

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION

2016 NEWSLETTER

U C L A

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Dear colleagues and friends of the Center,

As the UCLA Center for the Study of Religion moves into its third decade, we can look back with pride at what we have contributed, but also with humility at how much important work we have yet to do.

Open debate and dialogue were at the heart of events this past year, such as our interfaith discussion series, in which panelists presented and explored the interrelated perspectives of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam on a range of consequential topics, including the localization of religion in holy places and sacred space, and religion's role in American politics. All were welcome, from members of our own UCLA community to the many diverse communities of our city and beyond. At our 20th anniversary celebration I had the privilege of hearing Jared Diamond speak about "The Evolution and Function of Human Religion" and interviewing him for an enthusiastic standing-room-only crowd in Schoenberg Hall – an event with the largest attendance in the Center's history.

In this year of a Presidential election, with the relationships among different religions and their moral teachings so prominently disputed on the campaign trail, we will engage those issues in the best academic traditions of rational, informed, and fair-minded inquiry. In an era of worldwide tension and struggle among various faiths and holy books, there are many webs that urgently need untangling – a task that will require all the skills of our various disciplines in thoughtful conversation with each other. Professor Diamond's lecture was a reminder that, as technology advances, we may find ourselves counselors for the uneasy marriage between science and spirituality.

And while wrestling with these burdens, we must remember to enjoy our lives. I dearly hope that with your participation and support the Center can help with all of that.

So I look forward to seeing you at our Fall Reception and at the wonderful set of book talks, receptions, conference sessions, and other interactive and inclusive events featuring UCLA colleagues and distinguished visitors, described in this newsletter and in announcements over the months ahead.

As we strive to make the next twenty years as productive and enlightening as the last twenty for this exciting and important interdisciplinary work, we will continue reaching out to our university, local, and global communities. Please join us!

With all good wishes, and special thanks to our generous donors, our excellent staff, and our brilliant affiliated faculty representing no fewer than twenty different fields,

Carol Bakhos

Professor, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures
Director, UCLA Center for the Study of Religion
Chair, Study of Religion, Interdepartmental Degree Program



JARED DIAMOND'S LECTURE

The Evolution and Function of Human Religion

Jared Diamond, UCLA's Pulitzer Prize-winning professor of geography and an astute intellectual observer of human life in multiple practices, faced a standing-room-only audience who came to hear his compelling lecture titled "The Evolution and Function of Human Religion" at a celebration of the 20th anniversary of UCLA's Center for the Study of Religion.

Diamond asked the audience in Schoenberg Hall to set aside for at least an hour any preconceived or deeply rooted faith-based personal belief system, step back and dispassionately observe the utilitarian functions of religion and how they evolved over the course of history.

He lightheartedly likened the process of observation and study of religion to one that might be undertaken by an extraterrestrial traveler.

"Of course, any civilization intelligent enough to launch a spaceship is also intelligent enough to have the means to destroy itself ... just as is the case on Earth," Diamond quipped, often dropping humorously ominous hints that the human race will do just that sometime in the year 2043.

An intergalactic traveler interested in religion, Diamond explained, would find that it did not exist at all 6 million years ago when our ancient evolutionary ancestor, the chimpanzee, ruled the Earth. But dating as far back as 40,000 years ago are early signs of religion found in cave paintings of human burial in the Chauvet and Lascaux region of what is now southern France.

"Religion certainly existed 5,500 years ago at the time of the first human writing," Diamond said. "And a good guess



is that human religion actually began to evolve around 70,000 years ago with the emergence of behaviorally modern homo sapiens and the first convincing signs of art and rapid invention and advanced intelligence." The physiological development that allowed for more sophisticated language among homo sapiens also likely contributed, he said.

Studying the evolution of religion reveals six major utilitarian functions for humanity, Diamond said.

From its earliest forms, religion has both served as a tool for finding a supernatural explanation of the natural world absent scientific understanding of the universe, and helped diffuse anxiety over dangers beyond human control.

As scientific knowledge has increased, these two functions of religion have decreased, Diamond noted.

The third function of providing comfort — especially in the face of pain, suffering and mortality — was also present early in the evolution of religion, but this function has increased as humans evolved.

The final three functions of religion are almost entirely rooted in population growth and the emergence of centralized governments, he said. None were present in traditional tribal societies 8,000 years ago. And none are present in traditional societies that still exist in the modern age, Diamond noted, often referring to his decades-long work with tribal cultures of New Guinea.

“Those new functions of religion have been to teach obedience toward political leaders, to justify the moral codes of peaceful behavior toward strangers within one’s own society and to justify moral codes of killing enemies belonging to other societies with which one’s own society is at war,” he said.

Looking toward the future, there are two possible routes for the continued evolution of religion.

“If living standards rise all around the world and if science continues to explain more and more phenomena, four of religion’s six functions will probably continue to decline,” he said. “But religion’s second and third functions of diffusing anxiety and providing comfort seem to be likely to persist.”

And for those who find scientific explanations lacking, or reject them wholesale, religion will continue to be embraced because it lends meaning to individual lives and deaths, which are insignificant from the perspective of science.

“If, on the other hand, much of the world remains mired in poverty or continues to deteriorate, then all functions of religion — maybe even supernatural explanations — are likely to undergo resurgence,” he said.

It will be the UCLA undergrads of today, who will be approaching their 50th birthdays in the year 2043, who will know the answers to those questions, Diamond said with a grin.

Diamond also noted that, as of this year, he has been teaching at UCLA for 50 years and plans to be here for “a few more,” though happily retired long before 2043.



Andrew Tenebaum,
Carol Bakhos,
Tony Sauber



Aaron Hass,
David Schaberg,
Larry Cohen



Andy Kelly, David Kaplan, and Scott Waugh



Jared Diamond

Conferences, Symposia, Colloquia



Was the Rise of Islam a Black Swan Event?

Michael Cook, Professor, Princeton Department of Near Eastern Studies, gave the final lecture of the academic year, *Was the Rise of Islam a Black Swan Event?* Cook first introduced the audience to the concept of a black swan event – by definition a highly unlikely occurrence with a massive impact – and then suggested that although we now take the rise of Islam for granted, an examination of trends in earlier history may serve to indicate just how improbable such a dramatic emergence truly was.

Roundtable Discussion: Talmudic Tales in Their Iranian Context

Professor Richard Kalmin of the Jewish Theological Seminary and Professor Jason Sion Mokhtarian of Indiana University, joined respondent Professor Christine Hayes of Yale in a roundtable discussion on *Talmudic Tales in Their Iranian Context*. Moderated by Professor Carol Bakhos (UCLA Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures), our panelists' recently published books, *Kalmin's Migrating Tales* and Mokhtarian's *Rabbis, Sorcerers, Kings, and Priests*, served as a starting point for their broader discussion of the cultural context and influence of the Babylonian Talmud.



Faculty Lecture Series

Our Faculty Lecture Series showcases the innovative work of our UCLA colleagues across departments, fields and disciplines.

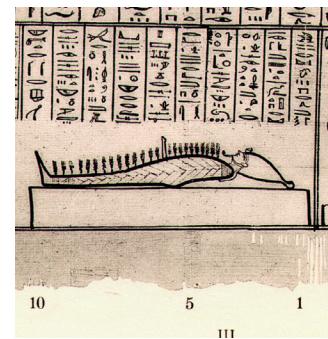
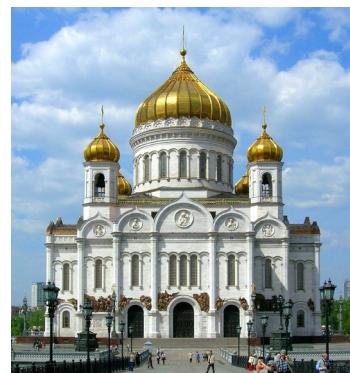


Women and Law in Ancient India

Stephanie Jamison, Distinguished Professor, UCLA Department of Asian Languages and Cultures and of Indo-European Studies, opened the series in the fall quarter by introducing us to the textual sources for women and law in ancient India and suggesting some of the ways in which they could be used to produce a more comprehensive picture of women's roles during the period. Her lecture **Women and Law in Ancient India**, which drew on the inferences made in the Mahbhārata, Rigveda, and Dharmasūtras about the status of women in the eyes of ancient law, also effectively demonstrated the value of approaching contemporary gender issues by means of the humanities.

The New Archaism: Eastern Orthodoxy in Postmodern Russian Culture

The winter quarter began with a lecture on ***The New Archaism: Eastern Orthodoxy in Postmodern Russian Culture*** by Ronald Vroon, Professor and Chair, UCLA Department of Slavic, East European and Eurasian Languages and Cultures. Vroon guided us through the history of the Eastern Orthodox Church's presence on Slavic soil, from its first institutional establishment through its abrupt end during the 1917 rise of Bolshevik power. His lecture focused both on how the Church has conducted its efforts to reestablish its relationship with the State since the fall of the Soviet Union, and how those efforts may provide some useful insights into more general questions regarding the reemergence of Russia as a global superpower.



From Temple to Tomb: Rituals for Osiris and the Deceased in Greco-Roman Egypt

In his talk ***From Temple to Tomb: Rituals for Osiris and the Deceased in Greco-Roman Egypt***, Jacco Dieleman, Associate Professor in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, drew on the instructions and incantations for burial to be found in the Artemis Liturgical Papyrus, an ancient Egyptian manuscript. Dieleman's presentation examined the manuscript in the context of the centralized cult of Osiris in order to explore the junction of temple cult and private funerary practices.





Fearing the Few: The Baha'i Question in Postcolonial Morocco

In his discussion of the process of expansion and proselytization of Baha'ism into North Africa in the first half of the twentieth century, Aomar Boum, Associate Professor, UCLA Department of Anthropology, set out ethnographic data he had collected through online interviews with Moroccan Baha'is as the basis for his talk on how such religious minorities tread political, social and cultural milieux in post-independence Morocco.

In addition, *Fearing the Few: The Baha'i Question in Postcolonial Morocco* considered the potential for national debates about religious conversion and their emergent discourse of religious freedom to prove a threat to national security.

The Politics of Internet Hinduism

In the final lecture of the winter quarter, Vinay Lal, Professor, UCLA Departments of History and Asian American Studies, began his talk on *The Politics of Internet Hinduism* by drawing our attention to a rising trend over recent years among the adherents of Hinduism to engage with their faith through digital media. The internet in particular, Lal contended, has enabled the emergence of a global Hindu consciousness. In his discerning lecture, he ultimately made the case that a revolutionary internet Hinduism is being forged which transforms an old faith into a worldwide religion and brings pliant Hindus, both in India and the older Indian diasporas of the nineteenth century, to an awareness of the global strengths of a “modern” Hindu community.





Trialogues

As the fall term came to a close, three speakers gathered in Royce Hall to discuss the subject “All Religion is Local – Holy Places and Sacred Space in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.” A panelist represented each religion in the discussion, which was moderated by Reinhard Krauss, Lecturer, Center for the Study of Religion at UCLA.



Gathered to offer their insights in the interfaith dialogue were Elliot Dorff, Rector and Professor of Philosophy at the American Jewish University, to provide a Judaic perspective, Daniel Young, Architect and Liturgical Design Consultant at Cunningham Group Architecture, to supply a Christian one, and Muzammil Siddiqi, Chair of the Fiqh Council of North America and the Religious Director of the Islamic Society of Orange County, to contribute Islamic understandings.



In the spring, Rabbi Elliot Dorff joined us again alongside two new panelists, Diane Winston, USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism Knight Chair in Media and Religion, and Aziza Hasan, the Executive Director of Newground, a Muslim-Jewish Partnership for Change, to offer wisdom on “God in the Voting Booth? The Role of Religion in American Presidential Politics” – a particularly consequential topic for a dialogue held just a few months before November’s election.

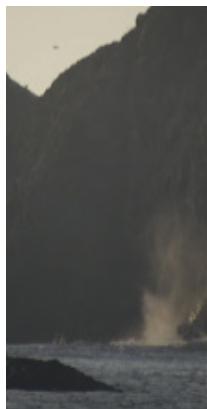


The events were the culmination of the upper-division seminar course Religion 120, designed to introduce an analysis of the complex interrelatedness of the three faiths to students from a broad spectrum of academic disciplines, cultural backgrounds, and religious traditions.

The dialogues, co-sponsored by the Academy for Judaic, Christian, and Islamic Studies, were open to any and all members of the wider UCLA and Los Angeles communities interested in exploring alternative religious perspectives in dynamic interaction.



The 2016 Graduate Conference on Religion: Sacred Sites and Landscapes



On May 11-12, 2016, the Center for the Study of Religion hosted the annual graduate conference on religion at UCLA.

The theme this year was Sacred Sites and Landscapes. In their demarcation from the non-sacred, sacred sites and landscapes heighten the expressions of religious identities through emphasizing the primacy of space. These spaces permit unique opportunities for access and display, thereby highlighting great diversity and investment in human religiosity. However, the interconnected and overlapping claims to sacred sites and landscapes have also been at times the cause of extreme strife and conflict among religious populations. The dynamic role that sacred spaces continue to play within the everyday realities of religious communities is the result of great continuity and change.

The keynote address, “The Endless Ocean that Climbs Our Cliff: The California Coastline, Sanctified, Profaned,” was given by Dr. Kimberley Patton, Professor of the Comparative and Historical Study of Religion at Harvard Divinity School. Her stimulating lecture analyzed the religious landscape of the California coastline, its rich history and its continued importance in the psyche of communities. Dr. Patton also reminded us not to forget the immediacy of the sacred landscape that surrounds us. Indeed, we must not to live our lives as though we are walking across a set with a green screen.

This graduate conference brought together sixteen graduate students from various academic disciplines whose research intersects with sacred sites and landscapes. The papers ranged from theoretical analyses of “religious” space, the role of colonialism in religiosity, the creation of spaces, the archaeology of spaces, to religious expressions. Nine UCLA faculty members served as moderators or respondents to the thematically organized panels. The UCLA Graduate Conference on Religion has a distinctive workshop focus, and the faculty engagement produces commentary that is constructive for the student presenters.

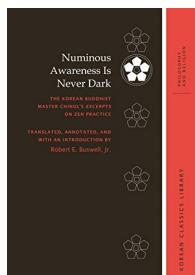
The 2016 conference was sponsored by the Center for the Study of Religion at UCLA. Generous support was provided by the Department of Asian Languages & Cultures, Department of History, UCLA Graduate Division, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, and Department of World Arts & Cultures/Dance.

Conference Coordinators: Michael Chen, Jeremy Peretz
Faculty Advisors: Carol Bakhos, Jacco Dieleman

Faculty Publications

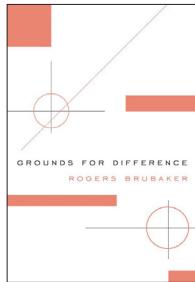


Archiv für Religionsgeschichte has published a special issue, which includes the volume "Authoritative Traditions and Ritual Power in the Ancient World" (edited by Ra'anana Boustan, former director of the Center for the Study of Religion, Jacco Dieleman, an Associate Professor in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures at UCLA, and Faculty Advisory Committee member in the Center for the Study of Religion, and Joseph E. Sanzo, PhD graduate of the UCLA Department of History. This collection of papers is based on a one-day colloquium (organized by the editors) that took place at UCLA on October 26, 2012 and was sponsored by the UCLA Center for the Study of Religion. The volume, which includes contributions from David Frankfurter, Sarah Iles Johnston, and Theodore de Bruyn, addresses the relationship between authority, tradition, and magic in the ancient and late ancient Mediterranean world. Accordingly, the essays critically engage with several long-standing issues in the study of magic, such as the place of magic within local and trans-local traditions, the creative uses of authoritative traditions (e.g., the Bible), and the ways magic figured into the construction and maintenance of religious identity.

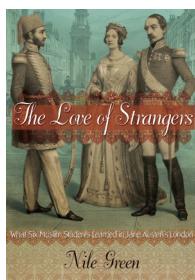


Numinous Awareness Is Never Dark examines the issue of whether enlightenment in Zen Buddhism is sudden or gradual—that is, something intrinsic to the mind that is achieved in a sudden flash of insight or something extrinsic to it that must be developed through a sequential series of practices. This “sudden/gradual issue” was one of the crucial debates that helped forge the Zen school in East Asia, and the Korean Zen master Chinul’s (1158–1210) magnum opus, *Excerpts*, offers one of the most thorough treatments of it in all of premodern Buddhist literature. According to Chinul’s analysis, Zen practice must begin with a sudden awakening before undergoing a more gradual maturation. This “sudden awakening/gradual cultivation” soteriology became emblematic of the Buddhist tradition in Korea. *Excerpts* is translated here in its entirety by the preeminent Western specialist in the Korean Buddhist tradition, Robert E. Buswell, Jr., a Distinguished Professor of Buddhist Studies in the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures and founding director of the university’s Center for Buddhist Studies and Center for Korean Studies at UCLA. *Numinous Awareness Is Never Dark* offers an extensive study of the contours of the sudden/gradual debate in Buddhist thought and practice and traces the influence of Chinul’s analysis of this issue throughout the history of the Korean tradition. Copiously annotated, the work contains extensive selections from the two traditional Korean commentaries to the text. In Buswell’s treatment, Chinul’s *Excerpts* emerges as the single most influential work written by a Korean Buddhist author.

2015 – 2016



Rogers Brubaker is the UCLA Foundation Chair and a professor of sociology whose past work had ranged in focus from nationalism to ethnicity to religion. In his latest book, ***Grounds for Difference*** (2015), he plait these threads together into an incisive analysis of the forces that shape the politics of diversity and multiculturalism today. The book is structured around three developments that have altered the stakes and the contours of the politics of difference: the return of inequality as a central public concern, the return of biology as an asserted basis of racial and ethnic difference, and the return of religion as a key terrain of public contestation. At a moment of heightened public and scholarly concern with deepening inequality, ***Grounds for Difference*** uses newly influential genetic understandings of human difference as well as the new ethnoracial naturalism in order to show how categories of difference such as race, ethnicity, and gender get built into enduring structures of inequality. Brubaker ultimately explores the major implications of public religion in recent decades in how we understand the politics of difference. ***Grounds for Difference*** explains why the most intensely contested struggles over cultural difference today tend to involve religion, confounding longstanding expectations about continued secularization.



Nile Green is a UCLA professor of history specializing in the globalizations of Islam. His latest book, ***The Love of Strangers – What Six Muslim Students Learned in Jane Austen’s London***, traces the footsteps of six Iranian students who arrived in London in 1815 under the escort of their chaperone, Captain Joseph D’Arcy. Green tells the story of their mission: to master the modern sciences behind the rapid rise of Europe. Over the course of four years, they lived both the low life and high life of Regency London, from being down and out after their abandonment by D’Arcy to charming their way into society and landing on the gossip pages. Drawing on the Persian diary of the student Mirza Salih and the letters of his companions, Green vividly describes both how these adaptable Muslim migrants learned to enjoy the opera and take the waters at Bath, as well as their more serious occupations: burdened with acquiring the technology to defend Iran against Russia, they talked their way into the observatories, hospitals, and steam-powered factories that placed England at the forefront of the scientific revolution. All the while, Salih dreamed of becoming the first Muslim to study at Oxford. An Editor’s Choice book for the ***New York Times***, which praised it for “uplifting history,” ***The Love of Strangers*** chronicles the frustration and fellowship of six young men abroad to open a unique window onto the transformative encounter between an Evangelical England and an Islamic Iran at the dawn of the modern age.



This past year, Jacco Dieleman and Burkhard Backes edited *Liturgical Texts for Osiris and the Deceased in Late Period and Greco-Roman Egypt*, a collection of 15 essays that throw light on the large and oft-neglected corpus of Osiris liturgies. These texts preserve the incantations and instructions for rituals performed in the temple cult of Osiris, the Egyptian god of death and regeneration. Although composed for use in state-sponsored temples, most copies have been found in private burials of the Late and Greco-Roman periods, inscribed on the walls of tombs and sarcophagi or on papyrus scrolls. The preserved copies offer thus not only precious information about the cult of Osiris, but also about transformations in equipping the dead with funerary texts in these later periods of pharaonic history.



Lowell Gallagher,
UCLA Department
of English

In *Sodomscapes: Hospitality in the Flesh* Lowell Gallagher, a UCLA English professor and Faculty Advisory Committee member in the Center for the Study of Religion, presents a fresh understanding of Lot's wife in the reception history of the Sodom story. The sudden mutation of Lot's wife in the flight from Sodom exemplifies the antiscopic bias that late modern critical thought inherited from premodern legacies of prohibited gazing. The archive of Jewish and patristic commentary holds a rival and largely overlooked vein of thought, which testifies to the counter-intuitive optics required to apprehend and nurture sustainable habitations for life in view of its unforeseeable contingency. Retrieving this forgotten legacy, this book's cross-cutting array of texts and images—a fifteenth-century illuminated miniature, a group of Counter-Reformation devotional paintings, a Victorian lost-world adventure fantasy, a Russian avant-garde rendering of the flight from Sodom, Albert Memmi's career-making first novel (*The Pillar of Salt*), and a contemporary excursion into the Dead Sea healthcare tourism industry—shows how the repeated desire to reclaim Lot's wife, across millennia and diverse media, turns the cautionary emblem of the mutating woman into a figural laboratory for testing the ethical bounds of the two faces of hospitality – welcome and risk – in diverse cultural locations. Sodomscapes—the book's name for this gesture—revisits touchstone moments in the history of figural thinking (Augustine, Erich Auerbach, Maurice Blanchot, Hans Blumenberg) and places these in conversation with key artisans of the hospitality question, particularly as it bears on the phenomenological condition of attunement to the unfinished character of being in relation to others (Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jacques Derrida, Emmanuel Levinas, Hannah Arendt). The book's cumulative perspective identifies Lot's wife as the resilient figure of vigilant dwelling between the substantialist dream of resemblance and the mutating dynamism of otherness. The radical in-betweenness of the figure discloses counter-intuitive ways of understanding what counts as a life in the context of divergent claims of being-with and being-for.

FACULTY PUBLICATIONS

Interreligious and Multi-faith Initiatives and Programs



Top L to R: Scott Bartchy, Amir Hussain, Elliot Dorff, Scott Young, Carol Bakhos, Ivan Finkle

Bottom L to R: Seema Ali, Harvey Schneider and Janet Doak



Burton Visotzky with the Pope



Burton Visotzky with the late King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia

Undergraduate Multi-faith Forum

Two years ago the Center established the Multi-faith Forum in order to address the needs of students who want to engage topics related to faith, religion, religious identity and spirituality, and who are interested in learning about religious traditions outside the classroom setting. Moderated by Professor Carol Bakhos, graduate as well as undergraduate students met on several occasions to discuss topics ranging from diversity within one's tradition, the challenges of being religious, and the role stereotypes play in how we interact with members of different religions. Students' desire to learn about religious traditions by getting to know one another was infectious and several religiously unaffiliated students participated in the discussions. Students of all backgrounds are welcome to join the conversations! The following students formed last year's leadership team: Michael Shimada ('16), Alex Kienzle ('16), Viktoria Chitwood ('17), Gabriela Chitwood ('17), Stephanie Luna ('18), Sulaiman Abdulmalek ('17).

For more information, please contact
sunnyhjkim@humnet.ucla.edu.

Multifaith/Interreligious: What's new in Jewish-Christian-Muslim Engagement?

In the half-century since Vatican II, Jewish-Christian relations have turned decidedly better so that we now may speak of friendship rather than enmity. In the almost 15 years since Sept. 11, 2001, Jewish-Muslim relations have gained a new urgency. What is the current state of Jewish-Christian and Jewish-Muslim relations? On Wednesday, April 13th, Professor, Rabbi Burton Visotzky of the Jewish Theological Seminary offered a first-hand account of the current state of interreligious engagement, reflecting on his meetings with the Vatican, Protestant religious centers, and Muslim-majority countries. This program was co-sponsored by the Academy for Judaic, Christian and Muslim Studies.



Highlights of the 2016-2017 Study of Religion Course Offerings

REL M10 Social, Cultural, and Religious Institutions of Judaism

This course is designed to introduce students to the various aspects of the Jewish tradition with the goal of understanding contemporary ideas, institutions, and thought from a historical vantage point. It will focus on the ongoing tension between tradition and innovation as manifested from epoch to epoch, and consider the question of Jewish identity in light of this very tension. How do we identify ourselves vis-à-vis religious, cultural and social categories?

REL 11 Religion in LA

This class introduces students to the varieties of religious experience in Los Angeles and its environs. Presentations, required readings, and (where possible) site visits will shape the engagement of course participants with selected faiths and spiritual practices throughout Southern California and provide a deeper understanding of the innumerable ways that the sacred is made manifest and encountered in the region. Recognizing that spiritual traditions are crucial reflections of the region's ever-changing demographics, emphasis will be placed on the role of ethnicity, gender, nationality, and race in the shaping of the religious landscape.

REL 120 Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: Comparative Approach

This course is designed to introduce students from a broad spectrum of academic disciplines to an analysis of the complex relationship of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It will focus on the scriptural traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam and will examine them more generally as living traditions whose historical origins, current interactions, and future development will continue to shape the spiritual, cultural, political, and economic aspects of human civilization in the 21st century. One of the main objectives is to introduce students to the study of religion by looking at the ways in which Judaism, Christianity, and Islam intersect and diverge.

REL 177 Variable Topics: New Religious Movements in America

This course examines new religious movements (NRMs) in the United States primarily from the perspectives of history and sociology. We will examine questions such as: what is a “new religion” as opposed to “mainstream religion”—and who decides? What is the life cycle of a (new) religion? How does a (new) religious tradition legitimate itself in the face of tensions with the larger society? What has made the United States so fertile over its history for the creation and transmission of NRMs and alternative spiritual communities? Traditions and groups to be examined include: Mormonism (LDS and FLDS), Seventh-Day Adventism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Christian Science, Theosophical Society, New Thought, Louisiana Voodoo, Nation of Islam, Scientology, Satanism, Peoples Temple, Branch Davidians, Heaven’s Gate, Raëlian Movement, New Age Movements, Neopaganism, Santa Muerte, and the Human Potential Movement. We will also address topics germane to the study of both new and mainstream religious traditions, including charisma, conversion, authority, institutionalization, scripturalization, syncretism, orthodoxy, heresy, apostasy, violence, gender norms, science and religion, and the law.

REL 177 Variable Topics: Religious Diversity in America

This course examines features of religious diversity on the American landscape by tracing some of the social, political, economic, sexual, and ethnic forces at play (among others) dating from the pre-history of the United States to present day. Mainline as well as new religious movements will be examined, including but not limited to the perspectives of Native Americans, Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Mormons, and Scientologists. The viewpoints of religiously unaffiliated Americans (atheists, agnostics, secular humanists, freethinkers, skeptics, and the “spiritual but not religious”) will also be considered, in recognition of the broader phenomenon known as the “rise of the nones.” It is intended that by the end of this course the student will possess a practical knowledge of America’s past and present religious diversity and pluralism, and thereby be in a position to foster inter-religious/cross-cultural respect and understanding in and outside of the classroom.

REL M177 Religion in the Public Sphere

Recent theories of public culture aim to meet the challenges of religion, calling for a reexamination of the secularized public reason put forth in modernist theories. This course traces the historical dimensions and contours of the knot of public reason, the public sphere, and liberal democracy from the Enlightenment to the present, and will explore potentialities and pitfalls of a postsecularism. We will examine a number of contemporary controversies, theoretical and practical, that liberal democracies face in trying to articulate and follow a public reason in the public sphere when pressed by religious citizens. Special emphasis this quarter placed on the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

REL 177 Variable Topics: Bioethics and Religion

This course examines major normative and ethical concerns in medicine and public health policy, with special attention to the influence of religion, in particular: as a source of ethical principles and practices; its historical relevance to medicine, hospitals, and human health; and as a significant feature of many medical/health-related NGOs. The course goals are: (a) to familiarize students with the theoretical and practical virtues of philosophical reflection, including within and between major ethical theories, in moral decision-making related to medicine and health, aided by case studies; (b) to better understand the concerns of ethical conflicts across competing normative theories and religions, as well as between individual judgments and collectively binding policy; and (c) to highlight the special significance of religion in rhetorics—theoretical, metaphorical, literal, practical—of health and healing.

REL M60W Introduction to Buddhism

General survey of Buddhist worldview and lifestyle, with focus on those religious doctrines and meditative practices most essential to various Asian traditions of Buddhism. Particular attention to problems involved in study of religion.

REL M 105C Baha'i Faith in Iran

This course examines Baha'i teachings that transformed the Iranian community and made it open to modernity. We will also consider progressive and transforming teachings and principles in light of Shi'i Persia.

REL M40 Christianities East and West

This course surveys three historical branches of Christianity—Eastern and Oriental Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, contrasting how history, dogma, culture and community structures develop in those three traditions.

UCLA Center for the Study of Religion Faculty Advisory Committee AY 2016-2017

Carol Bakhos, Director

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Jeffrey Guhin

Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology

Lowell Gallagher

Associate Professor, English and VC of Undergraduate Studies

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Lecturer, Art History

Stephanie Jamison

Professor, Asian Languages and Cultures

Polly Roberts

Professor, World Arts and Cultures/Dance

Gregory Schopen

Professor, Department of Asian Languages & Cultures

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Professor, Asian Languages and Cultures

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EVENTS 2016-2017

FOR COMPLETE LIST OF EVENTS,
VISIT WWW.RELIGION.UCLA.EDU

2016 Fall Welcome Reception

Thursday, October 13, 2016

4:00 pm – 6:00 pm
Royce Hall, 306

Book Talk: Numinous Awareness is Never Dark: The Korean Zen Master Chinul's Excerpts on Zen Practice: Is "Enlightenment" in Zen Buddhism Sudden or Gradual?

Robert Buswell, UCLA Department of Asian Languages and Cultures

Tuesday, October 18, 2016

4:00 pm – 6:00 pm
Royce Hall, 314
Co-sponsored by the UCLA Center for Buddhist Studies

Book Talk: The Love of Strangers – What Six Muslim Students Learned in Jane Austen's London

Nile Green, UCLA Department of History

Thursday, October 20, 2016

4:00 pm – 6:00 pm
6275 Bunche Hall
Co-sponsored by the UCLA Center for Near Eastern Studies and UCLA Center for the Study of Religion

Screening of Kisses to the Children and Discussion with the Director

Vassilis Loules, Director and Writer

Thursday, October 20, 2016

5:30 pm
Royce Hall, 314

Co-sponsored by the UCLA Department of Classics, UCLA Center for Jewish Studies, UCLA Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, and the UCLA Division of Humanities

Islam and Muslims in an Age of ISIS and Islamophobia

Omid Safi, Duke University

Saturday, October 29, 2016

3:30 pm – 5:00 pm
Young Court of Sciences, 50

Supported by the UCLA Islamic Studies-MRI Fund

Co-sponsored by the UCLA Center for the Study of Religion, and UCLA Center for Near Eastern Studies

Secularity: A Contested Concept

Charles Taylor, McGill University, Emeritus

Thursday, November 3, 2016

5:00 pm – 8:00 pm
Charles E. Young Research Library, Conference Room

Sponsored by UCLA Department of Philosophy, UCLA Department of Sociology, UCLA Department of Critical Theory, and UCLA Center for the Study of Religion

Across Legal Lines: Jews and Muslims in Modern Morocco

Jessica Marglin, USC

Tuesday, November 15, 2016

12:00 pm
Royce Hall, 306

*Sponsored by UCLA Alan D. Leve Center for Jewish Studies
Co-sponsored by UCLA Department of History, UCLA Center for Near Eastern Studies, UCLA Center for the Study of Religion, USC School of Religion, and USC Department of History*

New Archaeological Discoveries in Israel: The Case of Samson in Stone

Jodi Magness, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Tuesday, November 15, 2016

4:00 pm – 6:00 pm
Royce Hall, 314

Co-sponsored by UCLA Alan D. Leve Center for Jewish Studies, UCLA Department of Near East Cultures and Languages, and Cotsen Institute of Archaeology at UCLA

Trialogue: Protest in God's Name. Religious Dissent in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

Thursday, December 1, 2016

4:00 pm – 6:00 pm
Charles E. Young Library Conference Room
Co-sponsored by the Academy for Judaic, Christian, and Islamic Studies

The Rabbinic Sacrificial Vision and the Roman Imperial Cult

Mira Balberg, Northwestern University

Moderator: Ra'anana Boustan

Tuesday, December 6, 2016

12:00 pm
Royce Hall, 306

*Sponsored by UCLA Alan D. Leve Center for Jewish Studies
Co-sponsored by UCLA Center for the Study of Religion*

Quaker Mobility and the Threat to English America

Carla Pestana, UCLA, Department of History

Thursday, January 19, 2017

12:00 pm – 1:30 pm
Bunche Hall, 6275

Drumming Away Demons

Susan Ackerman, Dartmouth University

Tuesday, February 7, 2017

12:00 pm
Royce Hall, 314

*Sponsored by UCLA Alan D. Leve Center for Jewish Studies
Co-sponsored by UCLA Center for the Study of Religion*

Jewish Childhood in Ottoman and Hashemite Iraq

Orit Bashkin, University of Chicago

Thursday, February 16, 2017

5:00 pm

James West Alumni Center, Conference Room

Sponsored by UCLA Center for Near Eastern Studies

Co-sponsored by: UCLA Alan D. Leve Center for Jewish Studies; UCLA Center for the Study of Religion

How David Ben-Gurion and His Political Successors Read the Biblical Book of Conquest

Rachel Havrelock, University of Illinois at Chicago

Tuesday, February 28, 2017

12:00 pm
Royce Hall, 306

*Sponsored by: UCLA Alan D. Leve Center for Jewish Studies
Co-sponsored by: UCLA Department of Eastern Languages and Cultures and UCLA Center for the Study of Religion*

Divine Law and Community Boundaries in Jewish Antiquity

Christine Hayes, Yale University

Moderator: Carol Bakhos

Tuesday, April 4, 2017

4:00 pm
Royce Hall, 314

*Sponsored by: UCLA Alan D. Leve Center for Jewish Studies
Co-sponsored by: UCLA Center for the Study of Religion*

Lucas Cranach and Martin Luther: Sacred Art at the Dawn of the Reformation

Gregory Harwell, UCLA, Department of Art History

Thursday, April 20, 2017

12:00 pm – 1:30 pm
Location TBD

Book Talk: Muslims and the Making of America: A Conversation with Amir Hussain

Amir Hussain, Loyola Marymount University

Wednesday, April 26, 2017

12:00 pm – 1:30 pm
Location TBD

Beyond Honor and Shame: Rabbinic Control of Jewish Women in Medieval Egypt

Eve Krakowski, Princeton University

Monday, May 8, 2017

5:00 pm
Royce Hall, 314

*Sponsored by: UCLA Center for Near Eastern Studies
Co-sponsored by: UCLA Alan D. Leve Center for Jewish Studies; UCLA Center for the Study of Religion*

Conference: Learning the Other's Past: History Education, and Curricula in Israel/Palestine

May 18-19, 2016

Co-Sponsored by UCLA Department of Near Eastern Languages & Cultures

Graduate Conference on Religion

May 11-12, 2017

More information coming in November 2016.
Please check our website.