



Religious Studies

Alumni Newsletter

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ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

For teacher, 'golden thread' is real

Alison Wilkerson Brown, BA'02, turned abstract questions about life's meaning and study at IU into a teaching career that ignites the minds of inner-city students and motivates teachers. Here, she tells her story.

I have often entertained the fantasy that my earliest memories of "studying religion" would have made the old phenomenologists proud. I would walk down my woods-enclosed driveway trying to understand who the "I" was behind my perception of the world.

I conducted my experiments by covering and uncovering my eyes with my hands: even with my eyes covered there was some awareness that registered my being despite the dark shield that blocked the apparitions of the outside. I would think: "What was this strange presence, this "I-ness" I contained (or which contained me)?" Now, if you think that's pretty far-fetched for a young girl of about five, you've only begun the journey with me along this winding quest for truth.

At age 11 I pulled a copy of Ram Daas' *Be Here Now* from my father's eclectic library. I remember finishing up my second job as a summer beach cleaner just before sunset, plopping myself on a dock, and leafing through the illustrated pages with eager fingers and a trembling heart. Jesus, Krishna, Buddha, Allah — they were all pointing toward the same truth — delectable heresy for a young and rebellious girl lodged in the heart of the Bible Belt.

I think that was probably the time when



"The golden thread has been woven between the quest for truth and justice; it is knotted by the power of love that my students inflamed and strengthened in me."

the seed of my quest was planted. I was compelled to uncover that "golden thread" of truth that connects across all languages, all religions, all cultures, and all times.

In high school I hungrily ingested morsels from the *Bhagavad Gita* to *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, layering my beloved books behind the dense pages of my AP textbooks. To the testament of my high

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Around the department

Student awarded prestigious Cox Scholarship

Religious Studies major **Julie Singer** was among 21 undergraduates at Indiana University's Bloomington and Indianapolis campuses selected as recipients of the prestigious Cox Scholarship for 2009-10.

Now in its fifth year, the Cox Scholarship program was started with a \$15 million contribution from IU alumnus Jesse Cox and his wife, Beulah. The Coxes initiated the scholarship fund to reward students who balance both work and school in the pursuit of an IU degree, just as Jesse Cox did during the 1930s.

"Because of the foresight and generosity of Jesse and Beulah Cox, these 21 bright and industrious students are assured of being able to finance their education, even in these tough economic times," said Gene Tempel, president of the IU Foundation.

The Jesse H. and Beulah Chanely Cox Scholarship fund is one of IU's most generous scholarship programs for working students who are in-state residents. The renewable scholarship provides 75 percent of the estimated cost of attendance at IU Bloomington and Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis.

To learn more about the program and how to apply, visit: coxscholars.indiana.edu.



Singer

Theologian John Haught speaks on evolution & religion

Not only can evolutionary theory and religious faith peacefully co-exist, but the theory of evolution is a gift to Christian theology. So argued Professor John Haught of Georgetown University in a lecture to a large audience of students, faculty, and community members in October.

The Department of Religious Studies sponsored Haught's lecture as part of the College of Arts and Sciences' Fall 2009 Themester on "Evolution, Diversity, and Change." The new Themester program highlights the interdisciplinary nature and the intellectual relevance of the liberal arts and sciences by exploring a single theme through lectures, courses, workshops, and other events sponsored by diverse departments.

Haught, senior research fellow at the Woodstock Theological Center at Georgetown, is author of numerous books and articles that argue for a Christian theology that accepts and integrates evolutionary biology and the theory of natural selection.

In his lecture he sketched what he called extreme and problematic views on the implications of natural selection for religion, including the so-called "New Atheism" of Richard Dawkins and others and the Christian rejection of Darwinism through intelligent design theory. Instead, Haught advocated a theology that embraces evolutionary theory's combination of openness and reliability in the development of life. An imperfect universe moving freely and independently to an open future can be seen as the gift of a self-humbling God.

During his visit to IU, Haught also met with Professor **Lisa Sideris**'s class on "Evolution and Ethics." This popular seminar for undergraduates and graduate students represented another departmental contribution to the College's fall 2009 Themester.



Professor Lisa Sideris with speaker John Haught, who visited to deliver a Themester 2009 lecture.

Joe Dodson, BA'08, in Swaziland.



Fulbright Fellow travels to South Africa

Joe Dodson, BA'08, received a Fulbright Fellowship for Fall 2009. Dodson is currently in Swaziland, South Africa, where he is conducting research. As a Religious Studies graduate, Dodson says the most surprising thing for him was to discover that much of what he learned about religion in the global South from Professor Constance Furey's courses — that it is strikingly similar to American Pentecostalism — is largely true. On a lighter note, Dodson writes that he was caught off guard to learn that in Swaziland stoplights are referred to as "robots." "People give directions, 'Go to the second robot and turn left,'" he says. "You can imagine that I was often lost after first arriving."

Faculty news

David Brakke traveled to the University of Helsinki in October 2009, where he gave a public lecture, "Contested Canons: Differing Scriptural Practices and the New Testament in Antiquity," and he presented a paper on "The Original Gnostics" to a seminar of faculty and doctoral students. He then went to the University of Lund to participate in a seminar on asceticism in early Christianity; his paper studied teachings on anger in select ancient pagan philosophers and Christian monks. A book that he co-edited, *Critique and Apologetics: Jews, Christians and Pagans in Antiquity*, appeared from Peter Lang in Frankfurt, Germany. One of Brakke's early articles was abridged and reprinted as "The Problematization of Nocturnal Emissions in the Early Christian Church" in *Men and Masculinities in Christianity and Judaism: A Critical Reader*, edited by Björn Krondorfer (SCM Press), and a portion of his book on demons and monks was translated into French and published as "Le Gnostique. Évagre le Pontique" in *Collectanea Cisterciensia* 71.

Candy Brown published an article: "Touch and American Religions" in *Religion Compass* 3. In February, she gave an invited lecture, "Miracle Cures? Divine Healing Networks and the Global Expansion of Christianity," in the Bishop Walter F. Sullivan Chair in Catholic Studies Lecture Series at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Va.

Constance Furey concluded her three-year term as director of Renaissance studies and is spending the 2009–2010 school year working on her book, *Religious Relationships in Renaissance Poetry*, thanks to a grant from the College Arts and Humanities Institute and a sabbatical leave. In November she led a workshop at the Society for the Study of Early Modern Women Conference at the University of Maryland, together with two colleagues from IU: Will Smith (a PhD candidate in Religious Studies) and Penelope Anderson (assistant professor in the English department). At the AAR meeting in Montreal, she will respond to the papers delivered in a panel on "Monasteries, Madrasahs and Metivtas," during the inaugural session of the Europe and the Mediterranean World Consultation, which she co-founded.

J. Albert Harrill, as part of his research stay in Germany as Humboldt Fellow, presented a number of international lectures. The first was (in German) to the Evangelisch-Theologische Fakultät of the Westphalian Wilhelms-University in Münster:

GRADUATE STUDENT SYMPOSIUM CALL FOR PAPERS!

Religion, Nature, and Innovation



Following the College of Arts and Sciences Fall 2009 Themester on "Evolution, Diversity, and Change," graduate students will host "Religion, Nature, and Innovation." The symposium takes place this spring on Thursday, March 4 and Friday, March 5, 2010

Although the College-wide interest is in marking the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin and the 150th anniversary of the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, the department welcome papers focused not only on evolution but also on a variety of other topics related to nature and innovation, broadly construed.

We anticipate topics such as conceptions of nature; the relationship of traditions to environmental movements; innovations in human attempts to manipulate, care for, or submit to the natural world; theories about the natural and supernatural; paradigms of change and evolution within the field of religious studies; understandings of nature in ethics and conceptions of authority; or the nature of religion.

We welcome papers from graduate students in any departments and disciplines, beyond religious studies. **Please submit a 300-word abstract by Friday, Jan. 8, 2010 to iugradconf@gmail.com.**

"Gottesurteil gegen Hananias und Saphira (Apg 5.1-11): Eine Standardszene des Meineids und Todes," a study of death-scenes in the Acts of the Apostles. A second lecture, to Münster's Forschungskolloquium (Neutesamentliches Seminar), was titled "Paul and Empire." It evaluated the place of the Apostle Paul in Roman imperial studies. Harrill traveled to Finland to present a third lecture, "Slavery in the Christian Household: Social Roles and Occupations," to the Department of Biblical Studies at the University of Helsinki. In addition, Yale University Press has commissioned him to write a new translation and commentary of Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, to appear in the distinguished Anchor Yale Bible commentary series.

Nancy Levene will present "From Foucault to Descartes in the Study of Religion" at the Roundtable on Theoretical-Critical Issues in the Study of Religion convened by the Critical Theory and Discourses on Religion Group and the North American Association for the Study of Religion at the American Academy of Religion national meeting in Montreal. She is preparing two new courses for spring 2010: a new junior seminar in the study of religion on interpretations of reality, and a 100-level Introduc-

tion to the Study of Religion, co-taught with Richard Nance, on the formation of the religious self in global contexts.

Shaul Magid's book *From Metaphysics to Midrash: Myth, History and Scripture in Lurianic Kabbala* won the 2009 American Academy of Religion Book Award for Excellence in the textual studies category. He was also co-editor of three journal volumes with essays in each volume: in *Modern Judaism* on Abraham Joshua Heschel; in *Jewish Studies Quarterly* on Jews in Ottoman lands; and in *Prooftexts: A Journal of Jewish Literature* on mystical poetics. He also published the following essays: "Subversion as Return: Scripture, Dissent, and Renewal in Contemporary Judaism" *Subverting Scripture*, Beth Benedix ed. (New York, Palgrave Macmillan); "Pragmatism and Piety: The American Spiritual and Philosophical Roots of Jewish Renewal," *Kabbalah and Modernity* (Leiden, Brill, in press); and "The Holocaust as Inverted Miracle: Shalom Noah Barzofsky of Slonim on the Power and Divine Nature of Radical Evil," *Spiritual Authority: Wrestling with Cultural Power in Jewish Thought*, Haim Kreisel and Boaz Huss eds. (Beer Sheva: Ben Gurion University Press).

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Wilkerson

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school teachers who (mostly) indulged my fierce opposition in classes dedicated to the transmission of the Roman Catholic faith (it was not beyond me to stand on my chair to make an impassioned point), I was somehow bestowed the Social Justice Award a few years in a row during my high school career.

Between the hours of release from school and my grueling mission to decipher AP Calculus, my friend Micah and I would meet at the local Waffle and Steak (a cultural artifact found only in odd sections of the Midwest) to pursue our quest. We would load up the jukebox with quarters and our systems with caffeine and share quotes from our smuggled books.

Soon enough we would be passionately arguing about the meaning of life: he was convinced that the essence of it all was truth, while I was unswervingly committed to the existence of love as ultimate. Later I would exclaim, “But, Micah — the truth is love!” He’d have nothing to do with my clouded attempts at monism.

Needless to say, that January day in 1999 when I first leafed through course descriptions for the IU Religious Studies Department, I was brimming with excitement.

I couldn’t decide what I wanted to pursue the most: philosophy, sociology, or religious studies, so I simply indulged my smorgasbord tendency once again and majored in them all. I piled on course credits in the College of Arts and Sciences until the power of course registration was mine (... all mine).

My experience in the Religious Studies Department was truly transformative. On one hand, the course offerings were prime material for my personal quest; what better content could one ask for than Professor Richard Miller’s Religion and the Self course, linking Saint Augustine, Sigmund Freud, and Soren Kierkegaard all into one deliciously complex whole? Or Professor David Haberman’s unification of religion and deep ecology? On the other hand, my professors and colleagues were deeply caring, supportive, and intellectually engaging, preparing a fertile ground for my cultivation as a person. I was surrounded with people with whom I could hold conversations like those that Micah and I cherished. Moreover, I could receive college credit for them!

As time progressed and my seemingly insatiable need to devour material began to subside, I began to arrive upon an inkling that this truth I was seeking existed beyond language, beyond logic, and beyond the world of study. A kernel of peace developed within me, and I started to turn my attention beyond the realm of ideas and into the

world where all too much suffering exists. I had already begun volunteering at the Middle Way House, a longstanding domestic violence shelter in Bloomington, Ind., and so I doubled my efforts. I took on the night shift a couple times a week, and trained to become an on-scene rape advocate.

And so my quest expanded. As I worked with women and families, I witnessed how race, gender, health care, childcare, education, working wages, and other socioeconomic factors all functioned to form an intricate and seemingly inescapable web of problems. I also came to the abrupt realization that having the time and energy to philosophize about the meaning of existence was a privilege in and of itself. I was amongst the privileged, and moreover, I had the power and choice to utilize that privilege to help others.

As I looked into my future after IU, I wanted to find a way to help that would have impact. After further education and volunteering experiences through American University’s Transforming Communities Semester Program, I came to regard education as the pivotal area for change. Soon after, I applied and was accepted into the 2002 New York City corps of Teach for America.

It took some years of incredible exhaustion and hard work for me to refocus on any threads of deep meaning.

I was hired in the Bronx at a middle school that at the time was considered one of the most violent schools in the city. I suffered right alongside my students as we struggled to create a safe space free of violence, drugs, abuse, and intimidation so that I could teach and they could learn. Even when I was nearly thrown from a four-story window by a gang that broke into the school and burst into my classroom, I was told not to report the incident to the police for fear of further tarnishing our already heinous record as a school.

A few of my students were already addicted to drugs, many others were victims of sexual abuse and domestic violence, and one of my sixth graders was already pregnant by age 12. I could go on for some time about the intensity of the situation, but suffice it to say that my ideas about power, privilege, race, class, and gender were no longer mere ideas — they were a brutal reality that consumed my life.

For many months, I was completely overwhelmed and barely surviving each day. But on one particularly hard day, one of my students threw her arms around me and sang the Sesame Street song softly in my ear. “That’s what I do when my baby sister is upset,” she proclaimed with an ear-to-ear grin after she saw the tears well up in my eyes.

I looked at this little girl who was the primary caretaker of another human being at

11 years old, and my heart burst wide open. I had so much to learn from these beautiful, resilient children. And so for some time, I became the student and my children the teachers. I listened to them as they spoke about their lives, I watched as they lived them, and I was transformed by what they revealed to me.

As I continued to teach over the next five years, I learned to create a classroom that was an equally warm and demanding environment in which my students felt both safe and challenged to become the best people they could be. My instruction became infused with powerful ideas that I distilled from my own education and through my quest to make my students passionate about learning.

The classroom continues to be a mirror, where I am confronted with new layers of myself that I need to face and heal in order to be as present as possible for my students. Eight years later, I continue to be challenged by a profession that, in my mind, one can never truly master because the path to greatness is never-ending.

Today I serve primarily as a teacher of other teachers. I work as the Director of History Achievement for the Achievement First Network of 15 urban charter schools in Brooklyn and Connecticut, as well as a course designer and adjunct lecturer for social studies courses at Hunter College’s teaching graduate program in New York City.

I brim with excitement when I enter history classrooms in which the students are passionately debating issues that teachers and I have designed to connect the past, present, and future.

Currently our fifth graders are assessing the impact of geography on history, as guided by the thinking of Guns, Germs, and Steel. Our sixth graders are debating the question, “Is one religion more ‘right’ or ‘true’ than others?” and our seventh graders are evaluating whether the Columbian Exchange was ultimately more helpful or harmful to the world. As our seventh graders take on the Reconstruction Era, they are debating the question of whether equality can be legislated.

In many ways, my quest has formed a full circle. I design curriculum that is in part generated by the very things that impassioned me when I was young, and this curriculum is implemented in places where children might not otherwise have access to educational programs that empower them to think and act in transformative ways.

In this way, the golden thread has been woven between the quest for truth and justice; and it is knotted by the power of love that my students have inflamed and strengthened in me.—*Alison Wilkerson Brown*

Student Notes

Graduate student news & notes

Will Smith presented papers titled “Anne Wentworth’s Apocalyptic Marriages” at “To Have and To Hold: Marriage in Premodern Europe: 1200-1700,” during a conference hosted by the University of Toronto.

Nicole Karapanagiotis presented two papers at conferences during fall 2009: “Virtual Vishnu: Vaishnava Conceptions of Embodied Divinity in Cyberspace” at the American Council for Southern Asian Art Symposium/New Darshans Conference at Denison University, Granville, Ohio, in October, and “Making Offerings to the Cyber-Feet of Vishnu: The Framing and Protocol of Vaishnava Virtual-Puja” at the American Academy of Religion in Montreal in November. She continues to carry out ethnographic research in New Jersey for her dissertation.



The Bangla Summer Institute, of which Professor Rebecca Manning is director of curricula, is held on the campus of the Independent University-Bangladesh. It is the top-ranked private university in the country. The university’s vice chancellor holds a farewell dinner at the end of the summer for students and faculty (left to right: Mehedi Kayser Pabitra, Atif Safi, Matthew Rich, Afia Kader, Rehana Setu Perveen, Fatema Ara, and Rebecca Manning). Read more about Manning’s work in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and her innovative course on South Asian film on page 7.



Above: Professor David Haberman stumps undergraduate students during the fall welcome back reception.

At right: Saralyn McKinnon-Crowley answers questions from first-year students visiting the URSA’s Freshman Expo booth.



From the URSA presidents

URSA has been busy

During fall 2009, URSA organized a number of exciting events, all of which sought to foster contact between the department’s undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and the Bloomington community.

In October students had a chance to eat lunch with Professor Heather Blair, the department’s new faculty member in Japanese and east Asian religions. Later in the semester, URSA hosted a movie night with Professor Chaya Halberstam, a lunch with Professor David Brakke, a trip to the Bloomington mosque, and a panel with graduate students.

The graduate panel is quickly becoming an URSA tradition. For three years now, graduate students from the department have met with upper-level undergraduates over lunch to share their stories — why they chose graduate school and what path they took to get there, etc.

URSA was also involved in the College’s Themester, “Evolution, Diversity, and Change,” and the Religious Studies department hosted the theologian John Haught in conjunction with IUSA. Spring 2010 looks to be a busy and exciting semester! — *Saralyn McKinnon-Crowley and Aren Wilson-Wright, URSA co-presidents*

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Helping people 'make meaning' in life



Heather Maritano and her daughter photograph birds at a local market. Learn more about Maritano's practice at hmaritanocounseling.com.

Heather Maritano, BA'90, MSW'95, writes about how a life of religious studies lessons shapes her practice as a therapist.

My first religious studies class is vividly fixed in my mind — large, brightly lit lecture hall, seated third row from the front, and in about four seats from the left aisle.

Professor James Ackerman was waxing poetic about metaphor and symbols. He explained that, when we read, “The stars fell from her eyes.” we know stars didn't literally fall from her eyes, and he later discussed how, without evoking the symbolic meaning, the wearing of crosses as jewelry is akin to wearing guillotines.

What makes my memory unique is that I was in the fourth grade, accompanying my mother to her class. To a great extent I grew up in the religious studies department.

My mother being a single parent and
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Class notes

1970s

Katherine Cunningham, BA'74, MA'79, is a minister who, along with several other pastors, operates New Horizons, a not-for-profit counseling center in Ridgewood, N.J. In January, her husband Kurt R. Kaboth, BA'73, JD/MBA'77, was appointed director of resource development for the National Council of Churches in New York City. He is responsible for church membership and program support, contributed support, planned giving, and foundation grants. Kaboth served for 25 years as general counsel for the YMCA Retirement Fund and for three years as head of school for Eastern Christian School, in North Haledon, N.J., where the couple lives.

1990s

Marcy Flickinger Ball, BA'96, is the nursery director of Bridgepoint Church in Boise, Idaho. Her husband, Jeremy, BA'95,

JD'98, recently received tenure and was promoted to associate professor of criminal justice at Boise State University. The couple are parents of a three-year-old son. They live in Boise.

2000s

Erin R. Snyder, BA'00, MS'04, is a counseling psychologist with the Texas Tech University Student Counseling Center in Lubbock, where she lives. She completed a PhD in counseling psychology at Ball State University in December 2008. She married Nick Bosworth in July 2005.

Daniel J. Wasserberg, BA'00, Cert/JD'03, is a plaintiff's attorney for the law firm Williams Kherkher in Houston, where he lives. He has a five-year-old daughter, Elana.

Sarah E. Pritz, BA'01, a special-education teacher from Rockford, Ill., is one of five IU alumni teaching at the same elementary school in the Chicago suburb of Highwood, Ill. In addition to Pritz, Oak Terrace Elementary School includes among

its staff members Jamie Bernardi DiCarlo, BS'00, of Libertyville, Ill., a special-education and gifted-education teacher; Wendy Sheinin Larsen, BS'98, of Glenview, Ill., an ESL and gifted-education teacher; Peter G. Samaris, BA'99, of Evanston, Ill., a fourth-grade dual-language teacher; and Jessica L. Goldner, BS'05, of Chicago, a fourth-grade teacher. DiCarlo writes, “We have all been teaching together for several years. Oak Terrace Elementary serves 550 children, grades K–5, with dual-language problems. More than 50 percent of the school's population has Spanish as its primary language. Several of us have completed or are working on advanced degrees while teaching. This is a place where the IU spirit lives!”

Marsha E. Dawes, BAJ'08, MS'09, married Joseph F. Lovejoy, BA'07, MS'09, at Beck Chapel on the IU Bloomington campus on June 20. Marsha is a public-relations coordinator for Cook Medical Inc. in Bloomington, Ind. Joseph is an assistant director at the Career Development Center at IUB. They live in Bloomington.

Maritano

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religious studies major meant I was often taken to seminars, dinners, and events where I was privy to incredible conversations. Judith Berling greatly influenced my mother — I simply loved her apartment. James Hart became a family friend, and Mary Jo Weaver my godmother.

Announcing what I wanted to be when I grew up is as vivid as that first religious studies class and actually occurred around the same time.

While walking with my mother on the railroad tracks by Seminary Square Kroger, I stated I wanted to be a child psychologist. When I got to IU 10 years later, that was still my plan. It never occurred to me to major in religious studies; psychology was my chosen path. Yet somehow I ended up in Sycamore Hall talking with Luke Johnson about what I wanted to do and how I saw myself getting there. He clearly articulated the case for a broad liberal arts undergraduate and a career-focused graduate program. By the end of the conversation I had decided to become a second-generation religious studies major.

Ethics and social issues were my main focus: I couldn't get enough of James Hart, Richard Miller, and Robert Orsi. Of course I had a special connection to Mary Jo Weaver. Luke Johnson was phenomenal. I was particularly fortunate in my freshman year to have an associate instructor, Dan B., who helped me understand the department standards for critical thinking and academic writing through his extensive feedback. My ability to convey complex concepts deftly, in either written or verbal discourse, was greatly enhanced by the attention given by the faculty. I did not fully appreciate the quality of education I was receiving until I went on to graduate school.

What stands out as the most significant aspect of my religious studies experience was the rigorous engagement of topics between instructors and students. It is this more than any other aspect of my education — undergraduate or graduate — that has influenced my professional practices.

It is essential as a therapist that I can conceptualize another's experience in myriad ways in order to be helpful. Often I am providing a structure for understanding that which had previously been ill-defined. Perhaps similar to how religious traditions address the need to communicate about God? My religious studies degree has been extremely useful in my work as a therapist on so many levels.

While I didn't become a psychologist specifically, I did stay true to my childhood vision to be a therapist who works with children. Although I don't see children exclusively, my specialty is in play therapy. This is a way of working with children that uses their natural means of communication: play.

For more than 10 years I've maintained a private practice, Inner Resources Counseling. In addition to clinical work, I've been an adjunct instructor at Christian Theological Seminary, a clinical consultant, a supervisor, and a workshop presenter.

My ethics education is constantly called upon, and I enjoy presenting an annual training on ethical issues in clinical practice. Passion, excellence, and mentoring in every aspect of the educational process was what I took away from religious studies at IU, which is the model I use when teaching or supervising emerging therapists.

I took a class called Holy Anorexia with Professor Olivelle, which addressed extreme behaviors related to eating, or not, in Medieval Christianity. This is just one direct example of how the coursework in religious studies broadens my scope of understanding for addressing the human condition.

I am not satisfied to work within the confines of modern, Western, secular psychology. Individuals and families come to therapy with deeply held beliefs that shape behavior. It is my responsibility to explore their understandings first and foremost. Coming full circle to Ackerman's metaphor and symbol, I have chosen to specialize in a type of therapy that does not rely primarily on words but rather on symbols, stories and play. My degree in religious studies enhances my ability to understand, translate and make use of the symbolic or poetic ways in which people make meaning for their lives. — *Heather Maritano*

Faculty news

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Rebecca Manring is very happy to be back in Bloomington this fall, after another summer in Dhaka, capital of Bangladesh, where she serves as director of curricula for the Bangla Summer Institute. There, she works with a great group of very dedicated Bangladeshi faculty and a remarkable cross-section of the best of American students. This fall she taught a new but long-anticipated course, R388 *Mandir* [temple] and *Masjid* [mosque] at the Movies. Inspired by a student's senior honors essay some years ago, Manring developed a class that uses South Asian film as the lens through which to examine religion and the many critical issues it raises in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Manring organized a panel at the Annual Conference on South Asia (at the University of Wisconsin-Madison) in honour of her Bengali teacher, the late Dr. Carol Salomon of the University of Washington, who was killed in a bicycle accident in March. Manring has replaced Salomon on the Language Committee of the American Institute of Indian Studies. She has been named to the Policy Committee of the India Studies Program, and is working with her colleagues in that unit to revise their core course. She continues work on her book for Oxford University Press, which will include translations (from Middle Bengali and Sanskrit) of the hagiographies of the 15th and 16th century Bengali Vaishnava leader, Advaita Acharya.

Richard Miller published "The Moral and Political Burdens of Memory," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 37 (2009). As director of the Poynter Center for the Study of Ethics and American Institutions, he is co-sponsoring, with John Bodnar of the IU Institute for Advanced Study, a yearlong faculty workshop on "empathy." That workshop draws together 15 faculty members — from theatre and drama to English to Germanic studies to the Kelley School of Business — to synergize interdisciplinary conversations about the origins, meaning, and social and cultural implications of "perspective taking" and its emotional valences. Miller is again serving on the College of Arts and Sciences Tenure Committee. He will be making presentations at the American Academy of Religion, the Society of Christian Ethics, and Wake Forest University during 2009–2010.

Lisa Sideris published an article in the interdisciplinary journal *Soundings* 91, titled "Fact and Fiction, Fear and Wonder: The Legacy of Rachel Carson." Sideris contributed in several ways to the IU College of Arts and Sciences Fall 2009 Semester on "Evolution, Diversity, and Change." Sideris taught two Semester-related courses: Evolution and Ethics and Religion and the Global Environmental Crisis. She also participated in one of the "talkback" discussions with audience members, following the Cardinal Stage Company's performance of *Inherit the Wind*.

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Religious Studies Alumni Newsletter

This newsletter is published by the Indiana University Alumni Association, in cooperation with the Department of Religious Studies and the College of Arts & Sciences Alumni Association, to encourage alumni interest in and support for Indiana University. For activities and membership information, call (800) 824-3044 or send e-mail to iualumni@indiana.edu.

Department of Religious Studies

Chair.....David Brakke
EditorMary Lou Kennedy Hosek

College of Arts & Sciences

Dean Bennett Bertenthal
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