

Global Humanities and Religions

FALL 2023

website: chss.wvu.edu/humanities-religions



Note from the Department Chair:

November 2023

Dear alumni, colleagues, students,
and many friends of the department,

We hope this finds you well and
we're happy that you've decided to
read our news about some of the
department's activities over the past
two years.

I write now as we have a new academic year (2023-24)
underway, and as our Fall Quarter begins to wind down.
Over the past two years, the department has been very
relieved to return to teaching our courses on campus and
meeting in person, once again, with our students. Our
faculty continue to conduct research around the globe—and
are again traveling the world!—and to bring that knowledge
and experience into the classroom, continuing to teach
long-standing courses as well as developing new subjects to
offer the university community.

Among the new courses our faculty have developed
are Daniel Picus' upper-level electives on "Secret Books of
the Bible" and "Religion, Reading, and Power," in addition
to a new senior seminar: "Contesting Creation." Jonathan
Miran will also teach a new senior seminar on "Pilgrimage
and Travel in Islam," while Holly Folk is teaching about
"New Religious Movements in East Asia" this Spring. Carrie
Frederick Frost has also expanded our introductory courses
in Religious Studies, with popular courses on "Meditation,
Mindfulness, and Religion," and "Spirituality, Literature, and
the Wild;" at the same time, our attention to visual culture
has expanded with Gianna Carotenuto's "Global Histories of
Photography."

The department has also established a **new
interdisciplinary Minor in South and Southeast Asian
Studies**, hoping to increase Western students' knowledge
of that dynamic, populous region of our world. Related
to that, the department is also delighted to finally offer
a non-European Humanities 302 seminar this year—Prof.
Michael Slouber will teach a version of the seminar on the
"Ramayana: an Epic from India."

We also continue to have an energetic and active student
leadership team (on that, see page 9), and to award our

Meagan Elizabeth Smith
Memorial Scholarship
for Excellence in the
Humanities on an annual
basis—now often to two
students (see pages
10, 11, and 15). The
features on our students'
accomplishments in this
newsletter share just a
small fraction of the hard
work and achievements
of our current department
majors and minors!

We hope to announce
this year's annual
distinguished speaker
soon—please check
this page for upcoming
departmental speaker
events: [https://chss.
wvu.edu/global-
humanities-and-religions/
distinguished-speakers-
series](https://chss.wvu.edu/global-humanities-and-religions/distinguished-speakers-series)

Finally, I'll close with some particular congratulations to
my faculty colleagues—they published THREE new books
this year (more about those on page 14). My congratulations
to Professors Scott Pearce, Ethan Bushelle, and Carrie
Frederick Frost for that important and extensive work! Dr.
Ethan Bushelle, our expert in Japanese Religions and Culture
received tenure in the department and became an Associate
Professor; he is also currently the interim Director of the
East Asian Studies program on campus. And Dr. Michael
Slouber, our expert in South Asian Studies, was promoted to
Full Professor.

As ever, please keep in touch with the department and
let us know if you have news to share!

With warmest greetings to all,
Kimberly Lynn

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LOCAL

'The climate crisis is a moral crisis': How Bellingham's faith communities unite in action

BY YSABELLE KEMPE

UPDATED MAY 16, 2022 11:29 AM



The Climate Crisis

Bellingham's Lairmont Manor was bursting at the seams with attendees during the first event held by the local Multifaith Network for Climate Justice in September 2019. Despite a pandemic that upended how we gather, the Multifaith Network for Climate Justice has continued to meet via Zoom and correspond online, sharing information about policy, events and news.

Leaders from over a dozen spiritual traditions — including Catholicism, Buddhism, Judaism and Paganism— spoke at the first gathering, held during the city's annual ALL IN for Climate Action Week.

"No matter how superficially different people perceive them as being, all of them expressed a profound deeply rooted belief that their religion calls them to protect this earth," said Betsy Gross, a retired mental health professional who co-convoked the multifaith network.

The Multifaith Network for Climate Justice is a group of Bellingham residents from faith and wisdom communities that gather monthly to discuss climate change and justice. Gross said the group fills participants' unmet craving to explore the intersection between their faith and human-caused climate change, which is bringing more frequent,

severe extreme weather and disrupting ecosystems around the world.

"People came because their own faiths weren't talking about it, and they wanted to," Gross said.

The digital meetings begin and end with a centering moment that is reflective and meditative.

"It changes the whole tone," said Jillian Froebe, a community minister involved with the network. "It doesn't take the fire out of it, but it takes the judgment out of it."

Participants do not have to be part of an established faith or wisdom community, and meeting attendance ranges from 30 to 120 people, Gross said.

The network is Gross' brainchild. After attending a 2019 climate leader training in Atlanta, Georgia, led by former Vice President Al Gore, Gross came back to Bellingham with her "hair on fire." Filled with indignation that climate change would hit the poorest people the hardest, Gross decided she needed to engage a community in Bellingham that hadn't been as outspoken about climate change

issues: the faith community.

"This is a labor of love," Gross said. "To me, that's the niche that spiritual traditions have to offer to the conversation about climate."

'CLIMATE CRISIS IS A MORAL CRISIS'

What do faith and spirituality have to do with the environment and climate change? This is a question that Jason Brown, who teaches at Western Washington University and British Columbia's Simon Fraser University, has dedicated his career to exploring.

"The climate crisis is a moral crisis," Brown said. "That means that the climate crisis is a religious issue as much as it is a political, technological or ecological issue."

Different faiths and spiritual worldviews define the relationship between humans and the natural world in contrasting ways, Brown said. Some frame the earth as a "material blessing from a divine source," while others perceive the nonhuman world as sharing in God's presence, he said.

Indigenous peoples tend to have a more entangled relationship with the natural world and a "diverse view of persons," he said. Froebe, the minister involved with

Bellingham's Multifaith Network, said the group has much to learn from the way local Indigenous communities interact with the environment.

Part of the value of an interfaith group is that it allows participants to clarify their own faith's position on the environment and climate in relation to others, Brown explained.

"Do animals have souls? Is the Earth sacred? Can we say Mass outside?" Brown said. "You start to come up against the limitations of your own faith."

A climate-focused group rooted in spirituality and philosophy also serves as a space for people to process the emotions elicited by a warming planet, Brown said. Many young people have already begun to move away from religion, and it can be this loss of the "sense of the sacred" that makes the ecological crisis feel even more daunting to them, he said.

"There's goodness in gathering and talking about grief," Brown said. "People should talk about how scary it is right now and move to that place of certainty that other people feel the same way. You are not alone."

SACRED EARTH FAIR ON THE HORIZON

The Multifaith Network for Climate Justice is more than a space to talk. It is a vessel for climate action and policy.

"The idea now is to try and get those faith communities not just to acknowledge this portion of their spiritual path but to put them in a position where there is action taken, so we can do what we can to preserve what's left of creation," said Deb Cruz, a participant in the network from the Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship.

The network doesn't mark the first time that faith communities and climate action have crossed paths in Whatcom — statewide nonprofit Earth Ministry supported efforts to fight the proposed Gateway Pacific coal terminal at Cherry Point years before the Multifaith Network for Climate Justice was convened. The network formalized a partnership with Earth Ministry in early 2021.

It's been more difficult to get large fundamentalist Christian churches out in the county involved with the Multifaith Network than groups in Bellingham, Froebe said.



Diane Sue, Betsy Gross, Judy Hopkinson, Jillian Froebe and Brian Johnson hold the Multifaith Network for Climate Justice banner in 2021 in Bellingham. *Linda Conroy Courtesy to The Bellingham Herald*

The network is also not as intergenerational as she would like, but she has high hopes that the network's Sacred Earth Fair this summer will change that. The Sacred Earth Fair, which will take place at Bellingham's Center for Spiritual Living from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday, July 31, is an outdoor event that will bring together community members for an afternoon of speakers, yoga, listening circles, Zen nature walks, booths and children's activities. Violinist and Lummi Nation member Swil Kanim will perform, and Nooksack Tribal storyteller Tammy Cooper-Woodrich and her daughter Angela Letoi will speak.

Gross hopes community members walk away from the fair feeling energized to take action.

"It seems like the more we talk about this and offer 80 different ways you can see, know and understand it, the more we all get involved in doing something about it," Gross said.

[Link to Bellingham Herald story. www.bellinghamherald.com/news/local/article261267347.html](http://www.bellinghamherald.com/news/local/article261267347.html)

Travel Through Time

Special Collections at Western Washington University Libraries in Bellingham is a gateway into the ancient world. Located on the sixth floor of the Wilson building, this immense archive features medieval texts, photographs, pieces of art and artifacts.

"I like to think of Special Collections as a place where students can travel abroad and back in time, virtually, right at the heart of campus," said Michael Taylor, the Special Collections librarian. "Our goal is to make sure these materials will be around for a long time to come."

Western instructors from across the university bring their classes to see Special Collections. Students are able to traverse back in time and learn from old artifacts or books in the collection.

"The items in Special Collections inspire students to ask as many questions as the item might answer," said

Gianna Carotenuto, an instructor for Western's Department of Global Humanities and Religions. "The books, maps, illustrations and photographs act as a voice from another place and time and help the student understand a very different mindset."

Existing in the presence of such objects grants students the realization that these worlds were real and really not that long ago.

"It's very tactile, and it may bring something that seems like it's just distant history to life," said Dr. Amy Amendt-Raduege, an instructor for Western's Department of English who is often referred to as "Dr. Rad" by her students.

"I like to take my medieval literature and culture classes up there to see the medieval texts that we have in person," Dr. Rad said. "So that they can actually see and sort of touch real medieval manuscripts and get their eyes on, it makes it so real to them."

Western's Special Collections lets you travel through time

It features books, artifacts and artwork going back decades

By **Ben Stainbrook**

February 10, 2023 | 10:21am PST



Old texts are organized on a shelf in one of the Special Collections shelving areas on Jan. 27, 2023, in Western Washington University Libraries in Bellingham, Wash. The preservation of books like these is one of the main priorities of Western Libraries Special Collections. *Photo courtesy of Western Libraries Special Collections*

Historical archives in general remind people of our past and what it means.

“You need documentation, whether it be artifacts, or photographic or written or verbal. Information gives [historical] context,” said Jeff Jewell, a research technician at the Whatcom County Photo Archives. “[History] allows us to have a broader understanding of our place in time.”

For some, history is a grand puzzle that needs solving as it gives meaning to our current existence.

“Once you get the bug for history, it’s like solving a mystery. You can research and investigate and solve mysteries; it’s the detective story. And people love mysteries right?” Jewell said. “[The] legacy element is probably the most important thing that museums, history and the photo archives have to offer is that you’re satisfying that human need for meaning.”

Special Collections is meant to be an open resource for students to locate their interests, whether it be in the current time or in the past.

“Students and professors also use materials from Special Collections to do original research,” Taylor said. “If you are looking for primary sources, we are one of the best places on campus to visit.”

Museums, archives and collections like these are what define history as we know it. They close the distance between what is considered the past and what is considered the present.

“The passage of time isn’t automatically history,” Jewell said. “History is the documentation of the passage of time.”

[Link to *The Front* story.](#)

www.westernfrontonline.com/article/2023/09/wwu-music-library

Top Right: A look down the aisle in one of the Special Collections shelving rooms, located in Bellingham, Wash., shows the organization of various texts on Jan. 27, 2023. Shelving rooms are separate from the public exhibit, but items can be requested for research and obtained by Special Collections staff. *Photo courtesy of Western Libraries Special Collections*

Middle: Special Collections has a public exhibit on the sixth floor of the Wilson building at Western Libraries in Bellingham, Wash. The exhibit features several display cases including this one showcasing old photography equipment and Native American history as shown on Jan. 27, 2023. *Photo by Ben Stainbrook*

Bottom: Japanese history is presented as one of several displays in the public exhibit in Western Libraries Special Collections. Art pieces and photographs hang above a display case containing Japanese books as shown on Jan. 27, 2023. *Photo by Ben Stainbrook*



FACULTY UPDATES

Ethan Bushelle



As always, the past year has been a busy one for Ethan, filled with many family activities and, yes, even time for research and study. With his two kids (Theo 5; Phaedra 3) and wife (Emi, a professor of Japanese history here at Western), he has been able to take advantage of the full range of what life in Bellingham has to offer: from paddle boarding in Bellingham bay to hiking the seemingly endless trails on Mt. Galbraith. In between, he has also found time to explore new avenues of research. With much enthusiasm, he has been investigating the global connections that gave rise to some of the hallmark features of Japanese culture, from Shinto and samurai to the imperial system, in preparation for his book project, provisionally entitled, “Government under Heaven: The Birth of the Japanese State in Eurasian Late Antiquity.” Currently in the process of drafting the first chapter, he looks forward to presenting his research at AAS (Association of Asian Studies) in the Spring and organizing conferences and symposia on cross-cultural interactions in Japanese and East Asian antiquity in the near future.

Holly Folk



Holly Folk spent several weeks this summer in the New York area, researching the different branches of the Unification Church. The research was funded by a Fichter grant from the Association for the Sociology of Religion, which supports research on religions with women leaders. In August, Folk is giving a paper at the ASR meeting in Los Angeles, about problems in popular assumptions about religious “cults” — and then is returning to South Korea for research on several Korean new religions. Folk still hopes to hike out at Mt. Baker at least once before the start of fall quarter!


Carrie Frederick Frost



It has been an exciting year for adjunct professor Carrie Frederick Frost. She taught a new humanities course in spring 2023: “Spirituality, Literature, and the Wild.” *Church of Our Granddaughters*, her book of constructive theology about the place of women in the Orthodox Church, was published by Cascade Books. Carrie helped to organize and spoke at the International Orthodox Theological Association conference in


Greece in January, and gave the keynote at the conference “Women in the Orthodox Church Today” in Finland in September. She continues to be an avid birdwatcher, walking on the Arboretum trails every day she’s on campus. Perhaps most exciting, she became a grandmother last October.

Andrea Gogröf



Andrea worked as interim chair for the department in Winter and Spring 2023. She very much enjoyed surfing the steep learning curve, and the many connections established campus wide during these two quarters. Her research on the French author Michel Houellebecq allows for a quarter professional leave in Spring 2024. Other research includes German memory studies and studies on the history and valuation of work as it relates to real life of course but also as it transforms as a concept linked to the evolution of modernity.

Kimberly Lynn



Kimberly Lynn continues in her role as Department Chair, starting a third four-year term this summer. In 2022, she once again had the opportunity to teach her version of the 302 seminar, in which students read the entirety of *Don Quixote*. These seminars have been some of her favorite teaching experiences of at Western! In Fall 2022, in a first for the department, her senior seminar on the cities of the early modern Iberian Empires was cross-listed as a graduate course in the History department; it ended up being a wonderful, engaged group of half Humanities and Religion seniors and half History MA students. She also continues to work on various research projects related to the history of the Spanish Inquisition—this Fall a chapter of hers, “The Spanish Inquisition: Power, Minorities, and Dissent,” will be published in a collection with an international group of experts on the history of inquisitions; this piece is related to her ongoing work as [part of an advisory board based at the University of Bologna in Italy](#). But her happiest news this year was welcoming her second baby, Sylvie (Sylvia Rose), in May 2023!

Jonathan Miran

Jonathan Miran continues to pursue his current research and writing interests in ocean and sea-centered approaches to regional and global history as well as histories of slavery



and the slave trade out of Africa. A first-of-its-kind survey article that brings these two themes together, titled “Red Sea Slave Trade,” was published last year in *The Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*. Together with a colleague affiliated with the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC), Jonathan has now embarked on an edited book project with the working title “Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Red Sea Region, 7th-20th c.,” to appear, hopefully, in 2025 with Brill Publishers (Leiden).

Tom Moore

Tom has one foot in the classroom and one in the Fellowship Office, which sometimes makes for quite a stretch. This year has been a good one for Fulbrighters, with WWU students winning two to Germany, two to Spain, one to Scotland and one to Austria. As for GHR, Tom continues to teach Myth and Folklore as well as Poetry and Spirituality. A highlight of the former was to have Ms. Jessie Ulmer (WWU graduate) meet with the class and discuss her queer rewriting of ‘Hansel and Gretel’, titled *Bewildered* (Sword and Kettle Press).



Seán Murphy

Deep grappling with Dante and his historical moment endures in the Department. In 2021-22, Professor Seán Murphy experimented with a new 300-level course on Dante that will be offered to the university as a whole in years when the venerable seminar, “Methods of Interdisciplinary Study” (HUMA 302), is dedicated to something other than Dante. With a little less emphasis on sustained research into the *Comedy*, the new course, “Dante and Florence,” makes room for the study of 14th- and 15th-century Florentine historians (Dino Compagni and Leonardo Bruni) and culminates with an analysis of depictions of Dante by his three earliest biographers (Boccaccio, Bruni, and Manetti). Meanwhile, the millstones of research and publication continue their slow grind: this spring, Professor Murphy submitted a 487-page manuscript of William of Auvergne’s *De legibus* (On Laws) to Catholic University of America Press, where it will be published in an eminent and wide-ranging series: *The Fathers of the Church: Mediaeval Continuation*.



Scott Pearce

Over the last two years, Scott has been on research leave, this past year through sabbatical from Western, and the year before that, 2021-2022, with outside funding from the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton and NYU’s Institute for Study of the Ancient World. The time spent in Princeton and New York contributed greatly to Scott’s study of early medieval East Asia, a key example of this being regular access to the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s significant collection of art from the period, with pieces directly connected to Scott’s work. The research conducted during these past two years will take shape in a volume on the sixth-century military regimes from which grew the Tang empire; a volume on the regime from which those sixth-century states grew, *Northern Wei (386-534): A New Form of Empire in East Asia*, came out from Oxford in June of this year. The time spent in Princeton and New York was not just productive – it was also a delight. But it is also a delight to return to our fine little town of Bellingham.



Daniel Picus

Daniel Picus has had a busy few years year of teaching new courses and writing. He remains active in both the Society of Biblical Literature and Association of Jewish studies, presenting papers at both conferences, and presented at the weekly Wednesday Classics, Ancient Near East, and Religious Studies seminar at the University of British Columbia in March. He has a few different pieces coming out in the near future, one on early Jewish use of physical texts as ritual artifacts, and another on classical rabbinic interpretations of Biblical prophetic visions involving flying scrolls. In the meantime, he continues to make headway on turning his 2017 dissertation into a book tracking the way ancient rabbis thought about and discussed religious practices involving books and texts.



Michael Slouber

Michael Slouber was promoted to full professor in 2023. The past two years included a quarter of professional leave dedicated to a new book project on spirit healing. He has several new publications, including one on goddesses in Jainism just published in the *Oxford Handbook of Tantric Studies*. Another new piece reinvigorates a long-standing debate on the origin of the word shaman, and also explores its applicability to Indian Tantric exorcism traditions. He

FACULTY UPDATES



attended several conferences and presented new research both virtually and in person. Last Spring, Michael was pleased to be able to reconnect with old friends and colleagues at a UC Berkeley conference honoring his first Sanskrit teachers, Robert and Sally Goldman. He also helped organize and host a four-part lecture series on the Yoga Sutra with Dr.

Balasubramanian from India.

News From Emeritus Faculty

David Curley

I have reached the age of coming to an end of doing active research, and the pandemic of course also has ended my travels to India. But the magic of Zoom has opened a new activity, meeting with scholars from across the globe who are reading the kind of Bengali poetry that I worked on as a scholar. I get up at 5:30 most Friday mornings to be on a call at 6, while scholars in India are joining at 5:30 in the early evening! This has been lots of fun as we all take turns trying to translate verses from one long poem, appropriately about the Goddess of plagues and fevers.



Milt Krieger

Milt Krieger's definitively last ever academic publication, modest in length and scope, appeared as a preface to the book by his closest Cameroonian colleague the last two decades, now teaching in Cape Town: Francis Nyamnjoh, *Incompleteness: Donald Trump, Populism and Citizenship* (Langaa Press, 2022). Francis spent two mid-2015 months in Trump's, Jim Jordan's and J.D. Vance's part of Ohio, learned enough while there to predict 2016's presidential election correctly, and turned the experience into this book, with the Nigerian novelist Amos Tutuola among his muses. Milt's preface introduces Francis to a hoped-for American readership.



2021 marked the first (and likely last) publication of a Krieger poem, "Jazz Festival, August 2021" in *Whatcom Watch*, October 2021. As it suggests, he continues to stalk local jazz, and also to move his jazz vinyl and books to Western's Music Library, and jazz miscellany to the Center for Pacific Northwest Studies' Milton Krieger Collection on Jazz in Whatcom County.



2022-23 Leadership Team

Left to Right: Marina Holmes, Jay Mounts, Maile Akeo, Mercy Badgero, Petra Ellerby, John Cook

2023-24 Leadership Team



Left to Right Front Row: Vanja Hagman, Anne Lillis, Allison Martini, Jasmin Liwanag. *Left to Right Back Row:* Maxwell Bauccio-Teschlog, Calvin Christoph, Maesie Halliday, John Cook. *Not Pictured:* Sophia Robertson.

The 2022-23 Leadership Team Answers, “What you would like others to know about the department?”

John Cook – One thing that I would have others know about the department is that it encourages students to approach humanities studies through a wide range of disciplinary perspectives. This can be helpful for students who want to engage with the humanities broadly without committing to a specific discipline.

Maile Akeo – One thing that I would want others to know about the department is that the courses we have in our department are little bits of other fields of study. With the widespread range of topics that the department offers, each course has a mix of history, geography, and literature.

And with each course you can always find connections to the present and future that you might have not guessed would come about learning from the past. Taking courses in the department is like time traveling to find out and observe exactly how matters came about in different parts of the world.

Mercy Badgero – The teachers are really personable and really know how to make the subject they teach enjoyable towards the students.

Petra Ellerby – My GHR coursework has provided me with an important opportunity to think and write with disciplinary flexibility. Being a part of an academic unit explicitly dedicated to holistic (yet rigorous!) study has allowed me to pursue the sort of academic inquiry that makes me tick.

STUDENT RECOGNITION

Department Outstanding Graduate

2020-21	Jodie Permen
2021-22	Devan Gunther
2022-23	Matt White

Graduates with Departmental Honors

2020-21	Lena Blissell, Jodie Permen, Joe Stong
2021-22	Erin Allen
2022-23	Drew Owen, Thomas Thomas, Matt White

Presidential Scholar 2023

Petra Ellerby

Meagan Elizabeth Smith Memorial Scholarship for Excellence in the Humanities

6th Annual (2021-22) recipient:

Erica Campbell

7th Annual (2022-23) recipients:

Petra Ellerby

I arrived at Western in 2019, when my twin sister and I moved to Bellingham at the beginning of our first quarter.



Since then, we've (collectively) accumulated three majors, two minors, and maintained memberships in an eclectic assortment of campus organizations.

In addition to the moral support provided by friends and family, I've been lucky to have found a number of welcoming communities to help guide me through the pandemic

years. Since 2020, my participation in WWU's orchestral program has allowed me to remain on campus during periods of remote instruction. As a double major in History and GHR, I have been able to pursue my interests in an (inter-)interdisciplinary environment, and have enjoyed exploring the wide-ranging academic offerings made accessible by both departments. My first year at WWU introduced me to the study of antiquity, and I've been able to build upon (and branch out from!) that initial interest with the help of professors and mentors in History, Honors, and GHR. I successfully completed my History thesis ("Status and Profit in the Amarna Archives") with Dr. Steven Garfinkle, and then proceeded to an Honors capstone on an early modern European topic, working with Dr. Tom Moore. My final years at Western saw an ever-ballooning

assortment of essays and paperwork that can be blamed on my inability to write off any one of my allied interests in Assyriology, intellectual history, and library science. My coursework within GHR has encouraged me to enrich my thinking both topically and methodologically, and I will always be grateful for the chance to explore human history through diverse and complementary lenses... even if it does mean that I have a more difficult grad school decision on my hands!

Matt White

I'm deeply honored and grateful to have been selected as a recipient of the Meagan Elizabeth Memorial Scholarship



for this academic year. As a new student, both at Western and in the Global Humanities and Religions Department, my aim has been focused on engaging with diverse ideas, broadening my perspective, and consistently offering the best academic work I can in my studies.

My journey in life has been wonderful and strange, having lived originally

in Florida and eventually ending up here in Washington. Before moving to the Pacific Northwest and attending Western I was a weather forecaster in the United States Air Force. Six years in central Illinois instilled in me a longing for the mountains of the Pacific Northwest and a return to academia. My primary focus as a post-baccalaureate student has been relearning essential academic practices and fine-tuning them for later graduate studies. A specific area of study that I've become drawn to is identifying forms of alterity and self-concept in various cultures and historical periods, particularly through literary representations. I've been given a special opportunity to present a paper at the Pacific Ancient and Modern Language Association this year with the topic of "civilian alterity and veteran identity." When I'm not busy with schoolwork I spend my free time enjoying nerdy science fiction. I'm hoping to rekindle my love for running this summer and participate in a 5K or 10K at some point before the Fall. My plan after Western is to attend graduate school and continue my journey in academia.

8th Annual (2023-24) recipients:

Aodhan Jibril

In 2021, I came to western as a relatively aimless student who lacked any community, having intentionally left where I grew up down in the San Francisco bay area. I longed to leave and was drawn north by the nature of the Pacific Northwest and a chance to reinvent myself. As someone who has always had a desire to learn, I was excited to explore what the uni had to offer. Having grown up around several different languages, I was quickly drawn

to linguistics. My interest in exploring my own heritage as well as the cultures, art, clothing, food, and crafts of other cultures has long given me a love of history. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of my historical interests, I found an academic home in the GHR department, and towards the end of my first year at Western (my second year overall) I became a Humanities: History of Culture major. After over a year in the department, my time here has proven to be an immense challenge as well as a meaningful learning experience thus far (shoutout to Dr. Seán Murphy and Dr. Ethan Bushelle). Balancing two minors (Linguistics and International Business) with my major studies and my own life may be difficult, but thankfully the skills that become second nature as a History of Culture student prove to be an invaluable aid to the quality of work I am able to produce in my other studies.

I was incredibly surprised and honored to be the recipient of the Meagan Elizabeth Memorial Scholarship for this upcoming year, and I am overjoyed to be able to continue on this journey. The courses within the History of Culture track have so far forced me to become a more diligent researcher, a more critical thinker, and a more curious and eloquent mind, and for that I am grateful. The history of the Irish Language - from a linguistics and a sociocultural standpoint - has been on my mind lately and is something I would seek to understand using the skills I've acquired while being a part of this department. In general, the depth of research, the curiosity, and the writing skills that become so vital to thriving as a part of the GHR is what will enrich my endeavors into music, languages (Russian and Irish at the moment), historical crafts, food, geography, history, and whatever may follow in the years to come.

Anne Lillis

I was deeply honored to be selected as a recipient of the Megan Elizabeth Smith Memorial Scholarship. As someone who has pursued the thrill of learning and knowledge my whole life, discovering the Global Humanities and Religion department and the History of Culture major has led me to become part of a community that has enriched my life in every way. The incredible professors within this department have challenged me to think deeply and differently, encouraging me to step out of my comfort zone and grow in ways that surprised me. My peers have fostered that love of learning, creating lively class environments and inspiring me with their honest perspectives, their thoughtfulness, and their passion. As I've learned through my time at Western as part of the GHR department, the English department, and the Honors college, one of the most important things about being human is connection and community, both of which



I've found in abundance here at Western. The amazing opportunities I had to study abroad in both Ireland and Greece through Western-led programs opened my eyes to other cultures and experiences, but the time I've spent here in Bellingham, learning from the communities here, has been just as important and valuable as my time spent abroad. As I enter my fourth and final year at Western as part of the GHR Leadership team, I look forward to working on my GHR thesis and my Honors capstone project, and continuing on my pursuit of knowledge within this great community.

Humanities Scholarship

2021-22 Recipients:

Margaret Cameron-Behee, Petra Ellerby, Grace Stahlberg

2022-23 Recipients:

John Cook, Kyle Iboshi, Phoenix Willging

2023-24 Recipients:

John Cook, Maesie Halliday, Zen Quashie

2020-21 Senior Thesis Topics

Lena Blissell, "The New Apostolic Reformation in the United States" (Advisor: Holly Folk)

Joe Stong, "Reconstructing the World Religions Paradigm: Is Renovation Needed?" (Advisor: Ethan Bushelle)

2021-22 Senior Thesis Topics

Erin Allen, "St. Augustine's Neoplatonic Christianity: The Fruit that Fully Satisfies" (Advisor: Seán Murphy)

Carly Spradlin, "Influential Effects & Cyclical Instances of Religion: Examples from the Early Modern Era" (Advisor: Kimberly Lynn)

2022-23 Senior Thesis Topics

Drew Owen, "The Warrior and the Poet: Tracing Native British Warrior Culture from *Y Gododdin* to *The Mabinogion*" (Advisor: Seán Murphy)

Thomas Thomas, "Heart Knowledge; Representations of Judaism in Two Womanist Interpretations of the Song of Songs" (Advisor: Daniel Picus)

Matt White, "A Perilous Path: The Quiet Rebellion of William Blake" (Advisor: Andrea Gogroff)

Maile Akeo, "Restoring the Presence of the Pacific Peoples During the American Whaling Era" (Advisor: Holly Folk)

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



Vincent Vansaghi

Dear Department of Global Humanities and Religious

I was excited to hear from Dr. Slouber about this newsletter and I am happy to share a bit of my experience at WWU and afterwards. Firstly, a little about my experience in Global Humanities and Religions.

The structure of the department allowed me to specialize and focus on my personal interest while also facilitating a broader appreciation for different areas of thought and research; showing just how versatile and crucial the humanities are and how well an academic department can function.

During my time at Western I was able to take many classes directly concerned with South Asian Religion and Culture while also pursuing specific topics and languages through independent study classes. My education at Western was not restricted to South Asia though. The way the classes are structured, the professors, and the themes and goals of the department facilitate a broad knowledge and understanding of the humanities. Though the subject of study may differ from one's focus, there was always something crucial to take away from the courses

and interactions with the professors. I still regularly discuss the seminar classes I was lucky enough to be a part of; Dante's Love, Xuanzang's Journey, and the fascinating topic of Traditional Indian Medicine.

Thanks to the guidance and patience of the professors and the resources from the department I was able to apply and pursue language training through an international program called the American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS). While an undergrad at Western, I was able to complete two summers of Malayalam, in addition to the Hindi independent study courses I took with Dr. Slouber, which set me

up as a compelling candidate for graduate school. I applied for the University of Colorado Boulder's Religious Studies department and was told that my extra language training was a major factor in my acceptance.

During my time at CU Boulder I continued my research which I started at Western, on a contemporarily practiced martial art in the state of Kerala in south India called *kaḷarippayaṭṭu*. I have stuck with AIIS for four summer language intensives (Malayalam and Tamil) and I just finished a year-long program in Malayalam. I also studied Sanskrit at Naropa University in Boulder. These programs, ideally, take place in person in India and so facilitate, not only language training, but tangible interaction with the culture and people, which is absolutely indispensable in the pursuit of ethnographic research.

I continued my pursuit of ethnographic research of *kaḷarippayaṭṭu* in grad school and developed theories of the performing subject and the production of meaning and value, this concerns the expression of a worldview conditioned by tangible practice which becomes embodied on the individual practitioner. The pandemic has forced a bit of a pause but, at this point, I am seriously considering continuing on to a Ph.D in Religious Studies, South Asian Studies, or pivoting to a career working within the federal government. However, I have also had interest from companies seeking project managers and administrative positions.

Thank you for this space and asking me to share some of my story. Thank you, Western Washington University's Global Humanities and Religious Department, for being an invaluable foundation to my academic and professional path.

Long Live the Humanities!
Vinnie

Vincent Vansaghi, Religion and Culture with Thesis graduate 2019



Photo above top: Fishing nets

Photo above: Amazing food

Photo right: Malayalam group—first year



15th Annual Distinguished Guest Speaker information coming soon.

Keep an eye on the department webpage (<https://chss.wvu.edu/global-humanities-and-religions/distinguished-speakers-series>) for information.

14th Annual Distinguished Guest Speaker – Dr. Caroline Schroeder, University of Oklahoma (2023)

Professor Caroline Schroeder is a Professor of Women’s and Gender Studies at the University of Oklahoma, where she is also a member of the Dodge Family College of Arts and Sciences’ interdisciplinary Data Scholarship Program, an affiliate faculty member in History and Religious Studies, and a Fellow at the Data Institute for Societal Challenges.



Dr. Schroeder is an award-winning teacher and scholar who works at the intersection of the cultural history of early Christianity, gender studies, and digital humanities. Her most recent monograph, *Children and Family in Late Antique Egyptian Monasticism* (Cambridge University Press), was recently a finalist for the 2021 American Academy of Religion book award for textual studies in religion.

“Digital Methods in Early Christian Studies: Enabling New Discoveries and Confronting Old Challenges”

The early days of the internet inspired technological utopian visions of the future—a world where information could spread freely, dismantling hierarchies of class and education and enabling global exchanges of data and culture. In colleges and universities, humanists jumped on the bandwagon, developing the field of Humanities Computing, which has since morphed into what we now call Digital Humanities. Have digital and computational methods fulfilled these early promises of unfettered, accessible information sharing?

Religious Studies and Biblical Studies were a bit late to the game but in recent years major digital projects, especially in early Christian Studies have launched. How has this work enabled new research discoveries, and in what ways do longstanding challenges in the field—such as colonialism, multilingual accessibility, and a hyperfocus on canon formation—continue to trouble the field?

13th Annual Distinguished Guest Speaker – Dr. Judith Weisenfeld, Princeton University (2022)

Judith Weisenfeld is Agate Brown and George L. Collard Professor of Religion, and Chair of the Department of



Religion, Princeton University. Her most recent book, *New World A-Coming: Black Religion and Racial Identity during the Great Migration*, was awarded the 2017 Albert J. Raboteau Prize for the Best Book in Africana Religions.

Her current research examines the intersection of psychiatry, race, and African American religion in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She is also the Co-Director of The Crossroads Project: Black Religious Histories, Communities and Cultures, which is funded by the Henry Luce Foundation.

“Spiritual Madness: Race, Psychiatry, and Black Religion”

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, white American psychiatrists declared that mental illness among African Americans in the South had reached alarming proportions and argued that, in a notable percentage of these cases, “religious excitement” was the key precipitating factor. This talk explores late nineteenth and early twentieth-century psychiatric theories about race, religion, and the “normal mind” and shows how the emerging specialty of psychiatry drew on works from history of religions to make racialized claims about African Americans’ “traits of character, habit, and behavior.” This history of the intersections of psychiatry and African American religions sheds light on how ideas about race, religion, and mental normalcy shaped African American experience in courts and mental hospitals and on the role the racialization of religion played more broadly in the history of medicine, legal history, and the history of disability.

Vimeo Link:
**Digital Methods in
Early Christian Studies**



Department Sponsored Speaker



In April 2022, the department worked with Prof. Penny Hutchinson (Department of Dance) to coordinate a Yoga Sutra Lecture Series by **Dr. K. S. Balasubramanian**. He is an award-winning international scholar, author, and Deputy Director of the Kuppaswamy Sastri Research Institute in Chennai, India.



Ancient Wisdom for Modern Times: Lecture Series on the Yoga Sutra

The Yoga Sutra of Patanjali is a series of Sanskrit aphorisms designed as a step-by-step guide to self-knowledge. Patanjali's work marks the beginning of classical yoga, unifying various pre-classical practices and schools of thought into one brilliantly coherent system. His eight-part system is studied and practiced all over the world today. Hatha yoga as we know it today is indebted to its legacy. Patanjali made a standardized and comprehensive yoga system which gives importance to all the aspects of theory and practice.

Vimeo Link:
Yoga Sutra lecture links
for K.S. Balasubramanian

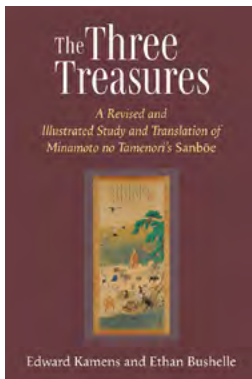
04.07.22 - Yoga Sutra Lecture Series

04.21.22 - Yoga Sutra Lecture Series

04.14.22 - Yoga Sutra Lecture Series

04.28.22 - Yoga Sutra Lecture Series

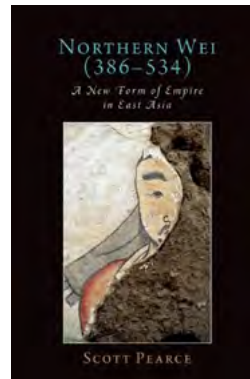
Faculty Spotlight, New Books Published in 2023!



Ethan Bushelle

The Three Treasures is a unique document that opens a window onto the world of Buddhist religious experience – especially for women – in high classical Japan, the time of Sei Shōnagon's *Pillow Book* and Murasaki Shikibu's *Tale of Genji*. Professor Bushelle's revised study and translation of this famous work – a collaboration with his distinguished colleague Dr. Edward

Kamens at Yale – was published this year by the [University of Michigan Press](#).



Scott Pearce

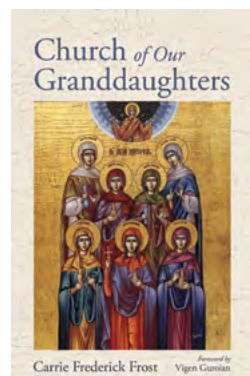
This year, Professor Pearce's study *Northern Wei (386-534): A New Form of Empire in East Asia* was published by [Oxford University Press](#). Pearce analyses traditions borrowed and adapted from the long-gone Han dynasty including government and taxation as well as the new cultural elements such as the use of armor for man and horse in the cavalry and the newly-invented stirrup. Further,

this book discusses the fundamental change in the dynastic family, as empresses began to play an increasingly important role in the business of government.



Andrea Gogröf

Andrea Gogröf had a painting accepted into the Edmonds Art Festival in June and it sold! **Congratulations Andrea!**



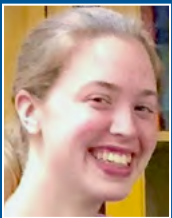
Carrie Frederick Frost

Church of Our Granddaughters ([Cascade Books](#) 2023) is a visionary work of scholarship that looks hopefully and lovingly two generations into the future, imagining the Orthodox Church's practices and realities rightfully aligned with its core theological teachings and truths regarding women.

Meagan Elizabeth Smith Memorial Scholarship for Excellence in the Humanities

*The department suffered a heartbreaking tragedy eight years ago, with the loss of our major and member of the 2014-15 Liberal Studies Leadership Team, **Meagan Smith**. We're honoring her memory with a scholarship.*

Meagan Elizabeth Smith Memorial Scholarship for Excellence in the Humanities



This scholarship honors the legacy of Meagan Elizabeth Smith (1993 - 2015). An outstanding student, Meagan was scheduled to graduate with departmental honors in December 2015, with a Humanities major, a concentration in Religion and Culture, and a German minor. She had developed a particular interest in non-Western societies, and especially in Nepal, which inspired the senior thesis she was researching on "Making Sense of Fierce Deities in Indian Religions." Meagan was a member of the first Liberal Studies Leadership Team, a musician, and an athlete, dedicated to serving the many communities of which she was a cherished part. This is the first and only named scholarship in the fifty-year history of the Global Humanities and Religions Department, designed to recognize academic excellence in the humanities.

Ways To Give

Online at
<https://foundation.wvu.edu/GlobalHumanitiesAndReligions>

With a check made payable to the WWU Foundation and mailed to:

WWU Foundation
Mailstop 9034
516 High Street
Bellingham, WA 98225-9034

By phone at: 360-650-3027

*Please write **Meagan E. Smith Scholarship** on the memo line of your check.

For more information on ways to give, including instructions for WWU employee payroll deduction or gifts of securities, please visit: <https://foundation.wvu.edu/making-gift>



The 2014-15 Leadership Team was asked, "Why HUMANITIES?" Meagan's Answer—

"Discussing religions and traditions from around the globe as well as from different time periods has helped to expand my cultural understanding of the world immensely. Joining this major has given me opportunities to study a variety of subjects, as well as embarking on a study of Nepal this upcoming summer. The Liberal Studies department has opened my mind to the cornucopia of traditions existing in our world today and the impact we each have on one another."

GRADUATION SPRING 2023



Left to Right: Maile Akeo, Jay Mounts, Kyle Iboshi, Drew Owen, Thomas Thomas



Left to Right: Prof. Seán Murphy, Drew Owen, Kyle Iboshi, Interim Dept Chair Prof. Andrea Gogröf, Maile Akeo, Jay Mounts

GLOBAL HUMANITIES AND RELIGIONS



MAKE WAVES.

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