

AAR Speaking of Students

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NOTE FROM THE STUDENT DIRECTOR, Bhakti Mamtora



On behalf of the Graduate Student Committee, we are excited to announce the Call For Papers for the upcoming Annual Meeting in San Antonio, Texas. The Graduate Student Committee aims to address the professional and personal needs of AAR student members through the Special Topics Forum and the Student Lounge Roundtable Series. You will find the highlights from last year's roundtable series and the call for this year's Annual Meeting below. We look forward to receiving your submissions!

As a reminder, we are always interested in hearing from you about your concerns as a student member and any suggestions you may have. Your suggestions will be instrumental in shaping graduate programming at the AAR in the upcoming years. You can write to your regional Student Director or me with your concerns. You can find our contact information here: www.aarweb.org/about/graduate-student-committee.

GSC ROUNDTABLE HIGHLIGHTS

The Dissertation Distance Dilemma

Brandon E. Turner

This year at AAR I was able to spend time with 15 other scholars who were all dealing with the "dissertation distance dilemma." While the specifics of our stories were different, each

one of us was trying to figure out how to stay on top of our studies despite the fact that we all had moved away from our academic “home bases” for one reason or the other. After sharing our horror stories with each other, we discussed various tips and tools that for ensuring that our dissertations get finished on time. Three main suggestions were shared:

First, the most important suggestion was to find a support group or friend to help you stay on track. Completing your studies at a distance makes you painfully aware of “how good you had it” back when you were surrounded by fellow students who understood your struggles. While you will never be able to recreate a student lounge in your new home, you can at least seek out someone who can help, encourage, and/or listen to you.

Second, we all decided that we should take advantage of technology but that we needed to turn it off on occasion. Many of us talked about how tools like Skype were invaluable in connecting with our advisors, but admitted that online distractions like Netflix and Hulu were constant temptations. One of my peers suggested that we all should carve out some Internet-free time each day (she actually leaves her home for a Wi-Fi- free park) to help us balance our time investments.

Finally, we all decided that it was vital to write something—anything—each and every day. This suggestion is obviously important for anyone working on a dissertation, but it is especially true for those of us who are far away from our schools. Resist the temptation to vacuum... or cook... those chores will wait. Keep on grinding along! Success is possible!

Job Hunting from an HR Perspective

Jessica Ehinger

Job hunting is a central concern for many grad students and recent graduates, so I was very excited to have the chance to discuss some aspects of job hunting—particularly regarding jobs other than the standard tenure-track positions—at this year’s Graduate Student Roundtables. For me, the two biggest takeaways from the discussion concerned preparation and confidence. In the academic cycle, we’ve gotten used to “putting our names in the hat” for anything and everything, but there are a lot of jobs outside of academia: so many, in fact, that no one can succeed by going for all of them. Instead, job seekers need to do their research, read postings and job descriptions, and work out for themselves what skills they have to offer, what kind of work they want, and how those things fit together. Beyond that, job seekers need to get comfortable talking confidently about their skills. As grad students, we have a lot to be proud of—not everyone can plan and execute an entire research project, and produce a manuscript describing their work. Presenting those skills with confidence, and speaking easily about our successes, are key to getting noticed by a hiring manager.

GSC ANNUAL MEETING EVENTS & CFP

Call for Roundtable Leaders

The Graduate Student Committee invites scholars of religion to share their hard-earned wisdom in the Student Lounge Roundtable Series. We are looking for individuals who will be responsible for leading a conversation or workshop (60–90 minutes) about a topic of practical interest to student members. A variety of formats are welcome. Possible topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Online resources and computer programs to aid research, writing, or teaching
- Managing a specific stage of graduate school (courses, exams, thesis, ABD, etc.)
- Research project design or methods
- Balancing graduate school with other dimensions of life and identity
- Creating or managing an online presence (websites, blogging, online portfolios, etc.)
- Job market (applications, interviews, alt-ac, etc.)
- Publishing (open access vs. peer review; alternative forms of publishing, etc.)
- Teaching (activities, online, technology, controversial issues, etc.)
- Presenting research to the public
- Networking
- Grant writing
- CV writing
- Leadership

Interested parties should contact Gwendolyn Gillson. Please send a brief proposal (~150 words) and a CV to gwendolyn-gillson@uiowa.edu by March 1, 2016. Please indicate if you are willing to co-present, if your topic aligns with another proposal. Roundtable time slots are flexible, and do not count toward the PAPERS system two-proposal submission limit.

Special Topics Forum: Re-imagining the Intellectual as a Revolutionary Social Force

The AAR's Graduate Student Committee is hosting its 2016 Special Topics Forum on the question, "How can Religious Studies re-imagine the intellectual as a revolutionary social force?" The framework of this question is the tendency to respond to the dearth of tenure-track positions by focusing on alternative (read: nonacademic) career paths for academics. The importance of this conversation is somewhat overshadowed by the pessimism that it can create among graduate students and early-career academics about their role as scholars. This panel would seek to combat that pessimism by demonstrating how the role of "scholar" remains a live option with revolutionary potential in both its traditional (i.e., tenure-track) and nontraditional manifestations. Although it is true that many young scholars will seek careers outside of academia, this panel will re-imagine how these opportunities may be explored while still keeping the identity of "scholar" primary.

In order to ignite a fundamentally hopeful conversation about the revolutionary identities, potentialities, and obligations—intellectual and moral—of new religion scholars in all areas

of today's society, this panel will explore:

- How post-graduate training in religious studies helps individuals develop the intellectual skills necessary to support sustainable, ethical, and revolutionary developments within and across their myriad intersecting cultures.
- How early career academics can come to see themselves as “real scholars”—with capacity to contribute to revolutionary change—even if they operate outside the confines of a traditional academic position.
- How the preservation of past discoveries and the nurturing of new ideas may be understood as acts of revolutionary moral courage.
- How scholars deal with intellectual “pushback” to their new and/or revolutionized ideas from “authorities” and “gatekeepers.”
- How scholars seek to engage with difficult or uncomfortable ideas, and in turn perform the potentially revolutionary act of “speaking truth to power.”

The GSC is open to exploring these, and related, questions in both theoretical and practical terms. It is particularly interested in proposals that contextualize a re-imagining of the revolutionary scholar within the broader themes of the 2016 AAR conference, “revolutionary love” and “religion and hatred.”

Please email brief proposals (~150 words) to Chase Laurelle Way (chase.laurelle.way@gmail.com) and Dan Randazzo (empiezo@gmail.com). These proposals do not count towards the two-proposal submission limit of the PAPERS system.

AAR REGION WEBSITES AND MEETING DATES

- [Southeast Region](#) – March 4–6
- [Mid-Atlantic Region](#) – March 10–11
- [Southwest Region](#) – March 11–13
- [Midwest Region](#) – April 1–2
- [Rocky Mountains-Great Plains Region](#) – April 1–2
- [Upper Midwest Region](#) – April 1–2
- [Western Region](#) – April 1–3
- [New England Maritimes Region](#) – April 2
- [Eastern International Region](#) – May 6–7 (February 15 [CFP](#) submission deadline)
- [Pacific Northwest Region](#) – May 20–22

To view Calls for Papers, and find out about the student paper competitions held at the regional meetings, we encourage you to please visit <https://www.aarweb.org/node/166>

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](#)