I would like to welcome everyone to the 2017-2018 academic year. We look forward to another great year for students, staff, faculty, and friends of the Religious Studies Program. I hope everyone had a great and productive summer vacation. This newsletter is intended to inform everyone in our network about the achievements of the program and our upcoming plans.

The Julian David Whichard Distinguished Professor in the Humanities rotates around the humanities programs in the Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences at ECU, and we are grateful that Dean Downs has assigned it to Religious Studies this school year. After a national search, we identified Professor Hellweg as an exciting visiting scholar who will spend the year with us, teaching, doing research, and connecting to the campus community and beyond. I hope everyone—students, faculty, friends to the program, and the community at large can take advantage of this unique opportunity to interact with him and learn from him. This great news was reinforced by the generous award of the Judith Kirkpatrick Whichard Scholarship Endowment for 2018-2019 academic year. Our gratitude goes to Judith K. Whichard for granting us this great opportunity towards supporting our students.

This year, our program is also fortunate to be hosting two distinguished lectures by some of great and renowned speakers in the country. We anticipate the visit by Dr. Rev William Barber of the NCAAP to give the 25th Distinguished Lecture on Religion and Culture on October 26, 2017 at 6:30 PM in Hendrix Theater. In addition, we will also host Professor Stephen Prothero of Boston University, who will give the Whichard Distinguished lecture on November 27, 2017. Mark your calendars, and stay tuned for schedule details.

Last semester, we initiated the Religious Studies Advisory Council to promote collaboration with and outreach to the community. So far, many great ideas have emerged from the council’s deliberations, including efforts to promote community engagement, speaker and panel series, internships, increased study abroad representation of our students, and possibilities for fundraising to support even more enrichment activities. Our next meeting is scheduled for October 11, 2017 at 5:00 PM in Brewster D313. All are welcome!

To conclude, I would like to wish everyone a great semester and year as we look forward to positive changes, increased productivity, and continued recognition of faculty and students for their hard work and contributions to the Religious Studies Program. Sincere gratitude goes to Calvin Mercer, LaShonda Brown, Marcia Rouse and Andrea Marrero-Sosa for their lead and contribution in the production of this newsletters. Follow us on social media:

https://m.facebook.com/ReligiousStudiesECU/?ref=bookmarks

Thank you,

Dr. Mary Nyangweso, Director, Religious Studies
The purpose of the Religious Studies Club is to create an environment in which students and faculty members can discuss religion from diverse perspectives in a friendly and open dialogue. The Religious Studies Club seeks to foster an understanding of world religions through discussions and presentations on a wide range of topics relating to all religions. All members are encouraged to share their views in a respectful manner. The Club hosts regular meetings that bring people together and promote mutual understanding, and members seek relationships with other religiously and culturally oriented organizations on campus and in the community.

Last year, the Club’s officers hosted a dinner for all Religious Studies majors to stimulate dialogue on how to improve our program. Those on the Board have also been active ambassadors of the Religious Studies Program. Meetings have been focused on a broad range of topics, including non-canonical books of the Bible and the different depictions of hell for multiple religions in the Bible. In the fall semester, participants will develop an agenda of interesting and timely topics. The Club will also host several speakers and lecturers who will give presentations from different religious perspectives. As an academic organization, the club does not favor or promote any particular religion, faith, or belief.

Club officers for 2017-2018
For details contact:
Chelsea Cullen-CULLEN@students.ecu.edu
or
Frank Dembowski-DEMBOWSKIE03@students.ecu.edu
Elections for new officers will be held in the Fall. Get involved!

Study Abroad in India!
Do Religious Studies field research
with Dr. Maher

http://www.ecu.edu/cs-cas/religionprogram/india-abroad.cfm
Upcoming Fall 2017 EVENTS

Distinguished Lecture on Religion and Culture

Rev. Dr. William Barber will deliver the 25th Distinguished Lecture on Religion and Culture on October 26, 2017 at 6:30 PM in Hendrix Theater. The title is “Poor People’s Campaign and National Call for Moral Revival”. The lecture is free and open to the public. Free tickets can be obtained through Central Ticket Office (CTO) in advance or at the door in Mendenhall. Call (252) 328-4788. The Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II is co-author, with Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, of The Third Reconstruction: How a Moral Movement Is Overcoming the Politics of Fear and Division. He is the 2015-2016 recipient of the Puffin/Nation Prize for Creative Citizenship. He files regular dispatches from the southern movement for racial justice for The Nation. Rev. Barber is the architect of the “Forward Together Moral Monday Movement,” president of the North Carolina NAACP, and pastor of the Greenleaf Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Goldsboro. He is also president of “Repairers of the Breach.” Read more at http://www.naacpnc.org/president.

Whichard Distinguished Lecture

Dr. Stephen Prothero will deliver the Whichard Distinguished Guest Lecture. He will speak on Monday, November 27, 2017 at 7 pm in Hendrix on ECU campus, on “Religious Literacy in an Age of Strongmen.” Professor Prothero is Chair of the Department of Religion at Boston University and the author of numerous books, including Why Liberals Win the Culture Wars (HarperOne, 2016), God Is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions that Run the World—and Why Their Differences Matter (HarperOne, 2010), and the New York Times bestseller Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know—and Doesn’t (HarperOne, 2007). His books have been published in five continents and translated into eight languages. Prothero has commented on religion on hundreds of National Public Radio programs; on CNN, MSNBC, FOX, PBS; and on all the major networks. He was also a guest on "The Daily Show" with Jon Stewart, "The Colbert Report," and "The Oprah Winfrey Show." A regular contributor to the Wall Street Journal and USA Today, he has also written for the New York Times, Slate, Salon, the Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times, and the Boston Globe. Read more about him at http://stephenprothero.com/.

Religious Studies is hosting the 2017-2018 David Julian and Virginia Suther Whichard Distinguished Professorship

The Religious Studies Program is pleased to host Dr. Joseph Hellweg to East Carolina University as the 2017-2018 David Julian and Virginia Suther Whichard Distinguished Professor. Hellweg brings to the Religious Studies Program expertise in the intersection of religion, security studies, politics, and public health. His research interests include ritual, Islam, performance, and social movements in West Africa. This fall he is teaching an advanced-undergraduate and graduate seminar, “Security, Ritual, and Politics: Portrayals of Violent Actors in Contemporary Africa.” Next spring he will teach a second seminar, “Religion and Public Health in the Black Atlantic: The Culture and Politics of Healing in Africa, the Caribbean, and the US.” His publications include Hunting the Ethical State: the Benkadi Movement of Côte d’Ivoire (2011); Anthropologie les premier pas (First Steps in Anthropology); and many journal articles. He is currently writing a book on the funeral songs of dozo hunters in Côte d’Ivoire and a series of articles on the N’ko alphabet invented in 1949 in Côte d’Ivoire for the purpose of writing Mande Languages. Learn more about Dr. Hellweg by going to the Florida State University Department of Religion webpage.
Mary Nyangweso presented “Religion, Effective Leadership and Social Deconstruction: The Case of Gender Based Violence in Kenya” at the 7th Annual African Interdisciplinary Studies Association (AISA) conference on the theme “Africa at Development Crossroads,” held at Multimedia University of Kenya Hotel, Nairobi Kenya on June 27-30.

Mary Nyangweso and Mansi Trivedi presented “Female Genital Mutilation: A Culturally Sensitive Approach to Caring for Women who have Undergone this Practice” at Brody School of Medicine, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, June 8, 2017


Kathy Barrett Dawson was inducted as Vice President-Elect, Society of Biblical Literature/Southeast Region for the 2017-1018 year at the Southeastern Commission for the Study of Religion annual meeting in March 2017.

Kathy Barrett Dawson presented "Past, Present, and Future Grace in Second Thessalonians" at the Society of Biblical Literature, Annual Meeting in Boston, MA.

Kathy Barrett Dawson presided over the session "Fear and Grief in the NT, Emotional Control in 4 Maccabees, and Disgust in the HB" in the Bible and Emotion Section, Society of Biblical Literature, Annual Meeting in Boston, MA.

Lee Johnson presented a paper called “What in the World is Performance Criticism?” at the Society of Biblical Literature, Annual Meeting in Boston, MA.

Lee Johnson presided over the session “Defining the Limits of Performance Criticism,” in the Performance Criticism of Biblical and Other Ancient Texts Session, Society of Biblical Literature, Annual Meeting in Boston, MA.

Lee Johnson is introducing a new entry level course at ECU: “Use and Abuse of the Bible” RELI 1500, to be debuted in Spring 2018.


Derek Maher co-edited a recent issue of Revue d’Études Tibétaines (volume 38, Février, 2017) with Tsering Wangchuk and Daniel A. Hirshberg called The Tulku Institution in Tibetan Buddhism: Past, Present, and Future Prospects of the Reincarnation System. The issue included his article “Revival and Renewal through Reincarnation: The Bodong Tradition Then and Now”.

Derek Maher contributed a chapter called “Compassion in Buddhism and Islam: The Liberal Arts and Living a Meaningful Life” to the volume called Compassion at the Heart of Higher Education, edited by Paul Gibbs (London: Springer, 2017).

HOW TO SUPPORT THE PROGRAM

RELIGIOUS STUDIES GENERAL PURPOSE FUND

This fund assists with miscellaneous expenses, e.g., graduates’ recognition ceremony, community programs, and events for the majors. Thanks for letting us know about your gift (mercerc@ecu.edu) so we can ensure it's credited to the proper account.

Make check payable to "ECU Foundation, Inc.," on the memo line put "Religious Studies," and mail to:

Division of University Advancement 2200 South Charles Blvd. Mail Stop 301 Greenville, NC 27858

If you wish to make a pledge, use this pledge form:
http://www.ecu.edu/cs-admin/ecuf/upload/Pledge-Form-InteractiveECUFOUNDATION-REV4-24-14-2.pdf

For more information on the program, please watch this video:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eoijlDA2xEg.

“If I went back to college today, I think I would probably major in comparative religion, because that’s how integrated it is in everything that we are working on and deciding and thinking about in life today.”
United States Secretary of State
John F. Kerry

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