

# AAR Speaking of Students

## NOTE FROM KRISTY SLOMINSKI, STUDENT DIRECTOR



On behalf of the Graduate Student Committee, we are excited to announce the events that we have organized for the Annual Meeting in Atlanta. Each year we try to address pressing concerns through our Special Topics Forum panel and our Student Lounge Roundtable Series in order to meet the professional and personal needs of AAR student members. Please see the lineup below, and note that the Annual Meeting early bird registration rate will end **after Thursday, June 18**. [Renew](#) your AAR membership if you haven't already, and [register for the meeting](#) online.

As a member of the AAR Board of Directors, I have also had the privilege of seeing our leadership take on many issues that affect graduate students. While there is more work to be done, I feel confident that our organization is moving in the right direction and has taken important steps to help graduate student members. One such step was to eliminate the candidate registration charge for the Employment Center, giving all members access to the full range of its services. Another was initiating Annual Meeting travel grants for those demonstrating financial need and a record of AAR contributions. We have also been working through policies regarding academic freedom and contingent faculty and currently have a task force dedicated to evaluating membership services and needs. As your representative on the national board, I would love to hear from you about your concerns as a student member and any

## Table of Contents

1. [Note from Student Director](#)
2. [Welcome New Regional Student Directors](#)
3. [Wanted: Student Director for New England-Maritimes Region](#)
4. [Annual Meeting Events for Graduate Students](#)
5. [Facebook Pages Student Members](#)

suggestions that you have. You are also encouraged to contact your regional student director with comments and questions. Our contact information can be found here:

[www.aarweb.org/about/graduate-student-committee](http://www.aarweb.org/about/graduate-student-committee). We look forward to hearing from you!

### **WELCOME TO THE NEW REGIONAL STUDENT DIRECTORS**

Every year, about half of the regions elect a new student director, a two-year role that serves on the regional board of directors and on the national Graduate Student Committee. This year, we are pleased to announce four new additions:

#### **Western Region's Student Director:**



**Chase Laurelle Way** is concurrently earning a PhD in religion and an MA in Islamic Studies in Claremont Graduate University's School of Arts and Humanities. Her dissertation explores how domestic religious trends have shaped US foreign policy towards Iran since WWII. In addition to her research, Way is a Fellow in CGU's Preparing Future Faculty program, where she helps other graduate students develop their teaching skills, write teaching philosophy statements, and create cutting-edge academic portfolios (among other exciting things!). Her main goal as the Western Region representative to AAR's Graduate Student Committee is to improve the quality and quantity of professional development opportunities available to graduate students. Upon finishing her doctorate, Way will pursue a career in academic research, teaching, and consulting.

#### **Midwest Region's Student Director:**

**Brian Hillman** is a doctoral student in the Department of Religious Studies at Indiana University with a doctoral minor in Jewish studies. His primary areas of interests are in modern Jewish thought and Jewish mysticism, focusing on the Mithnagdim, the Haskalah, and early Hasidism, as well as the reception history of medieval Jewish philosophy in the modern period. He hopes to explore the work of some of the lesser-known figures in the former movements in addition to the varied roles the



medieval philosophical tradition played in their thought.

Before coming to Indiana University, Brian earned a BA degree from the University of Chicago in 2011, majoring in philosophy and focusing on the philosophy of language. He continued his studies there, earning an MA degree in divinity from the University of Chicago Divinity School in 2013, specializing in the history of Judaism.

As student director for the Midwest Region he hopes to promote a scholarly community for graduates specifically in their respective subfields with the hope of promoting greater collaboration and collegiality throughout the region.

#### **Upper Midwest Region's Student Director:**



**Gwendolyn L. Gillson**, a PhD student with the religious studies department at the University of Iowa, is interested in the intersection of gender, society, and religion in Japanese Buddhism. Her project focuses on women and engaged Buddhism in contemporary *Jōdoshū* (Pure Land Sect). Originally from Oklahoma, Gwendolyn received a BA in religion from Gustavus Adolphus College in Minnesota and returned to Oklahoma for an MLIS in archives from the University of Oklahoma before moving to Iowa. When not working, she enjoys cooking, reading fiction, and spending time with her husband.

As student director for the Upper Midwest Region, she hopes to raise awareness about the AAR to a diverse group of residents in the Upper Midwest and generate closer ties between the UMW and other areas to foster better communication about (and development of) opportunities for graduate students.

#### **Eastern International Region's Student Director:**

**Aaron Ricker** is a PhD candidate (ABD) at McGill University. His degrees are in religious studies and his area of specialization is the New Testament, but since he is primarily interested in the habits and ethics of ancient rhetoric, he often tells strangers that he's in Classics or something. This occasional white



lie is a self-serving attempt to avoid long conversations (at least they feel long) about whether or not “all religions are really saying the same thing when you get right down to it.” His dissertation is on Romans 13, but he sure seems to read and write about Revelation and pop culture a lot. The post of regional student director is exciting to Aaron because he’s excited about the AAR finding ways for student members to really dig in and do great things while being themselves.

### **CALL FOR A STUDENT DIRECTOR IN THE NEW ENGLAND-MARITIMES REGION**

The New England-Maritimes Region is looking for a regional student director to replace Cristina Richie, whose term ends in the fall of 2015. If you would like to nominate someone, or nominate yourself, please e-mail Cristina Richie at [RichieC@bc.edu](mailto:RichieC@bc.edu) as soon as possible for further information. It is a two-year position open to student members who belong to the New England-Maritimes Region of the AAR.

### **ANNUAL MEETING EVENTS ORGANIZED BY THE GRADUATE STUDENT COMMITTEE**

#### **1) Special Topics Forum Panel:**

*Dehumanized vs. Holistic Scholars: How Academia Impacts Our Lives*

Scholars in academia at all levels perform many roles such as teacher, researcher, author, counselor, advocate, and activist, to name a few. In addition to the numerous hats that we wear in the academy, we also juggle personal identities such as being parents, partners, friends, and members of communities.

Mediating the pressures of being productive and the desire to maintain one’s humanity and beliefs often leaves the individual confused, diminished, and/or fractured. How does one go about incorporating the various components of the self (ethics, beliefs, family, personal and professional goals, etc.) into a balanced whole? What does a “holistic scholar” or “holistic scholarship” look like? Which aspects of the discipline support a holistic self, and which undermine such an ideal? This panel features a range of scholars interested in exploring the tensions, resolutions, and possibilities that lie between the “holistic” and “dehumanizing”

poles of our work.

Presiders: B. J. Parker, Baylor University and Bhakti Mamtora,  
University of Florida

Panelists:

Laine Scales, Baylor University

Rosemary Radford Ruether, Graduate Theological Union

Brian Palmer, Uppsala University

Donna Yarri, Alvernia University

Joshua Canzona, Georgetown University

Nicholas Werse, Baylor University

## **2) Student Lounge Roundtable Series**

- *How to Establish and Maintain a Professional Online Presence*  
Emily D. Crews, University of Chicago
- *Dealing with The Dossier: A Proactive Approach to Documenting Your Teaching*  
Raj Balkaran, University of Calgary
- *Conquering Qualifying Exams*  
Bhakti Mamtora, University of Florida
- *Making Grading and Assessment Work for You*  
Joshua Canzona, Georgetown University
- *Double-dipping, or Maximizing Your Time*  
Dr. Donna Yarri, Alvernia University
- *Balancing Graduate School with Life: Work, Life, Identity, and Family*  
Andrew Ike Shepardson, Univ. of Toronto and Elissa Cutter,  
Saint Louis University
- *Writing in Community: How a Writing Group Can Enhance Your Thesis or Dissertation*  
David Cramer, Jenny Howell, Jordan Rowan Fannin, Baylor  
University
- *Networking Like the Job is in Hand*  
Candace Mixon, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
- *Humility, Solidarity, and Mutuality: Three Holistic Methodological Goals for Comparative Religious Study*  
Sarah E. Robinson-Bertoni, Claremont Graduate University
- *Alt-Ac Employment: Hiring from an HR Perspective*  
Jessica Lee Ehinger, St. Peter's College, Oxford

- *The Dissertation Distance Dilemma*  
Brandon Turner, Catholic University of America
- *Kickstarter and Pinterest? Creating a Web of Support for Dissertation Writing through Popular Social Media Technology*  
Michelle Mueller, Graduate Theological Union

### **3) Undergraduate Workshops at Georgia State University's Religious Studies Department**

Sunday, November 22, 2:00–5:00 pm

In coordination with the AAR's Graduate Student Committee, Georgia State University's Department of Religious Studies invites undergraduates to attend an afternoon of free workshops on its campus, a 10-minute walk from the Convention Center. The event will start with a session from 2:00 to 3:15 pm on "Navigating the Discipline: Understanding and Making the Most of the Study of Religion." A meet-and-greet reception will follow from 3:15 to 3:45 pm. The event will conclude with a second workshop on "Applying Skills of Religious and Theological Studies after Undergrad." This session will focus on strategies and processes of applying to graduate school—in both religion and other fields. It will also include tips on how to market skills learned in the study of religion to pursue other career opportunities. All undergraduates are welcome to attend these free sessions.

Organizers: Kristy Slominski, Brett Esaki, Molly Bassett, Rupa Pillai

### **FACEBOOK PAGES FOR STUDENT MEMBERS**

Our [Student Members and Friends of the American Academy of Religion](#) Facebook page is available for all members and friends of the AAR. Members can post calls for papers, job listings, requests for more information, forthcoming publications, and more.

You can also stay connected with students and events in your region by "liking" your regional Facebook page:

- [Student Members of the AAR EIR](#)
- [Student Members of the AAR Midwest Region](#)
- [Student Members of the AAR New England-Maritime](#)

Region

- [Student Members of the AAR Pacific Northwest Region](#)
- [Student Members of the AAR and SBL Rocky Mountain-Great Plains Region](#)
- [Student Members of the AAR Southeast Region](#)
- [Student Members of the AAR Upper Midwest Region](#)
- [Student Members of the AAR Western Region](#)
- [American Academy of Religion, Mid-Atlantic Region](#)