

Young Scholars Program Revived

The Center is pleased to announce the restructuring and continuation of the popular "Young Scholars in American Religion Program." Funded by a generous grant from Lilly Endowment, the program will continue to focus on the teaching and research of early-career scholars in American religious studies.

Previous "classes" of Young Scholars have included many of the stellar academics working in universities, colleges, and seminaries today. These programs ran from 1991-93, 1994-96, and 1997-99. Over sixty people participated in those seminars, producing cutting-edge syllabi and research projects that have been published in a variety of venues. The leaders of those workshops have included such notable scholars as William Hutchinson, Catherine Albanese, Harry Stout, John Wilson, Wade Clark Roof, Debra Dash Moore, Grant Wacker, and Philip Gleason.

The next phase of the Young Scholars Program will include three "classes," each meeting for two years. The first group will gather at the Center on four occasions: 24-27 April 2003, 16-19 October 2003, 22-25 April 2004, and 14-17 October 2004. The second group will meet in 2004 and 2005. The final group will meet in 2005 and 2006.

Dr. Ann Taves of the Claremont School of Theology and Dr. Stephen Prothero of Boston University will mentor the class of 2003-04. Dr. Taves specializes in the history of American Christianity and is author of the acclaimed *Fits, Trances, & Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James*, as well as *The Household of Faith: Roman Catholic Devotions in Mid-Nineteenth Century America*. Dr. Prothero, a member of the Young Scholars class of 1991-93, has worked extensively in Buddhism and Hinduism in America and is author of *The*

White Buddhist: The Asian Odyssey of Henry Steel Olcott and *Purified by Fire: A History of Cremation in America*.

In addition to its historic concentration on teaching and research, the Young Scholars Program will now include consideration of the role of public intellectuals in today's society. Prominent public intellectuals will confer with program participants, discussing how academics can better teach outside the walls of their classrooms. Pulitzer-Prize winning author Garry Wills has agreed to participate in October 2003.

For those interested in joining the 2003-2004 class, the deadline for application is 15 September 2002. Subsequent classes will have deadlines in Fall 2003 and 2004. For more information about the program and the application process, please see page four of the Newsletter.

Religion on Campus Now Available

In early Fall 2001, University of North Carolina Press published *Religion on Campus*, the result of a unique study of the religious life of American undergraduate students. The study, conducted through the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture by authors Conrad Cherry, Betty DeBerg, and Amanda Porterfield and supported with funding from Lilly Endowment, examined the religious life of students at four anonymous U.S. campuses. The authors sat in on classes, attended student-led prayer and Bible study groups, studied course syllabi, participated in worship services, and interviewed students, faculty members, and administrators.

At a press conference in September, authors Cherry and DeBerg discussed their findings. "We found religious diversity, not religious secularization," said Cherry. In fact, faith is alive and well on college campuses. The authors learned that students consider themselves spiritual as opposed to religious. Cherry said students consistently told him they didn't believe they were as religious as their parents but that they wished to be religious in their own way. He said students told him they sometimes banned campus ministers from Bible study or discussion groups because they wanted to be responsible for their own religious activities.

While the findings of this study will be of interest to many, they will be of particular interest to scholars of American religious studies. As Elaine Maisner, Editor at UNC Press writes, "*Religion on Campus* has struck a chord among teachers of religious studies. I met a religion department chairperson who ordered copies for every faculty member in his department; he planned to hold a workshop centered around discussion of the book. I'm glad the book is being used in such an immediate way by people central to the issues. I also see the book inspiring thought about what religion, religious practice, and religiosity are for young Americans."

A Word from the Director

Philip Goff

Last time I wrote you about how the Center intended to pursue several projects in the coming years. With this Newsletter I'm happy to announce that one of these programs is underway.

As a former participant in the Young Scholars in American Religion Program, I am very pleased with its return. Just like the other sixty-some "graduates" of the program, I can attest to its significance in shaping every aspect of my career – including how I research and write about my topics, my philosophy and methods of teaching, and how I understand my role in my department, university, and field at large.

I will never forget how Harry Stout – our mentor for the first two seminars, who was complemented perfectly by John Wilson for the next two – disarmed us the very first time the "class" of '94 - '96 sat around the table together. "What are your deepest fears, your most haunting insecurities, when you step into the classroom?" he asked. Rather than allowing ten academic strangers to preen, we were forced to put aside our conceits immediately and for good. Each session built upon that honesty and openness over the next two years. Every one of us left the program better at what we did.

In restructuring the Young Scholars Program for the next several years, we were interested in keeping those personal elements that enrich this profession. The emphasis on teaching and research remains firmly in place, but rather than assign different mentors to cover each topic, two mentors will work closely with each class on both issues. By increasing the contact time with both mentors, we believe the personal connections to our shared topic and one another as colleagues will become deeper and more meaningful.

At the same time, we have sought to recognize and incorporate into the program an issue of growing importance: how we can teach outside the walls of our classrooms. With a public audience clamoring for a better understanding of religion's role in society and academic administrations pushing us toward distance learning, our responsibilities as faculty appear less and less traditional each day. By incorporating private sessions and public talks by America's leading public intellectuals, we hope to think through how we can better address our roles as public intellectuals.

In all, the new Young Scholars in American Religion Program will build upon the best traditions laid by previous meetings and attempt to take into account the ever-changing realities of academic life. I believe the program will continue to shape the way we think, teach, research, and write for years to come.

New Program Coordinator Joins Staff

Rebecca Vasko joined the staff of the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture in March 2002. She will serve as the Program Coordinator, overseeing the various activities of the Center. She replaces Terry Grimm, who left after eleven years to take a position in the IUPUI Medical School.

Ms. Vasko brings to the job a multitude of talents. Most recently she served nearly five years as office administrator of the American Studies Program and then the Religious Studies Department. If ever someone is fit to administer the programs at a center studying "religion" and "American culture," she is obviously the person. Previous to joining the staff at IUPUI, she worked in various capacities in law offices in Texas and as secretary to the Faculty of Law at Cambridge University.

Among her many duties will be scheduling national conferences at the Center, including the "Young Scholars in American Religion" seminars and an upcoming meeting of directors of institutes and centers studying religion in America. She will also oversee the Center's finances, coordinate grant reporting schedules, create newsletters and promotional material, and maintain the Center website.

Obviously, we are pleased to have someone so capable in this very important position. Those who deal with the Center through her in the coming years will feel the same way.

Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture

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Retiring Director Honored at Symposium

Distinguished Professor C. Conrad Cherry, noted scholar and founding director of the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture, was honored with a symposium and dinner at Lilly House in Indianapolis on October 26, 2001. Joining Dr. Cherry for the events of the afternoon and evening were his wife, Ellie, and son, Kevin. They and other guests heard a number of papers by Cherry's colleagues addressing his many contributions, both as a scholar in the field of American religious studies and as director of the Center.

Speaking at the symposium were Bruce Mullin, Professor of History and World Missions and Professor of Modern Anglican Studies at General Theological Seminary in New York City, NY, and James Wiggins, Professor Emeritus of Syracuse University and for nine years Executive Director of the American Academy of Religion. Although unable to attend, Stephen Stein, Chancellor's Professor of Religious Studies at Indiana University, George Marsden, Francis A. McAnaney Professor of History at Notre Dame University, and Mark Noll, McManis Professor of Christian Thought at Wheaton College submitted papers that were read.

Cherry's work on Jonathan Edwards was highlighted first. *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal* is credited with significantly altering the way scholars have interpreted and portrayed this important American religious figure. Prior to Cherry's work, according to Stein, Perry Miller's *Jonathan Edwards* "was exerting an astonishing influence over the image of this eighteenth-century New England minister. Miller made Edwards out to be first and foremost a disciple of the Enlightenment whose reading of Locke and Newton and whose appropriation of their empiricism were the foundational elements in his system of thought." Cherry's work, Stein said, "challenged the hegemony of Miller's portrait of Edwards."

Cherry, he continued, "opened the world of Reformed theology for his readers, showing how traditional dogmatic distinctions between nature and grace, word and spirit, were primary shaping forces in Edwards's system of thought . . . [He] reasserted the centrality of the covenant concept for Edwards, the pivotal role of biblical and exegetical insights in his thought, and the influence of earlier Reformed theologians in shaping his religious vision."

Paper contributors George Marsden and Mark Knoll concurred, Marsden observing that Cherry "shows that Edwards was thoroughly grounded in the tradition of Calvinist theology that preceded him," and Knoll noting that "Cherry insisted that modern readers understand Edwards first in Edwards' own terms—not as Miller had done as an encrypted icon of later American values, but as a self-conscious, thoroughly convinced, intentionally consistent, and completely unapologetic Calvinist."

As Stein concluded, "It is a rare tribute when one can say that a dissertation turned first book ends up a shaping force in a major field of study. Conrad Cherry's first book, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal*, is clearly such a work."

Bruce Mullin spoke of Cherry's contributions to the study of American civil religion, citing two of Cherry's essays ("Two American Sacred Ceremonies: Their Implications for the Study of Religion in America," and "Nation, Church and Private Religion: The Emergence of an American Pattern") and, most significantly, his book, *God's New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny*. "In these works," said Mullin, "[Cherry] has taken on the task of being a sociologist and cultural critic. Influenced by Emile Durkheim, he has plumbed the depth of the American religious experience, looking at rituals such as Memorial Day services and great national funerals and has set forth elements of a national civil religion . . . he has exegeted these rituals and has found a deep religious meaning."

Concluded Mullin, "I salute Conrad Cherry as a student of the field of civil religion. He has been one of the field's most thoughtful analysts and subtlest critics. He has brought to the field an insight, sensitivity, and sophistication that has been greatly appreciated."



Conrad Cherry at symposium in his honor

James Wiggins then gave a thought-provoking account of the evolution of Religious Studies departments in the past four decades. Citing Cherry's many contributions to this growth both as a scholar and as director of Scholars Press and later of the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture, Wiggins offered several insights into where the field stands and where it seems to be going. It was a fitting tribute to Cherry's lifelong work as a force in the development of Religious Studies in American academia.

An evening of conviviality and fine food followed the symposium. As Conrad Cherry entered a well-deserved retirement, many toasts were offered to a colleague and leader whose scholarship and administrative abilities have guided us all for nearly forty years.

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the center for the study of religion and american culture

announces a program for early-career scholars in American religion, funded by the Lilly Endowment. Four seminars devoted to the enhancement of teaching and research by young scholars in American religion will be offered in Indianapolis. The aims of the program are to develop ideas and methods of instruction in a supportive workshop environment, stimulate scholarly research and writing, and create a community of scholars that will continue into the future.

dates

2003

24-27 April

16-19 October

2004

22-25 April

14-17 October

seminar leaders



Ann Taves, Professor of History of Christianity and American Religion, Claremont School of Theology

Dr. Taves specializes in the history of Christianity since the Reformation with a particular focus on its North American context. Her research interests include the history of spirituality and popular religion; psychology and religious experience; and sexuality and gender studies in religion. She is the author of *Fits, Trances, & Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James* (1999), and *The Household of Faith: Roman Catholic Devotions in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America* (1986). She is editor of *Religion and Domestic Violence in Early New England: The Memoirs of Abigail Abbot Bailey* (1989).



Stephen Prothero, Associate Professor of Religion, Boston University

Dr. Prothero specializes in Asian religious traditions in the U.S. He teaches courses on American religious history, Buddhism in America, Hinduism in America, Death and Immortality, and Jesus in America. His first book, *The White Buddhist: The Asian Odyssey of Henry Steel Olcott* (1996), was awarded the Best First Book in the History of Religions for 1996 by the American Academy of Religion. His most recent book is entitled *Purified by Fire: A History of Cremation in America* (2001).

eligibility

Scholars eligible to apply are those who have launched their careers within the last seven years and who are working in a subfield of the area of religion in North America, broadly understood. Twelve scholars will be selected for each seminar series, with the understanding that they will commit to the program for all dates. Each participant will be expected to produce a course syllabus, with justification of teaching approach, and a publishable research article. All costs for transportation, lodging, and meals for the seminars will be covered, and there is no application fee.

to apply

Applicants must submit a curriculum vitae with three letters of reference and a 500-word essay indicating 1) why they are interested in participating, and 2) their current and projected research and teaching activities. The closing deadline for applications is 15 September 2002.

Send essays, letters of recommendation, and c.v.s to:

Director

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scholars scholars

what past young scholars say . . .

“The Young Scholars Program provided, for me, a perfect transition from student to teacher. It was the single most formative post-graduate experience I had. Sharing in a broad sense the field of American religious studies, we had representation from historical, sociological, and anthropological approaches to the study of religion, as well as faculty from all kinds of institutions: small liberal arts colleges, state universities, and confessional colleges. We shared our research and strategies for designing and teaching courses, all the while exploring the changing face of American religious history. Our bonding was so intense we are actually publishing a book together. I find myself referring mentally to my Young Scholars colleagues whenever I think through a problem in American religious history.”

Winnifred F. Sullivan, Dean of Students and Associate Professor of Religion, University of Chicago Divinity School

“The program provided some of the most helpful and formative experiences of my career. It offered a means for regular contact and conversation with other scholars and overcame the isolation that is typical, especially during the first years in the profession. It shaped how I think about teaching, and it provided a forum for the exchange of ideas about my research. It led to scholarly collaborations of all sorts, including in print, Three of us contributed pieces to one edited collection, and I co-edited a book with another member of our group. And, perhaps most surprising and rewarding, those connections have continued in formal and informal ways over the years: by email, on the phone, and at conferences. It is difficult to imagine a more useful experience for early career scholars.”

Thomas A. Tweed, Associate Professor of Religious Studies and Associate Dean for Undergraduate Curricula, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

“My participation in the first round of the Young Scholars in American Religion Program was very helpful as I was beginning my teaching and research career. I benefited greatly from the expertise of the two senior mentors and the other participants. My thinking about the field was expanded and challenged, and I met a wonderful group of people who are now friends and well-connected colleagues.”

Betty DeBerg, Professor of Religion and Department Head, University of Northern Iowa

“The Young Scholars program put me in close and extended contact with an extraordinary group who became friends, mentors, advisors, and partners on academic projects now coming to fruition. Of all the programs, seminars, and conferences that I’ve been involved in from my Ph.D. work forward, this one has been the most meaningful, long lasting, and personally enriching. I feel as if I am still living off the intellectual and personal sustenance provided by my comrades and the senior research and teaching fellows in the program.”

Paul Harvey, Associate Professor of History, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs

“I remember the weekend sessions themselves as periods of intense intellectual energy and generosity on everyone’s part—by the second session we all marveled at the fact that we’d only known each other for a few months and had spent just two full days together. These scholarly friendships have deepened considerably as the years have gone by. I don’t think that any of us has published an article or book, won a grant, accepted an academic position, or begun new research without involving the rest of the group in some way. We’ve all been marvelously productive, and I know that my own accomplishments over the last several years would simply not have been possible without the support of others in my group and the confidence that comes from belonging to a vibrant intellectual community.”

Tracy Fessenden, Associate Professor of Religion, Arizona State University

“The Young Scholars Program broadened my professional horizons, just as it promised it would, in both teaching and research. By interacting with other keen young scholars under the benign prodding of my senior mentors, I learned much more about the craft and the guild. I have used my time better ever since, and I have enjoyed the friendship—more than ten years later—of several members of my ‘class’—the first of the YSAR series. It was, in many respects, the equivalent of a ‘postdoctoral’ program, and I’m very grateful to have been a part of it.”

John Stackhouse, Sangwoo Youtong Chee Professor of Theology, Regent College

Journal Publishes Special Issue

Volume 12, no. 2, of *Religion and American Culture* (Summer 2002) will feature four essays that explore African American religious life, thought, and imagination. The articles range from the historical to the literary in terms of approach, whereas the time periods under consideration range from the eighteenth century up to the 1970s.

Susan Nance, in her "Mystery of the Moorish Science Temple," probes the alternative spirituality offered to southern blacks as they migrated to Chicago in the 1920s, showing how a variety of cultural elements were woven into a rich tapestry of meaning. In his "Islamizing the Black Body," Edward Curtis IV works to show how distinctive appropriations from the Muslim world provide a corrective for reading the Nation of Islam of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s as a discernibly religious movement. In her article, "Heathens and Infidels," Annette Laing challenges the conventional reading of a much earlier era in a thoughtful reconsideration of the "evidence" that slaves in pre-Revolutionary South Carolina by and large rejected access to Christianity afforded them by the Anglican Church. Finally, Peter Kerry Powers provides a pointed analysis of Zora Neale Hurston's gender discourses that both critiqued the Christian world and extolled a more robust way in his "'Gods of Physical Violence, Stopping at Nothing'."

Despite these various and discrete topics, approaches, and trajectories, each of the essays in its own way touches upon a matter of standing and increasing interest in the scholarship on African American religious experience and expression, namely, the distinctive and vivid emphases on the primacy of the body. One finds attention to the body as a *tabula* that, in different vocabularies, can be ritually inscribed, can be seen as a locus for spiritual discipline, and can be used as a primary identity marker and social referent. The body is shown as an expressive medium, as a decorative rack for symbolic costuming, and as a vessel of communal meanings. The corporate body works as a social tool, the gendered body is decoded as a spiritual weapon, and the sacramental "body" serves as an avenue into the social body. These analyses interpret African American efforts and achievements in light of the quest for religious presence and power.

These articles are rich iterations of the nature and dynamics of African American religious life and consciousness, and we are happy to invite our readers to reflect on the implications our authors bring to us.

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RELIGION AND AMERICAN CULTURE

A Journal of Interpretation

Upcoming Issue

African American Religion

Volume 12, No. 2

Susan Nance, "Mystery of the Moorish Science Temple: Southern Blacks and American Alternative Spirituality in 1920s Chicago"

Edward E. Curtis IV, "Islamizing the Black Body: Ritual and Power in Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam"

Annette Laing, "'Heathens and Infidels'? African Christianization and Anglicanism in the South Carolina Low Country, 1700-1750"

Peter Powers, "'Gods of Physical Violence, Stopping at Nothing': Masculinity, Religion, and Art in the Work of Zora Neale Hurston"

Rhys H. Williams, "Review Essay: Local 'Lived' Religion in America"

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