Center for the Study of Religion

2018 Newsletter

UCLA

CENTER FOR THE

UCLA STUDY OF RELIGION 2017-18

Director's Message

Dear colleagues and friends of the Center,

It's a great pleasure to once again have the opportunity to greet and thank you for another wonderful year. I hope you have all enjoyed restful summers and return to campus this fall invigorated.

During the 2017-18 year we not only continued with our rich programming of guest and faculty lectures, annual Graduate Student Conference and Spring Trialogue, but also organized events on Faith in Service of the City, designed to create dialogue on and offer potential models of how LA residents mobilize service acts to the city using their beliefs and values. In today's climate, we consider the relations between theory, theology, and practice more critical than ever to address.

Perhaps even more importantly, we spent the past year prioritizing to a higher degree than ever our relationship to UCLA and its students, who can so often feel neglected on a campus of our size and scope. We have been working to expand the diversity of our course offerings to include a broader range of undergraduate options , and this upcoming year will be offering our students even more, including REL110, "Religion and Violence," as well as new courses on the study of early Christianity such as REL177, "Jesus in Film," and the cross-listed M186A, "History of Early Christians."

The Center expanded its student outreach over the summer with "Religious Landscapes of LA," an intensive two-week NEH-funded seminar that flew in thirty teachers from all over the nation to attend a series of panels, workshops, and site visits throughout Los Angeles. Our teachers, who hailed from a wide range of subjects including English, history, and philosophy, came away with a better understanding of how to discuss religion sensitively and inclusively in their own classrooms across the country. More information on this program is available on the back of our newsletter.

As always, we look forward in the upcoming year to both continuing to serve the UCLA and Los Angeles communities and to working to build UCLA into a national center for the study of religion, two tasks that we consider one and the same.

With warmest regards and thanks for all that you contribute to our Center,

Carol Bakhos

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

Highlights from Faculty and Guest Lecture Series

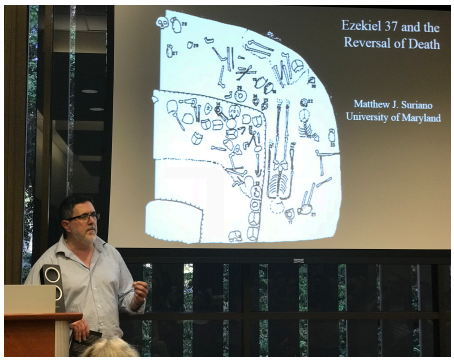
Attendance grows every year at our faculty and guest lecture events, which opened this past year with Islam and Jews in the Holy Land: Land and Nature and the Construction of Jewish Culture, co-sponsored by the Y&S Nazarian Center for Israel Studies. The Center is proud of its many co-sponsorships, and in 2017-18 worked alongside the Alan D. Leve Center for Jewish Studies for its winter Bible and Its Interpreters Seminar Series, the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, the Department of Classics, the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, and many others in order to bring to campus a broad and interdisciplinary range of speakers both local and international.

Among our own faculty talks we were happy to be able to offer platforms to newer faculty – such as Ryan Gillespie, who spoke this past November on "Healing with Joy: Recovering Medicine as a Moral Art in Uganda" and Karen Muldoon-Hules, who discussed her latest book, "Brides of the Buddha: Nuns' Stories from the Avadānaśataka," in April – as well as established faculty such as the English Department's Andy Kelly, who kicked off our 2018 programming with a packed lecture on "Satan in the Bible, God's Minister of Justice," arguing that an understanding of Satan as anything more than a "sinister celestial bureaucrat" is a classic misreading.

He was followed by Shari Lowin of Stonehill College, whose "Jewish Reactions to the Prophet Muhammad," was so successful that we look forward to hosting her again this upcoming spring as part of our "Between the Bible and Qur'an" symposium, this time right alongside some of our own excellent faculty.

A particularly busy week in February held two of our most popular events all year. In "Creating Gods Through Narratives: The Ontology of Greek Mythic Characters," co-sponsored by our Classics Department, Ohio State's Sarah Johnston traced the fictionalizing narratives of characters in religious texts from the Odyssey to the Ramayana. Two days later, a crowd of nearly a hundred and fifty attended "A Medieval Muslim Life in Transition," a panel discussion on Michael Cooperson (UCLA)'s recent translation of Ibn al-Jawzi's The Life of Ibn Hanbal.

In May, Harvard's Laura Nasrallah visited campus for a talk on "The Public Private Letter: From Ta-Nehisi Coates to the Letters of Paul and Beyond" about texts and their addressees, as did Boston University's Fallou Ngom, whose talk on "African Sources of Knowledge in Ajami Script: The Case of the Muridiyya" engaged with the often-overlooked written records of sub-Saharan Africa's intellectual heritage.



Graduate Conference on Religion

At the beginning of May, CSR hosted the Fourth Annual Graduate Conference on Religion – this year's topic: "Imagining Life After Death: Past, Present, and Future." After a first day of keynote talks on the subject by Christopher B. Hays (Fuller Theological Seminary), Claudia Setzer (Manhattan College), and Matthew Suriano (University of Maryland), the Conference continued the next day with wonderful presentations by an international set of students, including three from UCLA, who sought to address how ideas of death and life after death are conveyed across human history and applied in society and practice.

Spring Trialogue

Our annual trialogues, culmination of our upper-division Religion 120 seminars, are always popular and engaging events that gather all those of the UCLA and wider Los Angeles communities interested in exploring key issues of concern in contemporary religious and cultural studies. This spring's topic, "Help or Hindrance: The Role of Religion in Hearing the Voices of Women," was both timely and thoughtfully addressed by our three panelists. A Jewish perspective on the issues raised was offered by Gail Labovitz, Rabbinics Professor at American Jewish University, a Christian one by Jane Dempsey Douglass, Professor Emerita of Historical Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, and a Muslim one by Edina Lekovic, Educational Trainer and Consultant Producer and Host of *Meeting the Moment*. Our own Reinhard Krauss once again moderated.

NEH Summer Institute
"Religious Landscapes of LA"

This past July, on a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), the Center hosted twenty-eight K-12 educators from across the nation for a major two-week institute at UCLA.

"Religious Landscapes of LA," one of just twenty-five such U.S. institutes, featured visits across Los Angeles to Santa Monica churches, the Islamic Center of Southern California, and the Malibu Hindu Temple, among others, making it its consistent aim to understand varieties of religious traditions with an eye toward lived experiences. These service visits, exploring the many ways in which our city translates personal faith into civic engagement, encouraged bridge-building within local and global communities.

Lectures, panels, and workshops on faith traditions, featuring speakers including Loyola Marymount's Jeffrey Siker, Benjamin Marcus of Washington DC's Religious Freedom Center, and our own Carol Bakhos, provided participants with theoretical groundings and opportunities for involved discussion on the intersectionality of LA's abundant faith traditions with an eye to issues of culture, gender, and race.

As they bonded over their passion for these issues, our twenty-eight summer scholars gained the tools they need to teach about religious diversity as they return to their classrooms this fall.

Calendar of Events 2018-2019

UCLA CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION

FALL

2018 Fall Welcome Reception
Wednesday, October 10
4:00PM – 6:00PM
Royce 306

Guiding Presences and the Emergence of New Revelation
Ann Taves, UCSB
Tuesday, October 16
12:00PM – 1:30PM
Kaplan 365

Jesus in Retrospect: From Sin to Perfection
Jeffrey Siker, Loyola Marymount University
Thursday, November 1
4:00PM – 5:30PM
Kaplan 365

UC Faculty Working Group: New Directions in the Study of Black Atlantic Religions
Sponsored by: Department of World Arts and Cultures
Co-sponsored by: Center for the Study of Religion
Saturday, October 27
9:00AM – 5:00PM
Bunche 10383

The Public's Views of the Relationship Between Religion and Science – and the Resulting Disconnect With Social Sciences and the Humanities
John Evans, UCSD
Tuesday, November 13
12:00PM – 1:30PM
Haines 279

Johannes Vermeer and the Doctrine of the Logos
Gregory Harwell, UCLA
Wednesday, November 21
12:00PM – 1:00PM
Kaplan 365

WINTER

Finding Faithfulness in all the Wrong Places: Making Sacred Sense of Drunkenness, Deceit, and Debauchery in the Hebrew Bible
Peter Lanfer, Occidental College
Wednesday, January 16
4:00PM – 5:30PM
Royce 314

Dwelling on the Past and Longing for Home: Israel in Exile
Carly Crouch, University of Nottingham
Sponsored by: Alan D. Leve Center for Jewish Studies
Co-sponsored by: Center for the Study of Religion
Wednesday, January 23
12:00PM – 1:30PM
Royce 314

Three Versions of Muslim Anti-Judaism
Michael Pregill, Boston University
Co-sponsored by: Alan D. Leve Center for Jewish Studies
Tuesday, February 5
4:00PM – 5:30PM
Royce 314

Letters from Corinth: The Correspondence of Dionysios of Corinth and the Shape of Early Christianity
Cavan Concannon, USC
Wednesday, February 13
4:00PM – 5:30PM
Royce 314

What Chan Buddhist Athiesm Contributes to Contemporary Debates About Religion
Dale Wright, Occidental College
Co-sponsored by: Center for Buddhist Studies
Wednesday, February 27
4:00PM – 5:30PM
Royce 243

How Moses Became a Levite
Mark Leuchter, Temple University
Sponsored by: Alan D. Leve Center for Jewish Studies
Co-sponsored by: Center for the Study of Religion
Tuesday, March 5
12:00PM – 1:30PM
Royce 314

SPRING

CHESUCHRISTO: The Fusion of Word and Image of Che Guevara and Jesus Christ
David Kunzle, UCLA
Thursday, April 4
12:00PM – 1:30PM
Kaplan 365

The Seventeenth Century Judeo-Persian Adaptation of the Buddha Biographies
Dalia Yarsharpour, UCLA
Co-sponsored by the Alan D. Leve Center for Jewish Studies, Pourdavoud Center, and Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures
Tuesday, April 9
4:00PM – 5:30PM
Royce 306

On the Soul
Herbert Morris, UCLA
Wednesday, April 10
12:00PM – 1:00PM
Royce 306

Between Bible and Qur'an Symposium
Wednesday, April 17
2:00PM – 6:30PM
Royce 314

Why American Healthcare Needs Partnership with Religious Communities
Michael Balboni, Harvard University
Wednesday, May 1
4:00PM – 5:30PM
Haines 118

Trialogue
Details TBA
Thursday, June 6
4:00PM – 6:00PM
Royce 306

Calendar subject to change.
For a complete and updated list of events and RSVP, visit www.religion.ucla.edu
Questions: csr@humnet.ucla.edu