a variety of legal, theological, philosophical, and mystical traditions. I devote great attention to the doctrinal substance of the texts that I study and the curve of development in the thought of particular figures or schools of thought. Second, I am attentive to the socio-political and historical context in which these medieval texts are produced and consumed. My work advances conversations

on the intellectual and sociopolitical history of al-Andalus and North Africa, and it is part of an ongoing scholarly effort to rethink simplistic but long-held — and in origin colonialist — historiographical binaries between the "dynamic Arab" imperial heartland at the center of scholarly production, and the passive borderlands on the receiving ends of civilizational flowering. Third, I am a proficient editor and translator of primary texts, without which I cannot advance in my research nor can the field as a whole. For unlike many other areas in religious studies, the study of premodern Islamic thought remains in a

relative state of infancy and only a tiny sliver of the massive surviving textual tradition has been explored. My methodological approach is thus geared toward textualists and intellectual historians alike.





CELEBRATING HTI AND COMMITMENT TO SCHOLARSHIP WITH A HUMAN FACE

On April 4 The Divinity School and the **Hispanic Theological Institute** celebrated twenty-five years of transforming theological and religious education *en conjunto*, with an event featuring a panel of emerging Divinity School scholars presenting on their current research. Also in attendance was Dr. João Chaves, HTI's Associate Director for Programming.

The Hispanic Theological Initiative's (HTI) mission is cultivating Latinx PhD students across the nation by uniting and leveraging institutional resources (human, financial, and infrastructural). The University of Chicago Divinity School is a member of the HTI consortium, a unique collaborative enterprise in theological and religious education to increase the recruitment, retention, and graduation rates of Latinx PhD students across the nation. Member schools demonstrate their commitment by uniting and

leveraging resources and exchanging information and ideas to create the best practices in addressing the needs of Latinx faculty and students. With their support, HTI is now serving the largest cohort of Latinx PhD students, and continues to graduate students within 5.5 years, while maintaining a graduation rate of 94%.

The panel was live but also offered via livestream. If you'd like to watch, visit divinity.uchicago.edu/news/HTI.



CHRISTINA LLANES



MATTHEW VEGA



VINICIUS MARINHO



IZAK SANTANA



RAÚL ZEGARRA-MEDINA

Diverse Faces in Diverse Spaces: A Hispanic Perspective on Medieval Women's Mysticism. Christina Llanes is a PhD student in History of Christianity, focusing on 13th Century women mystics.

Doing Dignity Latinamente. Vinicius Marinho is a PhD student in Theology; his work is focused on economic and racial inequality, production, liberation theology, and critical legal studies.

Teología de Recuperación: Recovery Through Discovery in Constructive Theology. Izak Santana is a PhD student in Theology. He is interested in constructive theology, comparative theology, scriptural, and philosophy of religion. Izak is also the current President of the Divinity Students Association.

A Counterpublic Model of Liberation Theology. Matthew Vega is a PhD student in Theology. He is interested in traditions of resistance to dehumanizing situations, such as the liberationist, abolitionist, and Black prophetic traditions within Christianity.

Latinx Theology and the Primacy of Lo Cotidiano: A Reassessment. Raúl Zagarra-Medina (PhD'20) is a Divinity School Teaching Fellow. He focuses on the intersections between philosophy, theology, and ethics, with emphasis on questions of social justice and religious identity. In addition, Raúl is currently working on a book manuscript based on his doctoral dissertation, provisionally entitled "The Revolution of Tradition: A Reinterpretation of Liberation Theology."



“The Mystery of Encounter”

AIMS OF EDUCATION ADDRESS

BY SARAH HAMMERSCHLAG | DELIVERED ON SEPTEMBER 24, 2021

You're here. You're really here. I'm sure like many of you, before March 2020, I had no idea how tremendous, how epic it would feel, how grateful I would be, simply to be able to say that. I say it now knowing how precarious this is, even risky to be gathered together in this room on September 24th of 2021. And with the joy, the excitement of meeting new people and seeing friends and colleagues we haven't seen for 18 months, it is difficult not to wish that things were different, it is difficult not to wish that we were here without masks, without fear, without risk. Nonetheless, there is something in all this precarity that can be clarifying. Perhaps it can help us, indeed, to perceive more keenly the aims of our education.

A

s some of you may already know, the aims of education address is a University of Chicago institution. Since 1961 a faculty member has given an annual address to the incoming undergraduate class in Rockefeller Chapel with the assignment of offering a new

insight on this theme. While this is only the fourth year that we have included such an address in our own Divinity School convocation, our participation ties us to the greater tradition, and connects us to others who have gathered here, in this particular space, under these angels in years past, and to those who will gather, we hope, long after we're gone. As scholars of religion, it is not difficult for us to recognize this as the work, the enactment of a ritual, that goes into forging a tradition.

Twenty-two years ago, in 1999, I sat in this room for the first time, for my own orientation. I was twenty-five, a first-year Masters student and scared to death, not about catching a virus, or about the state of the planet, or about our nation's divisive culture — fears we can all now add to the personal ones that stem from self-doubt — but scared nonetheless. I was scared to be in a new city, to meet new people, but mostly scared that I wasn't smart enough, that I wouldn't measure up. I had not been a religion major as an undergraduate and I was convinced that I was out of my depths and that it was only a matter of time before everyone around me figured that out as well. I tell you this in case you have felt something similar, but more importantly, I tell you this because in the meantime, I've learned that the point of being here, the aim of education does not lie in having others affirm us so that those fears are dispelled. I will say without reservation having met many of you, having read your work and your applications, that you are indeed smart enough to be here, smart enough to produce great scholarship and make a contribution to the field. But that is not the point. The point is to find ways to turn outward, towards others, because the aim of education is in the possibility, the thrill, the risk, the chance of the encounter with another, in all that entails.



This is not to say that you will not be by yourself quite a bit while you are here, perhaps more than ever before in your life, staying late in the library, bent over a book, mastering a new language or discipline, or awake at home in your apartments when even the street traffic has been reduced to a hush, in front of your computer, your mind stirring with new thoughts and ideas.

We put a lot of emphasis at this University on both mastery and innovation, on daring to think something new, to say something that has never been said before, or at the very least to say it better. Perhaps the most *daring* thing I have to say today, is that I think the aim of education lies elsewhere, not in mastery but openness and vulnerability, not only in innovation, but also in reception.

But *is* it daring to say so? Perhaps not in a divinity school, perhaps not among people who study religious traditions. One of the reasons I came here in 1999 to study rabbinics and philosophy of religion was because I was so moved by the rabbis' interpretation of Deuteronomy 29:14 in *Exodus Rabbah*, by the way they understand its last phrase:

ראת אשר איננו פה עמנו היום

The verse begins: The lord God makes his covenant with those who are standing here with us this day — and this is the key phrase — “and with those who are not here this day.” This phrase the rabbis understand to indicate “that the sages who were to rise in each and every generation — each and everyone of them — also received at Sinai the wisdom he was to utter.” At the time I was fascinated by how such a teaching could accommodate innovation while grounding it in tradition, how this interpretation helped justify the rich and fruitful practice of commentary. What gets to me now, however, is something else: it is the emphasis on forging connection, constellating, what the poet Paul Celan in his 1960 address “The Meridian” calls “responding.”

The poem, Celan writes in this address, “is lonely. It is lonely and en route. Its author stays with it.



Prof. Sarah Hammerschlag on Welcoming Day

Does this very fact not place the poem already here, at its inception, in the encounter, in the mystery of encounter.

The poem intends another, needs this other, needs an opposite. It goes towards it, bespeaks it.

For the poem, everything and everybody is a figure of this other toward which it is heading.

What I love about these lines is how they stage the precarity of such an encounter, its risks and dangers. When I picture the poem and its reader I do not see something static, and I do not imagine a text consumed or absorbed by its reader. Rather the poem and the reader seek one another, head towards one another. Do they meet? We don't know. What does it mean for them to meet? The poem, he says, keeps its silences, its secrets, its site of origin from which it arose, it keeps those to itself. Celan says, “It is mindful of its date, but it speaks.” All of us have our dates, the events that changed us, that

marked us. And the singularity of those moments is, by the very nature of the event, not communicable. Like the poem, we are mindful of our dates, and yet *we* speak. The work you will do here at the Divinity school has its meaning in exactly that, in forging from the singular, the communicable. The date itself testifies to this structure, it bears its singularity like a scar, but when the day on the calendar circles back, we commemorate, we communicate. All scholarship participates in this ritual, a ritual we celebrate by gathering here today at the beginning of the school year.

There is no fusion in this encounter, no meeting of the minds, but something much more fragile, a meridian, an act of constellation. For the constellating act is also an event, a new one, one that begins, Celan says, with the turning of the breath, the *atemwende*, that moment of strangeness, when we read something that takes our breath away. This creates a new date. All of us, I imagine, commemorate these moments too, the moment

“The focus of its subjects, and thus of the viewer is elsewhere, on the capacity of knowledge to illuminate, to captivate.”

SARAH HAMMERSCHLAG

when we read something, or had a conversation, in which the very strangeness of it, well, it altered us. And it wasn't at first about understanding — at first we do not understand — and yet the moment itself *is* liberatory. It is not freeing in the sense that we feel empowered. It is something different, the freedom that comes from being unmoored, a freedom *from* what we thought we knew, from the familiar. That freedom is precarious, because it is the freedom of the encounter, with all the possibility of connection and all the risk of abandonment. These experiences, I hope, are why you are here. May they serve not just as the instigation of your education but also its aim.

At the same time, the risk involved in being open to an encounter with something strange and unexpected is also sometimes something we shy away from. We work to put secure ground under our feet, to buttress ourselves with support beams that give us a sense of security. We adopt truisms that make us feel less at risk in the world, or sometimes, we go on the offense and denigrate others to make ourselves feel more secure. This is the flipside of precarity.

Think about that interaction you had the other day. You know the one, where you thought you were potentially about to have an exciting and interesting conversation, and then you realized the person you were talking to was actually marshalling all of their defenses to keep the conversation on territory where they knew more, the one where you walked away thinking, “Wow I must have like one brain cell.” Or maybe you were on the other side of it, and maybe you walked away feeling smarter, because you could see on the other person's face that flicker of self-doubt.

I'm willing to bet, if you are in this room, at one time or another you've been on both sides of such an interaction. Recently, it has come home to me that such interactions don't just happen in the basement of Swift Hall, while waiting for your coffee. It has come home to me that such patterns of behavior are equally endemic to the history of philosophy and the history of religion, all of them driven, I think, by the fear of being unmoored.

In a small book by the philosopher Sarah Kofman entitled *Comment s'en sortir* [*How to escape*], Kofman writes, “There is no discontinuity between the various ‘technical traps’ which men weave to protect themselves and the traps sophists set in their discourse to master their adversaries, no break between fishers, hunters, weavers and sophists.” Lest you conclude that the point here is to separate the philosopher from the sophist, Kofman continues, the philosopher who tracks down the sophistic beast and drives him from every lair in a pitiless pursuit is closely related to his prey.” Might not the distinction itself, she suggests, be a part of the philosopher's efforts at self-protection, a means to defend himself from accusation. It is Plato who says in *The Republic* that the aporias of discourse, and thus the very activity of thinking, can be as dangerous and frightening as the sea, and we must swim, if we hope to reach the shore. The sophist, according to Plato, is the one who exploits these difficulties, introducing, Kofman writes, “duplicité, equivocity, tortuous and oblique ambiguity.” And how must the philosopher defeat him? (It is always a he, by the way—the female only appears as a trope for the traps themselves in these debates.)

“He must outdo him, by adopting *his* wiles.” This, Kofman suggests, is the very plot of Plato's dialogue *The Sophist*, “two doubles, one good, one bad. They resemble each other like dog and wolf.” The irony of course is that metaphor is the only means by which the philosopher can describe the battle for truth, even as it is the poet who is presented as a danger. But if how we describe our pursuit of truth is only by metaphor, must we live by metaphors that borrow from the battlefield? Must the goal of intellectual work always be put in terms of gaining ground? The moment we think in terms of offense and defense, don't we lose sight of the encounter?

This was a question Sarah Kofman asked throughout her life. Like Paul Celan, Kofman was a Holocaust survivor. As a child she spent the war in hiding and her father, a rabbi, Berek Kofman, died in Auschwitz, pummeled by a shovel for refusing to work on Shabbat. She was thus no stranger to loss, to risk, no stranger to the desire for security. But what preoccupied her as an intellectual was how the compulsion to distract ourselves from our own fragility sometimes animates our pursuit of intellectual mastery.

She makes this point most vividly in an essay published posthumously in 1994 entitled “Conjuring Death: Remarks on *The Anatomy Lesson of Doctor Nicolas Tulp*.” The title refers to Rembrandt's 1632 painting of an autopsy. Here the metaphors are not of the battlefield, but for Kofman they are no less problematic. What interests her about the painting is the fact that in it the body appears almost forgotten, for the attention of all the men is on the anatomy book at the foot of the bed. The body, as Kofman puts it, could almost be a lectern. The scientific gaze replaces the corpse with a specimen, allowing us to forget that this decaying body was only days earlier walking around, a man trying, like the doctors themselves, to forget his own entrails. “They do not seem to identify with the cadaver stretched out there,” she writes. They do not

see in it the image of what they themselves will one day be, of what unbeknownst to them, they are in the process of becoming.”

The desire to learn and to know is depicted here in the shared quality of attention, “luminous eyes, turned toward the light of truth.” This concentration, this thirst for knowledge, transforms the fact of the body into something else, to a means of higher attainment. Even as the body lies there for us to see, the painting fails to show us the reality of a 17th century autopsy, with its stench and mess. Kofman thus supplies it in a footnote, supplementing the painting with a description from the Georg Heym story “The Autopsy.” I'll share a few lines, if only for the sake of contrast.

They took their dissecting equipment out of the white cupboards, white boxes full of hammers, bone-saws with strong teeth, files, gruesome batteries of forceps, small sets of giant needles like crooked vultures beaks forever screaming for flesh...blood streaming over their hands...they delved ever deeper into the cold corpse and brought forth its inside like white cooks disemboweling a goose.

Unlike the painting, the Heym story emphasizes the violence of the operation, the violence of the pursuit of knowledge. In the painting, the violence is, if anything, implied, even as the painting depicts the dissection of an arm. The focus of its subjects, and thus of the viewer is elsewhere, on the capacity of knowledge to illuminate, to captivate. The likeness between the men and the body is hidden by their black robes. In their white collars they almost seem like floating heads. Science is here the means of transcendence. The painting is thus part and parcel of a long tradition, running from Socrates, through Christianity, to science. Kofman herself compares the painting to Jordaen's *The Four Evangelists*.



The book of science has merely replaced the Gospels — both providing illumination that dispels darkness.

Of course it would not be surprising, let alone problematic, we might respond, to see this continuity as the *virtue* of civilization, why shouldn't we prefer light and knowledge to death and horror?

But what if like the contrast between the painting of the autopsy and the story of the autopsy, the operation of truth seeking, our desire for the consolation of that pristine combination of truth and originality, is not only driven by the impulse to look away from the fact of our own entrails, from the fact that tomorrow it could be us lying on that table, what if the illumination of the promise of truth — the purity of which Socrates himself distinguishes in the *Phaedo* from the materiality of the body — also conceals from us our own acts of violence?

It is a question that seems all the more urgent at this moment as we round the bend in this country alone toward 700,000 deaths, over 225 million worldwide. It is a question I ask knowing that some of you may have lost someone over the last eighteen months, that at least, you have felt that risk. The point I want to make here is that we can scurry to free ourselves or distract ourselves from the experience of risk, or, we can recognize that living in a moment of precarity connects us to those who have come before. For study, whether humanistic, religious or scientific has never taken place far from the stench of death, even if the last sixty-five years in this country have sometimes given us that illusion. The reality we are living now connects us to the generations of those who also lived in precarious conditions, and to the very practices that have been used since time immemorial to make ourselves feel whole by projecting the site of frailty onto others.



Perhaps this connection to the past can help us. I say this not to endorse an uncritical or unthinking repetition of what has come before, or to council reverence toward the white men who wrote the foundational texts of our disciplines. I say it to suggest that even as we add new important voices to the conversation, it is not so easy to leave the old ones behind, for the simple reason that their desires and fears may not be so different from our own, not only because our culture has been shaped by their discourses, but because we share with them the condition of mortality.

Kofman fascinates me as a thinker because, despite her cogent critique of the history of philosophy, despite the fact that she often described it as though it were the story of men elbowing each other out of the way to declare themselves king of the hill, men who turned the world into a series of “natural” hierarchies so that knowledge and politics mirrored one another, in a relationship that functioned to benefit those in charge, despite seeing this tendency and diagnosing it with the insight of a prophet, she read and commented on this very tradition, the tradition of philosophy, with a kind of devotion.

She unsettled it; she disrupted it, but she read it and wrote about it, penning a kind of commentary that seemed to reference the rabbinic tradition she associated with her father. She wrote most importantly in a way that was attentive to her own mortality, to her own vulnerability. She wrote at such a pace that Jacques Derrida, her friend and interlocutor, once counseled her in a long letter from 1977, to slow down, not to give in to the desire to divest herself of her thoughts so quickly, to let go of a need to produce with urgency, a need, he suggested, that they shared in common. She responded, that in addition to this need, which she admitted they shared, she also wrote out of love, for others, for those she esteemed, *to exist* for those others. Without her writing, she confessed, she feared she would no longer be of interest, would disappear.

She fascinates me, because this is such a startling admission of vulnerability. It provides a depiction of the academic endeavor as one motivated, by the desire for recognition, the hope for an encounter and out of a need to *respond*.

All of us come here with these desires, hopes and needs. They make us vulnerable and put us at risk, but they also create possibility. When Kofman wrote that letter to Derrida, she did not know that I would one day read it. And I do not know what she was thinking when she wrote it. This is the case with her letter, which I found in an archive. It is also the case with the millions of books in the library. They were written not only for those who were alive that day, but also for those who are not yet. For each of those books there was an author who did not know that you would be the one to pick it up. We are each of us a hinge between the past and the future, determining what will be remembered, what will be carried forward. And in that very fact, there is possibility, mystery and responsibility. When you write, alone at your desk in the darkness, you bear this with you. You do not know who will someday read what you write, who will find in it something to which they must respond.

In saying this, of course I do not tell you something that you do not already know. If you, are fascinated by what it means to be a part of a tradition — or for that matter troubled by what it means—then you have already had such an encounter with something or someone that has the power to unmoor you, whether that other is a person you met, a poem, a Sutra, a mystical meditation or an argument for the existence of God. I don't mean to suggest, that this potential commonality makes us all the same — I would not presume it — but I say it, so that at the beginning of the school year, we might remind ourselves of the events that brought us here, and so that we might find in our common pursuits, in our shared endeavors, in our conversations, the breath turn, that moment of strangeness, of encounter. I'd like to conclude then with a few more lines from Celan's speech, which seems equally appropriate just short of sixty-one years later, on our September 24th to his October 22:



I am also, since I am again at my own point of departure, searching for my own place of origin.

I am looking for all this with my imprecise, because nervous, finger on a map — a child's map, I must admit.

None of these places can be found. They do not exist. But I know where they ought to exist, especially now...I find something else.

Ladies and gentlemen, I find something that consoles me a bit for having walked this impossible road in your presence, this road of the impossible.

I find the connective which, like the poem, leads to encounters.

Sarah Hammerschlag (MA'01, PhD'06) is Director of MA Studies and Professor of Religion and Literature, Philosophy of Religions and History of Judaism

Painting credit: *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Nicolaes Tulp*, Rembrandt

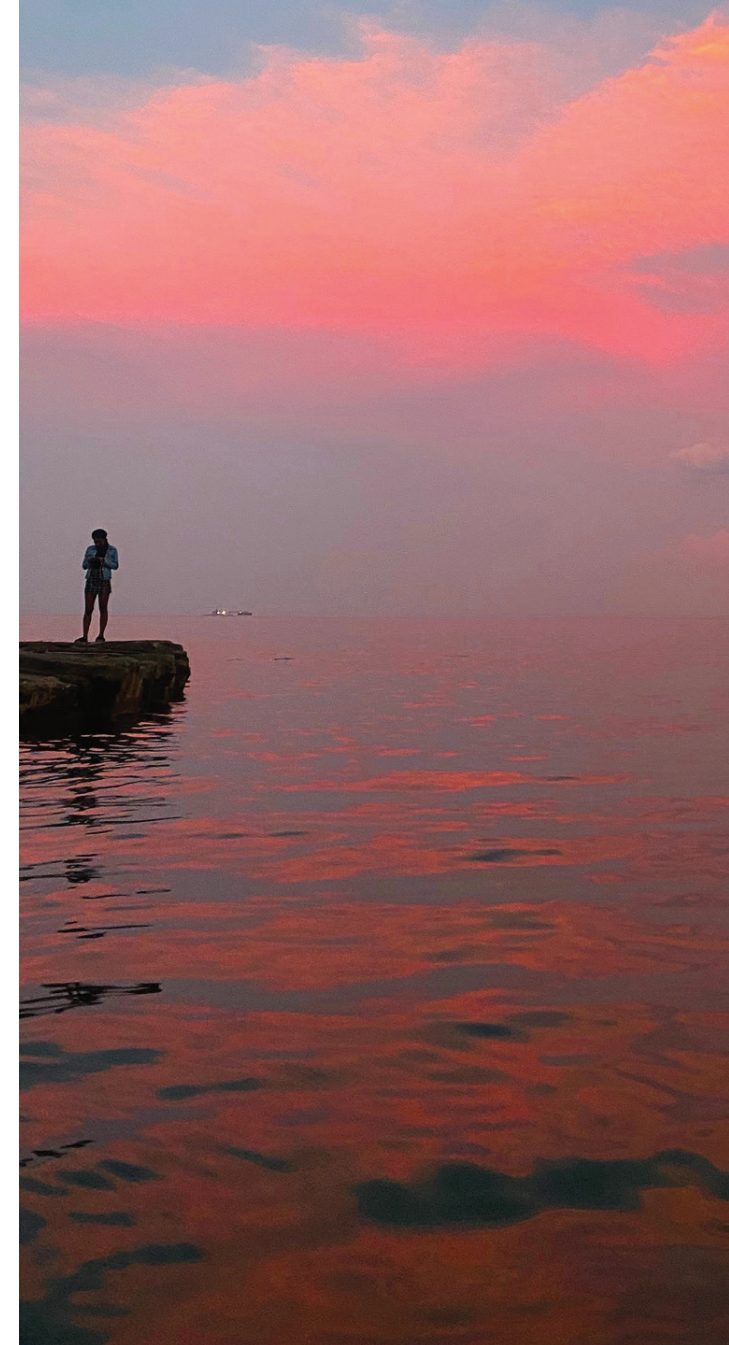


100

Views of Lake Michigan is a year-long art project honoring Lake Michigan's prominence in the souls of Chicagoans. Supported by UChicago Public Arts and a College Curricular Innovation Grant, the project brought images of Lake Michigan across the seasons to print installations, video projection events, lamppost banners, and more for the enjoyment and wonder of the entire UChicago community. Under the direction of Laura Steward, Curator of Public Art,

and artist and designer Jason Pickleman, students initiated the collection of hundreds of photographs of Lake Michigan's horizon line. The individual photographers remain anonymous in this collective endeavor.

The Divinity School installed all 100 Views in large format in the Swift Hall foyer, bringing these inspiring, fun, and diverse images of the horizon inside. We have collected a few for your enjoyment in this issue.





Sankofa

BY THE REV. MARSHALL HATCH JR.

In our faith tradition, “Sankofa” keeps us grounded and forward-looking. The Twi word is connected to a broader West African principle: Before moving forward we must first look back, gleaning the well-earned wisdom rendered by the ancestors. The word means “retrieve, or go back and fetch.” The instruction is symbolized by a bird flying forward while reaching back, tending to its egg. Culturally, we cling to its call to remember because we’ve learned that the past is what anchors our souls; without remembrance we’d be like a ship without a sail. We’d forfeit the inheritance and genius of Blackness. Spiritually, Sankofa is our “source of self-regard,” our place of refuge. It’s how we remain vigilant in the face of old and new struggles. It’s how we resist hopelessness and create beauty out of the muck and mire. Sankofa is more than a word. It’s the plank that we fling ourselves on to, because it is the best we have.

Like most communities, ours was wrecked by the onset of COVID-19. Our elders were terrified and isolated. Our young people were insecure and out of school. Our essential workers were finally deemed essential, but still without an essential wage. Our worship was online, but off-kilter. But unlike most communities, ours simultaneously faced the recurrent cancer of white supremacist racism and its structural implications. This disease was one of the triple evils prophesied by King before his assassination (the other two evils were poverty and militarism). We witnessed the convergence of these evils in the disproportionate numbers of Black, Brown and Indigenous COVID-related deaths, and in a policeman’s knee on the neck of George Floyd for 9 minutes and 29 seconds. Many of us responded with an uprising because ... we had to. The spirit of Sankofa had forced a racial reckoning with the past; there was no more running.

At our West Garfield Park-based church, we looked to the God of our ancestors, and leaned on what Howard Thurman called “the experience of a common sharing of mutual worth and value.” Several months prior to the pandemic, we had unveiled a 25-foot stained-glass window deemed “Sankofa.” It features the faces of the four little girls who were killed in a 1963 church bombing in Birmingham, Ala. It also features five contemporary martyrs: Derrion Albert, Laquan McDonald, Hadiya Pendleton, Blair Holt and Demetrius Griffin, Jr. The central image depicts a hooded Black Messiah shepherding the young people back to Sankofa Village, the beloved community. Of the five Adinkra symbols reflected in the window, my favorite is the one which means “love never loses its way home.” Every time the light of the setting sun shines through, it refracts, causing the window’s vibrant colors to illuminate our sanctuary. The light also seizes our gaze. We’re reminded that death and despair aren’t final, that there’s a light that shines beyond the darkness. We’re encouraged to press on, striving to embody this light — to love our way back home.

The Rev. Marshall Hatch Jr. (MDiv/MSW’17) is Co-founder and Executive Director of the MAAFA Redemption Project.

New Mt. Pilgrim M.B. Church Photography



COVID SERMONS WITH WBEZ CHICAGO

Earlier this spring the Martin Marty Center partnered with WBEZ Chicago (Chicago’s National Public Radio news station) to present “COVID Sermons” where religious leaders from around the city, from a variety of faith traditions, reflected on the relevance of their tradition for navigating the COVID-19 pandemic on the second anniversary of the initial lock-down.

The texts of these sermons are available online at our website; audio links can found at WBEZ: bit.ly/3MfHC1V.

Ustadh Will Ubaydullah Evans, Scholar-in-Residence at The American Learning Institute for Muslims: *“Anything Good That Happens To You Is From God”*

The Rev. Marshall Hatch Jr., Co-founder and Executive Director of the MAAFA Redemption Project: *“Sankofa”*

Rabbi Lizzi Heydemann, Founder of Mishkan Chicago: *“Rise to the Challenge of Blessing the Moment”*

Pastor Tim Kim, Co-Founder of Root + Branch Church: *“A Truth, Power, And Love Beyond My Spiritual Malaise”*

Rev. Emily McGinley, Executive Pastor of Urban Village Church: *“Time Has Lost Meaning In A Way We Have Never Known”*

Rev. Ron Miyamura, Resident Minister of the Midwest Buddhist Temple: *“Adjusting to Services Online”*

Saba Ayman-Nolley, PhD, President and Baha’i Representative of the Hyde Park and Kenwood Interfaith Council: *“Baha’i Reflections on Covid-19”*

Rev. Norman Hernan Moran-Rosero, Founder of Children of Pure Heart, *“Homilia: Englewood Teens Reflect on the Pandemic”*

Pranati Parikh, Fellow and Youth Leader of Bocharanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha: *“The World as a Mango: Our Friends’ Friends and a Choice”*

Dr. Jasvir Singh, Religious Secretary of the Sikh Religious Society of Chicago: *“Living in Gratitude”*

Rise to the Challenge of Blessing the Moment

BY RABBI LIZZI HEYDEMANN

There is a Hebrew blessing we say for first times. Sounds like this: *Barukh atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, shehecheyanu, v'kiy'manu, v'higiyanu laz'man haZeh*. Blessed is the One who gave us life, who held us up and who brought us into this moment.

Fundamentally, blessings are a way of bringing spiritual consciousness to an action, and elevating that action from the mundane to the spiritual by saying a blessing for it. Jews have blessings for eating and drinking. We have a blessing for going to the bathroom. Blessings for doing ritual practices like putting on a tallis (a prayer shawl) or lighting shabbat candles. Usually when we say this particular blessing, the shehecheyanu, it's for things we're grateful for having arrived in life to witness: tasting a new fruit or vegetable, seeing the sunrise in a new place. It was interesting saying shehecheyanu as we blessed wine on screen for what was thousands of Jewish people's first online seder April 9 of 2020, just two weeks after we went into lockdown. It was a reminder that as much as the situation was not ideal, it was no less a moment for spiritual consciousness than it would have been in person.

So much of this pandemic has been exactly that — balancing the admission that of course is not what any of us would have chosen, but as long as it is what it is, let's try to do our best to do what human beings have always done in times like this: Find the meaning in it, the blessing in it.

On the Jewish calendar, we celebrated a new year in September of 2021, and with every new year we say: *Shehecheyanu, v'kiy'manu, v'higiyanu laz'man haZeh*. We are still here, we are still finding reasons to bless, to bless each other, to bless food, to bless sunshine, to bless that we're here, to bless anything at all. We made it through delta. Here we are a few months

into 2022 — we've made it through omicron. There's something unexpected I can bless: Now I know half the Greek alphabet.

What we're going through now is not qualitatively different from what we go through every day, every week, year in and year out. Maybe different in degree, but not different in kind. We are always being invited to rise to the challenge of blessing the moment, this now moment, whatever is it. And while it wouldn't have been my first choice to expend the amount of time and energy thinking about risk tolerance and mask-wearing, and whether to host my son's fourth birthday party or my husband's 40th birthday party on Zoom or in-person ... all of these decisions built our collective capacity for living, for making the best decisions for ourselves, our loved one, and the people around us, given the circumstances. COVID has been a canvas, a backdrop against which to practice our most deeply valued spiritual and practical skills: blessing the moment. *Shehecheyanu, v'kiy'manu, v'higiyanu laz'man haZeh*.

As we offer each other our loving hearts, our forgiveness, our generosity, our patience, in the midst of all that we don't know, know this: as long as you're here, you can labor, you can love and you can bless.

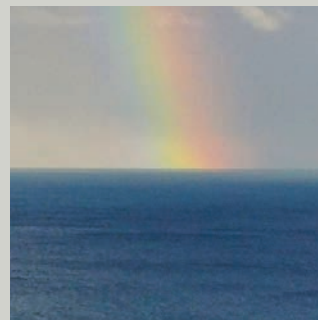
So sit up a little straighter, take a deep breath, and repeat after me:

Barukh atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, Shehecheyanu, v'kiy'manu, v'higiyanu laz'man haZeh.

We bless You, the Sacred, the Mystery that flows throughout our universe and inside of each one of us. Thank you for giving us life, for holding us up, and enabling each one of us to reach this moment.

Amen.

Rabbi Lizzi Heydemann catalyzed the founding of Mishkan Chicago.



Truth, Power, and Love Beyond My Spiritual Malaise

BY TIM KIM

As someone who started a church community for millennials with complicated feelings about religion, I spend most of my time in a world of ambivalence and ambiguity. We ask questions at Root + Branch. A lot of them. Some may be frustrated that we don't give enough answers.

But if you looked closely, you'd see that the entirety of the enterprise is built upon an unequivocal belief that it is good and necessary for us human animals to tap into things beyond the circumstantial and impermanent minutia that are our own individual lives. Drawing closer to God, being spiritually grounded, cultivating a personal and communal practice of faith, — whatever you want to call it — ultimately means coming alive alongside a truth, a love, a power, that is being expressed across all time and contingencies.

It is in view of this that I find myself trying to figure out how I've come to feel a palpable drift away from God. These two pandemic years have felt like a capitulation to entropy. My spiritual order, fallen into disarray.

There is a temptation in me to equate hope with good times. That may sound odd, since hope is often thought of as the one thing needed during trials and tribulations. But I am not talking about a hope that says things will get better. Rather, I am talking about the kind of hope that says this world can actually become in reality what we dare to imagine. In Christian parlance, we say: for the world to be redeemed and made new. It is much easier to inhabit, feel, and pass on such hope when your political candidate has won, or when your communities are flourishing, or when there is no global pandemic.

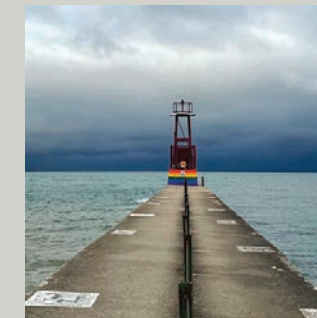
I imagine that this temptation is quite common, as is the truth that many of us have either lost this sort of hope or have at the very least felt it chipped away with every new variant, every grotesque video of a racially-motivated murder, every photo of a screaming maskless person at a grocery store, every cynical response from our appointed leaders.

In the earlier days of the pandemic, I aspired, as I suppose many of us did, to become some sort of ideal version of myself. Putting aside the album that didn't get written and the new morning routine that never got off the ground, I wanted to give more attention to my spiritual life. In the discipline of my daily meditations and walks around the neighborhood, I imagined being shot like a rocket into higher consciousness.

The poet Christian Wiman describes hope as "a condition of your soul, not a response to the circumstance in which you find yourself." My spiritual malaise didn't set in simply because I failed to adopt the disciplined life of a monk.

It won't be cured by suddenly doing so, either. I can, however, remind myself that I walk alongside a truth, power, and love that have been working long before March 2020, and will continue to do so, to make real what we dare to imagine.

Pastor Tim Kim (MDiv'17) is Co-Founder of Root + Branch Church



LIZZI HEYDEMANN



TIM KIM



The Divinity School is pleased to announce that [Carolina López-Ruiz](#) and [Matthew M. Harris](#) will join the faculty, effective July 1, 2022.



MATTHEW M. HARRIS
PROVOST'S POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW
OF RELIGIONS IN THE AMERICAS

Matthew M. Harris will join the faculty as Provost's Postdoctoral Fellow. A scholar of race and religion in the United States, he researches at the intersection of African American religion, Black radical traditions, and the politics of culture. He writes with the aim of recovering histories of struggle to appreciate

the theoretical and practical tools they offer to both reimagine the critical study of society and remake our world. Provost's Postdoctoral Fellows are appointed as Instructors on the tenure track, en route to review for promotion to Assistant Professor after the fellowship period of one or two years.

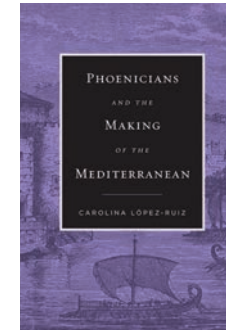


CAROLINA LÓPEZ-RUIZ
PROFESSOR OF THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS,
COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY, AND THE
ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN WORLD

Carolina López-Ruiz will join the faculty as Professor. A scholar of ancient Mediterranean cultures, her research focuses on comparative mythology and cultural exchange in the ancient Mediterranean. Central to her work is the idea that mythological

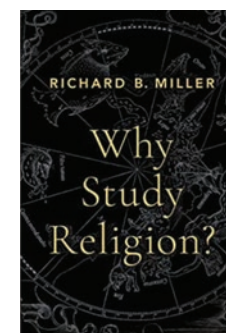
narratives and religious practices act as loci for cultural exchange and provide mechanisms for groups in close contact to negotiate tensions, adopt to change, and bolster their resilience.

New Faculty Books



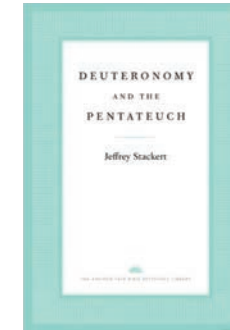
In *Phoenicians and the Making of the Mediterranean*, [Carolina López-Ruiz](#) writes the first comprehensive history of the cultural impact of the Phoenicians, who knit together the ancient Mediterranean world long before the rise of the Greeks. The Phoenician imprint on the Mediterranean lasted nearly a thousand years,

beginning in the Early Iron Age. Following the trail of the Phoenicians from the Levant to the Atlantic coast of Iberia, López-Ruiz offers the first full study of the cultural exchange that transformed the Mediterranean in the eighth and seventh centuries BC. This meticulous document and boldly argued text revises the Hellenocentric model of the ancient world and restores from obscurity the true role of the Near Eastern societies in the history of early civilizations.



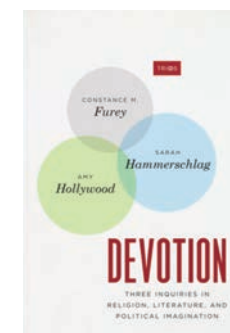
In *Why Study Religion?*, [Richard B. Miller](#) (PhD'85), Laura Spelman Rockefeller Professor of Religion, Ethics, and Politics, asks: Can the study of religion be justified? He observes that scholarship in religious studies, especially work in "theory and method," is preoccupied with matters of research procedure and thus inarticulate about the goals

that can motivate scholarship in the field. Taking up these issues, Miller identifies and assesses six prevailing methodologies in the field that symptomatize this inarticulacy and then offers an alternative framework for thinking about the purposes of the discipline. Miller's framework, Critical Humanism, theorizes about the ends rather than the means of humanistic scholarship, focusing on four values: Post-critical Reasoning, Social Criticism, Cross-cultural Fluency, and Environmental Responsibility. Ordered to such purposes, Miller argues, scholars of religion can relax their commitment to matters of methodological procedure and advocate for the value of studying religion.



In *Deuteronomy and the Pentateuch*, [Jeffrey Stackert](#) navigates readers through the major topics in the interpretation of Deuteronomy and its relationship to the other four Pentateuchal books. He considers the relationship between law and narrative, the role of Deuteronomy in Israel's history, its

composition and reception history, the influence of cuneiform legal and treaty traditions, textual and archaeological evidence from the Levant and Mesopotamia, and the status of Deuteronomy within the larger biblical canon. Stackert's book introduces ongoing debates surrounding Deuteronomy and offers a contemporary evaluation of the latest textual and material evidence.



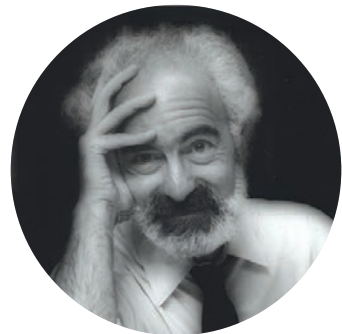
Devotion: Three Inquiries in Religion, Literature, and Political Imagination suggests different ways to characterize the object of devotion and the stance of the devout subject before it. What brings scholars of religion [Sarah Hammerschlag](#) (MA'01, PhD'06), Professor of Religion and Literature, Philosophy of Religions

and History of Judaism, [Constance M. Furey](#) (MA'93, PhD'00), and Amy Hollywood together in this volume is a shared conviction that "reading helps us live with and through the unknown," including times like these. They argue that what we read and what reading itself demands of us open new ways of imagining our political futures and our lives.

Faculty News

Three esteemed members of our faculty — [Michael Fishbane](#), [Matthew Kapstein](#), and [Jean-Luc Marion](#) — are retiring this year from teaching in the Divinity School.

Collectively, Profs. Fishbane, Kapstein, and Marion have given almost 100 years of service to the School: Prof. Kapstein's first appointment with us was in 1986; Prof. Fishbane joined us in 1990, and Prof. Marion in 1994.



MICHAEL FISHBANE, THE NATHAN CUMMINGS DISTINGUISHED SERVICE PROFESSOR OF JEWISH STUDIES, is a scholar of Semitic languages, biblical studies, and Judaica. His writings span from the ancient Near East and biblical studies to rabbinics, the history of Jewish interpretation, Jewish mysticism, and modern Jewish thought.

Among his many books are two winners of the The National Jewish Book Award in scholarship (*Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* and *The Kiss of God*). Fishbane received a Guggenheim Fellowship, among other major grants, and has twice been a fellow of the Institute for Advanced Studies at Hebrew University. He is a member of the American Academy of Jewish Research, and was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award in Textual Studies by the National Foundation of Jewish Culture. An entry on him and his work appears in the new edition of the *Encyclopedia Judaica*. Fishbane is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.



MATTHEW KAPSTEIN, NUMATA VISITING PROFESSOR OF BUDDHIST STUDIES, is a specialist in the history of Buddhist philosophy in India and Tibet, as well as the cultural history of Tibetan Buddhism. The author of over a dozen books and numerous articles, his teaching has focused on particular topics in the history of Buddhist thought, including Buddha Nature, idealism, and epistemology (*pramāṇa*), and on broad themes in the study of religion including the problem of evil, death, and the imagination.

Kapstein is additionally Professor Emeritus of Tibetan Studies at the École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris. In 2018 he was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Sought after as a lecturer around the world, his work consulting for the Library of Congress led to the acquisition of over 300 volumes of rare Tibetan texts from the People's Republic of China. He served, among other posts, as editor of the SUNY Buddhist Studies series for ten years. Kapstein's work has been supported by the Luce Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Academy of Religion, and more.

"These three distinguished Divinity School faculty have made major accomplishments in their fields and important contributions to the Divinity School. I know our entire community joins me in applauding them and wishing them all the best."

JAMES T. ROBINSON, INTERIM DEAN



ON MAY 25-26, THE DIVINITY SCHOOL RECOGNIZED JEAN-LUC MARION, Andrew Thomas Greely and Grace McNichols Greely Professor of Catholic Studies and Professor of the Philosophy of Religions and Theology, with a conference entitled "The Phenomenality of Revelation" that engaged his work, highlighting what he has meant for the Chicago tradition of doing theology as a conversation between reason and revelation.

Professor Marion, a scholar of theology, modern philosophy, and phenomenology, has published numerous books and received nine honorary doctorates; his many awards include the Grand Prix du Philosophie de l'Académie Française, the Karl-Jaspers Prize of the city and University of Heidelberg, and the Humboldt-Stiftung Prize. In 2008, he was elected to one of the 40 seats in the prestigious Académie Française. In 2020 he received the Ratzinger Prize, sometimes called the Nobel Prize for theology. Video of the conference will be available soon.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES INTRODUCES FIRST SUMMER UNDERGRADUATE COURSE

In July, the Religious Studies program will be offering its very first summer undergraduate course, "[Introduction to Religious Studies](#)."

Though the intro course at UChicago has a history that dates back to Jonathan Z. Smith, this will be the first time that it is offered as an online summer intensive course. This format is ideal for college students who are doing internships or are traveling, and early enrollment numbers show that students are interested in exploring the study of religion in this nontraditional learning format. More information, including the course description, can be found here: summer.uchicago.edu/course/introduction-religious-studies.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

What is religion? Is it truth or an illusion? Is it an opiate or an effervescent? Is it the origin of civilization or the end of it? Is it some of these things, or none, or all?

The task of defining religion has bedeviled scholars for centuries and remains a perennial concern in the academic field of Religious Studies. In this course we will explore some of the definitions of religion offered by scholars like Marx, Freud, Durkheim, James, Hurston, Long, de Beauvoir, DuBois, and Mahmood,

as well as the methods, motivations, and historical contexts that made those definitions possible. Along the way we will survey some fundamental themes and issues in the field of Religious Studies. We will then apply what we learn to data outside the field, analyzing how religion is defined and deployed in films, novels, music, TikToks, Instagram reels, and our own brains. Ultimately the tools we acquire in the course will enable us to think through how we as humans organize and make sense of our world and our place in it.

"It is very exciting to help students think through some of the many ways that people have understood the category of religion, and the very real world, political implications of those various understandings. I hope that students who are curious about religion but haven't had the opportunity to fit a religious studies class into their schedule can take advantage of the summer course."

RACHEL BROOKE KATZ, PHD CANDIDATE, HISTORY OF JUDAISM

WOMEN'S CAUCUS



On a frigid early evening in February, the Divinity School's **Women's Caucus** held their first meeting of the year. A collection of students and faculty joined one another in a Swift Hall classroom to share tea, wine, snacks, and the warmth of each other's company. The clanging of the zealous radiators could barely be heard over the sounds of quality conversation and the munching on treats.

The Women's Caucus is an affinity group designed to foster an inclusive community for all women who are a part of the Divinity School community. There has been a club for Divinity School women for more than 100 years, and it took on the name "Women's Caucus" as a part of a broader movement of women's advocacy in the late 1970s. During that time, women's caucuses were cropping up all over the United States in political organizations, universities, and graduate schools, including the women's caucus of the American Academy of Religion and Society of Biblical Literature.

Lydia Herndon, a second-year PhD student in the History of Christianity, and Kate Goza, a second-year MA student and incoming PhD student in the History of Christianity, are the presidents of the Women's Caucus and organized this year's inaugural event.

In preparation for the February gathering, Herndon did archival research to learn more about the history of the Women's Caucus in the Divinity School. When explaining the mission of the Women's Caucus, Herndon said, "All of the articles I have found about women's clubs



"I loved having the space and opportunity to talk with other women in the Divinity school about our interests both academically and personally."

EMMA STERNBERG
FIRST-YEAR MA STUDENT

at the Divinity School over the past century have emphasized a desire to create community and allow women to meet and support each other in male-dominated spaces of the academy." She continued, "Throughout its many incarnations, this has been a constant emphasis and one we hope to carry forward in the coming years."

With the lowering COVID impact and lifting of its restrictions, the Women's Caucus is hoping to begin holding a regular social hour (historically known as Tea Time) throughout the spring quarter. "As the club grows, we hope to also facilitate conversations with women professors about life in the Divinity School, as well as more creative social events like movie nights or outings," Herndon said. "I also think there's definitely an ice cream social in our future this spring!"*

Emma Sternberg, a first-year MA student interested in the Hebrew Bible and Religion and Literature, is a member of the Women's Caucus and attended the first gathering of this academic year. "I loved having the space



and opportunity to talk with other women in the Divinity school about our interests both academically and personally," said Sternberg. "I still feel new to the Divinity School, so being able to create friendships with women who are going through a similar experience helps me feel like a part of the community.

"I am so grateful for the supportive community of the Divinity School as a whole, but I also appreciate the camaraderie I have found with fellow women scholars through this group," said Herndon. "Everything about grad school is challenging, so I really value whatever spaces we can carve out to pause, take a breath, and connect with each other."

**there was definitely an ice cream social!*

For information about the Women's Caucus and its future events, please email lherndon@uchicago.edu or follow [@women_uchicagodivinity](https://www.instagram.com/women_uchicagodivinity) on Instagram.



A new exhibit at The Regenstein Library, entitled “**Buddha, Jesus, and the Japanese American Community in Chicago: Wood Carvings by Harry Koizumi**” is now available. The exhibit was curated by Paride Stortini, PhD Candidate, History of Religions. Paride’s research focuses on how Japanese Buddhist priests and scholars in late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries developed new forms of knowledge about the Indian origins of Buddhism through contact with Western scholarship and direct travel to South Asia, and how they used this knowledge to redefine a place for Buddhism in modern Japan.

BIBFELDT RETURNS

ON APRIL 1ST THE DIVINITY STUDENTS

ASSOCIATION held a conference and reception to celebrate the life and work of **Franz Bibfeldt**. After welcoming remarks by Dean James Robinson, an august selection of faculty

members, students, and alumni presented on various aspects of Bibfeldt Studies. Bibfeldt is also the subject of a daring new exhibit at The Library; learn more about Bibfeldt Studies at bit.ly/3NwiLXZ



EMILY D. CREWS, (PhD’21) will join the staff of the Martin Marty Center for the Public Understanding of Religion, effective August 1, as the Assistant Director. In this position Dr. Crews will contribute to advancing the research agenda of the Center, assisting faculty and graduate students with translating their work to public audiences as well as managing the Center’s community and academic partnerships and its engagement with the media.

Dr. Crews, who is currently a Divinity School Teaching Fellow, will bring a wealth of teaching, research, and publishing experience to the position. Brie Loskota, the Executive Director of the Martin Marty Center, commented, “Dr. Crews brings a depth of knowledge about religion in Chicago, history of religions, and the

Divinity School itself. She is a highly regarded member of the Div School community and could have chosen any career path within or outside the academy. That she has chosen to bring her strengths and expertise to the Marty Center is a testament to what we are building and the ways the Divinity School is broadening its reach.”

“I think the work we do at the Divinity School matters,” said Dr. Crews. “It has the potential to shape the ways that a diverse public understands issues that are profoundly important to our present moment, from the significance of the Supreme Court’s recent Dobbs draft to ethical responses to climate change. I’m honored to be part of the Divinity School’s engagement with that public.”

Dr. Crews’ research and teaching investigate the ways that women’s religious lives are bound up with issues of race, gender, and reproduction. Her current research project focuses on the significance of alternative reproductive health practices to the construction of certain forms of white femininity in evangelical Christian communities in the American South. She is currently at work on a digital humanities site, supported by a grant from the Center for Lived Religion in the Digital Age, that explores the landscape of African immigrant religions in Chicago. Dr. Crews is the co-editor of *Remembering Jonathan Z. Smith: A Career and Its Consequence* (with Russell McCutcheon, 2020) and *African Diaspora Religions in 5 Minutes* (with Curtis J. Evans, forthcoming 2023).

ANTI-VIOLENCE TASK FORCE

THE DIVINITY SCHOOL IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE OUR PARTICIPATION IN AN ANTI-VIOLENCE TASK FORCE FORMED BY THE HYDE PARK AND KENWOOD INTERFAITH COUNCIL.

The goal of the task force is preventing violence through education, service, outreach, and advocacy, and Brie Loskota, the Executive Director of the Martin Marty Center for the Public Understanding of Religion, is the University representative on the Anti-Violence Task Force. As the Marty Center Executive Director, Loskota works on supporting scholarship on religions and translating research to a variety of audiences. Her experience engaging religion and civic culture and enhancing religious pluralism and community resilience in faith communities makes her an excellent fit for this task force.

In addition to engaging members of the neighboring communities, the task force is encouraging students of the university to be engaged in promoting anti-violence. Loskota says it is “a beautiful fabric of people all working in concert towards a shared goal of a flourishing community,” and the Divinity School and its students’ focus on the study of religion can help work towards that goal.

SWIFT ONLINE

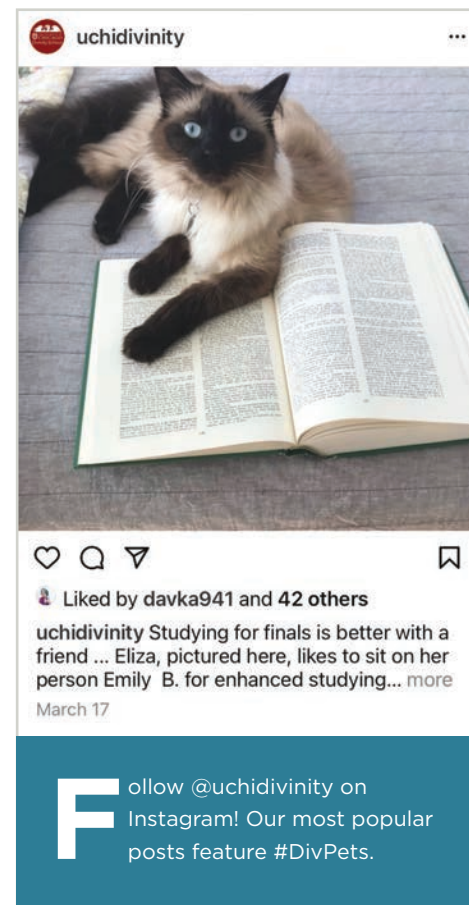
Visit our YouTube channel (bit.ly/DivinityVideo) for these videos and more.



PUBLIC SCHOLARSHIP ON RELIGION: AN EVENING WITH LIZ BUCAR

WATCH THE VIDEO OF OUR
MARCH 29TH EVENT WITH LIZ BUCAR.

Liz Bucar (PhD'06) is Professor of Religion, Dean's Leadership Fellow, and Director of Sacred Writes at Northeastern University. An expert in comparative religious ethics, she is a sought-after lecturer on topics ranging from gender reassignment surgery to the global politics of modest clothing. She is the author of four books and two edited collections, including the award-winning trade book, *Pious Fashion: How Muslim Women Dress* (Harvard, 2017) and *Stealing My Religion: Not Just Any Cultural Appropriation* (Harvard, summer 2022).



INSIGHTS FROM A LONG WAR AND A FRAGILE PEACE: AN EVENING WITH GARY MASON

WATCH THE VIDEO OF OUR APRIL 5TH
EVENT WITH GARY MASON.

Gary Mason is the founder of Rethinking Conflict. Rev. Dr. Mason spent 28 years as a Methodist minister in Belfast and was involved in bringing peace to Northern Ireland. He continues to be a close advisor to Protestant ex-combats on the civilization efforts of paramilitaries. He is a Senior Research Fellow at the Kennedy Institute for Conflict Intervention at Maynooth University in Ireland and an adjunct Professor at the Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta.





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



NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
CHICAGO, IL
PERMIT NO. 8086

Criterion