Welcome from Our Director

I would like to extend my welcome to all Religious Studies students, faculty, and friends of the Program to yet another academic year. We look forward to great things this 2019-2020 academic year. Last year we had great successes worthy of mention. The Program graduated eight majors and one minor. We successfully hosted SECSOR, the Southeast Regional Conference on Religion on March 8-10, 2019 and the annual Distinguished Lecture on Religion and Culture. We promise to stay active and to continue to engage our students and the public. This was followed by this year’s also successful lecture on religion and climate change. We are appreciative of all our students, faculty, and community leaders and those units on campus and beyond that have collaborated with us to produce these great events. As we look forward to more successes, I wish everyone a great year.

Thanks,

Mary

Director, Religious Studies Program

Graduate Wins Award

AUSTIN THAXTON

Austin has been accepted into Vanderbilt Divinity School, where he will pursue a Master’s in Theological Studies, and he was awarded the Divinity Merit Scholarship that is based upon academic excellence and promise of unusual professional achievement. Austin will defer acceptance of his scholarship until the fall of 2020. During his hiatus, Austin plans to travel to Israel to experience such sites as the Wailing Wall, Temple Mount, and Via Dolorosa, and enjoy the diverse cultures that abut in the Armenian, Christian, and Muslim Quarters. As part of his graduate work, Austin will focus upon the intersection of religion and culture, and he imagines this trip will provide ample inspiration for that work.

CHECK OUT OUR UPDATED WEBSITE

www.ecu.edu/cs-cas/religionprogram
Scholarship Recipients

Hadleigh Painter, Judy Whichard, and Zealy Helms

The first annual award of the Judith Kirkpatrick Whichard Scholarship for majors in Religious Studies was made in spring 2019 to two current majors: Hadleigh Painter and Zealy Helms. Judy Whichard is a recent graduate of the program, and her generous support of Religious Studies will provide annual scholarships for worthy majors. Zealy Helms, Mikenna Morrison, and Julia Shackleford also earned scholarships to participate in Dr. Maher’s study abroad program to India.

Focus on Our Graduates

Our graduates for the 2018-19 year were Rez-Robbie Arranguez, Nicolas Das, Stanley Harriman, Benjamin Justice, Kelly Kimble, William Swain, Brian Austin Thaxton, and Judith Whichard. Graduates Kelly Kimble, Brian Austin Thaxton, and Judith Whichard gave inspiring addresses to the graduating class.

Upcoming Distinguished Lecture

The Distinguished Lecture on Religion and Culture series has become one of the most well attended lecture series at ECU, drawing hundreds. The Fall 2020 distinguished lecturer is Duke University Professor Mary McClintock Fulkerson. A feminist scholar of religion, she addresses issues like racial and sexual diversity in religion. A list of past lecturers can be found on the program website at: www.ecu.edu/cs-cas/religionprogram.

Highlights from Recent Events

RELIGIOUS STUDIES PROGRAM HOSTS IMPORTANT SCHOLARLY CONFERENCE

The Southeastern Commission for the Study of Religion, the regional organization of the very active and prestigious American Academy of Religion and Society of Biblical Literature, met at ECU. A total of 170 scholars of religion shared their research on a range of topics, including such diverse subjects as rites of passage and public health discourses in Africa; use and abuse of religion in American politics; robotics, artificial intelligence, and the future of humanity; lessons from the Holocaust; confederate monuments; and archaeology. Thanks especially to ECU Religion Professor Kathy Barrett Dawson, an officer in the regional organization, whose leadership resulted in this successful event.

CLIMATE CHANGE EVENT DRAWS OVER 400 IN ATTENDANCE: Bill McKibben, well-known climate change activist and scholar, drew over 400 campus and community people for the 27th annual “Distinguished Lecture in Religion and Culture.” His presentation was titled “Faith and Climate: Trying to Make Sense of the Biggest Things that Ever Happened.” McKibben was introduced by Dr. Stan Riggs, noted expert on eastern North Carolina’s environment.

MARTYRDOM AND RADICAL ACTION: Award-winning author Dr. Candida R. Moss, Cadbury Professor of Theology at the University of Birmingham, UK, delivered the 26th “Distinguished Lecture on Religion and Culture.” Her well-received presentation was titled “The Myth of Persecution: How Persecution Radicalizes and Polarizes in the Ancient and Modern Worlds.”

COMMUNITY LECTURE ON RELIGION AND TECHNOLOGY: Bioethicist Ron Cole-Turner presented a community lecture on “More or Less Human? Will Technology Enhance Us or Destroy Us?”
Religion Professor Co-Edits New Book

This book builds on work that examines the interactions between immigration and gender-based violence, to explore how both the justification and condemnation of violence in the name of religion further complicates our societal relationships. Violence has been described as a universal challenge that is rooted in the social formation process. As humans seek to exert power on the other, conflict occurs. Gender-based violence, immigration, and religious values have often intersected where patriarchy-based power is exerted on the other.


SUPPORTING RELIGIOUS STUDIES’ INITIATIVES

Would you like to support Religious Studies initiatives? Consider being a donor. Donations provide support for scholarships, study abroad, and public events. The generosity and support of our alumni and friends of the Program have enabled us to host events and to engage the local community. As a donor, you will be kept informed of our activities and opportunities for involvement and your name will be listed in our newsletter. You can contribute online at: http://www.ecu.edu/cscas/religionprogram/donate.cfm. We look forward to your support, as every donation makes a difference in our students’ lives and impacts the community.

MERCER’S “EVENTS” EMAIL LIST

"Events" mailings provide information about religion-related cultural and/or academic events in the area and are sent to approximately 1,600 people who have requested to be on the list. This list is not shared with any other group or person. A mailing is only sent about once a month. Anyone wishing to receive the “Events” newsletter should send their email to: mercerc@ecu.edu.