

**Research in Religious Studies Conference
May 2 – 3, 2015**

Saturday, May 2, 2015

Continental Breakfast (Anderson Hall hallway): 8:00 – 9:00 a.m. (registration during that time)

9:00-9:15 OPENING COMMENTS (Room: AH116)

Prof. John Harding (Chair, Religious Studies)
Dean Craig Cooper (Faculty of Arts & Science)

Session 1 Making Meaning (Room: AH116)
James Linville, University of Lethbridge, presiding

9:15-9:45 “No Religion” Spiritual Individuals in the Millennial Generation: Developing
New Research Approaches for a New Spirituality
Sam Bahan, University of Victoria

9:45-10:15 The Spiritual Significance of Jihad
Bruce A. Coates, University of Lethbridge

15 Minute Break

Session 2A Religious Strife, Post-Colonialism, and India (Room: AH116)
Atif Khalil, University of Lethbridge, presiding

10:30-11:00 Conversion and Reconversion: Religious Peace and Stability in India
- A study into the issue of Ghar Wapsi movement in India
Gauri Julia Kaul, University of Calgary

11:00-11:30 Decolonizing Kandhamal: Using Colonial Concepts to Regain a Pre-Colonial
Identity
Samantha Grace Matychuk, University of Calgary

Session 2B Zen and the West (Room: AH117)
John Harding, University of Lethbridge, Presiding

10:30-11:00 The Discordance of Regional Philosophy: Reappropriating Zen for Western
Society
Danielle Fischer, University of Lethbridge

11:00-11:30 The Invisible and the Visible: Kitaro Nishida, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and the
Emptiness of Being
Daniel Fishley, University of Calgary.

11:30-12:00 What is 'Nothingness'? - An inquiry into Zen metaphysics as seen through the
perspective of the Kyoto School of Philosophy
Dillon St. Jean, University of Lethbridge

Session 2C **Ethics, Morality, and General Neighborliness** (Room: AH118)
Presiding: TBA

10:30-11:00 How Friendships Form Communities: A Comparison of Aristotle's
Nicomachean Ethics and Montaigne's On Friendship
Cailin Bartlett, University of Lethbridge

11:00-11:30 Morality as a Social Construction
Shinnea Wilson, University of Lethbridge

LUNCH 12:00-12:45 (Anderson Hall hallway)

Session 3A **Eastern Comparison** (Room: AH116)
Hillary Rodrigues, University of Lethbridge, presiding

12:45-1:15 The Road to Salvation: A Comparative Analysis of the Concept of Karma
Within the Traditions of Hinduism and Jainism
Stacey Crystal LeClair, University of Calgary

1:15-1:45 Yogic and Buddhist Models of Meditation: Patañjali's Yogasūtra and
Buddhaghosa's Visuddhimagga in Comparison
Will Humphrey, University of Calgary

1:45-2:15 Philosophical Daoism and Anarchism: Were Laozi and Zhuangzi the first
Anarcho-thinkers?
Chant Cowen, University of Calgary

Session 3B **Myth, Magic, and Method** (Room: AH117)
Anne Moore, University of Calgary, presiding

12:45-1:15 The Bed as Sacred Space in Indo-European Mythology
Dhanya Baird, University of Calgary

1:15-1:45 Adonai in the Middle Kingdom: Understanding the Edges of Jewish Plurality
Elijah Teitelbaum, Mount Allison University

1:45-2:15 Theories of Magic and Religion
Brooke Bull, University of Calgary

Session 3C **Religion and Spiritual Formulations** (Room: AH118)
James Linville, University of Lethbridge, presiding

12:45-1:15 Defining Spirituality and Religion
Rachel Bozel, University of Calgary

1:15-1:45 Ave Satanas: Another Look At LaVeyan Satanism
Kimberley Humphries, University of Lethbridge

1:45-2:15 Alternative Explanations for Religious and Spiritual Beliefs
Michelle Acheson, University of Lethbridge

Break: 15 Minutes

Session 4A **Crossing Borders: Feminism and Women's Rights** (Room: AH116)
Anne Moore, University of Calgary, presiding

2:30-3:00 The Myth of the Universal Woman: Muslim Women's Rights Advocacy in Houston and Istanbul
Samantha Chapa, Rice University

3:00-3:30 Buddhism and Feminism in the West
Adam Smith, University of Lethbridge

Session 4B **Scriptures, Church, and State** (Room: AH117)
James Forbes, University of Calgary, presiding

2:30-3:00 Constantine's Bishops: The Impact of the State on the Episcopate from 313 CE to 376 CE
Ryan Mikalson, University of Calgary

3:00-3:30 Thomas Arundel's Constitutions and the Condemnation of Wycliffe's Vernacular Translations, 1382-1415
Christopher Kshyk, University of Winnipeg

Session 4C **Methodology** (Room: AH118)
Hillary Rodrigues, University of Lethbridge, presiding

2:30-3:00 Maps and Territories: Freud, Eliade, Jonathan Z Smith and the Construction of Religious Studies
Daniel Fishley, University of Calgary

3:00-3:30 The Ever Changing Marketplace: Weberian 'Disenchantment' in Charles Taylor's "A Secular Age"
Grant Sawatzky, University of Calgary.

BANQUET: 6:00 p.m. Andy's Place (AH-100; Anderson Hall)

Keynote Speaker: Professor Kevin McGeough (Geography Department, University of Lethbridge)

Digging Up The Chariots of the Odd: Pseudo-Archaeology and New Religious Movements

Abstract: One of the most significant problems for public outreach in archaeology is the disjuncture between archaeologists' own interpretations of the data and the meanings created for this data by non-specialists, especially in light of their religious or spiritual beliefs. Whereas archaeology is an inherently rational and evidence-based discipline (or at least is framed as such) alternative interpreters approach the results of archaeological work from explicitly and purposefully irrational or hyperrational approaches. Aliens are said to have interbred with early humans, magnetic energy lurks within the trilithons of Stonehenge, and a secret library of the Atlanteans is buried beneath the sphinx. Newly discovered "ancient" tablets justify new religious movements and "mother goddess" figurines point to a long-lost feminist paradise. That these non-academic interpretations have become some of the most commercially viable types of interpretations in the media has only exacerbated the divide between academic and non-academic thinking about archaeology. This discussion explores some of the typical non-academic, arguably religious approaches to archaeological interpretation and questions the ethical responsibilities of archaeologists as public academics.

Sunday, May 3, 2015

Continental Breakfast (Anderson Hall Hallway: 8:30 – 9:00 a.m.)

Session 5A **Ancient Near East** (Room: AH116)
James Linville, University of Lethbridge, Presiding

9:00-9:30 The Cult of Kings
Colin J. Martin, University of Lethbridge

9:30-10:00 Gibberish of Schoolchildren; Epigraphic evidence in the Iron II Period
Caleb Ostrom, University of Lethbridge

Session 5B **Religion and the Environment** (Room: AH117)
Anne Moore, University of Calgary, presiding

9:00-9:30 Environmental Awareness: Sikh Theology
Tejinder Kaur Gill, University of Calgary

9:30-10:00 The Environment Crisis: Science versus Religion
Amanpreet Khosa, University of Calgary

Session 5C **“I’m Not Dead Yet” Ethnomedicine and Near Death Experiences** (Room:
AH118)
Presiding: TBA

9:00-9:30 Reimagining Episodes of Healing in the Apocryphal Acts of Andrew
Brooke Bull, University of Calgary.

9:30-10:00 To Hell and Back: A Call for the Reevaluation of Near Death Experiences
Sumaiya Hasan, University of Calgary

Break 15 minutes

Session 6 **Religion and Pop Culture** (Room: AH116)
James Linville, University of Lethbridge, Presiding

10:15-10:45 Norse Iconography in Pop Culture
Suzanna Narkaus, University of Lethbridge

11:45-11:15 Dark City: Finding Shell Beach
Michelle Acheson, University of Lethbridge

11:15-12:15 Panem Today, Panem Tomorrow, Panem Forever: An Essay on Sacrifice and
Ritual in The Hunger Games
Meagan Bennett, University of Lethbridge

12:15 Closing Comments
John Harding, University of Lethbridge

Conference Abstracts

Michelle Acheson
University of Lethbridge

Dark City: Finding Shell Beach

This paper will identify and examine the religious themes and the concept of reality versus illusion in the film *Dark City*. Through analysis of themes such as resurrection, transcendence and redemption, parallels will be drawn between the film and biblical passages.

The frequent manipulation of this imagined city and its inhabitants is an attempt by an alien race known as The Strangers to uncover the nature of the human soul. At midnight, The Strangers tune the city, changing the city structure and swapping peoples identities through memory implantation. Once John Murdoch realizes that the reality he is living in is fabricated, he searches relentlessly for the truth, the “real” reality behind the façade. Throughout the film, Shell Beach serves as an anchor point for Murdoch, because it is where he recalls growing up and it represents an idealized vision of reality. By transcending both himself and his oppressors, Murdoch appears to have returned to the “real” reality, though all he has truly done is replaced one version with another. In this way, Murdoch has taken up the role of creator, perpetuating the false – or at least fabricated- nature of this imagined city.

Michelle Acheson

University of Lethbridge

Alternative Explanations for Religious and Spiritual Beliefs

Specific aspects of Mormonism and New Age Spirituality will be categorized using both epistemological Theory of Knowledge and Social Psychology terms. This paper will pose alternative explanations for the beliefs, as examples of psychological theories. Theory of knowledge divides the ways we gain knowledge into eight categories. These are: emotion, faith, imagination, intuition, language, memory, reason and sense perception. Each of these involves different though occasionally overlapping cognitive processes. Knowledge by way of emotion as well as intuition can often be described by a feeling in your gut, or intrinsically knowing something without tangible evidence or indication. Faith knowledge can be, but is not always related to religion. This is knowledge in the absence of proof, and can endure despite the presence of contradictory evidence. These three knowledge systems are closely related in cognitive processes. Social psychology can provide explanations for behaviour, and Social psychology will be applied to the specific behaviours and belief systems. Some of the terms posed will include the fundamental attribution error, misinformation effect, self-fulfilling prophecy, placebo or expectancy effect, belief perseverance, Groupthink, conformity and obedience.

Sam Bahan

University of Victoria

“No Religion” Spiritual Individuals in the Millennial Generation: Developing New Research Approaches for a New Spirituality

This paper examines reasons why spiritual individuals of the millennial generation are going undetected in academic literature, the confusion between contemporary understandings of spirituality and religiousness for both millennials and researchers, as well as alternative approaches to studying this group. Taking a closer look at the spiritual lives of non-religious and atheist millennials, this paper gives an overview of some sources for millennial spirituality including values of diversity and equality, transmitted through cultural forces and parents who shifted away from institutionalized religion in the 1960s and 70s, as well as a secularized education system. Researchers seeking to understand the spiritual lives of millennials have typically assessed the growth of this movement by the number of individuals who identify as “spiritual but not religious”, a phrase which emerged alongside the 1960s New Age movement to describe the so-called ‘spiritual seekers’. This paper seeks to define a new form of spirituality unique to millennials through a proposed alternative research approach, which suggests that the phrase “spiritual but not religious” has evolved in its meaning for millennials and is no longer sufficient for understanding the spirituality of religiously unaffiliated individuals.

Dhanya Baird

University of Calgary

The Bed as Sacred Space in Indo-European Mythology

This paper seeks to explore the significance of the bed across Indo-European mythologies. A great deal can be determined by the way the bed is portrayed in Indo-European myth – by who can enter and who is not permitted access. I will demonstrate two differing ideas of what exactly the bed is. One is the physical presence of the bed, such as the hero Odysseus' great bed, which is formed from the trunk of an olive tree. The other idea is not focused on the physical form of the bed, but rather defines the bed as a sacred space, with its own rules of conduct and boundary lines, in which someone sleeps. Through this idea of the sacred space, I will explore the bed as a representation of the world tree and its link to a mother goddess. Carol Cusack (2011) states the world tree is a common feature in Indo-European myth, the famous example being Yggdrasil, the mighty ash tree featured in Norse mythology. Yggdrasil is found at the centre of creation, as Odysseus' bed is at the centre of his territory, and this world tree links together the worlds. Through this I will attempt to show a shared Indo-European conception of what the bed signifies.

Cailin Bartlett

University of Lethbridge

How Friendships Form Communities: A Comparison of Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics and Montaigne's On Friendship

The understanding that the type of community an individual inhabits helps to shape the individual and the types of relationships they develop is a fairly common occurrence in political philosophy. This logic is very naturally intuitive and it makes sense, causation wise, that the structure of the big helps to form the structure of the small. However, this may not capture the complete reality of the direction of causation; what if instead the flow of causation went in the other direction? If this were the case then the individual and the types of relationships that they formed would influence the shape of the larger community. Although this seems to be a far less natural thought process it is actually the reality presented in both Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics and Montaigne's On Friendship. According to these two pieces the nature of the friendships people make will affect every other major relationship that an individual will have in their life; especially those that they have with themselves and their community. If one follows the thought process of Montaigne through to its conclusion then community is an impossibility due to the failure of maintaining a "self"; whereas Aristotle leads reader down a path where the structure of friendships such as concord and sunaisthesis, both of which in practice do not seem to stray far from the Christian concepts of charity or love-of-neighbor, sustain both communities and the "self".

Meagan Bennett

University of Lethbridge

Panem Today, Panem Tomorrow, Panem Forever: An Essay on Sacrifice and Ritual in The Hunger Games

Bread and Circuses and the gladiatorial games as a continually replayed history of violence and subjugation in The Hunger Games. In this essay I will explore the similarities between Roman gladiator rituals with the Games that are used in the novel The Hunger Games. In Suzanne Collins novel, the tributes are what gladiators were in ancient Rome, they fight for their lives in an arena and have the chance of winning their freedom and a life of luxury after the fight. In the text there are many allusions to ancient Roman ideals and history such as a capital which controls the provinces that it has acquired through war by keeping them submissive and poor. When Rome acquired their provinces they took slaves from the outliers to keep the order and to show the dominance of the capital. This dominance is shown through the Games when citizens from each capital are picked to fight each other in order to entertain the masses in the city. The masses flock to this entertainment in Panem much as they did in Rome. This "Bread and Circuses" ideal was a key feature of Rome's rule over its citizens and Suzanne Collins uses the same idea, and key figures, to showcase how it controlled the people and provided entertainment as a distraction from the harsh realities of suppression in an autocracy.

Rachel Bozel

University of Calgary

Defining Spirituality and Religion

This research paper explores Religion and Spirituality both historically and philosophically throughout human societies in an attempt to create a more concrete definition of the terms. The definitions are outlined as follows: religions function as institutions and organizations with set rules and rituals for society to follow, while, spirituality is divine and there can be no rules applied to transcendence or mysticism and it is impossible to express such an occurrence. These are working definitions and are supported with the philosophical theories of Durkheim, Weber and Marx and historical accounts of genocide particularly the Rwanda Genocide.

Brooke Bull

University of Calgary

Reimagining Episodes of Healing in the Apocryphal Acts of Andrew

This presentation will explore episodes of healing and exorcism in the Christian Apocryphal Acts of Andrew (1-5). These episodes of healing have been compared to Jesus' healing episodes throughout the New Testament, as well as to accounts associated with the travelling 'holy man,' Apollonius of Tyana. Scholars such as Richard Horsley and John Pilch have approached Jesus' healings and exorcisms from the perspective of ethnomedicine, a sub-discipline of medical anthropology, in order to understand the impact of Jesus' healing episodes. Ethnomedicine examines the role of healers in communities practicing non-Western medicine. This same approach will be applied to the Apocryphal Acts of Andrew in order to gain further insights and understandings regarding how Andrews' healings and Andrew as a healer were viewed by his communities.

Brooke Bull

University of Calgary

Theories of Magic and Religion

The scholarly distinction between 'magic' and 'religion' is part of a larger discursive debate regarding how 'religion' is defined as a phenomenon or area of study. This presentation will examine three former theorists of religion who seek to describe this distinction. Malinowski argues that the distinction between magic and religion is that the former always functions with a purpose and the latter takes its logic from narrative myth (Malinowski 1992:38). Durkheim asserts that because a defining feature of religion is its social involvement, magic must be a separate phenomenon (Durkheim in Kunin 2006:33-34). Frazer, however, argues that the distinction lies with the possession of power; the magician claims for himself the power to control the elements and impact change, whereas the religious individual awaits the intervention of a higher being or force (Frazer 1951:59-60). This presentation seeks to raise questions regarding how this debate is reflective of Religious Studies as a discipline and whether it influences the inclusion or exclusion of 'spirituality' as a topic of study within Religious Studies departments.

Samantha Chapa

Rice University

The Myth of the Universal Woman: Muslim Women's Rights Advocacy in Houston and Istanbul

A common concept in feminist advocacy is that of a singular woman who generalizes women's struggles all over the world, otherwise known as the Universal Woman. In my paper, I argue that the concept of the Universal Woman is problematic because it largely ignores marginalized populations. The concept of the Universal Woman is hurtful and exclusive, and can actually be oppressive to women because it glosses over the unique religious, social, and political circumstances. In order for women's rights advocacy more effective, it needs to take into account the issues that uniquely apply to marginalized groups of women, such as the distinct disadvantages that Muslim women face in both Houston and Istanbul. To demonstrate this I will compare the perspectives of feminist advocates in both Houston and Istanbul. The methodology I employ is a blend of historical analysis and qualitative interviews with Muslim women advocates in Houston and Istanbul to explore how different political, social, and legal structures affect each group of women. My research will show that Muslim women advocates face different social barriers, religious restrictions, political impediments, and legal issues in each city that transcend the confines of the Universal Woman. The findings in this paper challenge the myth of the Universal Woman and help

generate awareness concerning issues that uniquely affect Muslim women in both Houston and Istanbul.

Bruce A. Coates

University of Lethbridge

The Spiritual Significance of Jihad

In the modern West jihad has become synonymous with holy war. As a consequence, many in the West mistakenly identify terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS as so-called jihadist groups. They are mistaken for the following reasons: (1) war, while allowed in Islam, is not described in its own Scriptural lexicon as “holy,” (2) military action is only one form of jihad, since there are two types (i.e., the “lesser” and the “greater”), neither of which endorses militarism in itself, and (3) normative Islamic jurisprudence prohibits the targeting of civilians, lays out strict rules for when war is permissible (jus ad bellum) and for what is allowed in war (jus in bello). The norms of jus ad bellum and jus in bello as defined in classical Islamic jurisprudence prohibit forms of violence which are commonly identified with jihad today.

So, if popular notions of jihad are incorrect, how is one to correctly way to understand it? In answering this question, this paper explores Qur’anic and other scholarly sources to establish an interpretation that is both true to the tradition of Islam and to the practices of Muslims everywhere. This paper will demonstrate that, although important, the military and legal implications of jihad are minor in comparison to its theological and spiritual significance.

Chant Cowen

University of Calgary

Philosophical Daoism and Anarchism: Were Laozi and Zhuangzi the first Anarcho-thinkers?

Philosophical Daoism and modern day Anarcho-thought are thought to be similar enough for some scholars to proclaim that philosophical Daoist texts, the Daodejing, the Zhuangzi, and sometimes the Liezi, are thought to hold a proto-form of Anarchism. Scholars proclaim that the Daodejing and Zhuangzi are the first Anarchist writings and commonly cite sections from the Daodejing and the Zhuangzi, as evidence in the thesis of philosophical Daoist thought being the first form of Anarchism. Religious Daoism will not be examined in this paper, as Religious Daoism does not deal with how one should deal with government, as philosophical Daoism does. The textual material that will be used for comparison with the notion of philosophical Daoism being Anarchist will be the Daodejing and the Zhuangzi, as these texts are commonly known and cited as proto-Anarchist texts. Sections selected from the Daodejing and the Zhuangzi that have been noted by some scholars as Anarchist. The findings from examining the supposed Anarchist sections of the Daodejing, and Zhuangzi, have found that the sections are not calling for complete no ruler/sage-king, but a lesser control of governmental powers and coercion from the ruler.

Danielle Fischer

University of Lethbridge

The Discordance of Regional Philosophy: Reappropriating Zen for Western Society

This research paper explores the dissimilarities between Eastern and Western philosophy and attempts to unpack the ways in which this juxtaposition of ideology has impacted the transmission of Zen to the West. It first solidifies this idea of innate difference, arguing that overall the East is more open-minded and existential, while the West is very analytically and logically driven. With these concepts in mind the paper goes on to discuss how this dichotomous relationship has impacted the presentation, production and practice of Zen in the Western world, generating a form of Zen that is incredibly disconnected from its traditional Eastern counterpart.

Daniel Fishley

University of Calgary

Maps and Territories: Freud, Eliade, Jonathan Z Smith and the Construction of Religious Studies

What exactly does religious studies study? Historian of religion Jonathan Z. Smith argues that religion is a category “created by scholars for their intellectual purposes” — it is a generic concept that establishes boundaries and horizons that structure the very discipline itself. Following Smith, my paper examines Sigmund Freud and Mircea Eliade: If, as Smith claims, religion is a construct solely of the academy, what is the 'object' called religion that their analysis has constructed? Thinkers like Freud and Eliade, I assert, are representative of a larger mode of religious scholarship that unquestioningly affirms the a-prior nature of religion. What, however, does religion and religious studies look like from the model that thinkers like Smith bring to the discipline? Is Smith's constructivist stance inimical to the study of religion? Or, as I will contend, is it not precisely the constructed nature of religious studies that makes it a productive discipline?

Daniel Fishley

University of Calgary

The Invisible and the Visible: Kitaro Nishida, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and the Emptiness of Being

The question of emptiness, subjectivity, and Being propel the divergent philosophical projects of French thinker Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) and Zen philosopher Kitaro Nishida (1870-1945). These theorists are united by a desire to challenge the dualistic contentions of Cartesian philosophy. Principle to both thinkers' projects is an emphasis placed on the centrality of the body as well as the assertion of the radical emptiness inscribed within Being itself. My paper will contrast the idea of emptiness that appears in the writings of both Merleau-Ponty and Nishida. Though their writings are stylistically similar and philosophically congruent, I argue that their projects are ultimately separated by the soteriological assumptions of Zen Buddhism laden in Nishida's project. In contrast to Nishida, Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, I assert, is marked by a radical imminence that denies any space for ultimate realization.

Tejinder Kaur Gill

University of Calgary

Environmental Awareness: Sikh Theology

Environmental ethics have been advocated by many religions in many different ways. However, the underlying message pertaining to the treatment of the environment is similar in all religions. One religion which is considered a religious minority in Western civilization is Sikhism. Although it is a minority, Sikhism has some relevant information regarding environmental ethics. This paper will demonstrate the themes of Sikh thought towards the treatment of the environment. Using three postulates from Sikhism along with the concept of Hukam, this paper will strive to demonstrate the Sikh view towards environment awareness and sustainability. The three postulates specifically pertain to the interconnectedness between spirit and matter, conscious human effort to achieve spiritual progression, and the importance of harmony with God through spiritual salvation. Specific verses from the Adi Granth (the Sikh holy book) and Sikh prayers will be used for reference as well as articles by theologians and recent day examples.

Sumaiya Hasan

University of Calgary

To Hell and Back: A Call for the Reevaluation of Near Death Experiences

The fear of death is shared by many people. One particular way of overcoming this fear however, is through a method called mythic transcendence. In Daniel Chidester's text, *Patterns of Transcendence*, he describes mythic transcendence as “stories, visions, and expectations that imaginatively transform death into a transition to another realm of experience.” One particular form of evidence of mythic transcendence is a phenomenon called near-death experience (NDE). Although there is debate among scientists surrounding the legitimacy of NDE's, those who experience them claim to have been enlightened with the knowledge that the consciousness continues after death, that the aforementioned afterlife is not always good, and lastly, NDE's provide individuals with a chance to change their lifestyle before permanently departing from their physical body – this subsequently reduces their death anxiety.

To develop a strong case arguing for the legitimacy of NDE's, the presence of NDE's throughout human

history and the common features of NDE's across differing cultures will be explored. The findings of Dr. Peter Fenwick (well renowned neuropsychologist) will support this argument. For a deeper investigation of NDE's and their impact upon the lives of those who undergo them, specific cases will be pulled from Dr. Maurice Rawlings' documentary *To Hell and Back* as well as the noteworthy case of Pam Reynolds which is discussed in Michael Sabom's article "The Shadow of Death (Part One)." Based on the analysis of various sources, it will be concluded that the long-time association between death of consciousness and end of brain function is an idea that should be re-evaluated and discussed because it is perhaps not as simple as humans have made it out to be.

Will Humphrey

University of Calgary

Yogic and Buddhist Models of Meditation: Patañjali's Yogasūtra and Buddhaghosa's Visuddhimagga in Comparison

The Yogasūtra of Patañjali, a collection of Sanskrit aphorisms from around the fourth century CE, often serves as the foundational text for modern understandings of yoga as a form of Indian philosophy. As an explication of ontology, the Yogasūtra has a close affinity to Sāṃkhya, a contemporaneous system of thought which describes existence as the interface of two fundamental principles: puruṣa, a purely conscious subject, and prakṛti, an insentient ground from which all phenomena arise. Thus, as one might expect, Patañjali and Vyāsa, the author of the oldest extant commentary on the Yogasūtra, make liberal use of Sāṃkhyan concepts in laying out the text's ontological framework. However, the Yogasūtra is not solely an espousal of metaphysics, but also a practical guide for meditation. I will argue that in this latter capacity, Patañjali and Vyāsa are not just in conversation with Sāṃkhya, but with Buddhism, which many scholars understand generally as a rival of Patañjali's form of yoga. To make this argument, I will compare the Yogasūtra with the Visuddhimagga of Buddhaghosa, a Pāli Buddhist text from roughly the same period, and examine the shared structures and terminology in the two texts' descriptions of meditative states. I will focus in particular on the Yogasūtra's description of various levels of samādhi, or meditative absorption, as consonant with the Visuddhimagga's description of the various levels of jhāna, or meditative foci. In so doing, I will show that the texts appear to draw upon a common set of terms and conventions in laying out their respective models of meditative practice, and that the two texts nevertheless diverge, and perhaps even compete, in their specific definition and organization of these terms. These divergences in the usage and definition of terminology regarding meditative practice, I will contend, can help us to understand better the broader differences between the two schools of thought, while also suggesting how theory and practice informed one another in the two texts' development.

Kimberly Humphries

University of Lethbridge

Ave Satanas: Another Look At LaVeyan Satanism

LaVeyan Satanism has always had a place in the topic of new religious movements. Founded in 1966 by Anton Szandor LaVey, Satanism became a religion many wish to avoid. With 'Satan' right in the name, speculations of what Satanism is are often full of fallacies. Quite a bit of stigma surrounds this religion blurring the true meaning and nature of it. However, very little discussion goes to correcting the common misunderstandings there are about Satanism. With a further look into the religion, we will find that there is a lot more to this religion than the name suggests. With help from sources, such as 'The Satanic Bible', I aim to show the difference there is between Satanism and Devil worship and to help retract the many myths and misconceptions of this famous religion to show how much Satanism differs from the mislead societal views. Some of the topics I will be discussing are Satanic crimes, symbols, and the rules of Satanism.

Gauri Julia Kaul

University of Calgary

Conversion and Reconversion: Religious Peace and Stability in India - A study into the issue of Ghar

Wapsi movement in India

Religious conversion has become the subject of passionate debate in contemporary India. From the early 20th century onwards, it has surfaced again and again in the political realm, in the media and in the courts. During the last few decades, the dispute has attained a new climax in the plethora of newspapers, journals, and books whose pages have been devoted to the question of conversion. The positions in the dispute are clear. On the one hand, there are those who plead for a ban on conversion, because it disturbs the social peace in plural India. Conversely, there are those who argue that conversion is a fundamental human right, which should be protected in any democracy. The recent Ghar Wapsi movement, that targets Christians and Muslims in India to be converted back to Hinduism, has raised much debate and heat in political and social circles in the country. Christians and Muslims in India have taken strong objections to the the Ghar Wapsi movement. Indian political parties have different policies on religious conversions. While some parties oppose conversion into a different religion, some support it. The current ruling party assured protection to the religious minorities. However, some Hindu organizations have sworn to continue Ghar Wapsi, which raises the concern of political and religious instability in India.

Amanpreet Khosa

University of Calgary

The Environment Crisis: Science versus Religion

While in the midst of environmental crisis the relationship between science and religion has been a subject of debate. After the Enlightenment era the interaction between science and religion within the context of environmental ethics seemed almost non-existent. As modern technology evolved, science began to replace religion as a primary source for humanity's deepest questions. Furthermore, without the guidance of religious teachings, humankind's approach the environment as an infinite resource pool for selfish needs. By taking a look through the times before and after the Enlightenment, and throughout much of the 20th and now into the 21st century, we see the changes in the relationship between science and religion moving from progressive to retrogressive to now slowly building a complex but somewhat unified bond. This paper will discuss some of the perspectives of science and religion pertaining to environmental challenges by highlighting opposing viewpoints, as well as the importance of these perspectives merging for our common future. It will also discuss what currently stands in the way of better protection laws for preserving our environment, and what actions we are now taking to bridge the gap between scientific and religious teachings in order to avert further damage to the environment. In today's society we must focus our attention away from anthropocentric viewpoints and hold ourselves accountable for the every growing environmental problem.

Christopher Kshyk

University of Winnipeg

Thomas Arundel's Constitutions and the Condemnation of Wycliffe's Vernacular Translations, 1382-1415

In the years between the publication of Wycliffe's Bible in 1382 and the Council of Constance in 1415, a thirty-year period in which there was no shortage of ecclesiastical and secular condemnations of Wycliffe's writings, Arundel's Constitutions is one of the few documents from this period which explicitly condemns the act of translation itself. As such, this paper will investigate the apparent contradiction in the various ecclesiastical condemnations of Wycliffe, and more specifically attempt to explain why Arundel explicitly condemned the translation of the bible into the vernacular, while the Pope, other ecclesiastical authorities, and councils did not. To begin, I will briefly examine the Lollard movement, the debate over what constituted heresy, and chronicle the major condemnations against Wycliffe and his followers between 1382 and 1415 to provide some necessary context for my analysis. I will then advance a number of probable reasons that might have conditioned Arundel's condemnation of Wycliffe's vernacular bible. The first is related to scholastic and ecclesiastical attitudes towards the transmission of knowledge in the later Middle Ages. As such, I will examine a variety of attitudes towards both written and oral transmissions of knowledge to condition my analysis of Arundel's Constitutions, specifically with regards to theological condemnations of vernacular translations. The second reason is related to the social and political upheavals in England during the late 14th and early 15th centuries, specifically with regards to the spread of the Lollard's political and theological reform beliefs through vernacular texts, which

threatened the legitimacy of both the Crown and the clerical hierarchy. As such, I will also examine Arundel's Constitutions in connection with Henry IV's (1399-1413) *De Hoeretico Comburendo*, which is evidence of the cooperation between the Church and the Crown to control the spread of the Lollard heresy.

Stacey Crystal LeClair

University of Calgary

The Road to Salvation: A Comparative Analysis of the Concept of Karma Within the Traditions of Hinduism and Jainism

Within the belief systems of various religions today, many can be characterized by the paths they offer towards salvation. With this trajectory, religion can often be understood as man's answer to the awareness of his own mortality. The religions of India are no exception to this. For centuries they have coexisted, all sharing a cosmology that situates human existence in a continuous cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. This concept is held at the base of many religions in India, and the underlying principle by which it is fuelled has had a profound influence on the lives of countless individuals. In the case of Hinduism and Jainism, this cycle is powered by a code of cause and effect known as Karma. Karma can be understood as a principle of causality in which the actions and objectives of a person influence their future circumstance and condition. Both religions conceptualize their understanding of karma in similar fashions as it is held at the core function of their practices and rituals, as well as at the primary basis of understanding towards concepts regarding death and an afterlife. While these religions bare many similarities regarding the concept of karma, their paralleled understandings must not be treated as a single philosophical body due to the fact that in the midst of their similar generalizations are many complex differences which fundamentally require equal attention. My paper will strive to provide an enhanced understanding of karma by comparing the concept from both the Hindu and Jain perspectives. While analyzing their similar understandings as well as their fundamental differences, one can thereby gain a nuanced understanding of the function of karma and how it ultimately can be recognized as a complex notion, demonstrating a deep-seated belief in an afterlife that is strongly held as a foundational concept in these Indian religions.

Colin J. Martin

University of Lethbridge

The Cult of Kings

Throughout the Ancient Mediterranean, monarchy became associated with religious deities in the royal dynasties of Egypt and Mesopotamia. At the emergence of the Hellenistic empires after Alexander the Great, monarchy cults developed around the Diadochi dynasties, which had similarities and differences from previous examples. This Hellenized monarchy cultic practise would form the Roman Imperial cults, whose deified emperors came to be worshipped across the Ancient Mediterranean. The nature of monarchy cults across the Ancient Mediterranean will be demonstrated by analyzing textual evidence found in Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Hellenic, and Roman sources to establish the connection and the development of the relationship between the monarch and the divine.

Samantha Grace Matychuk

University of Calgary

Decolonizing Kandhamal: Using Colonial Concepts to Regain a Pre-Colonial Identity

The 2008 events of persecution of Christians by Hindu fundamentalists in the Kandhamal region of India has spawned much scholarship, including Anto Akkara's journalistic compilation novel, entitled *Early Christians of 21st Century: Stories of Incredible Christian Witness from Kandhamal Jungles*. This novel, as well as other scholarly contributions such as Monica Melanchthon's article "Persecution of Indian Christians," and John L. Allen Jr.'s novel *The Global War on Christians: Dispatches from the Front Lines of Anti-Christian Persecution* presents these events as the an example of and as a result of religious persecution. Using B.J. Grim and R. Finke's definition of religious persecution (2007), David Richard's understanding of national identity (2010), and Ben Heath's discussion of British colonial strategies of control (2012), among others, I would like to argue that the events of 2008 are not, in fact, solely a case

of religious persecution against local Christians. Although the events in Kandhamal have been presented and examined as religious persecution against the Christians of the area, I would like to argue that there is, in fact, a different motivation behind the violence. The motivation of the Hindu fundamentalists' actions in the events of 2008 is, instead, one that strives to eliminate any remnants of colonial influence and rebuild this broken identity through the purging power of violent persecution.

Ryan Mikalson

The University of Calgary

Constantine's Bishops: The Impact of the State on the Episcopate from 313 CE to 376 CE.

In discussing the shifts of religious alliances and identity shifts following Constantine's reign, scholarship tends to focus on what Constantine and his successors did. This focus leaves the Church as an inert reactor to external stimuli rather than as the highly developed and organized nature of the clergy at the time. In supplement to recent scholarship on Constantine this essay focuses on the religious change of the 4th century through the perspective of the church, specifically through the episcopate. Following the examples of Timothy Barnes, Bruno Bleckmann, and Peter J. Leithart this essay will look at what impact Constantine and his successors could have had by examining the development of the episcopate before Constantine and specific examples of episcopal change during and following Constantine's reign. Through such an analysis it becomes reasonable to argue that the powers of the episcopacy broadened in scope following Constantine's reign and under Constantine's successors.

Suzanna Narkaus

University of Lethbridge

Norse Iconography in Pop Culture

In this essay I will examine some of the instances in which Norse iconography is represented in popular culture. I will discuss the important religious themes and dialogues represented and brought about by these symbols. In doing this I will explore the Norse iconography in various case studies that represent Norse iconography in media; film, television, literature and music. I will address the "cool factor" and discuss why this is relevant to popular culture becoming religion and religion in popular culture. I will explore the ways in which popular culture can create familiarity with historical religious iconography and create an introduction in which obscure and distant religions become relevant again.

Caleb Ostrom

University of Lethbridge

Gibberish of Schoolchildren; Epigraphic evidence in the Iron II Period

In our study we will survey some of the epigraphic evidence relating to Israel in the Iron II period and meditate on the scholarly process whereby raw data unearthed from the ground becomes meaningful information about culture and society in Iron Age Israel and the wider Ancient Orient. We will use Demsky's 2007 Near Eastern Archaeology magazine article "Reading Northwest Semitic Inscriptions" as a guide as we engage the epigraphic material, with a focus on Demsky's seven elements of epigraphy – provenance, writing surface, paleography, linguistic features, personal name, literary structure, and the historic message. The first six elements are in the realm of 'data' and when these elements interact in an integrative approach the knowledge gleaned from the critical-interpretative process converges on the historical message, which can provide us with some real information. Information has a deeper epistemological significance than 'data'. While overviewing the role of these elements of epigraphy we will also look closely at three sources of epigraphic information – the Tel Dan Inscription, The Jerusalem Pomegranate, and the Gezer Calendar. In doing so we will discover how much the critical investigator can learn from what appear to be meager sources, and something about the use and misuse of data in the academic community.

Dillon St. Jean

University of Lethbridge

What is 'Nothingness'? - An inquiry into Zen metaphysics as seen through the perspective of the Kyoto

School of Philosophy

During the early 20th century in Japan, philosophers like Nishida Kitaro, Tanabe Hajime and Nishitani Keiji developed what is now known as 'The Kyoto School of Philosophy'. Uniquely Japanese, their thought sought to explore Mahayana (in specific, Zen) metaphysics through the means of Western philosophers such as Plato, Hegel, Kant, Nietzsche and Heidegger. Exploring topics such as 'Sunyata' (emptiness), 'pure experience', and 'absolute nothingness' displayed the philosophical strength that Japan possesses.

Grant Sawatzky

University of Calgary

The Ever Changing Marketplace: Weberian 'Disenchantment' in Charles Taylor's "A Secular Age"

Max Weber's idea of 'the disenchantment of the world' has provided a sociological lens for viewing the decline of religion. Although Charles Taylor subscribes to Weber's disenchantment, his usage of the idea advocates a disparate meaning, and therefore a dissimilar outlook on secularization. This paper will discuss the ideas of 'disenchantment' and 'secularization' in Weber's 1918 speech "Science as Vocation" and Taylor's book "A Secular Age" in the following categories: the schools of thought from which they interpret; the audience they seek to influence; the purpose of their writing; and by examining the 'assumed object' of 'disenchantment' itself.

Adam Smith

University of Lethbridge

Buddhism and Feminism in the West

In this paper I look at the history of Buddhism and the women who have helped shape it. From the time of his awakening through to today females have been a large part of the Buddha's tradition, and through the transmission of the religion to the west feminists have been pivotal in how the religion is perceived. In the past Buddhism has been less than egalitarian, often it can be viewed as patriarchal, and modern feminists have taken notice. By examining the women of the past and the waves of feminism this paper compares feminist theory and the Buddhist tradition, often allies but sometimes in contrast. The ordination of nuns has been of particular interest to feminist theorists, but by looking at it from a modern western perspective many have failed to look at the indigenous nuns' desires. Examining the work of Sallie B. King this paper also looks at the interactions of different religions and their feminist movements in western society, most notably Buddhist and Catholic nuns.

Elijah Teitelbaum

Mount Allison University

Adonai in the Middle Kingdom: Understanding the Edges of Jewish Plurality

Although Jews have lived in China for roughly 900 years, they are not recognized as such. Decline in ritual and traditional observances, accompanying acculturation and assimilation, has caused the Jews of Kaifeng, in Henan, to lose much of their tradition. But what are the terms on which this "loss" is described? A clear line may exist between involvement and apathy, but measuring syncretic developments is far more complex. These create a tension between the unity of Judaism and the pluralism of its parts. The community in Kaifeng takes a central role in this conversation: are they a departure from, a subversion of, or a facet of familiar Jewish cultures? This uncertainty, far from being a problem, signals an opening. Better understanding the Kaifeng Jews can affect a shift in diasporic consciousness, building a new manner of comprehending the contextual development of Judaism throughout history.

In this paper, I use this case to outline a new approach to the Diaspora. This builds upon postcolonial and continental theories to depart from the centre-periphery relation that is implicit within normative Judaism. Acknowledging a plurality of centres, each with its own construction of nationhood and belonging, becomes key for understanding tradition and the transmission thereof. The Kaifeng Jews signal the necessity of privileging a complex relation of pluralisms within a broad understanding of "Judaism": a term that, while necessarily monolithic, can nonetheless support diversity.

Shinnea Wilson

University of Lethbridge

Morality as a Social Construction

This paper aims to present morality as a social construct, rather than an intrinsic property – the way it is typically viewed. Through the comparison of several religious traditions, such as Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism, and their differing views surrounding controversial topics such as abortion and euthanasia, I will argue that morality is subjective. The existence of multiple moral codes and standards within and between different religious traditions, which often disagree with and contradict each other, will be emphasized in order to support the non-universal nature of morality. Similarly, the malleability of the moral code in both an individual and group sense will be addressed, along with a brief discussion of the motivation or reasoning for the social construction.

