



Fostering Excellence
In the Study of Religion

A Quarterly Newsletter for AAR Graduate Students
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2010 Annual Meeting News and Announcements

Third Annual "Religion Beyond the Boundaries": Call for Papers

~ contributed by **Beth Lawson**, National Student Director, American Academy of Religion

The Graduate Student Committee invites submissions for the third annual Religion Beyond the Boundaries series. This forum allows students to step outside the more formal academic setting of the national meeting and present their work as part of a series of evening coffee shop talks. Three 45-minute presentations will be selected for this year's event at the national meeting October 30–November 1, in Atlanta, GA. Although proposals may be submitted on any topic, the committee especially welcomes presentations that touch on one of the following themes:

- Religion and Science
- Religion in Atlanta
- Public Understanding of Religion
- Religion and Pluralism

This is a chance to put your research into a new framework, practice your job talk, be a public intellectual, and explain the relevance of your work to your peers. If you are interested, please send a 150-word abstract to Graduate Student Committee member [Almeda Wright](#). The deadline for submissions is June 15, 2010. Thanks and stay tuned for updates!

Seeking Student Ambassadors for International Scholars

~ contributed by **Margaret Jenkins**, American Academy of Religion

Student ambassadors will serve as a resource person for the invited international scholars from Australia/Oceania who are participating in the

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2010 AAR Annual Meeting and welcome the idea of having a student ambassador.

If possible, the ICC would like to match a scholar with a student who has similar research and academic interests. The ICC feels this would enhance the experience for the student by providing a networking and mentoring opportunity, and it would help the international scholar to experience greater hospitality.

- Currently living in Atlanta or previously resided in the area
- Provide email address to the scholar before their arrival for the meeting so the scholar might contact the student if questions arise
- Provide a cell phone number to the scholar during the conference to be available for questions
- If possible and agreeable to the scholar, greet the scholar at the Atlanta airport
- Ensure the scholar receives meeting materials, including badge, program book and tote bag
- Join the scholar at the international members breakfast
- Respect the scholar's need for privacy and rest, so mentoring time should be initiated by and agreeable to the scholar
- Maximum of 2 hours per day, so both student and scholar can be free to participate fully in the annual meeting
- Annual Meeting fees will be waived for the student ambassador

Applications due August 6, 2010. Visit the AAR website for [more information](#).

[Students?](#)

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Regions Task Force seeks Student Input

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).

Regional Meeting Recaps

Southeastern Regional Meeting

~ contributed by **Brian K. Pennington**, Regionally Elected Director, AAR SE

The 2010 Annual Meeting of the AAR SE/Southeastern Commission for the Study of Religion was held Mar. 5-7 at the Atlanta Marriott Century City. It featured three workshops specifically targeted to students. The Fund for Theological Education sponsored *Nurturing the Next Generation of Scholars: A Workshop for Students of Color Considering the Ph.D.*, a recruiting event for students from underrepresented racial and ethnic communities who are enrolled in masters and undergraduate programs and are considering the Ph.D. in religion, theology or biblical studies. Through a Regional Development Grant, the AAR-sponsored *Climbing the Academic Ladder: From Getting the Job to Applying for Tenure*, a professional development workshop that fulfilled the objectives of the *AAR Career Guide for Racial and Ethnic Minorities in the Profession*. Organized and moderated by Ronald Neal of Claflin University, it featured Miguel De la Torre of Iliff School of Theology and Chairperson of the AAR Committee on the Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities. At *Writing, Publishing, and Scholars of Color*, a professional development forum for unpublished younger scholars, panelists De la Torre, Michael Joseph Brown (Director of the Graduate Division of Religion at Emory University), and Marc A. Jolley (Mercer University Press) discussed strategies and prospects for students and junior scholars who are trying to publish their first works.

The annual prize for the best undergraduate paper was awarded to **Rachel Grossman** of the University of North Carolina, Asheville, for *The Architecture of Jewish Identity: Change and Continuity in the Postwar Construction of Temple Beth Ha-Tephila, Asheville, North Carolina*. The award for the best graduate student paper was given to **Brooke Sherrard** of Florida State University for "'The Compulsion of Geopolitics': The Shift from Multiculturalism to Jewish Nationalism in the Popular Writings of American Biblical Archaeologist Nelson Glueck."

Upper Midwest Regional Meeting

~ contributed by **Katherine Brink**, University of Chicago

The Upper Midwest Regional AAR/SBL/ASOR Meeting was held on April 9-10 at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN. This year there were 250 attendees, including 58 preregistered graduate students and 28 preregistered undergraduates.

The annual SBL/AAR Graduate Student Seminar was entitled "Making Yourself Marketable: Preparing for the Job Market at the Beginning, Middle, and End of Graduate School." Close to 40 students participated in the session, which featured a marathon Q&A with Professors Calvin Roetzel and Alex Jassen of the University of Minnesota. Both speakers covered a wide range of subjects including choosing an institution, dissertation topics, and how to maintain broad education while developing a specialty. Students said they appreciated the speakers' practical tips and straight talk about what happens during academic searches. **Ross Jahnke** of Bethel Seminary remarked, "The Graduate Student Seminar was a highlight for me since it offered priceless insight into the hiring process at a major research university and gave me greater clarity for what I can do to make myself a better job candidate."

The AAR plenary session by Dr. Philip Clayton, "The Emergence of the Natural World, The Emergence of Religion. Or Why the Value-Free, Belief-Free Study of Religion Can Never Suffice," was well-received. Dr. Amy Marga, the Upper Midwest Regional AAR President, commented: "The discussion afterward was probing, lively, and one felt like [Dr. Clayton] had been our teacher for several years already."

The theme of religion and science continued during the joint AAR/SBL panel on "Intersections: The Importance of Dialog between Religion and Science," as panelists from Luther Seminary, University of St. Thomas, the Minneapolis Star Tribune, and St. Mary's University of Minnesota discussed the cultural tensions between religion and science, particularly in the United States. The dialogue flowed through Christian theology, epistemology, educational trends, Darwin and 9/11. There was much discussion of the gap between scholarly experience and public perception.

Next year's conference will again take place at Luther Seminary on April 1-2, 2011. Susan Hill, AARUMW's regional director, highlights upcoming events: "We're excited to see the formation of a regional women's caucus, and a new section on 'Women, Religion, and Sacred Text,' at next year's meeting. The AAR Plenary Speaker next year will be Dr. Margaret Miles, who will be speaking on her book, *A Complex Delight: The Secularization of the Breast, 1350-1750*." Students who attended the Graduate Student Seminar expressed interest in a future seminar on publishing, so a seminar called "Getting Published" is already in the works for next year. Dr. Hill would like to remind students that the "UMAAR/SBL is a great place to network with scholars from the region, to engage in broader academic conversations with others, and to gain experience as a presenter. We encourage graduate students to watch the AAR website for the regional call for papers and submit a proposal for next year's meeting." Jahnke agrees, "Once again, the Upper Midwest Regional Meeting of the AAR and SBL was a great time for connecting with peers and participating in academic discourse. The most valuable and enjoyable part of my experience this year was the opportunity to deepen friendships with fellow students from around the region."

If you are a student in the Upper Midwest Region and are interested in getting involved in the

Upper Midwest Regional conference, contact [Katherine Brink](#).

If you have news or announcements regarding this year's regional meetings to include in future issues of *Speaking of Students*, please contact the [editor](#).

Graduate Student Conference Wrap-Up

Florida State University on "Sects and Sexuality"

~ contributed by **Kristen Muldowney**, Florida State University

This February, Florida State University's Department of Religion, along with the Society for Women's Advancement in Philosophy, were proud to co-sponsor the Graduate Student Symposium, "Sects and Sexuality: Issues of Division and Diversity." The opening keynote address, "Beyond Slavery: Overcoming its Religious and Sexual Legacies," was given by Dr. Bernadette Brooten, Kraft-Hiatt Professor of Christian Studies at Brandeis University, and the closing keynote, "Sex and Sensibility: Interrogating Gender and Values in Bollywood Cinema," was given by Florida State University's own Dr. Kathleen Erndl. Participants were also given a chance to take part in a plenary session entitled, "Sights on Gender-Blindness: A Roundtable Discussion on Incorporating Gender into Your Scholarship," in which Dr. Kathryn Lofton of Yale University, Dr. Brooten and both Dr. John Corrigan and Dr. Nicole Kelley of Florida State University took part.

The Leo Sandon Best Paper Award was given to **Mike Nesius** for his work, "Deer Bladders Buried in the Landscape: Manifestations of Biodynamic Agriculture's Epistemological Challenge to Industrial Farming," and the Heidi L. Millarker Award for Best Contribution to Interdisciplinary Feminist Scholarship was given to **Jae Jerkins** for his work, "Talking about Sex: A Critical Look at Michel De Montaigne's 'On Some Lines of Virgil' in the Wake of the Analysis of Michel Foucault."

Second Annual MEICON-BC Student Conference

~ contributed by **Mona Sedky Goode**, University of Victoria

The Second Annual Student Conference of Middle East and Islamic Consortium of British Columbia (MEICON-BC), held at the University of Victoria, March 27, 2009, brought together graduate and honors students from across disciplinary boundaries who study and research in the aforementioned fields. Twenty-seven participants representing University of Alberta, University of Washington, University of Manitoba, University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, and the University of Victoria presented papers at the one-day conference with approximately 100 in attendance. The specific topics and themes within the conference included: The Middle East in the Arts, National and Religious Movements, the Medieval Islamic World, Gender and Politics, the Palestine-Israeli Conflict, Culture and Diaspora, Social Change in Iran, and Cross Culture and Inter-faith encounters.

Five to seven of the best papers presented at the Second Annual Student Conference of MEICON-BC will be published by the University of Victoria's Centre for the Study of Religion and Society (CSRS). The CSRS has a long history of publications including an annual student journal, *Illumine*. Contact [CSRS](#) if you are interested in a copy.

The Middle East and Islamic Consortium of British Columbia was established in 2008 as a collaborative project of the three major universities in BC — Simon Fraser University, University of Victoria, and the University of British Columbia — to help meet the needs of the increasing interest in BC among faculty and students in research and study pertaining to the various aspects of Islamic societies and the Middle East. MEICON-BC provides organizational communication and cooperation among British Columbian academics interested in the aforementioned area of study and research.

University of Toronto hosts Buddhist Studies Conference for Graduate Students Worldwide

From April 9 to 11, 2010 the Buddhist Studies Graduate Students at the University of Toronto hosted the 2010 North American Graduate Conference in Buddhist Studies at the University's Multi-Faith Centre, drawing together graduate students from universities across the world including Columbia, Harvard, Hong Kong University, University of Chicago, University of Virginia, Ohio State University, McMaster University and the University of Toronto. Panel topics included examinations of Doctrines and Rhetoric, Biography, Art, Textual Analysis and Site Histories. The papers presented revealed that current graduate students in disciplines as diverse as Religious Studies, Asian Area Studies, History and Art History are bringing to the study of Buddhist history, texts, and cultures a close analysis and interest in primary texts, as well as an interdisciplinary approach to their objects of study. Two keynote lectures shaped the conference from Isabelle Henrion-Dourcy (Université Laval) and Marc Des Jardins (Concordia University) whose work bridges current religious studies and anthropological approaches to the study of contemporary Tibet. The conference was a great success and was thoroughly enjoyed by all attendees.

Graduate Students convene on "New" Evangelical Studies

~ contributed by Kristy Slominski, University of California, Santa Barbara

On April 24th, 2010, graduate students from eight universities across the country came to the University of California, Santa Barbara to present their research at a student-led conference on "New" Evangelical Studies. This first-time event, sponsored by the UCSB Evangelical Studies Research Focus Group, was organized to bring together graduate students who are exploring new approaches and new topics for the study of evangelicalism. A particular emphasis was placed on how scholars define "evangelical" and the usefulness of the category "evangelical" for scholarly studies. Evangelical tendencies and trends were explored within Protestantism, Mormonism, and Eastern Orthodoxy.

This one-day conference consisted of three panels on the following themes: recent evangelical reactions to modernity, evangelicalism and the bodily

senses, and the marketing strategies of evangelical missions. Each panel was followed by a lively question and answer session, in which evangelical groups and trends were explored and compared. The conference also included a screening of *The Oak Park Story*, a documentary about a multi-racial, multi-religious community in Oakland, California and their legal, economic, and emotional struggles to gain housing rights. Co-writer and co-producer of the film Russell Jeung, associate professor of Asian American Studies at San Francisco University, was present to discuss the film, as well as elaborate on the involvement of evangelicals in this struggle.

All-in-all, the conference was a great opportunity to network with fellow graduate researchers, discuss timely topics, and compare research questions and approaches. The organizers were very pleased with the outcome of the event and look forward to the development of evangelical studies as graduate students continue to push the field in new directions.

If you have news or announcements regarding conferences organized by and for graduate students, please contact the [editor](#).

Facebook Group Still Going Strong

The [Student Members and Friends of the American Academy of Religion](#) is still going quite strong, with a membership (as of this writing) of over 800. Members have posted calls for papers, requests for more information, and have networked for sharing accommodations at the upcoming annual meeting. Most notable are the following two posts:

- GSC member **Steven Barrie-Anthony** posted a link to the new Religion section of *The Huffington Post*.
- Nicholas Adams and Mike Exeter have set up a new Facebook group for "Affordable Accommodation" at the 2010 annual meeting.

All members and friends of the AAR are welcome to join (free registration with [Facebook](#) required).

Seeking News & Announcements for *Speaking of Students*

If you have any departmental news or event announcements to share with the AAR's graduate student community, please [contact the editor](#). We especially welcome announcements regarding awards given to our student members and the various projects and initiatives in which they are participating.