2010-11 has been an exciting year! In July we welcomed Simon Coleman, the fifth Chancellor Jackman Chair to be appointed by the U of T. Coleman significantly enhances our strength in the anthropology of religion, in particular the anthropology of modern Christianity. We’ve also been joined by Tobie Strauss, who teaches Modern Hebrew, and we’re preparing to welcome Kyle Smith, whose principal appointment is to the Dept. of Historical Studies at UTM, but who holds his graduate appointment at the DSR. Smith is an expert in early late Roman and early Byzantine Eastern Christianity. Three faculty members have released their first books: Amira Mittermaier’s *Dreams That Matter: Egyptian Landscapes of the Imagination*, Laury Silvers’ *A Soaring Minaret: Abu Bakr Al-Wasiti and the Rise of Baghdadi Sufism*, and Karen Ruffle’s *Gender, Sainthood, and Everyday Practice in South Asian Shi’ism*. DSR faculty have been successful in winning research competitions and awards, too. Amira Mittermaier won a Wenner Gren grant and a SSHRC Standard Research Grant, and Frances Garrett was awarded a prestigious SSHRC Partnership Development grant, bringing to five the number of SSHRC grants held by core DSR faculty. In addition to an OCUFA teaching award, Shafique Virani won a large Early Researcher Award from the Gov’t of Ontario for a project entitled “Journey to the Roof of the World: The travels of Pir Sabzali in Central Asia.” Walid Saleh continues research sponsored by a Mellon New Directions Fellowship. Graduate students have also been busy and notably successful, with a robust contin-
As the 2010-2011 academic year began, we welcomed eighteen graduate students (eight Master’s and ten doctoral students), thus increasing our student cohort to 86. New doctoral students joining the department are: Rebecca Bartel, Michelle Christian, Tenzen Eaghll, Amy Marie Fisher, Nathalie LaCoste, Jessica Radin, Madison Robins, Youcef Soufi, Justin Stein, and Ryan Stoner. Our newest MA students are: Bhante Chipamong Chowdhury, Omar Edaibat, Nigel Fernando, Nicholas Field, Basit Kareem Iqbal, Adil Mawani, Arthur Ringis, Samuel Shonkoff, and Kiranjit Sohal. Pictures and academic biographies of all our graduate students can now be consulted on our webpage.

Our students have been very successful in fellowship competitions (news of which you can read on pp. 10-11). Ten doctoral students hold federally funded SSHRC grants (including seven holders of the prestigious Canada Graduate Scholarship), as do four of our M.A. students. Five doctoral students have been successful in winning Ontario Graduate Scholarships. (See the list of award winners on pg 23.)

This year we launched five mentorship groups, led by students, in order to ensure on-going peer support for our new and returning students. The groups are designed to gather and support students at every level of their programme (Master’s, PhD Coursework, Exam Preparation, Dissertation Writing, and Pedagogy). The mentorship programme is supported by the department, but owes its leadership to the CSRSA, especially to mentors Brigidda Zapata, Michelle Christian, Simon Appolloni, Aldea Mulhern, Bonnie de Bruijn, Barbara Greenberg, Nick Dion, and Rebekka King. By all accounts, our mentorship programme has been a great success and we look forward to continuing it in the coming years.

Building up the social side of our community has also been important this year. We launched a regular gathering, Tea@2 on Tuesdays (see photo below), to which all members of the department are invited. This is a wonderful chance for students and faculty to relax and chat. Some weeks, our lounge has been filled to over-flowing! Supporting professional development, we have also held five luncheons focused on pedagogy, wherein students and faculty have gathered to discuss our teaching and learning practices. Academic feedback on student work has been supported by our on-going PhD colloquia series, at which five doctoral students (Rebekka King, Barbara Greenberg, Jodie Boyer, Smita Kothari, and Ben Wood) presented their work-in-progress this year.

Other initiatives just getting underway include the development of a database of all graduates. Our hope is to publish and maintain this information, including placement data, to inform prospective students and others interested in our work. We will also be establishing regular professionalization seminars for doctoral students to assist them in acquiring skills for the academic market and workplace (as well as alternate career paths). My thanks go to Bonnie de Bruijn for spearheading the professionalization initiative.

As my first year as Director of Graduate Studies winds down, I want to note what a pleasure it has been working with our graduate administrator, Fereshteh Hashemi. Fereshteh is a tireless and conscientious administrator; she makes the job of directing graduate studies in religion not only possible, but also delightful. I am grateful too for the administrative support of our business officer, Irene Kao, and the undergraduate assistant, Marilyn Colaço. Lastly, I want to thank my fellow academic leaders, Professors Frances Garrett and John Kloppenborg for their support and advice throughout the year. It has been great fun working with you all and I look forward to the coming year.

From the Graduate Director
Jennifer Harris
This coming summer four students from the DSR and one from NMC will go to Israel to participate in the excavations at Bethsaida (et-Tell), conducted under the direction of Dr. Rami Arav (University of Nebraska at Omaha). The site is at the north end of the Kinneret (Sea of Galilee), and dates from at least the late Bronze Age (1200-1100 BCE). In the early Iron Age it flourished as a Geshurite city, and in the early Roman period was one of the cities of Herod Philip, who renamed it as Julias, in honor of the daughter of Augustus. The city lost prominence in the Byzantine period, but seems to have been occasionally occupied in the crusader period.

The students will also visit a variety of other archaeological sites in the Galilee and Judaea: Gamla, Sussita/Hippos, Hazor, Omrit, Tell Dan, Banyas, Capernaum, Khorazin, Sepphoris, Yodfat, Kana, Gush Halav, Bar'am, Sythopolis, Bet-Alfa, Caesarea Maritima, various sites in Jerusalem, the Herodion, Khirbet, Qumran, Ein Gedi, and Masada. Some of the site visits will be led by members of the Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Students participating in the 2011 summer Bethsaida excavations are Natalie Lacoste, Andrew Jones, Nicholas Schonhoffer, Ryan Stoner, and Jade Weimer, and they will be joined by Callie Callon and Erin Vearncombe for the Jerusalem and southern visits. The tour is lead by Dr. John S. Kloppenborg and is funded by a generous grant from the Canadian Friends of Hebrew University.

In the summer of 2010, four DSR graduate students (Nicholas Schonhoffer, Jade Weimer, Brigidda Zapata and Sarah Rollens) accompanied Professor John Kloppenborg on a two-week archaeological dig at the site of Bethsaida, east of the Jordan River. The site of Bethsaida, famous as the birthplace of three of the apostles and as a place where Jesus is said to have performed miracles, had not been excavated until recently. In 1996, soon after archeological work began, the remains of an Iron Age city was uncovered below the Hellenistic-Roman remains.
DSR Reading Groups and Research Teams

This year the halls of the Department for the Study of Religion have been busy at all hours with extracurricular academic gatherings that unite students and faculty. Our growing community has been organizing an increasing number of reading groups and research teams, organized around common interests or projects of various kinds. The new Islamic philosophy reading group, for example, started two months ago with a group of U of T students and graduates interested in expanding their knowledge of late Islamic philosophy. They are now working on Mullā Sadrā’s *Metaphysical Prehensions*, and they also spend time discussing the basics of Islamic philosophy. This group is led by Sayeh Meisami, who taught philosophy at undergraduate and graduate levels in Tehran for many years before moving to Toronto. Dr. Meisami has a PhD from Tehran University and is now a DSR research associate.

Graduate student Omar Edaibt also started a reading group this year with the aim to discuss contemporary Islamic scholarship. Students attending are from the Dept of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations and DSR, plus an undergraduate in Psychology and an alumni. Each week a member selects a peer-reviewed article in Islamic Studies, on any topic of interest. This approach makes for discussions of all sorts, ranging from religion and secularism to human rights, classical Islamic Law, Islamic history, theology, and more.

The Islamic Studies Workshop, led by DSR faculty Amira Mittermeier and Anver Emon, meets monthly focusing each time on the work of a U of T Islamic Studies scholar. Papers are pre-circulated and the targeted scholar contextualizes the work briefly at the meeting, followed by a response by a graduate student, and general discussion by the group.

The Hindu Studies Colloquium & Discussion Group, begun last year, involves graduate students and faculty as well as an occasional external scholar. This year focused on the works of Michael Witzel, Wales Professor for Sanskrit at Harvard, looking at areas of his scholarship relating to linguistics, early Indian history, Vedic and epic literature and the Indus script. The group was chaired by Christoph Emmrich. Also in South Asian Studies, Srilata Raman led an Advanced Sanskrit Reading Group, which focused on Kṛṣṇaśāstra’s *Mīmāṃsa-paribhāṣā* (a compendium on the Pūrvamimāṃsa) and Horstmann’s 2009 masterpiece *Der Zusammenthalt der Welt*.

The Numata Buddhist Studies Program has organized a reading group series for the last several years. Typically hosting six visiting speakers yearly, the Program alternates lectures and reading group sessions. In the latter format, the group reads a pre-circulated article and then discusses the work with the visiting scholar him/herself.

This year the Religions of Mediterranean Antiquity (RMA) Colloquium began meeting once a month. The purpose of the colloquium is to foster an environment where RMA graduate students can present current work to colleagues and faculty and receive feedback. This year eight students have presented papers, with eight more scheduled for next year. Like the RMA Colloquium, the Religion in the Public Sphere Initiative’s reading group series is also organized and hosted by graduate students, but with a focus on published books in the field. This year, David Kaden led the group in a discussion of W.G. Runciman’s *The Theory of Cultural and Social Selection* (Cambridge U Press 2009), and DSR graduate Dr. Laurel Zwissler led a discussion of Courtney Bender’s *The New...*
Research Teams in the DSR: Islam and Muslim Civilizations

By Shanifa Nasser-Sunderji

Adjusting volume controls in a recording studio, layering geospatial data on digital maps, editing raw footage for a documentary film - one may not expect to find these activities on the to-do list of the typical student of Religion, but they are only a handful of the tasks undertaken by students on Prof. Shafique Virani’s research team. Last spring, I was invited to be Research Coordinator for this diverse and growing group, to mentor a broad range of students from across the U of T and beyond in carrying out work on various projects related to Islam and Muslim Civilizations. This position was created through the U of T Mississauga inaugural “Research and Teaching Hand-in-Hand Fellowship,” funded by Graduate Expansion Funds and the Office of the Dean. The experience transformed my understanding of what can be involved in research and how fruitful such innovative methods could be. With one of its aims to make humanities research more accessible both within academia and outside, Virani’s research team is comprised of nearly forty students. Undergraduates enroll through the University’s Research Opportunity Program and independent studies classes, while MA and PhD students pursue reading courses or paid internships funded by the work-study program and grants from SSHRC, as do a few post-doctoral fellows. In 2010, the Ontario Ministry of Research and Innovation awarded Virani an Early Researcher Award, making it possible to fund additional internships for graduate students to gain hands-on research experience. In recent years, students from other universities such as McGill and York, excited about working in such a collaborative setting, have also joined the team. So enthusiastic are its members that many continue in a voluntary capacity, even after the completion of their terms.

Currently, the team’s projects include the creation of the iBrary Online, a digital repository and library of academic sources pertaining to Islamic studies, the production of educational podcasts, designing a font to preserve primary sources in a near-extinct Indic script, and using GIS technology to map the expeditions of a 20th-c. Muslim traveller. These are accompanied by the cataloguing and analysis of numerous religious texts and manuscripts spanning Arabic, Persian, Gujarati, Hindi, Tajik, and Urdu, as well as translation work in English, French, Russian, and this year, Indonesian, Malaysian, Portuguese, and Spanish. One of the team’s recent projects involves the study of a 1923 expedition through remote mountainous regions ranging from the Pamirs all the way to present-day China, requiring students to draw from former Soviet military maps of the region in order to chart the course of the journey. This assignment saw one student travel to London’s British Library to consult rare books and gazetteers detailing uncharted locations encountered along the way. Many of these projects culminate in presentations at the
“The universe is communion of subjects, rather than a collection of objects,” says Thomas Berry.

Alpacas, a type of Chilean llama, are regarded as sacred by some of the Pueblo Diaguita indigenous population of the mountains region of Chile, near the Argentina border. The community utilizes the symbol as part of the cultural identity, which they are now defending against industrialization and cultural homogenality in the form of contested open-pit mining on their land.
By Nicholas Dion

Last December, I had the privilege of attending a sold out debate between former British Prime Minister Tony Blair and renowned New Atheist Christopher Hitchens at Toronto’s Roy Thompson Hall. One of several such debates organized across North America in the last few weeks by Blair’s Faith Foundation - his post-retirement project - the evening promised to be both a good time and a chance to observe how to think about religion outside the university. So after fighting my way through a few dozen protesters with their chants of “Tony Blair, war criminal” and passing the metal detection test, I settled into my seat.

The motion for the debate read as follows: “Religion is a force for good in the world.” Each presenter was given time for opening statements, which were followed by two rounds of rebuttals and finally questions from the audience of about 2700. I had missed this on my way in, but participants had a chance to vote on the motion before the debate, so that the organizers could track how the arguments changed audience opinion. While I was expecting to be in a largely Blair-sympathetic audience, I was quickly proven wrong. Initial numbers showed that 22% of people agreed that religion was a force for good in the world, 57% disagreed, and 21% were undecided. 75% of those polled also suggested that their opinions could be influenced by the debate.

Arguments on both sides were fairly predictable, as Hitchens kept hammering at examples of religious groups doing wrong - terrorist attacks, evangelical intolerance, genocide, and so on - while Blair presented opposing cases of religious groups doing good. The two categories of “good” and “bad” were used uncritically, as was the label of religion. In a way, both participants agreed on much - that neither one of their positions was absolute, for example. Even they had to recognize, albeit implicitly, that the proposal up for debate was deeply flawed; the obvious answer was “sometimes religion works for good, and sometimes it’s a source for terrible evil.” Both presenters agreed on this, I think. So while Hitchens pointed to the immorality of religious beliefs, which discriminate an “other” along imaginary lines, which denigrate women and homosexuals, he did not want to suggest that religion would die out; he knew that it wouldn’t, arguing instead that “more secularism would simply be a good thing” and that religions need to give up their claims to supernatural authority and enter debate with alternative positions on proper terms. The obvious reply from Blair: “If we can agree that religion isn’t going to die out, why not work on reforming it, by encouraging the good in religion?” How one would do so, however, is unclear.

Blair came closest to thinking critically about the category of religion when he pointed out that none of the things that Hitchens criticized about religion were unique to it. Don’t some political beliefs make “good people do bad things” just like religious beliefs do? But instead of following this road, Blair fell back on an essentialization of religion, suggesting that “real religion” is a force for good in a person’s life, thereby implying that those religious actions that Hitchens named were some kind of “false” religion, making a messy picture all too clean. Blair did thank Hitchens for his positions, and described the value that religion brings with its challenges to one’s faith can have. Faith should always be reflexive faith, then.

What can I say in terms of my general impressions? I’ve already mentioned that the motion itself was deeply flawed. I was deeply impressed with Hitchens, who quickly won the audience’s affection. If a debate is won by the charisma and humour of a given presenter moreso than his arguments - and I have no doubt that it is - Hitchens was the clear winner. I had heard terrible things about Hitchens “the man” going into the debate: that he was an ogre, every bit as closed minded and belligerent as the worst of religious fundamentalists. I was thus pleasantly surprised; he was funny, entertaining and respectful, all the while defending his own opinions lie closer to his than Blair’s regardless. Rest assured though - my vote was quickly counterbalanced by my colleague, also in attendance, who couldn’t believe that I would encourage Hitchens in any way.

The final result? Hitchens 68%, Blair 32%, with no undecided option provided. The two, then, essentially split the undecided voters. For those interested, I voted for Hitchens, simply because he put on the better show, though my own opinions lie closer to his than Blair’s regardless. Rest assured though - my vote was quickly counterbalanced by my colleague, also in attendance, who couldn’t believe that I would encourage Hitchens in any way.

Nicholas Dion is a doctoral candidate in the DSR. His research interests include psychoanalytic thought, theories of space, religion in the public sphere, and the philosophy of Peter Sloterdijk. This essay was first published in the DSR’s Religion Beat blog, http://religionbeat.blogspot.com/.
Pamela Klassen On Five Months in Germany

For five months of my sabbatical during 2010-11, I was a Visiting Professor at the Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Tübingen, where I was also a Humboldt Foundation Alumni Fellow. I taught a course, Anthropology of Christianity, to students in the “Magister” program (a program now being phased out in place of a B.A./M.A. model). I learned a great deal both from the students and from navigating the different academic culture of Germany. I was also delighted to have the chance to work with the two new professors in the Institute, who were not there at my last visit to Tübingen: the Director, Prof. Dr. Roland Hardenberg and Prof. Dr. Gabriele Alex. For a short while, I also had the pleasure of becoming a student myself once again while taking a seminar on “The Sublime and the Beautiful” taught by Prof. Dr. Cornelia Klinger in the Department of Philosophy.

While in Germany, I also gave lectures in Heidelberg, Tübingen, and Göttingen. The first two were based on my new research project, “The Protestant Sublime,” and the third drew from my forthcoming book, *Spirits of Protestantism: Medicine, Healing, and Liberal Christianity*. In Göttingen I also participated in a panel discussion on my newly published co-edited book, *After Pluralism*. This discussion included our host Prof. Dr. Peter van der Veer, Director of the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, DSR student Rachel Loewen, who spoke on her research with Coptic Christians in Cairo, and Prof. Dr. Gabriele Alex, a scholar of medical pluralism, from the U of Tübingen.

The Göttingen visit was part of one of the highlights of my time in Germany: a ten-day DAAD Study Tour, which brought eleven U of T Ph.D. students to Germany. I met the students in Berlin, and the next day we participated in a workshop with faculty and Ph.D. students from the History of Emotions Group at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development, hosted by Dr. Monique Scheer. DSR students Edith Szanto and Rebecca Bartel gave papers, as did Nermeen Mouftah of NMC. We were also lucky to have Prof. Dr. Birgit Meyer, a fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin, talk about her research on “Religion and the Question of Materiality: Pictures as Sensational Forms.” After four days in Berlin, we travelled for a (too-short) afternoon visit to the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology at Halle, where we learned about the work of a research group on religion in post-socialist contexts, led by Prof. Dr. Chris Hann. While in Halle, we also visited the fascinating Marienkirche in the city centre. We then went on to Göttingen, where we were generously hosted by Peter van der Veer and his colleagues at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity. Three of our students, Arun Brahmbhatt, Matt King, and Paul Nahme delivered papers, along with three MPI post-doctoral fellows. We enjoyed a festive meal in the basement of the city hall that night, and the next day we had the *After Pluralism* discussion, along with time to explore the city of “Wissenschaft.” At all of these Max Planck Institutes, we were very impressed by the cultures of scholarship that were nurtured—with public funding—in these astonishingly beautiful spaces designed for thinking, writing, and talking.

Our last stop was Heidelberg, where the hospitality of the Institut für Religionswissenschaft began as soon as we stepped off the train, when we were met by four smiling students. Together with our host, Prof. Dr. Inken Prohl, I moderated our two-day workshop, “Religionswissenschaft Across the Continents: New Perspectives from Toronto and Heidelberg.” U of T students Nicholas Dion, Maria Dasios, Aldea Mulhern, and Justin Stein gave papers and responded to the work of Heidelberg students. In Heidelberg, we also enjoyed an animated (and noisy) dinner with our hosts, as well as a farewell evening on our last night in a very hip bar on the Neckar River. Another highlight for me was a brief visit to the grave of Max Weber, thanks to the guidance of three Heidelberg students. Our only regret on the trip was that Prof. Amira

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**FACULTY NEWS**

**Pablo Argárate** has accepted the positions of Professor for Patristics and Ecumenical Theology and Director of the Institut für Okumenische Theologie, Ostkirchliche Orthodxie und Patrologie (Institute for Ecumenical Theology, Eastern Orthodoxy and Patrology) at the Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz, Graz Austria. He will start in Austria in August 2011.


In 2010 **Simon Coleman** started a new journal, *Religion and Society*, with Ramon Sarró (University of Lisbon), which will be published annually by Berghahn as part of their Advances in Research Series, and which contains in-depth reviews and critiques of current research in the study of religion. The 2010 issue contains a consideration of Maurice Bloch’s contributions to the analysis of religion (including reflections by Bloch himself). For more information see http://journals.berghahnbooks.com/air-rs/. Coleman’s publications in 2010 were: “An Anthropological Apologetics,” in *South Atlantic Quarterly* 109; “Constructing the Globe: A Charismatic Sublime?”, in *Traveling Spirits: Migrants, Markets and Mobilities*, eds. Hüwelmeier and Krause (Routledge); “Engaging Visions? Sites and Sites in Contemporary Pilgrimage to Walsingham,” in Walsingham in Literature and Culture from the Middle Ages to Modernity, eds. Janes and Waller (Ashgate); “Ta(?)king Possession: Exchanging Words and Worlds among Charismatic Christians,” in *Summoning the Spirits: Possession and Invocation in Contemporary Religion*, ed. Dawson (Tauris);


The President of Italy, Giorgio Napolitano, has appointed **Konrad Eisenbichler** a Commendatore (Knight Commander) in the Order of Merit of the Republic of Italy. Founded in 1951 to replace several previous honours for merit awarded by the Kingdom of Italy, the O.M.R.I., is the first and highest of the various orders of knighthood of the Republic of Italy. It is headed by the President of the Republic and is awarded in five degrees, of which that of commendatore is the third or middle degree (comparable to the rank of Officer in the Order of Canada or of Commander in the Order of the British Empire). Eisenbichler received the distinction in recognition of his scholarship in Italian studies and his work for the advancement of Italian culture in general.

**Amir Harrak** published *Syriac and Garshuni Inscriptions of Iraq* Recueil des inscriptions syriaques 2 (Paris: Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, 2010); Vol 1: Texts, Vol 2: Album. The *Syriac and Garshuni Inscriptions of Iraq* volume brings together in a corpus for the first time all Syriac and Garshuni (Arabic in Syriac script) inscriptions of Iraq. Many are dated (709–2000). The inscriptions pertain to the various Syriac communities, in all their ecclesiastical, but also economic and

*continued on page 20*
**Graduate Student News**

**Arun Brahmbhatt** received the Sandhya Ray Award for Indian Philosophy and Religion. He also presented “Navigating Sectarian Conflict Through Text: The Swaminarayan Case” at the Conference on the Study of Religions of India, hosted by U of T’s St. Michael’s College.

**Callie Callon** has won the Joachim Jeremias prize awarded to a graduate student essay by the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies, for her essay, “Adulescentes and Meretrices: the Correlation between Squandered Patrimony and Prostitutes as drawn from Greco-Roman Comedy in the Parable of the Prodigal Son.” She also published (with J. Kloppenborg) “The Parable of the Shepherd and the Transformation of Pastoral Discourse” in *Ancient Christianity* 1 (2010).


Last summer, **Alex Green** was a visiting scholar at the Cambridge University Taylor-Schechter Genizah Project, working on ethical texts in the Cairo Genizah (see story on pg. 19). He also published a review of Joel Kraemer’s *Maimonides: The Life and World of One Civilization’s Greatest Minds* (Doubleday 2008) in *Review of Politics* 72; a review of Paul Bagley’s *Philosophy, Theology and Politics: A Reading of Spinoza’s Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (Brill 2008) in *Review of Metaphysics* 63; and an article, “Power, Deception and Comedy: The Politics of Exile in the Book of Esther” in *Jewish Political Studies Review* 23 (2011).

**Basit Kareem Iqbal**’s presentation on “Mourning al-Andalus: Tolerance, Discourse, History” was selected for the Prandium seminar series run by the UTM Dept of Historical Studies.

**Shaftolu Gulamodov** presented a paper on progress, problems and prospects in the academic study of Ismaili Muslim traditions of Central Asia at the Central Eurasian Studies Society 11th Annual Conference at Michigan State U.

**David Kaden** was asked to co-author an article with Professor Peter Richardson on the depiction of the Herodian Temple in the writings of first century CE historian Flavius Josephus. The article will be published as part of a collection in *A Companion to Josephus in his World* by Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, eds Honora Chapman and Zuleika Rodgers. The article explores the narrative role the temple plays in Josephus.

**Matt King** was awarded a Canadian Society for the Study of Religion scholarship for doctoral field research in Mongolia and Tibet, and he also won a Buddhist Studies grant from the Sheng-Yen Lu Foundation’s Lotus Scholarship Fund. He presented a number of papers this year: “Temporaliencies in the Creation and Revival of Mongolian Buddhism” at the Asian Institute PhD Seminar Series; “Tibet in the Story of Khalkha Buddhist History: Agency and Locality in Histories of Buddhism in Mongolian” at the International Association of Tibetan Studies Seminar at U of British Columbia; “What’s New is Old in the Gobi: Conceptualizing Co-option, Appropriation and Re-deployment in the Mongolian Buddhist Revivalist Movement” at the American Anthropological Association annual meeting; “Circulation and Localization in Early-modern Buddhist Inner Asia: Examples from the Historiography of bLo bzang rta dbyangs (1867-1937)” at the UC Berkeley Mongolian Culture Conference; and “The Twilight of Khalkha Buddhism: The Autobiography of Zawa Damdin on the Eve of Revolution” at the Stanford Buddhism in Mongolia Conference.

**Tim Langille** received the DSR’s Molly Spitzer Scholarship in Judaism/Jewish Studies, and he also received a Travel Grant for Graduate Research in Israel from Canadian Friends of Hebrew U. He’ll do research in Israel this May.

Graduate student news


Bryan Levman had two articles accepted for publication: “Aśokan Phonology and the Language of the Earliest Buddhist Tradition” in the Canadian Journal of Buddhist Studies; and “Is Pāli closest to the Western Aśokan dialect of Gīrnār?” in the Srilankan International Journal of Buddhist Studies.

Lindsay Macumber was selected for the Auschwitz Jewish Centre Fellows program, A Bridge to History, through the Museum of Jewish heritage in NYC. This consists of a three-day orientation in NYC, followed by a three-week tour through Poland (including visits to Krakow, Warsaw, Lodz, and Auschwitz) in June 2011. She was one of ten selected from around the world.

Congratulations to Paul Nahme and his wife Brauna on the birth of their son, born January 29th.

Luiz Felipe Ribeiro presented “From the Aseret Ha-devarim to the Vitia Principalia: The transformation of the Torah oriented vice lists in the Jewish Two Ways Document (Didache 1-5//Barnabas 18-20//Doctrina Apostolorum 3-5) into Technologies of the Self?” at the IX European Annual Jewish Studies Conference in Ravenna, Italy. He has also been appointed to a Visiting Lectureship in the graduate summer program (2011) in History of Ancient Christianity, at the Universidade de Brasilia, Brazil, where he will teach a course on The History of Sexuality in Ancient Christianity.


Sam Berrin Shonkoff has published a review of Sacred Attunement: A Jewish Theology in the U of T’s Journal for Jewish Thought; and he delivered the paper, “Spinoza’s Contradictory Approaches to Biblical Contradictions and Ambivalent Foray into Ancient Near Eastern Studies,” at the U of T’s Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations Graduate Student Association Symposium.

Justin Stein presented papers on his research on Reiki at the East Asia Graduate Student Conference at Columbia U, at Rice U’s Transnational Asia Graduate Student Conference, and at a student workshop at the U of Heidelberg’s “Asia and Europe in Global Context: Shifting Asymmetries in Global Flows” cluster. In April, he will present at the joint annual conference for the Association for Asian Studies and the International Convention of Asia Scholars in Honolulu, and in August he will present at the annual conference of the European Association for Japanese Studies in Taliin, Estonia. In June and July, Justin will do an intensive language study program in Akita, Japan.

Eric Steinschneider, Devanathan Jagannathan, and Arun Brahmbhatt presented a panel entitled “In the Shadow of Classical Vedānta: Continuity, Contestation, and the Construction of Religious Identity” at the Texas Asia Conference held at the U of Texas at Austin. Eric Steinschneider also received the India-Canada Association Scholarship as well as the Asian Institute Graduate Student Support Grant, which he used to conduct research in Varanasi last summer.

Ryan C. Stoner received funds from the A&S Less Commonly Taught Languages Fund for study of Ethiopic (Ge’ez) at Princeton this May. He will also be going with Prof. Kloppenborg to the Bethsaida (Israel) excavations this summer. He presented a paper on 1 Enoch at the NMC Graduate Student conference another on the parable of the great feast in Luke for the Canadian Society for Biblical Studies Annual Meeting.

Benjamin Wood was chosen to receive the BDK Canada Scholarship to be held for one year at Bukkyo University in Kyoto.
Biblical Studies and Nietzsche: Philological and Philosophical Reflections

By Nathalie LaCoste

On May 28, 1869, at the age of 24, Friedrich Nietzsche was asked to give the Inaugural Lecture at the University of Basel in Switzerland. His lecture “Homer und die klassische Philologie” (“Homer and Classical Philology”) focused on the question central to classical philology of his day, “who was the original Homer?” Nietzsche’s contribution to this question was not to provide a new way of accessing the original Homer, but rather to undermine the entire philological endeavor. Needless to say, his lecture was not well received by his audience of philologists. His provocative reinterpretation of the question devalued the quest for an original Homer and instead asked: “was the person made of a concept, or the concept of a person? This is the real Homeric question, the central problem of personality.”

Nietzsche’s provocative speech was the central theme of a symposium on Biblical Studies and Nietzsche: Philological and Philosophical Reflections held on March 22, 2011, co-organized by the Seminar for Culture and Religions in Antiquity (SCRA) and the Centre for Jewish Studies. The symposium was the idea of Prof. Hindy Najman, who wanted to reflect upon the impact of Nietzsche’s thinking on the quest for originality and its significance for biblical studies. Many of the students who attended the symposium, including myself, were also a part of Najman’s course held in Fall 2009 where we first encountered Nietzsche’s address and its impact on biblical studies. The symposium enabled further discussion of the questions raised in Najman’s seminar.

After the opening remarks by Najman and the chair of the session Prof. Judith Newman, the day began with Prof. Paul Franks contextualizing Nietzsche within his philosophical and philological contexts. Drawing upon the developments of historicism and nihilism, Franks explained how radical Nietzsche’s words were within the academy. By presenting philology as nihilism (annihilation of the intrinsic character or individuality), Nietzsche deconstructed the very question and foundation upon which philology operated. Franks also presented the seeds of thought upon which Nietzsche built his project, mainly the work of Friedrich August Wolf (1759–1824) and Johann Gottfried Eichhorn (1753–1827). As the first speaker of the morning, Franks provided the framework for thinking and rethinking about the quest for originality often romanticized in biblical studies.

Prof. Ronald Hendel (UC Berkeley), gave a paper entitled “The Untimeliness of Biblical Philology.” Using the analogy of a double-edged sword, he spoke about “untimeliness” (a term borrowed from Nietzsche himself) and discussed the value of biblical philology in both an 18th c. context as well as in the present. As the Editor-in-Chief of the Oxford Hebrew Bible Project (http://ohb.berkeley.edu; a new eclectic version of the Hebrew Bible) the question of the impossibility of determining and re-constructing an “original” text is a practical one.

Prof. Eibert Tigchelaar (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven), presented his thoughts on, “How Should One Edit Ancient Jewish Texts and Dead Sea Scrolls?” Coming from a practical perspective based on his experience as an editor, he raised questions about our notions of text, and how we think about the fixity of texts in Second Temple Judaism. He suggested that focus on the social construction of texts presents a different way of understanding the world of Second Temple Judaism. Instead of searching for an original, we can tie certain texts to particular periods of time and contextualize them as they are transmitted and received.

Hindy Najman gave the final lecture and brought together many of her recent reflections on Nietzsche’s address as well as many of the ideas presented by the previous speakers. She centered her discussion around three words: Discourse, Precursors, and Constellations. Discourses, she argued, are valuable in organizing ancient literature. Instead of thinking in canonical terms, we can organize them based on figures, concepts, or images. Building upon Michel Foucault’s “discourse tied to a founder” (who was strongly influenced by the work of Nietzsche), she showed how particular texts were not only tied to figures in ancient Judaism (e.g. Pentateuch is attributed to Moses, Psalms attributed to David, etc.), but that this type of attribution was a practice which could be thought of as forward moving. In her discussion of precursors, she argued that through the writing and re-writing of texts, one could imagine alternate pasts and alternate futures. Lastly, Najman presented a constellation of elements (locus, figure, reading/interpretation, overcoming destruction) which could be used to understand how texts imagined and re-imagined themselves through their writing and transmission.

As a response to Najman, Prof. John Kloppenborg concluded the session by making connections between the study of Second Temple Judaism and New Testament scholarship. He also presented a meta-reflection on the work of philology and the relationship between the scholar and the text as had been touched on by all the scholars throughout the day. He argued that the Homeric question was not only important for

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Encyclopedia Moves up in the World: From a Czech Village to the DSR

By Mike Fuhrmann

It is 1948 and Communists have taken over the country. You decide in a hurry to emigrate halfway around the world. With space at a premium, some choices must be made: what do you bring? A 20-volume German encyclopedia is not the obvious answer. And yet, in that pre-Wikipedia era, a great encyclopedia demands respect. Der Grosse Brockhaus is emphatically non-virtual. It is as essential, in its way, as the bedding and tableware that are packed for the long journey.

This encyclopedia’s first home was a modest flat in the Czech village of Maly Beranov, where my grandparents lived with their two children. It was an unlikely setting, since “Maly” means small and “Grosse” means large, so this was a big bunch of German books in a little Czech place. Hard to imagine another Brockhaus in that community, populated as it was by rural folk and labourers at the local textile mill. There wasn’t even a school in Maly Beranov. My mother trudged to a neighbouring village for her primary education in a one-room schoolhouse where all the grades were taught by a single teacher. She later remembered seeing the thick volumes arrive intermittently in the 1920s and 1930s, each one an impressive-looking emissary sent to a foreign land from Leipzig, Germany, on publication.

The 15th edition of Der Grosse Brockhaus – a reference work whose origins date back to the 18th century – was expansive and expensive (it would have been a major purchase for my grandfather, Evzen Kucera, who ran the dye house at the mill). It occupied a lot of space in the flat. On matters of general knowledge it was considered the ultimate authority. Family debates would be settled with the decisive utterance: “Let’s see what the Brockhaus says!” The tomes were dark blue, with gold lettering over a band of red on each spine. They looked fine, even noble, in a way. This was a huge compendium. No one would argue with Brockhaus.

My grandparents spoke Czech and German and intended their children to be bilingual as well, so having the Brockhaus in the home assisted in that goal. Also, when it came to school assignments on any subject under the sun, there was nothing better. In 1945, in the general commotion after the Second World War, the family was uprooted, moving 80 kilometres eastward to the city of Brno. That was the set’s first relocation with the Kuceras, and it was not an easy one. The Brockhaus was weighty in more ways than one. All those volumes had to be carried up flights of stairs to a fifth-floor apartment in the centre of town. But evidently the family considered the effort to be worth it. The next move was much more dramatic, taking the Brockhaus far away to a bigger city and another foreign land. It was prompted by more social upheaval – this time, the Communist takeover of Czechoslovakia. Four generations wound up in Toronto.

And there the set remained for many years in an 18th-floor west-end condo, surrounded by other fish-out-of-water relics – clocks, paintings, knickknacks – brought from Brno. Entering my parents’ museum-like aerie felt like being carried away to a distant time and place, and the old Brockhaus, stretched out in all its abundant intellectual glory on shelves in my father’s study, fit right into that refined atmosphere. Could there have been another Brockhaus in the building? No way. More people probably lived in that tower than in the entire village of Maly Beranov, and yet the Brockhaus was once again all on its own, in a place no one could have expected.

Surprisingly, it continued to be useful, serving as a valuable reference for my father, Robert Fuhrmann, in his work as a translator. There were even occasions - not as frequent as in decades before - when only the Brockhaus could answer some burning question, or at least provide a vital historical perspective. Like a senior citizen who’s no longer au courant but is replete with wisdom from times past, the encyclopedia still earned respect. “Let’s see what the Brockhaus says,” my father would comment in the midst of one of our discussions about things European, and I felt a thrill as I watched him reach for A-AST, or MAI-MUD, or TOU-WAM, to see the Brockhaus contribute to the conversation.

Over the years my father consulted many references for his meticulous translations, often going to public and academic libraries in Toronto to track down the specialized material he needed. And so it seems particularly appropriate that this much-travelled encyclopedia now lives where it does, in a university library, where others may come to it and find what they need in its well-worn pages.

DSR Prof. Frances Garrett found this beautiful set of Der Grosse Brockhaus advertised on Craigslist; she contacted Mike Fuhrmann and the set was donated to the DSR in January 2011, where it is now housed in our seminar room library.
Jennifer Bright in Eastern Tibet

This year, my doctoral research has taken me to Xining, Qinghai Province, in Western China, where I am researching the contemporary literature and practice of Tibetan gynecology. My study focuses on the relations between Tibetan Buddhism, gender/sex and medical science, comparing modern medical literature and clinical practice in a hospital setting. My work in the hospital transpires in the Amdo Tibetan dialect, whereas the medical texts I study are written in a quite different, written modern Tibetan. For the first few months of my trip, therefore, I took Amdo dialect lessons at a University in Xining and focussed on acquiring colloquial skills. Later, I apprenticed under a well-known female gynecologist in the Tibetan Medical Hospital and Research Institute of Qinghai Province in Xining. She and her students taught me many aspects of medical theory and practice, including efforts to “combine” Tibetan medicine with biomedicine. Although the focus of my work is on doctors and researchers, I also saw patients and learned about the contemporary treatment of gynaecological disorders using Tibetan medicines. I also studied Tibetan gynaecological texts and spoke with doctors, students and scholars about medical theory and changes brought on by the modernization projects set by the Chinese state. Having the opportunity to observe how doctors are using Tibetan medicine to treat patients while incorporating biomedical notions and techniques, has allowed me to “see” (and attempt to translate into English) brand new forms of medical theory and practice.

Jennifer Bright is a PhD candidate in the DSR with interests in Tibetan religion, medicine and gender. She has lived in India, Nepal and China for over three years.

And what a trip it was...

By Justin Stein and Rebecca Bartel

6500 km from Toronto at a hostel in Berlin, we asked our fellow travelers, “What year are you?” “What do you study?” Ten days later, we not only could easily describe our colleagues’ research, but also their life histories, personal quirks, favourite beverages... This was the DSR trip to Germany funded by the DAAD. The evening of our arrival, Michael Bodemann, Director of U of T’s Berlin Office, set the tone with a talk on contemporary dynamics of religiosity in an increasingly pluralized Germany. The next day was a full conference at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development, where we were treated to a lecture by Dr. Birgit Meyer before a working group on the History of Emotions, directed by Dr. Monique Scheer. We then headed south, briefly stopping at Halle’s Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, where MPI post-docs presented their research on post-socialist religiousities. From Halle, we had two full days at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religion and Ethnic Diversity. Along with presentations, we were treated to two talks from our dear Doktormutter, Pamela Klassen: one based on her upcoming Spirits of Protestantism and one from her After Pluralism, which triggered a lively discussion that included medical anthropologist Dr. Gabriele Alex. This was followed by a final two days in Heidelberg with Dr. Inken Prohl and her exuberant group of graduate students from the Dept of Religionswissenschaft. Each day of our trip was filled with exciting exchanges, challenges, and debates that made it enjoyable, educational, and unforgettable. Electric connections with kindred spirits sparked intense conversations on the future of religious studies and possibilities for collaboration.

Justin Stein is a doctoral student studying North American and Japanese healing, spirit possession, and “spiritual science,” and Rebecca Bartel is a doctoral student studying the dynamics of political identity formation within the evangelical Christian movement in Latin America.
It has been a very busy year for the Religion in the Public Sphere Initiative. In addition to our regular reading group series (see pg 5) and service-learning course (see below), we organized several major international events. The first to take place was a two-campus event entitled “New Voices, New Visions,” featuring ethnographic films by Tibetans from within China and young Burmese filmmakers, a lecture and film on Buddhism in Burma, and a workshop on religion, new media and development in Asia. The weekend highlighted the work of emerging and established Tibetan filmmakers, some never shown outside China, Burmese students in the Yangon Film School by established Anglo-Burman filmmaker Lindsey Merrison, plus academic talks by an expert on Tibetan literature, Françoise Robin, and an expert on Burmese Buddhism, Patrick Pranke. Films were followed by discussions with prominent documentary filmmakers from Toronto. Discussions focused on the special value of participatory media projects for young people worldwide and on the potential of open access and open source media products and practices. The event was a product of the research project, “Representing Tibet,” funded by a recent SSHRC Image, Text, Sound and Technology Grant, for which DSR’s Frances Garrett developed partnerships between U of T faculty and students, and photographers, writers, musicians, ethnographers, researchers and independent scholars in Canada, the US, France, Germany, Myanmar and China.

This year’s RPS theme is Food and Religion, which we are exploring with international and local academics, food practitioners, and policy makers in a day-long workshop and a public forum. Looking at religious and secular authority, for example, we consider environmental, ethical, and political issues that come into play when decisions are made about who eats what. What alternatives exist for those who want to eat meat in accordance with their religious tradition but prefer to bypass the industrial system? From another angle, we’re exploring religious responses to hunger. How have recent concerns about the quality and ethics of packaged and processed food changed the ways religious groups practice food donation? Approaching the boundaries of sacred and secular, we’ll consider how various encounters with the land are shaped by religious ethics. How do religious groups respond to the re-shaping of nature through GMOs, pollution, or climate change?

Such questions will be at the heart of two April events. In a day-long workshop on April 14, thirty participants will discuss the issues above; participants include academics from the U of T and elsewhere, and also representatives of local community groups, religious organizations and policy groups, including the Toronto Food Policy Council, the Shoresh Jewish Environmental Programs and Kavannah Garden, Foodshare, Toronto Public Health, the Noor Cultural Centre, Afri-Can Foodbank, the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, Toronto City Council, Beacon to the Ancestors Foundation, and others. On April 15, a public forum will be moderated by DSR Professor and RPS Founder Pamela Klassen, hosting four speakers: Nancy Chen, from UC Santa Cruz, a medical anthropologist who examines cultural and religious practices of self care through eating and medicating; Nigel Savage, founder of Hazon, the largest Jewish environmental organization in North America, dedicated to creating healthy and sustainable communities in the Jewish world and beyond; Yasir Syeed, founder of Green Zabiha, a business which produces organic, halal, pastured and grass-fed meats and is devoted to promoting the importance of conscious eating; and Elbert van Donkersgoed, an agricultural journalist and former Strategic Policy Advisor of the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario. The organization of events relating to this theme has been led by Andrea Most, Professor of American Literature and Jewish Studies in the Dept of English, cross-appointed to the DSR.

Also in the works at RPS for later this summer is the Graduate Fellows Workshop on Religion and Human
SEPTEMBER 2010

Richard Mann, Carleton U, spoke on “The Rise of Mahasena: The Transformation of Skanda-Karttikeya in North India from the Kusana to Gupta Empires.”

OCTOBER

The Shoshana Shier Distinguished Visiting Lecturer was Michael Morgan, Professor of Philosophy and Jewish Studies at Indiana U, in a series on “Continuity and Discontinuity in the Thought of Emil Fackenheim.” He spoke on “Can There Be a Judaism without Revelation?”, “Human Freedom in a Post-Holocaust World”; and “Philosophy after the Holocaust.”

NOVEMBER

In an event sponsored by Religion in the Public Sphere, Losang Rabgey spoke on “Engagement in Tibet.” Rabgey is a founder and executive director of Machik, a non-profit organization that develops opportunities for education, capacity-building and innovation on the Tibetan plateau. A U of T alumna, Rabgey holds a PhD in gender studies and anthropology from the School of Oriental and African Studies.

Todd Lewis, College of the Holy Cross, spoke on “Sources and Sentiments in Sugata Saurabha, a 20th-c. Narrative on the Buddha’s Life from Kathmandu Valley,” in the Numata series.

Arvind Pal Mandair, S.B.S.C. Assistant Professor of Sikh Studies at the U of Michigan, spoke on “Mourning Sovereignty: Finitude and Sacred Violence in the Khalsa Narrative” as part of the Hindu Studies Colloquium.

Michael Brenner, Professor of Jewish History and Culture, U of Munich, spoke on “Through the Lens of Auschwitz: Re-Writing the German-Jewish Past in Postwar Germany,” sponsored by CJS, the Dept of History, D.A.A.D, and J.I.G.E.S.

Mary Rose D’Angelo, Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity, U of Notre Dame, spoke on “Jewish Piety and Roman Rule: 4 Maccabees and the Propaganda of Trajan.”

DSR doctoral student Rebekka King spoke about her research in a talk entitled, “A Faithful Heresy: A Linguistic Analysis of the Use of Eschatological Adverbs by Progressive Christians,” as part of the DSR Colloquium series. The month’s second colloquium was on the research of doctoral student Jodie Boyer, on “Reason, Will, and Moral Insanity.”

JANUARY 2011

Steven Weitzman, Professor of Biblical and Early Jewish Literature and Religion at Stanford U, spoke on “King Solomon and the Search for Wisdom: Reflections from an Unauthorized Biographer.”

Matthew Levering, Professor of Theology at Ave Maria U, led a conversation on “Jewish-Christian Dialogue & the Life of Wisdom: Engagements with the Theology of David Novak.” Novak is J. Richard and Dorothy Shiff Chair of Jewish Studies, Professor of Religion, U of T.

Charlene Makley, Reed College, delivered a lecture entitled “Spectacular Compassion: ‘Natural’ Disaster and National Mourning in China’s Tibet,” as part of the Numata series. Makley’s specialization covers globalization, development, ethnicity, religion and ritual, feminist theory, and linguistic anthropology in Tibet and China.


FEBRUARY

The Woodsworth Alumni Cafe presented “The King Has Returned: Religion and Violence in Mainstream Films: An examination of biblical symbolism” by DSR graduate Ken Derry, who now teaches at UTM.

A weekend event entitled “New Voices, New Visions” featured Tibetan ethnographic films (by Dorje Tsering Chenaktsang, Tsering Perlo, Dondrup Dorje and Wendekar), a lecture on Tibetan film by Tibetan Studies scholar Françoise Robin, films by young Burmese filmmakers (including Eh Mwee, who traveled here from Myanmar), a lecture and film on Buddhism in Burma (with Buddhist Studies scholar Patrick Pranke contextualizing a film by filmmaker Lindsey Merrison), and workshops on documentary film and development in Asia. (See pg 15.)

Anne Monius, Professor of South Asian Religions at Harvard U, led a Numata Reading Group/Hindu Studies Colloquium session on “The Viracoliyam: Language, Literature Theory, and Religious Community, and Imagining Community through Commentary.”

Albert Welter, U of Winnipeg, led a Numata Reading Group session on “Strange Brew: The Fictional Background to Yulu Encounter Dialogues.”

Reinhard D. Kratz, Georg-August-Universitat Gottingen, spoke on “Rewriting Within and Outside the Hebrew Bible.”

The Seminar for Culture and Religion in Antiquity presented Jörg Rüpke, from Erfurt, on “Individualisation and identity in visionary texts of the early second century AD (Shepherd of Hermes, 4 Ezra).”

The DSR colloquium featured PhD student Barbara Greenberg, speaking on “‘We did not hear you’: An Exploration of the United Church of Canada and Residential School Apology.”
Around Campus

MARCH

Federico Squarcini, U of Florence, spoke on “Yoga for Cats, Doga, Woga and others monsters in contemporary yoga practice.”

Christian Wedemeyer, U of Chicago Divinity School, delivered a Numata talk entitled “The Trouble with Tribals: Indian Esoteric Buddhism and Fantasies of the Primitive.”

The Seminar for Culture and Religion in Antiquity presented Matthias Henze, from Rice U, speaking on “The Conceptualization of Time in Early Jewish Apocalyptic.” The SCRA also hosted Martha Himmelfarb from Princeton with a lecture on “The Messiah Son of Joseph from the Second Temple Period to Sefer Zerubbabel,” and a Workshop on “The Homeric Question: Implications of Nietzsche’s Inaugural Address for Biblical Studies” (see story on pg. 12).

Mona Schrempf, from Humboldt University in Berlin, spoke on “Female Body, State and Family Planning: Tibetan women’s experiences with China’s birth control policies.” Schrempf, an anthropologist of religion and medicine, was a DAAD Visiting Professor in the DSR for the spring semester.

Smita Kothari led the DSR Colloquium on her research on “Preksha Dhyana in Jain Yoga: an Archetypal Ritual for the Proper Ordering of the Soul.”

APRIL

The DSR’s Annual Graduate Symposium is on the theme Religion and Beauty. 12 papers were delivered by students from the U of T, Southern Methodist, U Delaware, U Chicago, UC Santa Barbara, Northern Arizona U, and Villanova.

The Numata Buddhist Studies Program hosted an international conference on the lives of ordained Buddhist nuns in India from the time of the Buddha until the eventual disappearance of the bhikṣuṇī saṅgha from Indian soil. Speakers included Oskar von Hinüber (Universität Freiburg), Hiraoka Satoshi (Kyoto Bunkyo U), Shayne Clarke (McMaster U), Yonezawa Yoshiyasu (Taishō U), Petra Kieffer-Pülz (Martin-Luther-Universität), Jinah Kim (Vanderbilt U), Jason Neelis (Wilfrid Laurier U), Gregory Schopen and Kishino Ryōji (UCLA), Paul Groner (U of Virginia), Shimoda Masahiro and Yao Fumi (Tokyo U), Jampa Tsedroen (Universität Hamburg), Sasaki Shizuka (Hanazono U), Ann Heirman (U of Gent), and Christoph Emmrich (UT Mississauga).

Religion in the Public Sphere, continued from page 15

Security, co-sponsored by the Munk School of Global Affairs. Current debates on religion’s role in the public sphere have framed religion’s relationship to human security as confrontational. This Fellows Workshop, in response, will encourage critical reflection on the themes of religion and human security in a post-9/11 world by examining the contention that religion is not simply a threat to which security forces, government policies and public debate should react or respond. Rather, religion is deeply bound to the practice and construction of security, to the very idea of what it means to be secure, immune from threat, sound, holy or saved.

Finally, this year the RPS Service Learning course again gave undergraduates the opportunity to experience, through a work-placement, how religion enters the public sphere. Nine students spent 45 hours working with organizations such as Princess Margaret Hospital, the Canadian Council of Churches, Baycrest, Toronto Rehab Spiritual Care Services and Shoresh Jewish Environmental Programs. They spent the semester assisting volunteer programs with the elderly, developing curricula for learning about environmental and poverty issues and Millennium Development Goals. As the semester comes to a close, students have been reflecting on the role of religion in the public sphere and the importance of the academic study of religion. These undergraduates have developed informed, critical perspectives on the many ways that religion and pluralism play a role in public life.

Modern Hebrew in the DSR

As of the 2010-11 academic year, the Department of Religion is offering (annually) three levels of Modern Hebrew, beginning with an elementary level for students with no background in Hebrew. The three levels correspond to the first three levels of Hebrew in the Ulpan at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, facilitating smooth progress from Modern-Hebrew courses at U of T to ones in the Ulpan and vice versa. The courses develop both oral and written skills; the upper-level classes are conducted in Hebrew.

This year the courses were taught by Dr. Tobie Strauss, who joined the department after spending a year at U of T on a Halbert Exchange Postdoctoral Fellowship. Tobie recently earned her Ph.D. at the Hebrew University, where she wrote her dissertation on the Biblical accents (te’amim).
The Force of Laws

A project entitled “The Force of Laws: Negotiating Code and Commandment in Liberal Democracies” is in the planning stages of two workshops, the compilation of a cooperative bibliography, and the development of new approaches to key methodological concerns in the study of religion and law. This year three Ph.D. candidates, Paul Nahme, Shari Golberg, and Amy Fisher, have been canvassing members of the “Religion and Diversity” SSHRC Major Collaborative Research Initiative (MCRI), based out of the U of Ottawa. Their goal has been to amass a collective bibliography of theoretical approaches to the question of how religious conceptions of duty, law and obligation are at play under civil and legal authority. Paul Nahme has also helped MCRI member Prof. Pamela Klassen organize a “Force of Laws” workshop, in conjunction with Prof. Ruth Marshall and the RCP Working Group (see pg. 5). The May 2011 workshop will bring faculty and students at the U of T together with legal anthropologists and political theorists from the U.S. and Canada to examine the challenges and possibilities of studying religion and law from diverse disciplinary starting points. Through critical discussion of various methods of conceptualizing the parameters and meaning of “law,” the “State” and the ideal of “duty,” this workshop will illuminate some of the pre-suppositions of the study of law and religion. Eventually, a second larger gathering will ask: what does the “law” of the state have to do with religious “law” in the lives of those who live with both? How do different religious traditions negotiate this overlap or conflict in particular nation-states? For more information on the Religion and Diversity MCRI see religionanddiversity.ca

Pamela Klassen on Five Months in Germany, continued from page 8

Mittermaier, who applied for the DAAD grant together with me, was not able to attend because she had broken her foot only a few weeks before our departure.

The trip was made possible by the generosity of the DAAD, as well as the hospitality of our hosts. The Dean’s Office of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences also offered support, as did the DSR. I would also like to thank the students, who paid their own way over the ocean, and who took the time to engage in this cross-cultural intellectual encounter. They were all excellent representatives of the University, and our hosts commented often on their impressively articulate (and just plain smart) contributions to the conversation. I hope that the Department will be able to host similar groups of students from German institutions in the near future.

Research Collaboration on Islam and Muslim Civilizations, continued from page 5

Undergraduate Research Fair, where students gain their first exposure to an academic conference and a taste of the professional side of research. This year, presentations by the team included an investigation into the ancestry of Muhammad, an examination of the performance of the bay’ah or oath of allegiance in the Islamic tradition, and a study of the origins and practices surrounding the Persian festival of Nawruz.

The team brings together a spectrum of talent from across multiple disciplines ranging from textual studies to information science, fostering a sense of teamwork and cooperation and pushing the boundaries traditionally thought to divide the academic arena. The group’s cohesion can be seen in its numerous social events attended by active and past members, the most recent of which took place in the newly-renovated departmental conference room, where students engaged in an evening of lively and spirited team-building exercises. Having forged lasting friendships, members continue to remain in close contact through an active alumni group on Facebook.

My own experience with the research team began when I joined as an undergraduate student through the Research Opportunity Program, through which I acquired first-hand knowledge of how to work with translations, critical editions and annotated bibliographies, an opportunity I otherwise may not have had before graduate school. Similarly, coordinating the team and its diverse projects this year has armed me with important skills in planning and collaboration, not usually taught in a graduate program. Not only was it a lesson in project management, but it’s also given me a look inside the emerging world of digital humanities and new media. Perhaps the most exciting aspect of the team is that through interacting with researchers from such a vast range of disciplines, students learn to apply multiple perspectives in their own fields of study. In turn, they find that these methodologies converge in a way that allow them to better examine the intricacies of complex questions surrounding religion in particular and the humanities in general. The team’s collaborative nature underscores how traditional forms of humanities research can harness innovative technologies ubiquitous in the world today to propel the fruits of their inquiries to new heights. Through their diverse projects, students learn how seemingly-obscur details can form the basis of their inquiry, that age-old assumptions can be challenged through re-examination from new angles, the satisfaction of accidental discovery, and as with all research, that often the biggest leaps begin with the smallest steps.

Shanifa Nasser-Sunderji is an MA student in the DSR with interests in classical Persian literature, Islamic mysticism, and Ismaili history and thought.
Preśādhyāna in Jainism
Smita Kothari’s doctoral research

My engagement with the Terāpantha Śvetāmbara Jain sect and Preśādhyāna (meditation), the subject of my doctoral dissertation, began in 2008 in a discussion with Christopher Key Chapple on a flight to Delhi, which led to an interest in 8th-c. Jain yoga, and then to 21st-c. Preksa meditation. While attending the Int’l Summer School for Jain studies in 2008, I met the Terāpantha Ācārya in Jaipur during their cāturmās (rainy season residence when peripatetic Jain ascetics do not travel, to minimize violence to insects). This brief encounter with Ācārya Mahāprajña, the tenth preceptor of the Terāpantha (who passed away in 2010), and many of the ascetics in the sangha, led to my changing my dissertation topic to Dāna (giving gift, charity) and Dhyāna (meditation) in Jaina Yoga. The Terāpantha as a “reform” movement is a rich area of study not only because it is the most modernized Jain sect that has introduced Preśādhyāna, but also because it has introduced a middle order of ascetics that are allowed to travel by modern transportation, allowing them to propagate Preśā globally and proselytize Jainism. This is momentous in the history of Jainism, as Jain monks, who traditionally travel by foot, are not allowed to travel abroad.

In 2009 I returned to Ladnun, in the the Rajasthan desert, for a period of four months to study Prakṛt and conduct fieldwork. Ladnun is a small town brought to prominence by the Terāpanthis, who have made it their stronghold with a huge campus that houses a school, a university and residences for ascetics, faculty and lay people all within the same grounds. From a research perspective, I had hit a gold mine. I attended national and international meditation camps and interviewed hundreds of devotees who were there to do sevā (guru worship).

My days in Ladnun were busy, beginning with 5 am meditation amidst blaring loudspeakers broadcasting Hindu, Muslim, and Terāpantha mantras. I studied Prakṛt six mornings a week and the balance of my time was spent in field interviews and discussions with ascetics. I also attended conferences on Gandhi, peace and conflict resolu-tion, and on relative economics and social justice. Occasionally, I sat amidst thousands of devotees listening to sermons given by the Ācārya or the Yuvācārya (ācārya in waiting). I also witnessed ten ascetic initiations, which are spectacles in themselves, though less so among the Terāpanthis than their counterparts in the temple-worshipping Jain communities. By the end of my time in Ladnun I had done hundreds of inter-views with lay people and ascetics. I had also spent time in Delhi, Jaipur and Ahmedabad doing comparative research among Terāpantha and non-Terāpantha Jains. In 2011 I returned to these places for productive follow-up interviews.

Ladnun and the people there have left a lasting impression on me, and with each trip I deepened my understanding of my subject.

Smita Kothari is a PhD candidate in the DSR, the Centre for Environment, and the Centre for South Asian Studies.

Alexander Green and the Cairo Genizah

Last summer I worked in the archive of the Cairo Genizah, one of the great Jewish discoveries of the 20th century. Now housed at Cambridge U, this is a collection of roughly 280,000 texts and other assorted documents that had been stored in the attic of the Ben-Ezra Synagogue in Cairo, many of which date back as far as the ninth century CE. Because of the traditional Jewish prohibition against the disposal of writings with God’s name on them, these materials were preserved for hundreds of years until they were discovered by Solomon Schechter in the late 19th century and taken to Cambridge for analysis. Preserved in this attic were documents ranging from original handwritten manuscripts of famous works, previously unknown letters written by important scholars and communal leaders, to shopping lists and other ephemera. Scholars examining these documents over the last 100 years have come close to completing a full catalogue and digitalization of the material. At the same time, there remains much uncharted territory. My own project was to investigate material catalogued as “ethics” (mussar) in the Genizah and formulate some fundamental questions about the nature of ethical

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social dimensions, The indexes are a mine of information for linguists, archaeologists, and historians of late antiquity, medieval, and modern cultures.

**Frances Garrett** has published an article, “Eating Letters in the Tibetan Treasure Tradition” in the *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 32, and a book, *Health, Medicine, and Modernity in Tibetan Contexts*, co-edited with Sienna Craig, Mingji Cuomo and Mona Schrepmpf (Int’l Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies GmbH 2011). She directed the release of the project Plateau Culture (plateauculture.org), an online archive of images, writings, and place information from and about the Tibetan plateau, including the academic journal *Asian Highlands Perspectives*, the online form of which is officially published from the DSR. She delivered a few conference presentations: “Eating Right with Tibetan Food Practices,” at Cardiff University; “Food, Medicine and Healing in Tibetan Literature,” at the Int’l Asn of Tibetan Studies Seminar at UBC; and “Embryology and Epistemology in Tibetan History,” for the Tibetan Medical Research Unit in Xining, China. She was also awarded a SSHRC Partnership Development Grant for a three-year project entitled “Mapping an Epic: Religion and Healing in Inner Asia,” with co-applicants from the U of Virginia, Cardiff U, and Qinghai Nationalities U in China.

**Kenneth Green** has had two books accepted for publication, both forthcoming in 2012: *Leo Strauss and Maimonides: The Recovery of the Vital Elements in Medieval Jewish Philosophic Thought*, with U Chicago Press; and *Leo Strauss, Maimonides Rediscovered: Essays and Lectures*, with U Chicago Press. He also has two forthcoming articles: “Spinoza’s Defense of the Bible: A Model of Modern Statesmanship,” in *The Companionship of Books: Essays in Honor of Laurence Berns*, eds. Udoff, Portnoff, and Yaffe (Lexington Books 2011); and “What S.Y. Agnon Taught Gershom Scholem about Jewish History,” in *The Modern Invention of the Medieval*, eds. Hughes and Diamond (Routledge 2011). He has also just completed a book manuscript entitled *Emil Fackenheim’s Search for Revelation: Divine Presence and Diabolical History*. In the last year, Green has given a number of presentations, including “Fackenheim and the Political Theology of Diabolical Evil,” at the annual conference of the Association for Jewish Studies, Los Angeles; and “What S.Y. Agnon Taught Gershom Scholem about Jewish History” at a conference on Literature and History: Middle Eastern Perspectives at Ben-Gurion U in Israel; “Leo Strauss on the Dialogue-Debate between Faith and Philosophy” at the London School of Jewish Studies; and “Leo Strauss’s Maimonidean Approach to Reason and Revelation” at Emory.


**Michael Lambek** published *Ordinary Ethics: Anthropology, Language, and Action* (Fordham U Press 2010). A number of the essays concern the relation between religion and the ethical, both theoretically and ethnographically. Other recent
relevant work by Lambek includes: “Provincializing God? Provocations from an Anthropology of Religion” in Religion: Beyond a Concept, ed. de Vries (Fordham 2008); “Terror’s Wake: Trauma and Its Subjects” in The Trauma Controversy: Philosophical and Interdisciplinary Dialogues, eds. Brown and Bermo (SUNY 2009); “Traveling Spirits: Unconcealment and Undisplacement” in Traveling Spirits: Migrants, Markets, and Mobilities, eds. Hüwelmeier and Krause (Routledge 2010); “How To Make Up One’s Mind: Reason, Passion, and Ethics in Spirit Possession” in University of Toronto Quarterly 79 (2010); and “Kinship as Gift and Theft: Acts of Succession in Mayotte and Ancient Israel” in American Ethnologist 38 (2011). Lambek is a member of the advisory board of the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research research initiative on The Future of the Religious Past, and he is part of the ReSET programme on Anthropological Approaches to Religion and Secularism for scholars in and from countries of the former Soviet Union. He is PI of a SSHRC-funded project on Heterodoxy and the Ethical Imagination in the Western Indian Ocean, Switzerland, and Israel. He has recently participated in these workshops on religion: Religious-Secular Distinctions (British Academy 2010); ‘Ordinary Muslims’ in Southeast Asia and Western Europe (KITLV, Leiden 2010); Religion and Secularism in countries of the former Soviet Union (Tbilisi 2010); Religion in Conflict (Max-Planck-Institute, Halle 2010); The Other Side of Sacrifice (Edinburgh 2011).

Reid B. Locklin is completing a year as a Senior Fellow at the Martin Marty Center for the Advanced Study of Religion at the U of Chicago. His publications this year include “The Return of Comparative Theology” in JAAR (2010), co-authored with Hugh Nicholson, and “The Many Windows of the Wall,” a review essay in the Journal of Law and Religion (2009-2010). His Liturgy of Liberation will be out by the end of 2011. In June, he attended a conference on "Religion, Dialogue and Society" sponsored at the U of Calicut.

Amira Mittermaier was awarded a fellowship at the School of Social Science at the Institute of Advanced Study in New Jersey, she published a book, Dreams That Matter: Egyptian Landscapes of the Imagination (U California Press 2010), and she received a SSHRC Standard Research Grant for “The Ethics of Giving: Islamic Charity in Contemporary Egypt.”


Shafique Virani received a teaching award by OCUFA (Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations) for 2009-2010 in recognition of his “outstanding contributions to university teaching.”

Nicholas Terpstra, DSR/Dept of History specialist in the social history of the Renaissance and early modern Italy, is organizing a 2011-12 program of research, with a workshop and conference, on “Early Modern Migrations: Expulsion, Exile, and Religious Refugees in the Early Modern World.” The early modern period witnessed a dramatic increase in expulsions and exiles, most often for reasons related to religion, yet the phenomenon has never been studied in a sustained and comparative way. This research program aims to recast the paradigm of the Reformation around the phenomenon of expulsion and exile and the figure of the religious refugee. This focus has the potential to expand the concept of ‘Reformation’ to include not just Catholics and Protestants, but also Jews and Muslims, indigenous groups in the Americas, and marginalized communities in Asia. Following exiles and their diasporic communities around Europe and the globe also allows us to explore emerging forms of toleration and hybridity in Early Modern culture.

A group of scholars will be meeting in a series of four workshops through 2011-12, culminating in a conference in April 2012. The conference will be interdisciplinary, incorporating literature, art history, history, religious studies, and anthropology. Working on the project since January 2010, based at the U of T, the group includes members from the U of New Brunswick, McMaster U, the U of Waterloo, and St. Anselm College, from a range of disciplines (History, English, Religious Studies, French, Italian, Latin American Studies, Medieval Studies). The group welcomes new participants from other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences.

Biblical Studies and Nietzsche, continued from page 12 classical studies; it was also important for New Testament and Hebrew Bible studies as well. Speaking about his own work on the reconstruction of the Q document as a heuristic task, he acknowledged both the value and also the challenges of reconstructing an original text which may never have existed at all, further illuminating the challenges of the Oxford Hebrew Bible Project.

While the lectures helped to contextualize the value of Nietzsche’s speech in modern studies of ancient texts, the discussions following each paper were the most instructive. They provided both faculty and students the opportunity to engage with the topics addressed and think about the ideas in a new light. Unlike Nietzsche’s audience in 1869, this symposium opened dialogue between different fields of study and challenged those present to take seriously the questions we ask as modern post-enlightenment scholars, whether they are explicit or implicit, in our study of ancient texts.

Nathalie LaCoste is a doctoral student in the CSR and CJS with research interests including Hellenistic and Second Temple Judaism, Biblical Wisdom traditions, and Hellenistic philosophy.
At left: Religion major Andreas Kloppenborg rides from Kingston to Toronto on a non-stop 14-hour ride in wintery January, as a charity effort for children in Haiti. A frequent volunteer for various charities, his goal was to raise $1,320 to fund the education of two students in Haiti, and in the end he raised almost twice that amount. (Andreas is the son of DSR Professor John Kloppenborg.) Below: Members of Shafique Virani’s research team at work in the Faculty of Music studio, recording Afghan vocals in preparation for an upcoming podcast.

Alexander Green and the Cairo Genizah, continued from page 19

literature in Jewish medieval Islamic society. Is there even such a thing as a separate ethical literature in the Genizah? If not, in what other forms of literature was it mostly subsumed? How much of it can be considered part of legal, philosophic or mystical works? Who were the ones writing about ethics? Until the Cairo Genizah, modern scholars had very little access to Jewish texts from the large Jewish communities of Egypt, Iraq and Iran, other than through what became popular and circulated throughout the world—such as the works of Moses Maimonides and his son Abraham Maimonides. The Genizah has allowed scholars to place these works in a larger societal and historical context. One discovery I made was finding a substantial number of loose pages of Bahya Ibn-Pakuda’s *Duties of the Heart* that were previously unidentified.

The first challenge of working with Genizah documents is learning how to decipher Genizah fragments. On the first day before they sat me down with the texts, they sternly warned me that I may not succeed in understanding a single text, and that I may end weeks of work with little result. The first difficulty I encountered was that every single piece of parchment bears a different style of handwriting or form of calligraphy. You have to learn to decipher the handwriting of one text to make out letters, being aware that it may be completely different in the next text. The second challenge is that you are not always presented with a full page, since many pieces of parchment are ripped or fragmented, leaving the researcher to decipher unfinished sentences. You have to hope that the other half of the page and the rest of the work is lying somewhere among the other 280,000 fragments! The third obstacle is that a lot of texts have been watermarked, leading to blurring. Lastly, if you make it through these obstacles, you still have to learn the unique literary style of every writer.

I didn’t unlock the secret of ethical material in the Genizah. One of the great modern interpreters of the medieval period, Hermann Cohen (1842-1918), argued that Judaism’s primary teaching is that of “ethical monotheism,” and that this can be found in many places throughout the Jewish tradition. Although it is too early to tell, maybe further research into the Genizah materials will corroborate Cohen’s claim and uncover the substantial role that ethics played in medieval Jewish thought and society.

Alex Green is a doctoral student in the DSR and CJS whose research analyzes the development of virtue ethics among the Jews in medieval Spain, North Africa and Provence.
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GRADUATE STUDENT AWARDS, 2010-11

SSHRC: Matt King, Nicholas Dion, Erin Vearncombe; CGSD SSHRC: Michelle Christian, Maria Dasios, Elizabeth Klaiber, Callie Callon, John Lorenc, Paul Nahme, Nicholas Schonhoffer; CGSM SSHRC: Nicholas Field, Bridgida Zapata, Victoria Nguyen, David Belfon; OGS-PhD: Greg Beiles (Naim S. Mahlab OGS), Kathleen Gibbons (Thomas and Beverly Simpson OGS), Alexander Green, Rachel Loewen (Ruth and Harry Carter OGS), Benjamin Wood; Connaught: Amy Marie Fisher, Shafiala Gulumadov, Sarah Rollins, Kathleen Gibbons; Avie Bennett Award: Justin Stein; FAS Fund for Study Elsewhere of Less Commonly Taught Languages: Ryan Stoner, Eric Steinschneider; H. Albert Ellam Travel Award: Rebekka King, Nathalie LaCoste; DSR Conference Travel Award: Mourad Laabdi

PH.D. GRADUATES

Alexander Damm “Ancient Rhetoric and the Synoptic Problem”; Mona LaFosse “Age matters: Age, Aging and Intergenerational Relationships in Early Christian Communities, with a Focus on 1 Timothy 5”; Fei Lan “Desire Viewed Through Ethical Optics: A Comparative Study of Dai Zhen and Levinas”

MA GRADUATES

Adam Asgarali, Babak Bakhtiarian, Rajesh Balkanan, Michelle Christian, Ben Clarfield, Helen Craigie, Amy Da Silva, Jennifer Gilbert, Roselle Gonsalves, Kendra Hawke, Ada Jeffrey, Andrew Knight-Messenger, Nathalie LaCoste, Emily Springgay, Yael Richardson, Leah Wottherspoon, and Rebekah Zwanzig.

Emeritus Professor Joe O’Connell was Guest Editor of the January 2011 Special Issue of the Bangladesh e-Journal of Sociology. The issue has a number of substantial articles on religion in Bangladesh, deriving from a recent conference on the subject. O’Connell has been collaborating with scholars in that country since his retirement, working with the new Department of World Religions and Culture at the University of Dhaka. The Department, O’Connell writes, “has served as a focal point and catalyst for intensified interest in religious phenomena in relationship to diverse aspects of culture, society and politics by scholars in other departments of the university.” The issue, Vol. 8, No 1, can be found online at www.bangladeshssociology.org/BEJS %208.1%20Final.pdf.

In May and June of this year, Professor O’Connell will be working with the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies.
From the Chair, continued from page 1

gent of students presenting papers at the annual American Academy of Religion meeting in Montreal and the Society of Biblical Literature meeting in Atlanta. See “Graduate Student News” for an impressive record!

This year we’ve welcomed Dr. Mona Schrempf as a DAAD Visiting Professor. Dr. Schrempf, an expert in Tibetan religion and culture, taught two seminars on Buddhism and has interacted with faculty and graduate students working on Tibet. Two visiting scholars from Iran have spent productive time at the department too: Dr. Babak Farzaneh works on Qur’anic lexicography and Dr. Sayeh Meisami works on Islamic philosophy and leads an Islamic philosophy reading group (see pg 4). In a few weeks another visiting researcher will join us, Dr. Samah Ahmed, doing a project on religious pluralism and education in Islam in Canadian society.

For the second year, I am taking graduate students to Israel to participate in the excavations of et-Tel, probably the ancient city of Bethsaida-Julias (see the cover photograph and the page 3 story, “Digging in Bethsaida”). This is funded through the generosity of the Canadian Friends of Hebrew University, and the students, in addition to excavating at Bethsaida, will visit the excavations of Sepphoris, conducted by Hebrew University Prof. Zeev Weiss, as well as other archaeological sites in Israel. Another grant, this time from the DAAD, allowed Prof. Pamela Klassen to take ten graduate students (pictured above) with her to Germany in February to visit research institutions focused on the study of religion and religious diversity. The host institutions include the Max Planck Institute für Bildungsforschung in Berlin, the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity in Göttingen, and the Institut für Religionswissenschaft at the University of Heidelberg. Yet another DSR faculty member, Prof. Joseph Bryant, taught a summer course at the Humboldt University of Berlin.

As always, as Chair I express my deep appreciation to our administrative staff, Irene Kao, Marilyn Colaco, and Fereshteh Hashemi, and to my fellow department administrative colleagues, Drs. Frances Garrett and Jennifer Harris, whose support, creativity, energy, and scholarship make this a great place to be.
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Students in the DSR travel the world to learn how religion affects diverse peoples and cultures. Above, Ph.D. student Matt King explores the ruins of Serkhog Monastery in Qinghai Province, China, with Buddhist Studies Professor Frances Garrett. The Tibetan Buddhist centre was a site of educational exchange and political intrigue for several centuries, playing an important role in Tibet-China-Mongolia relations. Matt King’s doctoral research examines processes of patronage, cultural exchange and conversion between Tibetans and Mongols at sites like Serkhog. Visiting the places named in historical documents brings the characters of history alive for students, but funding for research travel is scarce. Your donations can help students who study religion widen their horizons and globalize their perspective on religious practice and thought worldwide.
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