

Religious Studies

Alumni Newsletter

Indiana University

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From the chair

From “American religions” to “religion in the Americas”: media, globalization, and identity

Anglican bishops from throughout the world recently issued an ultimatum to the U.S. Episcopal Church: stop blessing same-sex marriages, and do not elect another gay bishop. The presiding Anglican bishop of Nigeria came to the United States and consecrated a bishop to lead conservative Episcopalians distressed by their church’s acceptance of gays and lesbians. There are an estimated 2.2 million members of the Episcopal Church in the United States and 20 million Anglicans in Nigeria.

How should one study “American religions” in the 21st century? This department had to ask itself this question as, due to the retirements of beloved colleagues and eminent scholars Stephen Stein and Mary Jo Weaver, we found ourselves with no faculty in this key area of our curriculum. We rapidly learned that the decline of mainline Protestantism, the process of globalization, and the rise of communications technology require approaches that combine a solid understanding of Jonathan Edwards and the Great Awakenings with study of Joel Osteen, Latino immigrants, and pop culture. As the potential Anglican schism illustrates, U.S. religion no longer develops in isolation from the rest of the world, if it ever did. Our new colleagues in “religion in the Americas” emphasize the issues of identity that arise in a transnational, media-driven context.

Having already established herself as an authority on American evangelicalism with her book *The Word in the World*, Candy Gunther Brown is currently studying spiritual healing practices. Among the movements that she examines is Global Awakening, an international ministry based in



David Brakke

Christian groups are growing at an astonishing rate. Professor Brown offers courses on evangelical Christianity, women and

Toronto, Canada, that carries out missions in Africa and Latin America. In September 2007 Professor Brown will observe Global Awakening at work in Brazil, where charismatic and Pentecostal

religion in the United States, and spiritual healing.

In his award-winning book *The Myth of Ham in Nineteenth-Century American Christianity*, Sylvester Johnson examined how the biblical story of Noah’s sons provided a means of constructing racial and religious identities and justifying slavery. Professor Johnson continues to explore the role that scripture and other texts play in identity formation among Americans, with special interest in the notion of Americans as a “chosen people.” Professor Johnson’s

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Department welcomes new faculty

Four new faculty members join the department this fall. Kevin O’Neill joins as assistant professor of religious studies and American studies. He is an anthropologist of religion with regional expertise in the Americas. Professor O’Neill studied philosophy and theology as an undergraduate at Fordham University and received a master’s degree in theological studies from Harvard University. In 2007 he completed his PhD in anthropology at Stanford University with a dissertation on evangelical Christianity’s growing



Kevin O’Neill

influence on Guatemala’s efforts at democratization. He has already published articles on the Christian dimensions of the report of Guatemala’s post-genocide Truth and Reconciliation Commissions and on gender in the rhetoric of the National Rifle Association. Professor O’Neill will contribute to our new focus on religion in the Americas.

Richard Nance completed his PhD at the University of Chicago in 2004 and comes to IU as assistant professor of religious studies with a specialization in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism. As an undergraduate at New York Univer-



Richard Nance

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Many accomplishments celebrated at annual Honors Day party

In April each year the Department of Religious Studies celebrates the outstanding achievements of its students and faculty at the Honors Day Celebration. This year Professor Constance Furey moderated the well-attended event, and there was indeed much to celebrate. **Richard Miller** was awarded the 2007 James Philip Holland Award for Exemplary Teaching and Service to Students. This is one of the College of Arts and Sciences' highest honors and is based on student nominations. Khalil AbuGharbieh and Emily Crouch, both religious studies majors, wrote the nominating letters.

This year Bert Harrill was promoted to full professor, and Kevin Jaques was awarded tenure and promoted to associate professor. In July Jaques became the director of the Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies Program, an interdisciplinary effort that involves faculty of several different departments. Nancy Levene succeeded Jaques as the department's director of graduate studies.

Graduating senior **Khalil AbuGharbieh** was awarded the Herman B Wells Senior Recognition Award. This award is one of the most prestigious honors given to undergraduates for dedicated co-curricular service to the Bloomington campus. It is awarded to a student who has an impressive academic record coupled with significant leadership involvement among student groups, university departments, and community organizations. Khalil has been exemplary in all of those areas, and the award is richly deserved.



Also celebrated were the winners of the annual **Bill Gallagher Essay Contest**, made possible by a generous endowment from Mr. Gallagher that allows us to continue to offer this contest each year. This year there were three prizes: Junior **Christopher Chrzan** won first prize of \$500 for his essay "Beyond Mystic, Monastic and Misogynist: Challenging the Inferiority of Feminine Power Roles in Medieval Japanese Religion."

Junior **Aaron Goldman** won second prize for his essay "Broken Individuality and Fractured Community," and third prize went to sophomore **Tim Swanger** for "Passion against Passion: The Spirit at War with Itself."

The departmental essay contest winner was junior **Becky Winn** for "By word formed in my understanding: Language and Its Reworking in *The Shewings of Julian of Norwich*." And in an unprecedented event, there was a three-way tie for the honors essay division of the departmental contest. The winners were **Christine Foust** for "Pedagogy, Polemic, Propaganda: The Evolution of Martin Luther's Art and Rhetoric," (advisor, Professor Constance Furey), **Emily Crouch** for "Defending Liberation Theology: A Rejoinder to Cardinal Ratzinger," (advisor, Professor Richard Miller), and **Maggie Downham** for "Eastern Orthodoxy and Virtue Ethics: Community Formation and Social Action in the Liturgy" (advisor, Professor David Brakke).

Theta Alpha Kappa is an international academic honor society founded in 1976 to honor outstanding undergraduate students in the fields of religious studies and/or theology. Several extraordinary students were inducted into IU's chapter of Theta Alpha Kappa this year: **Khalil AbuGharbieh, Daniel Millner, Aaron Goldman, Daniel Youngren, Andrew Cornetta, Emma Young, Jon Kleinman, Hilary Scarsella, Joe Dodson, Amanda Dubinski, Emily Crouch, C. Scott Andreas, Caitlin Ody, Trevor Giddings, Meghan C. Clark, Erin M. Parks, Lori Petersen, Deana Sussman, and Maggie Downham.** Also celebrated were this year's **Phi Beta Kappa** inductees: **Emily Crouch, Erin Griffin, and Erin Parks** in fall 2006, and **Emma Young, Khalil AbuGharbieh, Amanda**



Faculty and students enjoy Honors Day.

Dubinski, Aaron Goldman, Dominic Guido, Adam James, Hilary Scarsella, and Deana Sussman in spring 2007. **Phi Beta Kappa** was founded in 1776 at the College of William and Mary. Since then it has evolved to become the nation's leading advocate for liberal arts and sciences education at the undergraduate level. Phi Beta Kappa elects over 15,000 new members each year from 262 chapters across the United States, and IU supports a strong chapter here on campus.



Emily Crouch, Richard Miller, and Khalil AbuGharbieh



2007 Theta Alpha Kappa Inductees

Faculty news

David Brakke responded to a paper on the apologetic aspects of early Christian martyrdom accounts at a conference hosted by the University of Aarhus (Denmark) entitled “Jews, Christians, and Pagans in Antiquity—Critique and Apologetics.” Doctoral candidates Jennifer Hart and Ellen Muehlberger also participated in the conference, which took place in January. In May Brakke spoke on “Pagans and Christians in Late Antique Panopolis: The Evidence of Shenoute’s *Discourses*” at the Early Christianity Workshop of the University of Chicago Divinity School. Also in May, he gave a lecture entitled “Gnostics and Other ‘Heretics’: Imagining the Diversity of Early Christianity” at Ohio State University as part of a series of lectures inaugurating OSU’s new Program in the Study of Religions. In addition, his essay “Research and Publications in Egyptian Monasticism, 2000–2004” was published in *Huitième congrès international d’études coptes (Paris 2004): I. Bilans et perspectives 2000–2004*, edited by Anne Boud’hors and Denyse Vaillancourt (Paris, de Boccard, 2006). In July he concluded his term as president of the Gamma of Indiana chapter of Phi Beta Kappa.

Candy Brown served as chair and commentator at the American Society of Church History, Atlanta, for “Contemporary American Christianities” in January 2007. She also published the entries “William Branham,” “John Alexander Dowie,” “Healing and Revivals,” “Kathryn Kuhlman,” “Francis MacNutt,” “Sanctification and Revivals,” and “Maria Woodworth-Etter” in the *Encyclopedia of Religious Revivals in America*, edited by Michael J. McClymond (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 2007), 60–62, 144–145, 201–204, 235–236, 249–250, 382–384, and 471–472.

Constance Furey, director of Renaissance studies, organized a series of lectures on demonology this past semester. The first speaker, Virginia Krause from Brown University, spoke on spiritual discernment in a 16th-century demonology manual. The capstone speaker, Stuart Clark from the University of Swansea (Wales), lectured on “Demons, the Sense of Sight, and Early Modern European Visual Culture.” Upcoming lectures include one on demonology and witchcraft by an art historian from Northwestern University and one on demonology, love, and identity in Renaissance Italy by Armando Maggi from the University of Chicago. Professor Furey is also designing a new course, to be taught in

the fall, on Gender in the Reformation. In addition, she has been directing two honors theses about Luther’s theology, one by Andrew Cornetta and the other by Christine Foust. Christine presented her research at the Honors College research symposium in March.

J. Albert Harrill published two articles. The first, “The Slave Still Appears: A Historical Response to Jennifer Glancy,” in *Biblical Interpretation* 15 (2007), is about his recent book, *Slaves in the New Testament: Literary, Social, and Moral Dimensions* (Fortress Press, 2006). The second, “The Metaphor of Slavery in the Writings of Tertullian,” in *Studia Patristica* 42 (2006), examines an early church father’s use of the slave to “think with” in exhortations to Christian slaveholders like himself. Professor Harrill acted as “temporary professor of symbology” (a one-night appointment) to discuss the film “The DaVinci Code” with students from the Undergraduate Religious Studies Association. He continues to serve as director of undergraduate studies and director of the graduate program in ancient studies.

Nancy Levene was a panelist at the symposium “Religion, Law, and the Public Sphere,” the second event in a series of workshops convened by the Collective on Religion and the Secular, University of Michigan Ann Arbor (February 2007). In March she was a respondent at a symposium at IU on the work of Alain Badiou, and she is working to organize a visit to IU by Badiou himself in fall 2007. In May she presented a paper entitled “Spinoza’s Political Reason” at a conference in Jerusalem on Spinoza as Social and Political Thinker, the sixth in the series “Spinoza by 2000—The Jerusalem Conferences.” In the fall she will teach two new courses: a graduate seminar on Kant and Hegel and an honors course called God and the Human Condition.

Kathryn Lofton and **Shaul Magid** won College Arts and Humanities Institute awards this year. This award allows faculty members to take a semester off from teaching to devote themselves to research.

Rebecca Manring has been asked by the trustees of the American Institute of Bangladesh Studies to become involved in their intensive summer language program in Dhaka, Bangladesh. She participated in the application screening process for the past two years, and this July spent two weeks in Dhaka to evaluate the program. When she was in South Asia, she made a quick trip across the border to Kolkata (formerly Calcutta), India, to confer with Profes-

sor Subhadra Kumar Sen, her collaborator on a massive new project to critically edit a medieval Bengali epic, the *Dharma Mangala*, and translate it into English. Professor Manring has just been awarded a travel grant from the College of Arts and Sciences Arts and Humanities Institute to travel again to Kolkata next winter to work further with Professor Sen on the project. In addition, the paper she presented at the summer 2006 World Sanskrit Conference has been accepted for publication in a volume of work selected from the grammar section of the conference, edited and reviewed by leading scholars of Sanskrit grammar.

Richard Miller was awarded the College of Arts and Sciences 2007 James Philip Holland Award for Exemplary Teaching and Service to Students. He continues to direct the Poynter Center for the Study of Ethics and American Institutions and to sponsor the IU Ethics Bowl Team. He published “Art, (Human) Nature, and Social Criticism,” an introductory essay in the catalogue accompanying the spring 2007 *Human Nature* exhibit at the IU School of Fine Arts Gallery. Also in spring 2007, he led the second semester of the Poynter Center Interdisciplinary Faculty Seminar on “Memory: Ethics, Politics, Aesthetics.” In addition, he gave the keynote address on “Models and Motivations in Research Ethics” at the 14th Annual Teaching Research Ethics Workshop. He also collaborated with center directors at the University of Minnesota, the University of Virginia, Georgetown University, and IUPUI on *EthicShare*, an initiative to build a digital commons in bioethics. He also served as a member of the IU Bloomington Provost Search Committee.

Lisa Sideris published “Religion and the Meaning of Ecology” in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology*, Roger Gottlieb, ed., Oxford University Press, 2006; “Religion and Environmentalism in America” in *Faith In America*, [Three Volumes], Charles Lippy, ed., Greenwood Press, 2006; “Writing Straight With Crooked Lines: Holmes Rolston’s Eco-Theology and Theodicy” in *Nature, Value, Duty: Life on Earth with Holmes Rolston, III*, Christopher Preston and Wayne Ouderkirk, eds., Springer Press, 2006; “Environmental Ethics, Ecological Theology, and Natural Selection” in *Environmental Stewardship: Critical Perspectives, Past and Present*, R.J. Berry, ed., T&T Clark International, 2006; and “Evolving

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Faculty news

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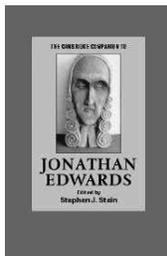
Environmentalism: Ecotheology in the Creation/Evolution Debate” (*Worldviews* vol. 11, no. 1, 2007) in *Worldviews: Environment, Culture, Religion*. In June she presented a paper entitled “The ‘Real World’ of Rachel Carson” at the 2007 meeting of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment in Spartanburg, S.C., as part of a panel commemorating the 100th anniversary of Rachel Carson’s birth.

Steve Stein received a Grant-in-Aid of Research and Scholarly Activity for Retired Faculty from IU in support of the planning and production of *The Cambridge History of Religions in America*, a three-volume historical resource for which he is serving as general editor. In March he lectured at the University of Richmond (Virginia), where IU alumnus Douglas Winiarski teaches in the Department of Religion. His lecture was entitled “Reflections on the Globalization of American Religion.” He also participated in a seminar session Doug was conducting on American Shakerism.

In April he gave the Branigin Lecture at Franklin College in Franklin, Ind., on a similar topic.

Mary Jo Weaver edited the section on Roman Catholicism in the *Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America*, which has been selected by the American Historical Association as winner of the 2006 Waldo G. Leland Prize for best reference tool in the field of history. This encyclopedia harvests the fruits of 25 years of scholarship on the history and current state of women’s religious experience in North America.

An essay written by **Steve Weitzman** calling into question the traditional Hanukkah story was featured as a front-page story in the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, causing a fair amount of controversy in December 2006. Professor Weitzman also recently completed a co-authored history of Jewish civilization, forthcoming from Prentice Hall Press, and is working on a new project that seeks to rethink how scholars relate biblical texts to historical contexts. He is hoping to restore the IU-Tel Beth Shemesh archaeology program, which brings students to Israel to help excavate an important Israelite “border town.” He hopes to renew it as early as the summer of 2008, but will only succeed in doing so if there is sufficient student interest. If you have such interest, please contact him.



Stein book

Ethics Bowl team has successful year

The **Ethics Bowl team** enlists students from across the campus and has traditionally included many students from religious studies. This year’s team members were **Emily Crouch**, a senior in religious studies and the Liberal Arts and Management Program; **Khalil AbuGharbieh**, a senior in political science, religious studies, and Near Eastern languages and culture; **Emma Young**, a junior in classical studies and religious studies; **Ryan Funk**, a senior in political science with a religious studies minor; and **Neil Shah**, a sophomore in mathematics, finance, and accounting.



Ethics Bowl Team L to R: Ryan Funk, Khalil AbuGharbieh, Emma Young, Neil Shah, Emily Crouch, and coach Mark Wilson.

Owing to the explosive national interest in the bowl, this year it expanded to a regional format as a way of determining who would move on to compete at the national level. There are now seven regions across the nation that narrow the field down to 32 teams for the national event. The IU team performed very strongly in the regionals in Indianapolis and advanced to the nationals, where they made it to the quarterfinal round, once again making it clear that IU is a formidable opponent with articulate, poised, and extremely well-prepared students. Professor Richard Miller, team sponsor, says that he is “extremely proud of them and of their superb coach” (Mark Wilson, a doctoral student in religious studies and a research assistant at the Poynter Center for the Study of Ethics and American Institutions).

From the chair

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courses cover these themes as well as African-American religions and religion in the U.S. South.

Kathryn Lofton has explored the religious dimensions of the media in articles on Oprah Winfrey and her distinctive spirituality. Her current book project examines the early years of American fundamentalisms, a time in which new sexual identities and versions of the self arose in tandem with new concerns for religious orthodoxy. With a joint appointment with the American Studies Program, Professor Lofton teaches courses in American religious history as well as American studies in general, including an innovative course on the culture of Indiana.

Kevin O’Neill, one of our newest colleagues, also joins both this department and the American Studies Program. With graduate training in theology and anthropology, Professor O’Neill has written on the rapidly growing charismatic Protestant communities in Guatemala and the gendered discourse of the National Rifle Association. In the former case, he is interested in how practices associated with spiritual warfare support Guatemalan nationalism, but also travel to the United

States through transnational immigrant networks and recorded media. Among his courses will be Christianity and Democracy in the Americas.

As diverse as their research and teaching interests are, these scholars share a commitment to a study of religion in the Americas that is historically responsible, methodologically innovative, and sensitive to the connections between the United States and the other countries of the Americas. I am proud that Indiana University remains one of the best places for both undergraduates and graduate students to study the religious life of this country.

—David Brakke

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Student Notes

Graduate news

Aimee Hamilton was awarded a visiting scholar fellowship from the International Summer School for Jain Studies for an intensive two-month study of Jainism in Delhi, Jaipur, and other Indian cities during summer 2007. She has also been accepted as a Berkeley Urdu Language Fellow for the 2007–08 Urdu Language Program in Lucknow, India. The program is run by the American Institute of India Studies.

Erik J. Hammerstrom passed his doctoral qualifying examinations in March 2007 and won a Fulbright U.S. Student Grant to spend next year in Taiwan doing research for his dissertation, which is tentatively titled “Buddhists and Science in Modern China (1919–1949).” Erik also delivered two papers this past year. The first, entitled “Buddhism in Republican China: Superstition, Religion, or Science?,” served as the starting point for a roundtable discussion at the International Buddhist Conference’s Buddhist Studies Conference, which took place at the University of the West in Los Angeles in October 2006.

The second paper was part of a panel he organized for the annual meeting of the Midwest Region of the American Academy of Religion called “Science and Chinese Traditions.” The title of his paper was “Chinese Buddhist and American Christian Critiques of Science: 1920–1940.” This past year Erik helped organize the 2007 IU Religious Studies Graduate Student Symposium, in addition to starting an electronic mailing list for scholars studying modern and early modern Chinese Buddhism. He also won the graduate division of the Department of Religious Studies essay contest this past spring.

Jennifer Hart has been awarded the College of Arts and Sciences Dissertation Year Fellowship.

William Clarke Hudson accepted a tenure-track position in Chinese religions in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia.

Barbara Krawkowicz’s manuscript of her book, “William James: Pragmatism and Religion,” (in Polish) was accepted for publication in a distinguished series of monographs by Polish scholars in the humanities. It should be out in Poland sometime this year.

Nicole Karapanagiotis was awarded a Foreign Language and Area Studies fellowship and living stipend from the University of Wisconsin to study Gujarati this past summer. In addition, she received

an International Enhancement Grant from the Office of International Programs at IU, also for Gujarati study at the University of Wisconsin.

Ellen Muehlberger presented her paper, “The Limits of Critique: Augustine’s Concepts of Angelic Nature,” in January at “Jews, Christians, and Pagans in Antiquity—Critique and Apologetics,” a conference hosted by the University of Aarhus (Denmark). In March she took part in the Religious Studies Graduate Symposium, presenting her paper “Multiple Voices in Iamblichus’s *de mysteriis*,” and in the Medieval Studies Symposium, reading a selection from Timothy I’s Letter 39 to Sergius in Syriac. Her article “The Representation of Theatricality in Philo’s Embassy to Gaius” has been accepted by the *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods* and will appear in early 2008.

Jonathan Pettit has been granted the 2007–08 Louise Wallace Hackney Fellowship for the Study of Chinese Art. This \$8,000 fellowship will fund travel to Taiwan and China for the study of temple murals.

Jeremy Rapport presented a paper at the 2007 IU Department of Religious Studies Graduate Student Conference entitled “The Theory of Correspondence in the Unity Movement.” In March he presented a paper at the Midwest Region of the American Academy of Religion meeting in Chicago entitled “Corresponding to the Rational World: Scientific Language in the Early Unity Movement.” He also was awarded the Dissertation Year Fellowship from the Department of Religious Studies for 2007–08.

William Smith passed his doctoral qualifying exams in the history of Christianity and received a Future Faculty Teaching Fellowship, through which he will teach at Indiana–Purdue Fort Wayne during the 2007–08 academic year.

Michael Stanley-Baker gave a paper at the IU Anthropology Graduate Student Association in February entitled “De-Colonizing Hobsbawm: Suggestions for Post-Constructivist Scholarship.” In March he presented a paper at the Mid-Atlantic Regional American Academy of Religion Conference on Science and Religion in Chicago, along with fellow religious studies students Erik Hammerstrom and Clarke Hudson and the Department of East Asian Languages and Culture’s Steve Kory. The paper was entitled “Cultural Fractals: Immeasurable Boundaries of Chinese Medi-

cine and Religion.” He also presented a paper entitled “Embodiment in Chinese Religion and Medicine” at a student conference at Harvard. In addition, he won a Ministry of Education grant to study Mandarin, which he used this past summer in Taipei, Taiwan, studying Taiwanese and advanced Mandarin at the Mandarin Training Centre. He also won a three-year funded studentship at the Department of History of Medicine at University College London and will move there in fall 2007 to write his dissertation.

Undergraduate news

Maggie Downham won the senior honors thesis research grant of \$100 for her prospectus “Eastern Orthodox Theology and Virtue Ethics.” Maggie also received a \$200 Poynter Center grant for undergraduates doing research in practical ethics. She presented her thesis research at the Hutton Honors College Research Symposium and the IU Undergraduate Research Conference.

Two graduating seniors, **Andrew Cornetta** and **Emily Crouch**, have been

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Religious Studies

This newsletter is published by the Indiana University Alumni Association, in cooperation with the Department of Religious Studies and the College of Arts and 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 ialumni@indiana.edu.

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INDIANA UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
Bloomington

1970s

Don Kurre, MA'79, is director of the office of religious education at the Diocese of Grand Island in North Platte, Neb. He was elected to the North Platte City Council.

1980s

Not only is **Kathy L. Osborn**, BA/BS'87, JD'99, a lawyer, but she's a "mother of invention." Osborn designed a programmable musical mobile, compatible with MP3 players and other digital music devices, that allows parents to choose the music their child hears. Her mobile design garnered a second-place prize in the nationwide 2006 Whirlpool Brand Mother of Invention grant competition. Her prizes include a \$5,000 grant to develop her design. An associate at the Indianapolis law firm of Baker & Daniels, she practices in commercial and appellate litigation.

1990s

Eva K. Marer, BA'90, of New York City, is a freelance writer covering fashion and women's health. Her feature "Trouble in Mind" appeared in the December issue of *Vogue*. She recently married cinematographer Daniel Shulman.

Jasmine Hickey Syljebeck, AGS'97, BA'00, is an account executive at Netbank Inc. in Jacksonville, Fla. She writes, "I met my husband, John '00, my senior year at IU Bloomington—so, luckily, it took me six years to graduate. After two years in Indianapolis, we moved to sunny Neptune Beach, Fla. We are still big IU fans, love to visit on the holidays, and follow IU sports."

2000s

Adam Armstrong, BA'06, married Ashley Bell, and they are living in Milford, Ind., where Adam works as a sales partner at Da-Lite Screen (a projection screen manufacturer).

Byron C. Bangert, PhD'04, is the author of *Consenting to God and Nature: Toward a Theocentric, Naturalistic, Theological Ethics*, published by Pickwick Publications. He is the research associate at IU Bloomington's Poynter Center for the Study of Ethics and American Institutions.

Marissa L. Bracke, BA'00, is an associate at the law firm of Barnes & Thornburg in Fort Wayne, Ind. She is a member of the firm's litigation department.

Laura Ertmer, BA'05, is going to attend Oxford University in the fall for a two-year master's degree in development
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Alumna profile

Religious studies degree leads to new career path for alumna

When I attended IU beginning in 1969, I originally planned to be an English major, thinking I would become a teacher. My older brother convinced me to take a course with Professor David H. Smith in the Department of Religious Studies, insisting that I would truly enjoy it. (I was extremely reluctant at the time.)

That decision is one that changed my entire life's path. With Stephen Stein as my faculty advisor, I modified my plans to include an interdepartmental major with the Department of Religious Studies. When Professor Joseph Epes Brown came to IU on sabbatical, I participated in his research project in the Southwest, living with an 89-year-old Navajo medicine man, his 77-year-old wife, and their grandchildren near Inscription House, Ariz.

Over the years I have had five of their grandchildren live with me while they attended college. We have remained close for more than 30 years. My Navajo grandmother lived to be 108 years old.

I had thought that my English major would lead to my financial support, but it was my specialty in religions of the North American Indians through the Department of Religious Studies, along with my work with Professor James Mahan's Native American Experience with the School of Education, that gave me access to a varied and fascinating career. I lived 11 and a half years on the Navajo Reservation—seven and half of those years I was employed directly by the Navajo Tribe. I worked five years with the Gila River Indian Community as a counselor for Indian Programs with the Coolidge School District and two years for the Bureau of Indian Affairs on the Tohono O'odham Reservation.

I was the first woman to be promoted to the coordinator's level of Navajo tribal government, and I was responsible for writing the first draft of the Education Standards now appearing in the Navajo Tribal Code. My experiences in that bilingual government setting gave me a valuable reference for my most recent writing endeavor.

After teaching GED in a private prison for a few years, I accepted a position teaching in a high school learning center in Casa Grande, Ariz., where I had the good fortune to meet and work with a young man whose father was the program manager for the Complaint, Application and Appointment Department for the President's Office with the government of Afghanistan during President Najibulla Ahmadzai's regime. Anwarshah Anwary asked me to assist him in writing his life story.

I would never have been able to embrace this task without the religious studies foundation for understanding diverse cultural perspectives. This, combined with my experiences working with the bilingual government environment of the Navajo Tribe, allowed me to visualize what Mr. Anwary was unable to articulate with his limited English. As a young woman making that first casual decision to take a course with Professor Smith, I never imagined that step would be the critical turn in the entire direction of my life.

Perhaps there is another young student out there who is hesitating and questioning the economic value of pursuing a religious studies major. That student might benefit from the knowledge that great success comes with being unique. It did not take me long to discover that there was much more competition for those jobs requiring my English degree. I was alone in the pursuit of my field of unique specialty. There were only 14 of us who were selected for Professor Brown's research program, and only three of us who were placed on the Navajo Reservation.

In 1972 the School of Education was just setting up the new Native American Student Teaching Experience without the benefit of established training materials. I was the only IU student returning from Professor Brown's research experience who was also in education and willing to assist them in developing their materials. There was no competition for the job.

I believe that there is also a misconception among students that people with degrees in religious studies must become ministers or priests or missionaries. For

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Alumni notebook

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studies, hopefully still focusing on Latin America.

Patricia Hake, BA'06, is teaching English in Cambodia with the Peace Corps.

Brianne Williams Kirkpatrick, BA'03, is a prenatal-genetic counselor at St. Vincent Women's Hospital in Indianapolis. She married in June 2006 and lives in Zionsville, Ind.

Jordan Pickett, BA'06, with majors in religious studies and art history, will attend the University of Pennsylvania's Art and Archaeology of the Ancient Mediterranean program in the fall with a full tuition scholarship and a substantial stipend. This past summer he guest lectured on Carolingian/Ottonian art history at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas, and participated in an archaeological dig for one month at the villa of Marcus Aurelius in Anagni, just outside Rome.

David Sipes, BA'02, is teaching sociology and psychology at Korea Kent Foreign School, an international school (K-12) with approximately 300 students from more than 30 different nations. David is teaching grades 11 and 12. He plans to stay in Seoul for the 2007-08 school year.

Mary M. Underwood, BA'03, is a student at Washington College of Law at American University in Washington, D.C. She was previously a paralegal.

Jacqueline L. Walker, BAJ'06, writes, "After several interviews at various magazines and newspapers, I decided to accept a position at a book publisher in Champaign, Ill. As of October 2006, I am working as an assistant editor at Human Kinetics, editing books about health and physical education. E-mail me at jaclwalk@yahoo.com." Walker lives in Champaign.

Student notes

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accepted into Teach for America. Emily will be teaching in New York. Andrew will be getting married in the fall and deferring his teaching placement for one year.

Seth Libby won the senior honors essay research grant this spring, earning \$100 to be used toward research expenses related to his honors thesis.

Leslie Rodgers, religious studies and studio art major, was selected by the Fellowship Committee of the School of Fine Arts to receive the top undergraduate award, the Summers Scholarship, in the amount of \$1,500.

Becky Winn, double major in English and religious studies, has been awarded an

Around the department

Department says farewell to April Lane

In June the department said a bittersweet farewell to April Lane, who had served as academic advisor and communications specialist since 2005. April accepted a position as an advisor at St. Mary's College in South Bend, Ind. As an alumna of the department's undergraduate and master's programs, April brought a special knowl-

edge of religious studies to her work with our undergraduate students; she contributed greatly to the large and talented group of majors that graduated in 2007. She also helped many faculty develop new courses during a time of transition. We will miss April and wish her well.

Department of Religious Studies donors 2007

Elizabeth Agnew, PhD
Elizabeth M. Bounds
Michael T. Bradley Jr.
David Brakke, PhD
Linda Bunce
Susan D. Burnam
Sherie Cooley
Reverend Katherine A. Cunningham
Rev. Daniel J. Daly
David Dutschke
Deborah Feldacker Granick
Christopher and Sandra Franks
William Gallagher
Robert Gallager
Indrani Gupta
Dr. Arjun K. Gupta
J. Albert Harrill
John Hobgood
Tara A. Hughes
Cynthia Ingersoll
Paul Jaster
Kurt R. Kaboth
Barbara and John Knipp
Beth LaRocca

Mark A. LaRocca-Pitts
Francis P. McCarter
Robert N. Martin, PhD
Reverend Laurie A. Miller
Richard B. Miller, PhD
Monica and Brad Nelson
Kerry J. Pace
Lucinda Peach, PhD
Bonnie Personett
Kirk A. Pinkerton
Stephen E. Potthoff
Kathleen and Michael Romy
Letha Scanzoni
Jonathan R. Scheinbart
Susan Schwartz, PhD
Jeffrey C. Shirkey
Jeffrey and Judy Siker
Eliot R. Smith
Matthew T. Smith
Alleyne C. Toppin
Michael Vincent
Steven P. Weitzman, PhD
Ellen K. Wilson
Jean and Bruce Wollenberg

Abel Scholarship, a Jeanice Bartling Lewis Memorial Scholarship, a John W. Ashton award, and a College of Arts and Sciences Scholarship. In addition, Becky won the 2007 Intensive Writing Prize in the amount of \$150 from the College.

The Undergraduate Religious Studies Association (URSA) had a busy semester. In January Professor David Brakke met with students over lunch to discuss the discovery of the "Gospel of Judas." In February Professor Kathryn Lofton discussed Oprah's spiritual empire over lunch, and Professor Kevin Jaques hosted a "Religion, Cartoons, and Pop Culture" movie night. In March URSA formed a bowling team and bowled "For Kids' Sake," which benefited the Boys and Girls Club. The team raised more than \$600 and had a great



URSA bowls "For Kids' Sake."

time. Finally, in April our resident "professor of religious symbology," Professor Harrill, hosted a *Da Vinci Code* movie night to watch and discuss the controversial film.

New faculty

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sity, he studied theatre and performance. Professor Nance's research interests are in Indian and Tibetan Buddhist history, philosophy, rhetoric, and ritual, and he draws on the fields of history, philosophy, and philology in his work. This fall he will teach Introduction to Buddhism and Buddhist Philosophy in India.

Paul Fischer comes to the department as a visiting lecturer in East Asian religions. He recently completed his PhD at the University of Chicago, and his areas of interest include East Asian intellectual and religious



Paul Fischer

history, ideas of self-cultivation, traditional Chinese text criticism, the interplay between Daoism and Buddhism, and the tension between "great traditions" and "local religions." This fall he will teach Religions of the East and Religion and Literature in Asia.

Finally, the department welcomes **David Delgado Shorter** as an adjunct instructor. He finished his PhD at the University of California, Santa Cruz in 2002 and is currently an assistant professor



David Delgado Shorter

in the Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology at IU. He is also an adjunct instructor in the Department of Anthropology and the American Studies Program. He is interested in myth, ritual, and symbol; indigenous worldviews; religious folklore; and colonialisms. Recently taught courses include Aliens, Psychics, and Ghosts; Myth, Symbol, and Ritual; and Native American Film and Video.

Alumna profile

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me, it has been a vehicle for understanding cultural differences. On a personal level, I have become an eclectic spiritualist—a gift to me, evolving from the knowledge of a wider view of possibilities.

—Yvonne Esther Johnson, BA'74

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