

# Global Humanities and Religions

FALL 2025

website: [chss.wvu.edu/humanities-religions](http://chss.wvu.edu/humanities-religions)



## Note from the Department Chair:

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

We hope this newsletter finds you well and in good spirits. This past academic year has been, for me as interim chair, a

steep but rewarding learning curve. With the kind and efficient support of our former chair, Kimberly Lynn, our department manager, Maureen Christman, and Dean Keith Russell and his team at CHSS, we successfully navigated a challenging year for the university as a whole.

The transitional nature of last year continued into this one, shaped by significant budget revisions and large-scale restructuring efforts across campus. While such changes inevitably weighed on morale at times, our department was fortunate: all faculty and staff remained employed, and our core work proceeded without major disruption from the financial crisis.

Amid these challenges, we celebrated notable achievements. We awarded two Meagan Elizabeth Smith Scholarships for Excellence in the Humanities, along with honoring our outstanding graduating student of 2024/25. We also hosted Rebecca Moore for our annual Distinguished Speaker Series. Her compelling lecture, *The Myth of the Dangerous Cult: Violence and New Religions*, drew an engaged, campus-wide audience and sparked lively discussion.

While I valued my year as interim chair, we are delighted to welcome Dr. Michael Slouber as our new chair. We look forward to continuing our work together as a vibrant, collegial, and successful department.

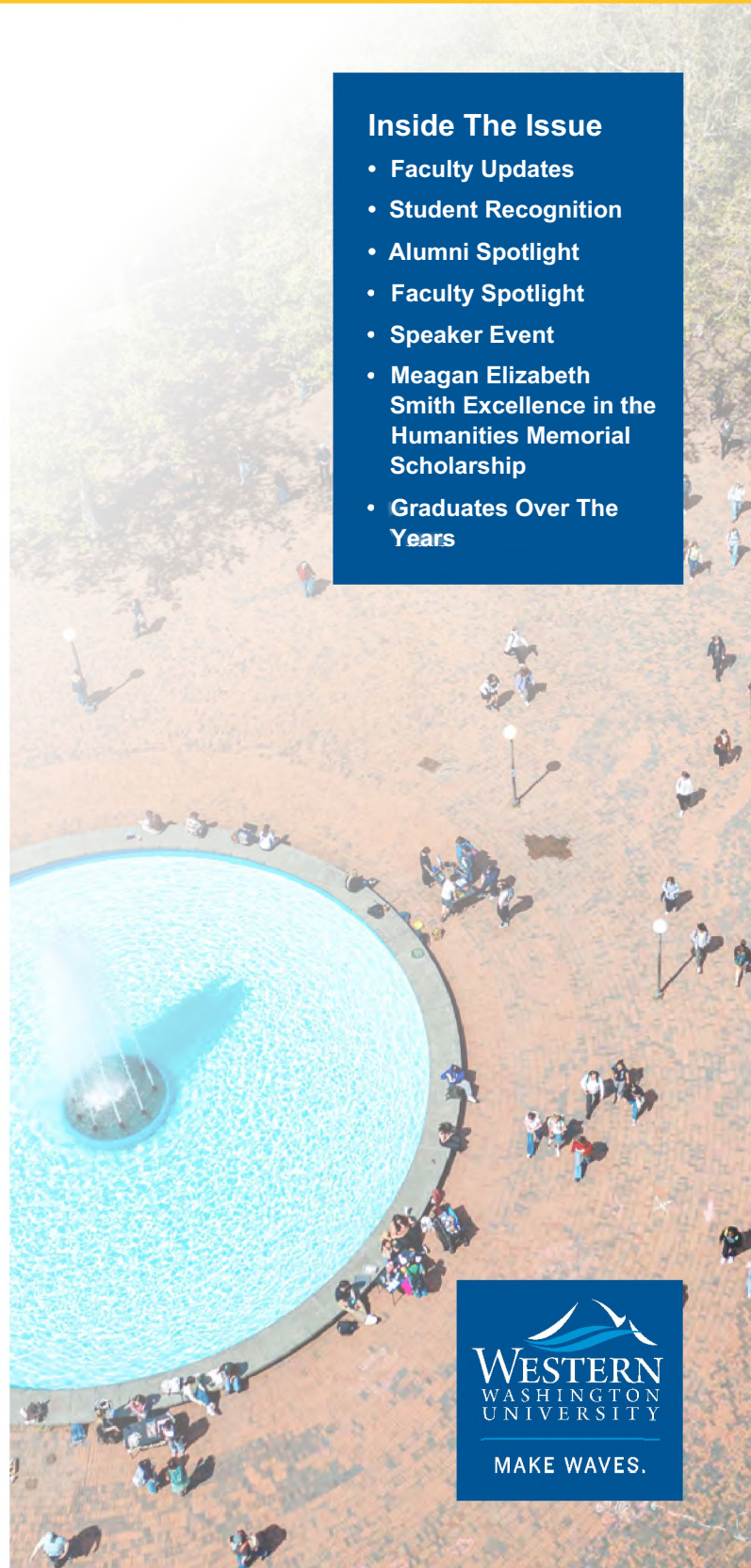
We remain deeply grateful to our alumni for their generous contributions to scholarships and programs. Your support sustains our mission and affirms the importance of the Humanities.

As always, we invite you to stay in touch, share your news, and let us know how your ideas and endeavors intersect with our work.

With warm regards,  
Andrea Gogröf

## Inside The Issue

- Faculty Updates
- Student Recognition
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- Meagan Elizabeth Smith Excellence in the Humanities Memorial Scholarship
- Graduates Over The Years



**WESTERN**  
WASHINGTON  
UNIVERSITY

MAKE WAVES.

## FACULTY UPDATES

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### Ethan Bushelle

Taking advantage of two quarters of professional leave last year, Prof. Bushelle has been deeply immersed in



the writing of his first book-length monograph, *Yamato and the Eurasian World: A Connected History, c. 200–600 CE*. His students will recognize many of its main themes: the importance of intercultural connections between Japan, Korea, and Inner Asia, the Inner Asian origins of Shinto ritual and myth, and Shinto's contribution to the

emergence of Yamato kingship. So far, he has managed to put together three article-length publications, which he plans to expand into separate chapters of the book. Much work, however, still remains, and he looks forward to further exploring the big questions of the book with his students in his upper-level seminars in the department. When not writing, Prof. Bushelle enjoys spending quality time with his family. His son, Theo (6 years old), has become quite the soccer player, while his daughter Phaedra (4 years old) has developed a passion for gymnastics—though, at this early phase, mostly in the house. With gymnastics camp coming up this fall, we are hoping that she will learn how to transfer those skills to the gym.

### Holly Folk

An article by Holly Folk was recently published in *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*.



Folk's article, "Rejecting or Remaining? The Second Generation in the Unification Movement" focuses on young-adult members of the Unification Church in the United States and Japan. It appears as part of a special issue on "New Religions and Second-Generation Studies."

### Carrie Frost

Carrie Frederick Frost greatly enjoyed her first year as Assistant Professor. She taught three new upper-level courses: *Comparative Contemplative Practices*; *Comparing Holy Lives*; and *Women, Ritual & Christianity*.

She launched a few new initiatives, including informal bird walks in the Arboretum, a Spirituality Studies Group with students, and Fourth Fridays—a monthly opportunity for GHR faculty to informally talk about their research with colleagues and students.

Two of her books were published in translation—*Maternal Body: A Theology of Incarnation from the*



*Christian East* (Paulist, 2019) was published in German as *Inkarnation und Mutterschaft – eine orthodoxe Perspektive auf den weiblichen Körper* (Herder 2025, trans. Rossi Osthus) and *Church of Our Granddaughters* (Cascade, 2023) was published in Finnish as *Lasten-Lastemme Kirkko* (Litula 2024, trans. Elsi Takala)—and several of her articles were translated

into German, Finnish, Russian, Dutch, and Greek. She also edited a festschrift for her PhD advisor at the University of Virginia: *A Chorus of Faith: A Festschrift in Honor of Vigen Guroian* (Pickwick, 2025).

In addition, she lectured at Emory University, Simon Fraser University, and the Institute for Eastern Christian Studies, and traveled with her three daughters to Rome to speak at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome.

### Andrea Gogröf

Dr. Andrea Gogröf's research examines surveillance in the age of artificial intelligence through the lens of philosophy



and contemporary literature. Drawing on the thought of Friedrich Nietzsche, she interrogates questions of anxiety, mistrust, and authenticity in the modern era. Her scholarship also engages with the work of French novelist Michel Houellebecq and, more recently, with that of Constance Debré, whose writing explores the pursuit of authenticity through the

rejection of preestablished behavioral norms in favor of continual renewal and truth-seeking.

In addition to her research, Dr. Gogröf is deeply committed to student mentorship. She continues to guide students in successfully applying to and presenting at the annual conference of the Pacific Ancient and Modern Language Association, thereby fostering their professional development and scholarly engagement.

### Kimberly Lynn

While still Professor of Humanities in the department, Kimberly Lynn is not currently teaching or advising Global



Humanities and Religions students. She is currently serving as Director of the WWU Honors College. There, she's especially enjoying supporting an interdisciplinary curriculum that includes a core humanities sequence, upper-division seminars, and a capstone research project, as well as working with students enrolled

in majors and minors all across campus. She's also really enjoyed talking to high school students and their families who are considering Western — a significant part of her current role on campus!

### Jonathan Miran

This past fall, Jonathan spent two weeks as a Visiting Scholar at the Centre for Transcultural Studies (Gotha



Research Centre) at the University of Erfurt in Germany. During his stay in Gotha, he consulted early cartographic representations of the Red Sea and its African and Arabian coasts at the Perthes Collection, one of Europe's most important geographical archives. In late winter, he was invited to Turin, Italy, to give a talk on the testimonies of enslaved

runaway pearl divers in the southern Red Sea region in the early twentieth century. The talk drew on a chapter he wrote for a volume that he is co-editing with a colleague, under contract with Brill Publishers (Leiden & Boston), on slavery and the slave trade in the Red Sea region. The book will feature thirteen chapters written by scholars from ten countries.

Recently, Jonathan was especially excited to hear from one of his former students, Andrew Accornero (Drake), who drew inspiration from readings in the course *Sufism: The Islamic Mystical Tradition* to compose two independently published collections of poetry in the styles of the great Sufi poets Rumi (13th c.), Hafez (14th c.), and Kabir (15th c.).

### Tom Moore

Tom considers himself to be the department's chief representative of dilettantism. He continues to work on



his poetry and one major novel, *The Heifer Girl*, which is a retelling of the myth of Io. In addition to teaching Poetry and Spirituality & Myth and Folklore for GHR, he is currently teaching a seminar for Honors somewhat grandiosely titled *The Landscape of the Spirit*. The other half of his workday is spent running he Fellowship Office, this year

sending Fulbrighters to the Belgium & South Korea as well as helping WWU students win a Hollings Scholarship and a Udall, both focusing on environmental science. In his spare time he plays with his marvelous granddaughter and helps former WWU grads with their writing projects. All in all, a full and rather wonderful life.

### Scott Pearce

In the past year, Scott continued to work on a new book on 6th century regimes in northern China. It is hoped that



a draft will be finished by the end of Summer 2025. He also published several invited review articles, including one on "Experiences of Elite Women in the Northern Wei," with the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*. In March 2025, he served as chair and discussant of a panel on "The Role of Stone Inscriptions in the Society and Politics of the Northern

Dynasties (386-581)" at the national conference of the Association for Asian Studies. The panel was comprised of young scholars from Japan and China.

### Daniel Picus

Professor Picus is incredibly grateful to have been granted tenure this year, and looks forward to many more



stimulating years in the department of Global Humanities and Religions. He had the opportunity to teach two new classes this year, Introduction to Judaism and The Talmud, and between them, during Spring Break, presented some of the new research for his book at Simon Fraser, just across the border. At the moment, he's in the middle of guest-editing a

special edition of the journal *Philological Encounters* with J. Gregory Given (Harvard) on the role of the critical edition as a philological technology. Work on his book continues apace, and when he's not reading, writing, making ice cream, or baking this summer, he's working to transform his lawn, bit by bit, into a PNW wonderland filled with berries and fruit trees.

### Michael Slouber

Michael has just finished up a term as Faculty Senate President, which entailed extensive involvement in a



variety of issues across campus. You can read about some highlights of the year in his last Senate blog post: <https://faculty senate.wvu.edu/end-year-review-what-we-accomplished>. In May he traveled to Vienna and Paris for a workshop and conference respectively. He continues to make new contributions to scholarship on Tantric traditions

and goddesses; for instance, his chapter "The Goddesses of Jaina Tantra" appeared last year in the *Oxford Handbook*

## FACULTY UPDATES *continued* | 2025-26 LEADERSHIP TEAM

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on Tantric Studies. This past year he enjoyed teaching the two department methods courses with all new books: last Spring it was an iteration of HUMA 302 with the great Indian epic the Ramayana as the focus of study; this Winter REL 303 was organized around a new set of readings on textual criticism, comparative mythology, and religion and law. Michael was elected chair of Global Humanities and Religions, effective June 2025, and is committed to maintaining the strengths of the department through the next several years.



### 2025-26 Leadership Team

*Back row, L to R:* David Leahy, Hayley Christensen, Emma Brown, and Alex Bassett  
*Front row, L to R:* Andy Jennings and Hannah Fleischmann

### Department Outstanding Graduate



2024-25  
Calvin Christoph



### David Leahy

This year, I will be entering my third year at WWU. I am beyond grateful to have been chosen for the Meagan Elizabeth Smith Memorial Scholarship. Through my education, I hope to expand my understanding of the world around me, and being awarded this honor will help me considerably towards that goal. So

far in my time at WWU, I have found myself drawn to the studies of history, culture, and religion. I believe that it is extremely enriching to examine the human stories of the past, because that allows us to further appreciate our place in the world today. I'm especially interested in discovering how human cultures interact with natural landscapes and the spiritual traditions that are produced from that link. The GHR department has proven to be the perfect fit for this aim, and I've really enjoyed getting to know my professors and peers more in the past year. The interdisciplinary nature of the department allows me and other students to explore a plethora of subjects, which is quite a powerful way to learn. I will also be joining the department leadership team this year, so I'm excited to continue my studies and deepen my involvement in the department!

### Graduates with Departmental Honors

2024-25 Vanja Hagman  
Sebastián Prieto-Keith  
Max Whitley

### Meagan Elizabeth Smith Memorial Scholarship for Excellence in the Humanities Awardee

10th Annual (2025-26) recipients:

#### Hayley Christensen

I am an incoming third year student here at WWU, and I am immensely grateful to have been selected for the



Meagan Elizabeth Smith Memorial Scholarship. I've greatly enjoyed my time at WWU so far and am excited to return again this fall to engage in higher level classes in my two majors: Humanities, History of Culture and Education. I am also very fortunate to be working for a third year as a Program Assistant for our GHR department. Outside of my studies I

am a part of High Intensity (HI10), one of a few dance teams here on campus. I will be branching out a bit next year too by joining both our GHR Leadership Team and WWU's Figure Skating Team for the first time! Over this past summer I've caught up on my reading list, mostly consisting of books involving Scandinavia. Scandinavia's history and culture has been an interest of mine since my early teen years, and it's definitely something I would like to incorporate into my History of Culture senior thesis. After my four years at WWU I hope to obtain a master's in teaching to eventually teach high school English. I would like to teach anywhere from Seattle to Bellingham as I am very lucky to call many places along that stretch home. I've spent a lot of time around the northern Puget Sound and know this is where I would love to create a career and life for myself. I cannot wait to see everyone back at school. Go Viks!

### 2024-25 Senior Thesis Topics

Vanja Hagman, "Dis-Disembodied: Cartesian Dualism and the Buddhist Transformation of Neuroscience" (Advisor: Ethan Bushelle)

Sebastián Prieto-Keith, "In the Name of the Nation, the Ancient, and the Holy Land: Civil Religion, and Archaeology in the Israeli State" (Advisor: Daniel Picus)

Max Whitley, "The Highest Wisdom and the Deepest Depravity: A History of Esoteric Satanism and Antinomian Identity" (Advisor: Holly Folk)

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



Calvin Christoph

### Calvin Christoph '25

I am honored to be included in this year's review and to have the opportunity to reflect on my time here in this department, where I received a major in Religion and Culture and a minor in African Studies. This winter I participated in a study abroad program with Prof. Christopher Wise from the English department, where I studied sufi literature and traveled to Senegal to learn from professors, cultural bearers and religious elders. After the program's completion, I traveled to Zanzibar where I had once lived as a child, and I caught up with family friends while eating as many passion fruits and mangoes as I could. Throughout this trip I was constantly grateful for the perspective which I

had developed in this department, as I found myself understanding many of the social dynamics and cultural practices which had perplexed me as a child. I also greatly enjoyed speaking about religious practices and belief with elders and young people alike, and I found myself employing the techniques of reflexive thinking which I had learned in the classroom in Bellingham. Throughout the trip I constantly compared the religious practices of communities in Senegal and Zanzibar to the practices I'm familiar with from my Episcopalian upbringing here in Washington, and I found so many similarities which helped me to understand the people I visited, and which helped me to explain my own customs in conversations of exchange.

I also found myself learning new perspectives, many of which contradict one another, or contradict what I had learned in texts, and I greatly enjoyed this experience as it reinforced my appreciation of the diverse perspectives on religious belief within Islam.

Some of the greatest moments of the trip to Senegal were the moments of confusion as I navigated my complete lack of French language skills. A particularly memorable and perplexing moment occurred one day outside of the fish market, when a man approached with a small cage full of birds. I purchased several birds at my friend's request, with no clue of what the purpose would be. Later, I learned that this was a ritual, in which one releases a bird from captivity, and in return, the bird prays for the good fortune of their savior. I was willing to say yes to the interaction despite my confusion and I'm glad I did, as I held the small birds in my hands and threw them up into the wind and the surf on the beach in Dakar, watching them fly away was a powerful experience.

For brevity I'll include images of the African Renaissance Monument, the Grand Mosque of Touba - a pilgrimage site for Mouriddiya Muslims, some devotional images to Mouride saints, and myself under a pirogue, a typical Senegalese fishing boat which are painted with devotional phrases and images.

After a good three weeks in Senegal, my trip to Zanzibar was quite leisurely, I enjoyed the tropical fruit, visited the endemic Red Colobus monkey, and even visited my childhood school, which had grown quite large since 2010, and had added many buildings where the guavas once grew.

For those who are curious about my next steps, I am happy to announce that I will be attending the UW Evan's College of Governance, where I will be pursuing a Master's in Public Administration. As for this summer, I am writing this letter from my duty

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



station where I work for Oregon Department of Forestry as a wildland firefighter, and where I have worked since my first summer at Western. To conclude, I'd like to say thank you to everyone in the department, to the faculty, staff, and my fellow students. This department has served as an

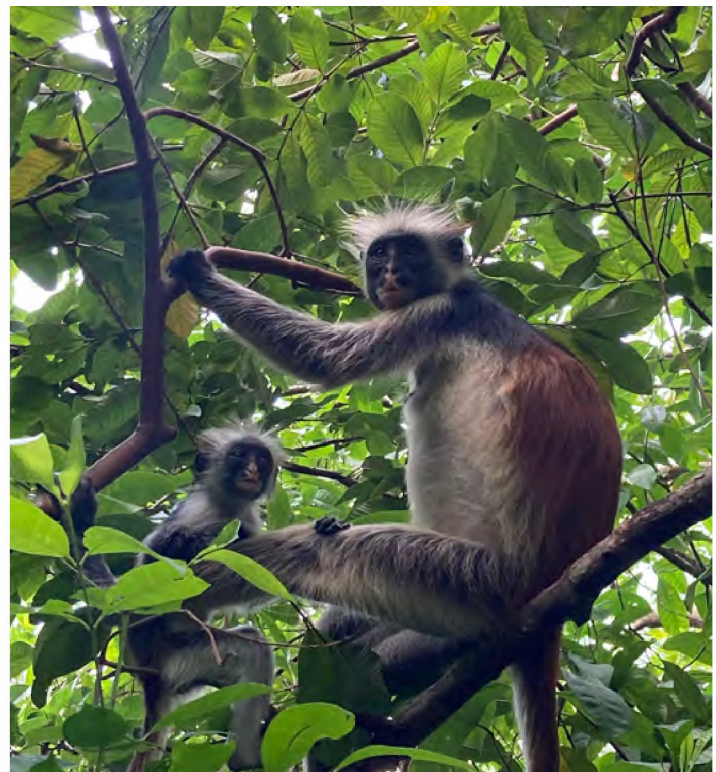
irreplaceable source of inspiration and insight for me, and I will carry the degree and skills I have developed here with pride.

Thank you all,  
Calvin Christoph

*Opposite page:* Calvin under a pirogue, a typical Senegalese fishing boat.

*Above left to right:* Tropical Fruit in Zanzibar, Grand Mosque of Touba, Pilgrimage site for Mouriddiya Muslims

*Below left to right:* African Renaissance Monument, Red Colobus Monkey



## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

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### Maesie Halliday '24

Over the past year I've rediscovered my love of painting and have been lucky enough to sign several contracts with conservation organizations to design artwork for restoration projects. I decided this summer that I'll be furthering my education with Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) with plans of getting an MFA (Masters of Fine Arts) in their Natural Scientific Illustration Program, so that I can keep making art for causes I believe in - chiefly, the protection of the land and its many species of plants and animals.

Illustrations of her artwork below.



### Johnny Cook '24

Working on Masters in Woodring at WWU. I am applying what I learned in my undergraduate studies with the GHR to my studies in AHE (Adult and Higher Education) by examining systems of adult education as a reflection of the societies that create them. It is such a joy to study the theories of learning and interrogate systems of education because I am able to directly apply what I learn both to my own learning and development, and to my professional work. I am very thankful for the foundation of skills and experience that I received from the faculty of GHR and I look forward to witnessing ways I can apply the knowledge I have gained at Western to life.

**Global Humanities and Religions’  
Andrea Gogröf discusses her painting in  
Pacific Coast Philology interview**

**April 30, 2025**

Andrea Gogröf, professor and chair of the Department of Global Humanities and Religions, has an interview published in Pacific Coast Philology (PCP) Volume 58, Issue 1-2, 2023 (the journal is backlogged, and the interview is from late 2024).

In the [interview with Craig Svonkin](#), the executive director of the academic conference attached to the publication of PCP, Gogröf speaks about her work as an abstract painter, a life-long passion, search and labor parallel to her career at Western Washington University. She is a painter in abstraction, landscapes and portraits, and two of her works, “New York City Subway” and “This Is Not a Barbershop,” appear on the front and back covers of the journal.

For 15 years, Gogröf has participated in Western’s much-loved Employee Art Show, organized by Nancy Philipps and other intrepid givers of their time and effort, and she is forever grateful to Western for supporting creativity almost as much as academic rigor and output.



Andrea Gogröf being acknowledged at PAMLA conference.



Front Cover



Back Cover

[Interview with Craig Svonkin](#)

<https://scholarlypublishingcollective.org/psup/pcp>



## SPEAKER EVENT

### 17th 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.

### 16th Annual Distinguished guest Speaker Dr. Rebecca Moore, Emerita Professor of Religion at San Diego State University.

Rebecca Moore has more than thirty years experience teaching, publishing, editing, and lecturing in a variety of settings. She earned a Ph.D. in Religious Studies from Marquette University and has taught as a professor at Montana State University and the University of North Dakota. She retired from San Diego State University in 2015, where she taught for more than 16 years and served as Chair of the Department of Religious Studies and Chair of the Department of Classics and Humanities.



As Professor Emerita of Religion at San Diego State University she maintains an active research and publication schedule. She is currently Reviews Editor for *Nova Religio*, the quarterly journal on new and emergent religions published by University of California Press. She also co-manages the digital archives *Alternative Considerations of Jonestown and Peoples Temple* and co-directs the *Women in the World's Religions and Spirituality Project*.

Dr. Moore studies New Religious Movements, where she has concentrated on interpreting Peoples Temple and the events at Jonestown, Guyana that occurred in November 1978. A brief listing of links to articles appears [here](https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=16580) ([https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=16580](https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=16580)). Additional research appears in the book *Understanding Jonestown and Peoples Temple* (Praeger, revised paperback 2018). She has also written and published extensively on religion and violence, see e.g. "[Violence and New Religions](#)" in the Oxford Research Encyclopedia. *The Politics of Peoples Temple and the Deaths in Jonestown* will be published by Cambridge University Press in 2022.

*"The Myth of the Dangerous Cult: Violence and New Religions"*

Often described as cults, new religious movements fascinate and terrify people around the world. NRMs are titillating in large part because their very essence



seems filled with deviant beliefs, perverse practices, and dangerous possibilities. Yet this essentialist view of new religions is inaccurate. Eruptions of extreme violence are the exceptions, rather than the rule, for new and minority religions. These groups are generally nonviolent and wish for nothing more than to follow their consciences in peace. Indeed, the greater threat of violence today comes from state actors that seek to suppress religionists whom they consider deviant, criminal, or traitorous.



Dr Rebecca Moore and GHR Professor  
Dr Holly Folk

Annual Distinguished Guest Speaker website

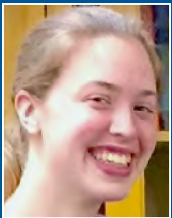


<https://chss.wvu.edu/global-humanities-and-religions/disting>

## Meagan Elizabeth Smith Memorial Scholarship for Excellence in the Humanities

*The department suffered a heartbreaking tragedy in 2015, 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-five-year history of the Global Humanities and Religions Department, designed to recognize academic excellence in the humanities.

### Ways To Give

Online at

<https://foundation.wwu.edu/GlobalHumanitiesAndReligions>

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

The Foundation for WWU & Alumni  
516 High Street, MS 9034  
Bellingham, WA 98225

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.wwu.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."*



<https://alumni.wwu.edu/giving/to/GHR>

QR link to give.

## GRADUATES OVER THE YEARS



2023



2018



2017

# GLOBAL HUMANITIES AND RELIGIONS



MAKE WAVES.

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