

Contingent Faculty Director

Serves a three-year term. Serves a three-year term. The Contingent Faculty Director must be teaching in a non-tenure-track position at the time of election. The Contingent Faculty Director represents the particular concerns and interests of contingent faculty to the Board of Directors, and helps to ensure equity, labor justice, and the common good in the Academy. The Contingent Faculty Director serves on the Academic Labor and Contingent Faculty Working Group.

Whitney Cox

Whitney Cox holds an MDiv from Drew Theological School and a PhD from Temple University. Her research focuses on the early decades of the AIDS epidemic; using periodicals, pamphlets, newsletters, and other ephemera from the period, she examines the historical, political, practical, and theological intersections between queer and Christian communities. She is involved in the Southwest Region of the AAR, and has served as the cochair of the Ethics, Society, and Cultural Analysis Section, and the inaugural chair of the Religion, Gender, and Sexuality Section. In the past, she has taught as a contingent faculty member at Temple University, West Chester University, Lincoln University, and Rowan University; currently, she is an adjunct at the University of Houston, where she teaches in both the religious studies and women's, gender, and sexuality studies departments. In Houston, she has facilitated connections between UH and a number of local archives, in order to collect, preserve, and digitize unique historical materials.

Statement

The state of academia is changing rapidly. As tenure-track positions disappear, more and more, academic hopefuls are finding themselves in contingent, precarious positions. Short-term contracts and adjuncting single classes (often at multiple institutions) are increasingly becoming the model of employment in higher education, especially in underfunded disciplines such as Religious Studies. Contingent positions often pay poorly, disappear without warning, and come with little or no institutional support.

Contingent work can also be terribly isolating. Contingent faculty often have little to no communication with other faculty at their institutions, decreasing opportunities for collaboration and personal growth. Without access to institutional funding, they frequently have no financial support for professional development. Contingent faculty are often not included in department- or campus-wide opportunities for faculty and staff. Worse, there is often little reason to believe that these contingent positions will become permanent and/or benefitted, causing many contingent faculty to become frustrated with this stagnation and leave teaching altogether.

However, this reality is not often reflected in academia's understanding of itself. My hope for the Contingent Faculty Director position is that it will serve foremost as a reminder to the AAR of the changing landscape of the profession. Assumptions made about the AAR's membership base are no longer necessarily accurate, and do not represent the state of the field.

Since 2009, I have taught at five different institutions, and I have seen the wide range of how universities treat their adjuncts. I will bring this experience to the position of Contingent Faculty Director, working to advocate in all aspects of the AAR for the needs of non-tenure-track faculty. I will work to increase programming for contingent faculty, creating opportunities for networking and collaboration across institutions and levels of seniority, as well as providing information and support for careers outside of traditional faculty positions.

The past few years have shown time and again how important collective bargaining can be for faculty. Too many contingent faculty fall outside of faculty contracts and unions, or do not find their particular interests represented by the same. My hope is that the AAR can lead the way in advocating for its contingent members, helping to organize for better conditions for the benefit of faculty and students alike.

How can we make sure the AAR is worth the investment for contingent faculty members? With low wages and precarious job security, contingent faculty often find membership and conference costs prohibitive, and do not see the benefit of joining a professional organization that does not address their needs. The needs of contingent faculty are not a small matter, but concerns that impact the lives of a growing number of scholars of religion. Establishing the position of Contingent Faculty Director is a step in the right direction for making sure that contingent faculty truly have a place in the AAR.

Kerry Danner

Kerry Danner (PhD, ethics and social theory, Graduate Theological Union, 2011) is a part-time lecturer in the theology department of Georgetown University. Her research interests span economic/gender/racial justice, virtue ethics, Catholic social teaching, liberation theologies and the religious imagination. She is working on a book-length manuscript titled *Living Justly in an Unjust World: An Exploration of Character Traits, Chance, and Commitment*. Her most recent article, "Hope, Courage, and Resistance during Climate Change: Insights from African American Economic Cooperative Practices" appeared in *The Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* (Fall/Winter 2017). With Maria Riley, OP, she wrote "Seeing the World Anew: Educating for a Just and Sustainable Future: New Perspectives for a Catholic Curriculum" *International Studies in Catholic Education* (vol. 5, no. 1). Danner was selected as a residential fellow with the Character Project (2013) and a Doyle Teaching Fellow (2012) and was the recipient of the Father Markey Scholarship for Catholic Women in Ministry (2002–2007) and Graduate Theological Union's Chan Prize in Economics and Religion (2002 and 2004). Danner earned her doctorate after working with nonprofits committed to women's issues and to economically marginalized students. Her work has also been published in *Washington Post Magazine*, *U.S. Catholic*, and *St. Joseph's Messenger*.

Statement

I am honored to be a nominee for the AAR Contingent Faculty Director. My service on the AAR's Contingent Faculty Task Force (now the Academic Labor and Contingent Faculty Working Group), and my work with my union at Georgetown University has prepared me to represent contingent faculty issues on the AAR's Board of Directors. I was appointed as a temporary representative to the Board last January. If elected to the position I will continue to build relationships with board and committee members, serve contingent faculty needs and work with all AAR members on these issues.

After earning my PhD, I, like many other women, withdrew from the job market to tend to family. I began teaching a 2/2 load in 2011. With my annual pay under \$24,000, my attendance at AAR meetings became sporadic. Like many others, I started participating in meetings only when presenting. I quickly became involved in Georgetown's first adjunct union. While unions are not a panacea, they legally require institutions to bargain with their workers; data demonstrates their effectiveness at raising compensation and gaining benefits. Through my union, I met other adjuncts around the country, honing my dialogue skills and deepening my understanding of the overlapping areas of concern related to contingency: obstacles to participation in learned societies, concern for the effects on academic fields, justice for faculty, and the credibility of higher education.

Since joining AAR's Contingent Faculty Task Force in 2014, I have contributed to changes that more fully integrate contingent faculty, both term and adjunct, who now make up 65–75% of almost all higher education institutions. These ongoing efforts include developing a more nuanced sliding scale for membership, increasing travel funding, and building an AAR that offers more programming year-round. AAR needs a culture that welcomes and recognizes contingent faculty in leadership, one that is cognizant that low pay, high job anxiety, and multiple jobs may affect the quantity of scholarship but not the quality of thinking, teaching, or commitment to the field. Contingent faculty's academic freedom may also not be fully protected in practice, particularly if one directly or indirectly challenges department or institutional policies. Further, high reliance on contingent faculty affects the production of knowledge in our field, namely by often leaving it to those with ample institutional or personal resources. This reliance reveals a moral failure in pay parity, with most term faculty receiving at most one third of the pay for teaching similar courses as their tenure track peers. Contingent faculty are often held to higher standards for much lower pay, receive no healthcare or retirement, and are given no support or credit for the research or service they often do anyway. This reality undercuts the credibility of all faculties, our students, the field, home institutions, and higher education itself. How much do our institutions really value the very education they provide if they pay contingent faculty little and give them no role in governance?

We need to think together, across rank and status, to foster dialogue and provide information and tactics for addressing these issues. Contingent faculty and scholars working outside of higher education can be fully integrated into the fabric of the AAR, and we all, and the field we love, benefit. If elected, I look forward to continuing this important dialogue.