

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 share the Student Lounge Roundtable series for the upcoming AAR Annual Meeting in San Antonio, TX. This year we have an exciting line up of presentations on topics ranging from teaching portfolios to grant applications. You will find a list of topics and abstracts for the roundtable sessions below. As a reminder, the Annual Meeting super saver registration rate will end on May 19th.



We are interested in hearing from you about your concerns as a student member of the AAR. 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.

WELCOME TO THE NEW REGIONAL STUDENT DIRECTORS

Every year, approximately half of the regions elect a new student director. The regional student directors serve on the regional board and national Graduate Student Committee for two years. This year, we are pleased to announce two new additions:

Rocky Mountains-Great Plains Region – Rev. Anthony Roberts

The Rev. Anthony Roberts is an adjunct instructor of religion at Southeastern University and an adjunct faculty member at the Iliff School of Theology. Additionally, he is a PhD student at the University of Denver and Iliff School of Theology. His research focuses on the intersections of Christian theology, race, and culture. Roberts is an active member of the Society for Pentecostal Studies and is currently serving as the secretary for



its Diversity Committee. In 2015 Roberts was elected as the president/director of communications for the Joint Doctoral Program Graduate Student Association at the University of Denver. In addition to working in the academy, Roberts is an ordained bishop in the Church of God (Cleveland) and serves in a number of pastoral capacities.

Southwest Region – Rachel Toombs

Rachel Toombs is a doctoral student in the Department of Religion at Baylor University. Her areas of specialization are in theology, Hebrew Bible/OT, and the writings of Flannery O'Connor, with a keen interest in articulating how stories about God-bearing down on the human are reflected in narrative style and theological convictions about nature and grace.



Rachel shares the company of her husband, Lance, and two pit rescues Eowyn and Rosie. Among her favorites things are experimenting with baking recipes, walking (ahem, being dragged by) her dogs, and stopping to smell the roses. As student director for the Southwest Region, Rachel looks forward to helping strengthen the connections in the region and bolster the graduate student presence and excitement at the regional meeting.

STUDENT LOUNGE ROUNDTABLES, SAN ANTONIO 2016

This year's Annual Meeting will feature several Student Roundtables on various topics, aimed at serving student member needs, and organized and hosted by members just finishing (or just finished) their degrees. We encourage you to peruse the descriptions below, and to take the time in San Antonio to stop in on those that interest you.

Valuing Your Work, Working Your Values: Why You Do What You Do

Hosted by Raj Balkaran

We are versed, by training, at communicating what we do, and how we go about doing it. What our training does not address is why we do it. We invest in our work with good reason, and once we register and communicate this good reason, we inspire support from others, e.g., those reviewing our grant proposals, publication submissions, or job applications. This

roundtable is geared towards articulating why you do what you do, an ability that can only enhance professional prospects.

Playing the Grant Roulette: When and How to Play the Grant Game in Higher Education

Hosted by Dustin D. Benac

This workshop will provide an introduction to grant writing for research and administrative purposes in higher education. The workshop will provide an introduction about how to develop a fundraising strategy, search for grant opportunities, identify foundation prospects, develop a grant proposal, and manage the award process. Workshop participants will have the opportunity to develop a fundraising strategy and receive resources that will help them track grant prospects, develop proposal budgets, and write proposals.

The Work-Life Balance in Academia: Balancing Graduate School with Family

Hosted by Elissa Cutter

I struggled with balancing academic work and family after giving birth to my first child in May 2014. It took me nine months to figure out how to balance work and family. It all came down to setting priorities, finding a space to work away from family, and not being too hard on myself for things I don't get done. Although some of that seems obvious, I think for many parents (especially mothers!) it is not always obvious.

Do _____ Women Really Need Saving?: Teaching across Cultures amidst Development Discourse

Hosted by Dimple Dhanani

The question of women's liberation in development discourse has been widely debated in a variety of fields in the social sciences, but the scholarship which explores the intersection of feminism and majority world women has not yet adequately addressed methods for reframing public discourse for students in the religious studies classroom. This roundtable discussion will revisit Abu-Lughod's seminal article "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?" to bring attention to the developing discourses on feminism and the contextual and historical limitations of public and academic discourse.

Alt-Ac Employment and Recruitment from an HR Perspective

Hosted by Jessica Ehinger

The session will cover some issues particular to job hunting outside the traditional tenure track, including how to write an effective resume and cover letter, how to identify potential positions, and how non-academic job hunting differs from the academic market. We can also discuss how to negotiate salaries, HR best practices for hiring, and potential red flags for new hires.

Teaching Living Religions in Environments of Potential Controversy

Hosted by Aaron Ricker

In focused but informal conversation with teachers (including Hector Avalos, who will share classroom approaches that have proven effective in avoiding the very dynamics of division and reaction that his works aimed at fellow scholars sometimes provoke), this roundtable will provide a chance for teachers and soon-to-be-teachers to share and discuss simple, concrete pedagogical strategies for teaching local/living religions with due care and integrity—without earning the distrusted status of a “pusher” of one view or another.

Graduate Student Teaching: In the Classrooms and with Your Peers

Hosted by Candace Mixon and Shannon Trosper Shorey

This roundtable uses focused discussion and workshop practices to give you the tools to make the most out of your teaching. We begin with an overview of the different types of teaching experiences available in graduate school, considering how teaching styles differ for each. We will then outline how your cohort might begin forming teaching committees, organizing department roundtables and workshops, and formalizing peer observation teams to bring structural support to sustain best teaching practices at your department. These practices will allow you and your cohort to maintain spaces for solidarity, departmental memory, and training as you share strategies that work for your teaching goals and your students.

Time-Saving Resources and Strategies for Teaching

Hosted by Kristy L. Slominski and Brett J. Esaki

In the world of contingent faculty and graduate student teaching, classes often get assigned last minute and on topics that are unfamiliar. This session will share time-saving resources and strategies for developing courses and preparing lessons: easy syllabus creation, teaching supplements and videos, creating and adapting lesson plans, grading more efficiently, and developing a toolbox of in-class activities. We will also discuss strategies for teaching topics outside of your comfort zone (without overpreparing) and reducing the time spent answering student emails (while still being responsive). Participants will leave with a list of resources and examples that can be adapted.

Embedded and Embodied: The Ethics of Virtual Ethnography

Hosted by Kayla Wheeler

From going on Hajj in Second Life to receiving communion via Skype, the Internet is playing an increasingly important role in religious people’s lives. The field of media and religion is burgeoning, with Heidi Campbell and Stewart Hoover leading the way. Despite the potential for new insights into people’s everyday lives and increased attention from scholars, there is no standard set of ethics for conducting virtual ethnography. Using a womanist approach, my presentation will provide recommendations for studying religious groups online.

FEATURE ON GRADUATE STUDENT ISSUES

What Would a “Pretend” Scholar Look Like?: Interrogating Gatekeeping between Traditional and Flexible Academics

by Jessica Lee Ehinger

I don't doubt that gatekeeping among traditional academics is well-intentioned—after all, maintaining scholarly rigor is a key component of effective research. In focusing on flexible academics, however, I do think traditional academia may be overlooking some serious challenges facing the field as a whole. Similarly, in attempting to prevent the integration of work by 'pretend' scholars, we may be cutting ourselves off from the real-world ramifications of the same concepts and phenomena we study. Barring a fantastic shift in the current job market, it seems unlikely flexible academia will do anything but continue to grow, so we need to be prepared to ask challenging questions about what our gatekeeping is actually keeping out.

Read Ehinger's full article [in Religious Studies News](#).

REGIONAL MEETING DATES AND CFPs REMAINING, 2016

May 20–22 - Pacific Northwest

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](#)

