



Fostering Excellence
In the Study of Religion

A Quarterly Newsletter for AAR Graduate Students
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AAR Still Seeking Student Ambassadors...but not for long!

The International Connections Committee is looking for student members who are familiar with Atlanta to serve as Student Ambassadors. The Ambassadors will serve as a resource to the International Scholars from Australia/Oceania who are participating in the 2010 Annual Meeting. The deadline to apply is August 6, 2010. More details are available on the [AAR website](#).

Student Events Lined Up for Atlanta 2010

The Graduate Student Committee has several events lined up for the 2010 Annual Meeting in Atlanta, including:

- Student Town Hall Meeting
- If I Knew Then What I Know Now: Lessons from Academic Life from Those Who Have Gone Before (co-sponsored with the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion)
- Beyond the Boundaries (a series of lectures by graduate students geared toward the general public)
- Student Lounge Roundtable Discussions (co-sponsored with the American Theological Library Association) *Note: the Graduate Student Committee is still seeking proposals for roundtable discussions. See [below](#) for more details.*

In addition to events sponsored by the Graduate Student Committee, two other events will be of particular interest to students:

- How to Get Published (sponsor: Publications Committee)
- The Job Market for Academic Positions in Religious Studies: Recession,

1. [AAR Seeking Student Ambassadors](#)
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Depression, or Paradigm Shift? (sponsor: Job Placement Task Force)

More information on each of these sessions is included on page 14 of the 2010 Annual Meeting Program Planner, which was sent to all members in early June. In addition, this information may be found [online](#).

Student Lounge Roundtable Series: Call for Proposals

The Graduate Student Committee invites you to share your hard-earned wisdom with other students in the Graduate Student Roundtable Series. We are looking for discussion leaders who will be responsible for developing a topic and directing an hour-long conversation about the practical dimension of graduate studies. Possible topics include: studying for comprehensive exams, summer research, selecting your committee, online teaching, making a teaching portfolio, job interview advice, campus professionalization workshops, or any other facet of student life and professionalization that is essential to success in the academy. If you are interested in leading a discussion, please send a brief (150-word) proposal to [Cameron Jorgenson](#) by August 6, 2010. Discussion time slots are flexible.

Advance Registration Until September 30

So you missed the July 1 deadline for "early bird" registration. No worries... September 30 is the new deadline for "advance" registration, for which students pay only \$95 (after which "regular" registration costs \$110 until October 29). Registration takes only a few minutes [online](#).

Winners of Student Research Grants Announced

Congratulations to the following student members for winning International Dissertation Research Grants from the AAR:

- **Kathleen Foody** (University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill) for research at the Iranian Institute of Philosophy in Tehran
- **Ehud Halperin** (Columbia University) for field research in India's Kullu Valley.
- **Ilyse Morgenstein-Fuerst** (University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill) for research at the British Library.

These annual grants, designed to support AAR student members whose dissertation research requires them to travel outside of the country in which their school or university is located, are intended to help candidates complete their doctoral degrees by offsetting costs of travel, lodging, and other dissertation research-related expenses.

Nominations for the 2010-2011 International Dissertation Research Grants cycle will open August 16. For information and application, see the [Grants Page](#) of the AAR website.

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[Contact Us](#)

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Regional Meeting Student Paper Winners

This spring, each of the AAR's ten regions held its annual meeting, during which (among other things) our student members presented their research in a congenial scholarly environment. In addition to the valuable feedback they received in subsequent discussions, several talented students won awards for their work. The Graduate Student Committee would like to congratulate the following individuals for their achievements:

Eastern International

Danny Finer (Syracuse University), "Embodiment, Empathy, and Redemption: A Critique of Disembodied Being in the Novels of Chuck Palahniuk"

Sarah Shea (McGill University), "Literature and Love: Leone Ebreo's *Dialogues of Love*"

Southeastern

Brooke Sherrard (Florida State University), "'The Compulsion of Geopolitics': The Shift from Multiculturalism to Jewish Nationalism in the Popular Writings of American Biblical Archaeologist Nelson Glueck"

Rachel Grossman (University of North Carolina, Asheville), "The Architecture of Jewish Identity: Change and Continuity in the Postwar Construction of Temple Beth Ha-Tephila"

Western

Catherine Mary La Fuente (Claremont Graduate University), "Lesbianism and Islamic Law: Examining the Boundary Between Love and Legality"

Eric Hall (Claremont Graduate University), "Toward an Understanding of the Role of the Church in a Secular Social Order"

Sarah E. Robinson (Claremont Graduate University), "Islam, Ecology and Ecofeminism: Countering the Death of Nature"

Students Host Anniversary Conference for Toronto School of Theology

In May, graduate students from the Toronto School of Theology's Advanced Degree Student Association initiated and organized a successful conference to celebrate that institution's fortieth anniversary. Focusing on the theme, "Ecumenism and the Challenges of Pluralism: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue," over twenty-five papers across multiple disciplines were delivered from

scholars from as far away as the Netherlands.

The conference was kicked off with a fascinating account of the institution's history (and its place in the history of Canadian academia and politics), narrated by TST Director Alan Hayes. A keynote address, "The Orthodox Church and the Ecumenical Imperative," was delivered by noted Orthodox scholar John McGuckin (Union Theological Seminary and Columbia University) and proceedings were concluded with a panel discussion on "The Future of Theological Education."

Furthermore, thanks to the efforts of student organizers to procure grants from various related institutions, meals were provided and the conference fee was only \$35, thereby encouraging a significant number of participants.

Open Positions of Student Leadership

Student Director

Nominations are now open for the 2012-2013 Student Director. For a full explanation of the process, please refer to the "[Upcoming Officer Elections](#)" in the News section of the May 2010 issue of *Religious Studies News*.

Nominations and self-nominations must be received by January 1, 2011, and should be sent directly to the Chair of the Nominations Committee, [Rebecca Albert](#). Please contact [Elizabeth Lawson](#), Student Director 2010-2011, if you have any questions regarding the position.

From the Student Desk Editor

The Student Director is seeking a new "From the Student Desk" editor to fill the role which will be vacated by Carl Hughes when his term expires later this year. All current AAR student members who have been members for at least one calendar year are eligible to serve in this capacity. Previous editing experience is desired, but not required. As part of the selection process, candidates will be asked to copy-edit a sample column. The position is two years to begin and end in November at the Annual Meeting. For a complete job description, click [here](#). Interested candidates should apply by September 30, 2010 by completing a [nomination form](#).

Regions Task Force Still Seeking Student Input

As mentioned in the previous issue of *Speaking of Students*, recent changes to US legislation now require all non-profit organizations to submit more detailed financial and activity reports for all operations, including those of any affiliated chapter organizations. For the American Academy of Religion this new political situation requires a formal review of the current AAR regional structures to determine the best course of action to both meet the new reporting requirements and serve the distinct needs of all regional members.

To that end the AAR Board of Directors has established a Regions Task Force with a one-year mandate to study the overall health of regions, examine

current governing/reporting structures, and review the range of regional activities to determine how each contributes to regional members, the overall work of the AAR and the study of religion. The task force includes scholars from each of the ten regions and one graduate student: **Laurie Lamoureux Scholes**, a doctoral candidate at the Department of Religion, Concordia University (Montreal, QC) and active graduate student member within the AAR Eastern International Region. Lamoureux Scholes is interested in hearing from student members about their thoughts, concerns and/or visions for regional chapters of the AAR. In particular she is looking for feedback on the following questions:

- What are the key activities that appeal to students in your region?
- How does your region...
 - encourage student participation?
 - contribute to the overall work of the AAR?
 - promote religious studies within the academy and beyond?
- What role should students play within the regional governing bodies?
- How could your region best serve student needs?

The task force will be meeting throughout the summer months with the intention of submitting a preliminary set of recommendations at the 2010 annual meeting. Please forward your comments as soon as possible via email to [Laurie Lamoureux Scholes](mailto:Laurie.Lamoureux.Scholes@concordia.ca).

An Opportune Time to Look at AAR Governance

If you have found yourself wondering how the AAR is governed, now is the time to pursue that interest! At the next Annual Business Meeting, to be held during the Annual Meeting in Atlanta at 7:30 am on Sunday, October 31, members will vote on whether to adopt the new proposed by-laws. If adopted, these by-laws will take effect on January 1, 2011.

Members have until October 1 to propose additional changes to these by-laws, which include the following recommended changes:

- the AAR Board of Directors to be reduced to 12 members (from the current 27)
- 11 of these Directors to be elected from the entire AAR membership (from the current 6)
- the continuation of an annual Leadership Summit
- the adoption of "a more energetic and proactive strategy" for bringing various concerns to the Board
- the provision of specific representation for program unit directors (in addition to current provision for students and regions)
- the addition of several new committees and restructuring of current standing committees

Detailed information is available [online](http://www.aar.org) at the AAR website. For students entering the guild, this is an opportune time to study and participate in the inner workings of this organization...don't be left behind!

AAR Website adds Video Page

In case you either missed the 2009 Annual Meeting in Montréal or skipped the plenary events for one of the countless other concurrent sessions, videos of the major events at Montreal 2009 are now available for viewing online! Visit the new video page at [AAR online](#) for the following:

- **Plenary Panel: Islam and Modernity** (Reza Aslan, Tariq Ramadan, Nilüfer Göle, and Robin Wright)
- **Presidential Address** (Mark Juergensmeyer)
- **Plenary Panel: Rethinking Secularism** (Mark Juergensmeyer, Charles Taylor, José Casanova, Saba Mahmood, and Craig Calhoun)
- **Plenary Address** (Tariq Ramadan)
- **The Martyr Forum** (James H. Cone and Cornel West)
- **Whither the "Death of God": A Continuing Currency?** (Thomas Altizer and Slavoj Žižek)
- **Islamic Authority and Reform** (Omid Safi, Tariq Ramadan, Kecia Ali, and Ahmet Karamustafa)
- **Plenary Panel: Global Perspectives on Religious Studies** (Vasudha Narayanan, Azyumardi Azra, Shrivatsa Goswami, Koichi Mori, Kim Knott, and Sylvia Marcos)

In addition, there are also videos from the **2009 Emory-Oxford Conference** on New Scientific Approaches to the Study of Religious Experience.

Real-time Updates on Facebook Group

If you enjoy keeping up with student-related news through this quarterly e-newsletter, then you will want to join the "Student Members and Friends of the American Academy of Religion" at Facebook. Both *Speaking of Students* and the Facebook group are initiatives of the Graduate Student Committee aimed at increasing awareness of current events of interest to students within the guild. The advantage of the Facebook group is that updates are in real-time, rather than published quarterly. Furthermore, anyone can post an announcement or begin a discussion. Current membership stands at just under 900, providing an excellent avenue for networking and participating in current discussions. If you are not already a member of this group, [join now!](#)

Continuing the Conversation: Taking Student Conferences Into Publication

In the previous issue of *Speaking of Students*, several recent student-led conferences were recapped. But what about those conference conversations that continue after everyone goes home? For the fall edition, the editor of *Speaking of Students* is seeking information regarding student conferences that have somehow gone beyond their last paper into some form of publication, whether online or in print. If you have any related experience or insight, please [contact the editor](#).