

Research in Religious Studies Conference  
May 7 – 8, 2016

**SCHEDULE**

**SATURDAY MAY 7**

All conference sessions are in Anderson Hall

Lunches, Dinner and Keynote Address are in the Student Union Building, Ballroom A, SU300A

8:00 – 9:00 **Light Breakfast and Registration** **AH 175**

9:05-9:15 **OPENING COMMENTS** **AH 116**

James Linville, University of Lethbridge

Craig Cooper, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, University of Lethbridge

**Session 1 Identities & Border Crossing** **AH 116**

Presiding: James Linville, University of Lethbridge

9:15-9:45 *The Eternal Jubu: Buddhism's Enlightening Example of a New Age Religion*

Garrett Bishoff, University of Lethbridge

9:45-10:15 *"Gie Her a Haggis!": Address to the Haggis Ceremony and Scottish Identity in Diaspora*

Hannah Forbes, University of Calgary

10:15-10:45 *The Influence of Church in Re-creating Identities: Postwar Dutch Reformed Immigrants in Southern Alberta*

Lisa L. Schalk, University of Lethbridge

10:45-11:00 **(15 minute break)**

**Session 2A Buddhism 1** **AH 116**

Presider: John Harding, University of Lethbridge

11:00-11:30 *On the path of the Dhamma: How the Dhammapada is a Representational Text for Theravada Buddhism*

Chant Cowen, University of Calgary

11:30-12:00 *In Search of the Bull: Nishitani's 'Emptiness' and Harman's 'Object Orientated Ontology*

Dillon St. Jean, University of Lethbridge

**Session 2B Early Christianity** **AH 117**

Presiding: Anne Moore, University of Calgary

11:00-11:30 *Re-placing Rome: Roman Place and Identity as a Papal city in the Early Medieval Period*

Ryan Mikalson, University of Calgary

11:30-12:00 *Forgetting Jerusalem: The Gospel of John's Construction of a Christian Social Memory*

Rebecca Christian, University of Calgary

**Session 2C Ancient Eastern Traditions and Modernity**

**AH 118**

Presiding: Hillary Rodrigues, University of Lethbridge

11:00-11:30 *Hinduism and Feminism*

Kate Korte, University of Lethbridge

11:30-12:00 *Unlikely Symbionts: Exploring the Relationship Between Buddhist Modernity and the Modern Sciences*

Jessica Knoop, University of Lethbridge

**LUNCH 12:00-1:00 SU300A Ballroom A**

**Session 3A Religion and the Shedding of Blood**

**AH 116**

Presiding: Hillary Rodrigues, University of Lethbridge

1:00-1:30 *Heresy, the Flagellant Movement and the Fluidity of Orthodoxy During the Black Death (1348-1349)*

Grant Sawatzky, University of Calgary

1:30-2:00 *Sole and Exclusive: Power, Control, and Violence in the Utah Territory, 1847-1857*

Brendan Cummins, University of Lethbridge

2:00-2:30 *The Manson Myth*

Kimberley Humphries, University of Lethbridge

**Session 3B Hebrew Bible**

**AH 117**

Presiding: James Linville, University of Lethbridge

1:00-1:30 *Voicing Violence: Lamentations 4 as Verbal Art*

Chelsea Lamb, Ambrose University

1:30-2:00 *Elihu, a Countercultural Voice for Today*

Fanny Tamègnon, Ambrose University

2:00-2:30 *A Text of Songs? Some Observations Regarding Cohesion and Texture in the Song of Songs*

David M. Dalwood, Ambrose University

**Session 3C Art and Religion**

**AH 118**

Presiding: Joan Greer, University of Alberta

1:00-1:30 *Saint Denis Is Shaving: Bodily Desire as a Marker of Rationality*

Whitford, Adam, University of Alberta

1:30-2:00 *Christian Being in the World Without Being of the World: Sense, Signification and Religious Art in Jean-Luc Nancy's Deconstruction of Christianity*

Nikolaas Deketelaere, Catholic University of Leuven

2:00-2:30 *Kazimir Malevich and the Icon of the Absolute*  
Kalyna Somchynsky, University of Alberta

2:30 – 2:45 **(15 minute break)**

**Session 4A Western Perceptions of Islam**  
Presiding: Rachel Braun, University of Calgary

**AH 116**

2:45-3:15 *Trends of Islamophobia in American Politics*  
Kimberley Humphries, University of Lethbridge

3:15-3:45 *The Distortion of Truth in Islam*  
Rosemary Boisson, University of Lethbridge

**Session 4B Philosophy and Theology**  
Presiding: Anne Moore, University of Calgary

**AH 117**

2:45-3:15 *Having Faith in the Transimmanent: On the Role and Relevance of Faith in Jean-Luc Nancy and Jean-Luc Marion*  
Nikolaas Deketelaere, Catholic University of Leuven

3:15-3:45 *Dynamics of Symbols in the Hermeneutic of Paul Tillich and Paul Ricoeur*  
Grant Sawatzky, University of Calgary

**Banquet (Reservations Required)**

**6:00 p.m. Ballroom A, SU300A, Student Union Building**

Keynote Address:  
**Prof. Joan Greer, University of Alberta**

**Dominocratie, Christocentrism and Anarchist Theory in the Art of Vincent van Gogh and Johan Thorn Prikker**

*Christ alone ... lived serenely, as a greater artist than all other artists,  
despising marble and clay as well as color, working in living flesh.*  
(Vincent van Gogh, letter 635/B8, June 23, 1888)

With these words, Vincent van Gogh identified a close relationship between religion and art that included the conflation of the role of the artist with that of a religious leader, and indeed, in this case of Christ. At the heart of the statement is the question of the fraught connections and dis-connections between religion and art during a period when secularist and religious discourses collided. Religion in 19th -century Holland played a central role and, until close to the end of the century, members of the clergy – the dominees – held powerful positions, affecting most aspects of Dutch social and cultural life, including in the areas of literature and the visual arts. By the final decades this position of dominance was being challenged, most strongly through ideas related to socio-anarchist tendencies emanating both from within and outside of Holland. Curiously, even when conventional religious institutions were being rejected, artists continued to draw on recognizable religious iconography. This talk will examine this historical backdrop as a rich, formative context within which the art of the final decades of the nineteenth century arose – at times in ways that fit within still widely accepted religious discourses, at other times in ways that

strongly departed from them. These ideas are examined in the art of two Dutch artists who worked both within and outside of Holland, Vincent van Gogh and Johan Thorn Prikker.

## **SUNDAY MAY 8**

### **Session 5A Jews and Muslims in Imperial Russia**

**AH 116**

Presider: Brendan Cummins, University of Lethbridge

9:00-9:30 *Media Ferocity: Anti-Semitism in 19th Century Imperial Russia*  
Rechele Korbie, University of Lethbridge

9:30-10:00 *“Let’s Just Ignore Islam, It Will Go Away, Right?” Religious “Indifference” in Russian Central Asia, 1867-1881*

Colin J. Martin, University of Lethbridge

### **Session 5B Islamic Mysticism**

**AH 117**

Presider: Hillary Rodrigues, University of Lethbridge

9:00-9:30 *The Nature of Love: al-Ghazālī and Islamic Mystical Philosophy*  
Bruce A. Coates, University of Lethbridge

9:30-10:00 *The Whirling Dance of the Dervishes*  
Erin Davis, University of Lethbridge

### **Session 5C Buddhism 3**

**AH 118**

Presiding: John Harding, University of Lethbridge

9:00-9:30 *The Curious Absence of Japanese Nuns from Buddhist Material Culture*  
Kira Thibaudeau, University of Alberta

9:30-10:00 *Marathon Monks of Mount Hiei: An Analysis of Tradition, History, and Philosophy*  
Brittany Lewis, University of Lethbridge

10:00-10:15 **(15 minute break)**

### **Session 6 Myth and Method**

**AH 116**

Presiding: Hillary Rodrigues, University of Lethbridge

10:15-10:45 *Betrayal in Select Indo-European Multigenerational Mythic Arcs*  
Dhanya Baird, University of Calgary

11:45-11:15 *Awakenings as Phases of American Religious Life*  
Chris Miller, St. Mary’s University

11:15-11:45 *Reflections on Research Design in Religious Studies*  
Rachel Braun, University of Calgary

11:45 Closing Comments:  
Hillary Rodrigues, University of Lethbridge

## Conference Abstracts

Dhanya Baird  
University of Calgary

### *Betrayal in Select Indo-European Multigenerational Mythic Arcs*

This paper will focus on differences in the concept of betrayal in select Indo-European mythological settings, focusing on the Norse myths of Sigurd the Dragonslayer and his descendants, and Euripides' plays about members of the House of Atreus – both multigenerational stories revolving around family drama. While the most basic definition of betrayal – a “violation... of expectations” (Whisman and Wagers 2010:1384) – applies in both sets of stories, the expectations violated change depending on culture. By breaking a betrayal situation into three parts – the events culminating in the betrayal, the moment of betrayal, and the consequences of the betrayal for both betrayer and betrayed – I will isolate and define these cultural expectations. In particular, I will discuss the importance of the intent of the betrayer in betrayal situations, and how this relates to the assignment of blame and punishment to the betrayer. The level of blame and punishment assigned to men and the difference in that assigned to women in the Greek and Norse texts will also be discussed, as well as the significance of religious practices in determining the consequences of betrayal acts. Through this exploration I will attempt to show that the perceived nature of betrayal changes depending on cultural and historical context.

Garrett Bishoff  
University of Lethbridge

### *The Eternal Jubu: Buddhism's Enlightening Example of a New Age Religion*

Through recalling the development of the unique combination of Buddhism and Judaism into the Jubu (Jewish-Buddhist) movement, this paper will explore why these two religions are able to coexist in this fashion so easily in the modern era. With a focus on Buddhism's adaptability and active efforts by both sides to establish a dialogue, the paper uses the experiences of Rodger Kamenetz in meeting the Dalai Lama thoroughly and his observations of the Jubu beginnings (which he provided the name for). Supplemented by works on Allen Ginsberg, arguably the first Jubu; the interaction of different religions in America; influences of both Buddhism and Judaism in the heart of the other in Israel and India; and the unique connections between Jews and Tibetans via their similar modern experiences; the paper will point out exactly how these connections fostered by Buddhism's openness encouraged the meeting of both cultures and strengthened each so that the Jubu religion naturally evolved as a result, whether the practitioners of it regard themselves as Jubus or not.

Rosemary Boisson  
University of Lethbridge

### *The Distortion of Truth in Islam*

For hundreds of years Western society has been unfair in its judgment towards the Middle East. Before the attack on 9/11 the West viewed the Middle East as being an exotic land filled with delicacies, veiled belly dancers, and rich sheiks who cannot keep their hands to themselves. Post 9/11 the ideas surrounding the Middle East have changed dramatically. Now the image portrayed is a desolate land where the women are oppressed and every man is a terrorist. Along with this

shift in attitude towards the Middle East has been an unfair distortion of the main religion that happens to be Islam. Unfortunately the real values of love, justice, and generosity have gotten lost in the Western media's interpretation of this religion. In fact the comparison that is made in the West is the contrasting of Western Christian values against Islam's which are intrinsically the same, but again the latter has been distorted to serve the Western world's agenda.

So why has this distortion of the truth about Islam become so important? Western society has a script that it uses in order to demonize others in order to excuse their actions and turn their actions into a fight which is black or white, right or wrong. The worst of the distortion of the truth comes from the media giants who have told Westerners what to think. This paper will examine what some of the fabrications of the truth are and why they are still being propagated.

Rachel Braun  
University of Calgary

### *Reflections on Research Design in Religious Studies*

Life histories in religious studies comprise qualitative research methods that seek extensive records of a person's life as reported by themselves or others. Data is obtained via interviews, and is analyzed using project-specific combinations of linguistic coding, key themes, and social constructions of validity. There are eight components of life history research design: topic, approach, ethics, methodology, theory, transcription, verification, and dissemination. These components establish a relational dialectic between the form and content of a research project; between the researcher, interviewee(s), and other religious studies scholars. In this paper, I argue that thorough and deliberate epistemological reflections help the researcher navigate these components during the research design process. First, the researcher must establish their scholarly orientation. This requires reflection on theories and philosophies of religion to conceptualize what is "religion" or "religious" in their topic of study, what (if anything) is beyond theorization, and why. Second, the researcher must consider the nature of knowledge production in the interview process. This reflection defines the researcher's approach to interacting with the interviewees, for example: phenomenology, hermeneutics, narrative, or discourse analysis. Third, the researcher must consider what new knowledge the project brings to the academic study of religion. Such reflection orients the project into one of three major life history streams: biography, how a life history is told, or the relationship between the life history and the lived life.

Rebecca Christian  
University of Calgary

### *Forgetting Jerusalem: The Gospel of John's Construction of a Christian Social Memory*

Unlike the Synoptic Gospels, the Gospel of John is rarely examined for its historical accuracy, or for its insights into early Christian identity. Place and memory studies are some relatively new approaches within New Testament studies, but they provide new perspectives into the Gospel's depiction of an early Christian community. The Gospel of John, composed after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, negotiates a community's radically altered notion of religious place, and, through this, a changing conception of their own identity. In order to reconcile this displacement, the Gospel of John re-situates elements of the community's history in a new context, providing an outline for a social memory that negates the importance of the Jerusalem Temple. This paper examines the Gospel of John's de-placement of Jerusalem, and Christianity's early attempts at "forgetting" the city's prophetic connotations. The Gospel's author employs the Jesus movement as a model to discuss and reconcile the issues of his own displaced community.

In particular, the Gospel's association of Jesus with Moses de-emphasizes Jesus's place in the Judaic Davidic dynasty, inevitably centred in Jerusalem. Instead, the Gospel's community is reimagined within the remembered history of the Exodus. The Gospel of John's creation of new memories for an early Christian community discloses some of the processes involved in the construction of Christian identity; it frames this new identity in terms of community, shared history, and religious place.

Building on Tim Cresswell's studies on place and identity, and Paul Connerton's understanding of religion as creating an identifying social memory for a group, this paper will examine how Christianity's self-identification and divergence from Judaism relies on the creation of a new social memory, oriented around new religious places. Though this research addresses Christianity only, the insights from place studies proves to be widely applicable in new theories about the acquisition and development of religious identity.

Bruce A. Coates  
University of Lethbridge

*The Nature of Love: al-Ghazālī and Islamic Mystical Philosophy*

As with most matters of phenomenology, our experiences of love can be difficult to describe. However, part of the mystical experience is its indescribability. Are experiences of love therefore comparable to mystical experiences? They are, according to Islamic mystical philosophy.

This paper provides a critical overview of al-Ghazālī's philosophical musings on love, from his proposed perceptual relationship between love and pleasure to his five related objects of love. Al-Ghazālī's reasoning is examined and explained in the light of the Islamic doctrine of Divine Unity (*tawhīd*), helping to shed light on the nature of God and love in Islamic mysticism.

Chant Cowen  
University of Calgary

*On the path of the Dhamma: How the Dhammapada is a representational text for Theravada Buddhism*

The Dhammapada is one of the most widely known and studied Buddhist texts spanning from the Theravada tradition in South East Asia to the East Asian Buddhist tradition. The popularity of the Dhammapada is not just felt in the Asian Buddhist traditions, but is also one of the first Buddhist texts to be translated fully into English and typically thought to be one of the first Buddhist texts Westerners come in contact with. The Dhammapada is still one of the most translated Buddhist texts in the West and is typically easily accessible for the interested novice of the Buddha's teachings. With all of this in consideration, it begs the question, is the Dhammapada a representational text for the Theravada Buddhist tradition? Scholars of early Buddhist thought and in the Theravada Buddhist tradition are in general consensus that the Dhammapada is a representational text of Theravada Buddhism. Evidence for this thesis is the Dhammapada's short and concise treatment of the Buddha's wisdom in the Dhammapada, the various commentaries found in Southeast Asia and East Asia, with well-known and respected Buddhist monk, Buddhaghosa, composing the most notable commentary of the Dhammapada. In addition, the various translations of the Dhammapada and interpretations of the text make it accessible for various peoples to study. The Dhammapada can be seen as a Buddhist-like Bible, as it encompasses the wisdom of Theravada Buddhism in one text in contrast to the hundreds of texts in the Pali Canon.

Brendan Cummins  
University of Lethbridge

*Sole and Exclusive: Power, Control, and Violence in the Utah Territory, 1847-1857*

When the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints made the long overland trek to the Great Salt Lake Basin the Saints were in search of place to build their prophesied Kingdom of God. The Mormons believed the only way they would succeed there when previous attempts had failed was to obtain and maintain complete governance over the civil and public arms of government and marry them with the spiritual laws of their faith. Non-Mormons who travelled to or through Utah experienced what that control meant in the most direct of ways. The Church spent the middle part of the nineteenth century entrenching themselves for what it knew would be an inevitable conflict with the outside world. Through the 1850s the Church created a government, judiciary and economic system designed to create a fortified cultural and political enclave. Violence was a useful and powerful tool in that creation. Far removed from the eastern states that would eventually raise enough of an outcry to bring armed troops to Utah, the Saints practiced what they preached with impunity. In Utah, there was no difference between the church and state, and there never would be for as long as the Mormon Church could manage to keep it so.

David M. Dalwood  
Ambrose University

*A Text of Songs? Some Observations Regarding Cohesion and Texture in the Song of Songs*

In their attempts to demonstrate the (dis)unity of the Song of Songs, biblical scholars exhibit a frequent methodological orientation towards structural analyses that emphasize either the perceived presence of organizing poetic features within this book or the lack thereof. Although such studies have undoubtedly yielded important insights, when viewed in light of the theoretical perspective provided by Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) it is apparent that exegetes have shown an uneven appreciation of the interpretative import of structural considerations when examining texts. Adopting the terminology proposed by SFL theorists, this paper suggests that structure should more precisely be restricted to the various syntagmatic relations of a language as organized across linguistic domains (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014:21-22), while recognizing cohesion as those semantic relations that together constitute a discourse as text and infuse it with meaning.

Applying these definitions to a synchronic assessment of Canticles, this study attempts to situate discussions of the book's unity within the aforementioned linguistic paradigm by tracking a selection of the features therein that together exert a cohesive force on the work as a whole. To this end, I argue first that when examining the semantic texture of the Song it is unnecessary to treat the referent of the Solomonic superscription *lišlōmōh* (1:1) as cataphorically identifying the otherwise unnamed male lover in the subsequent chapters; rather, it may be accepted that there is no explicitly identified antecedent for mentions of this latter figure while nevertheless recognizing cohesion at the outset of the book as resulting from the author's manipulation of imaginary texture. Following this preliminary discussion, I outline the cohesive effects of a selection of the expressions employed to refer to each of the lovers, specifically, the use of *dōđ* for the man and *yāpāh* and *ra'yāh* for the woman. When these instances of lexical cohesion are taken together, there is sufficient linguistic evidence within the work itself to accept the Song of Songs as constituting an instance of semantically definable text.



Erin Davis  
University of Lethbridge

*The Whirling Dance of the Dervishes*

Dancing alone can be a joyous experience, but for some it is a path to altered states of consciousness which yield hidden esoteric knowledge. For this reason Rumi encouraged dancing as a path to the Absolute. After the death of Rumi the *sema* (turning) dance of the Whirling Dervishes became a tradition filled with symbolism that offers direction to those on the path to the Beloved. Circular motions are present in many Islamic and Sufi practices, pulling adherents closer to the Divine. The twirling of the Dervish is an outward expression of the inward phenomenon that occurs within the Sufi's heart. For Rumi and the members of the Mevlevi order the *sema* is a way to express the love and joy that one feels for the beloved. It is this completion of the love affair that fulfills all of creation and Rumi speaks of dance in his poetry as the amorous expression of this love.

Nikolaas Deketelaere  
Catholic University of Leuven

*Christian Being in the World Without Being of the World: Sense, Signification and Religious Art in Jean-Luc Nancy's Deconstruction of Christianity*

Jean-Luc Nancy's project of the deconstruction of Christianity not only offers a powerful critique of metaphysics similar to those of Heidegger and Derrida, it also serves as a fruitful framework to think about the value of religious discourse in a contemporary multicultural society. In this paper I will show how Nancy's latest intellectual endeavour can be seen as exhibiting the same fundamental idea underlining his earlier political, aesthetic and ontological writings: that authentic being means being *in* the world without being *of* the world.

To do this, I will use two conceptions of meaning: first, *signification*, which locates the meaning of this world in a static exterior world; second, *sense*, the dynamic process where the meaning of the world is not situated in another exterior world, but opens up in the world itself as that which is other *from* the world but not other *than* the world. This entails a fundamental openness towards other meanings, instead of the absolute truth of signification. According to Nancy, since the inception of monotheism along with metaphysics, the world has been enclosed in signification: the meaning of the world, or beings, is traditionally traced back to and separated from a supreme divine principle, or Being, which is outside of this world and constitutes it. Though monotheism initiates this closure of the world, it is also the source of its *dis-enclosure*: monotheism, specifically Christianity, deconstructs itself and thereby indicates that the meaning of the world is not one of signification, but of sense, which opens up in the midst of this world as that which is other from it, i.e. a dynamic openness towards other meanings. Nancy argues for this by giving a specific interpretation of the notion of creation *ex nihilo*. Moreover, I will argue that the same auto-deconstructive dynamic can be observed in the way in which Nancy thinks about art, rendering truly religious art paradoxical, since art has essentially to do with sense, whilst all representations of the divine claim to signify this deity.

Nikolaas Deketelaere  
Catholic University of Leuven

*'Having Faith in the Transimmanent: On the Role and Relevance of Faith in Jean-Luc Nancy and Jean-Luc Marion'*

Jean-Luc Marion is currently probably the most well-known living French philosopher, certainly outside of Europe. He has sought to think Christianity beyond metaphysics and in order to do so, he has developed a phenomenology of givenness. Marion seeks to liberate phenomenology from its traditional preoccupation with intentionality, which he considers to be metaphysical, and instead starts from the mere givenness of phenomena to a passive consciousness. Marion then focusses on saturated phenomena, phenomena that are so rich in their appearing to consciousness, in their intuition, that the subject fails to grasp them. Thus, Marion is able to talk again about the divine, as saturated phenomenon, starting from experience, which Kant seemed for so long to have rendered impossible. However, as Shane Mackinlay argues in a very sharp critique, Marion is so preoccupied with doing away with the active, intentional subject, that by overstressing the passive nature of the subject to whom phenomena appear, traces of metaphysics remain in his phenomenology, because it neglects the ontological dimension of hermeneutics.

In this essay I will nuance Marion's thought in order to accommodate Mackinlay's concerns. To do so, I will turn to Jean-Luc Nancy's relational ontology of being singular plural, which, I will argue, is a hermeneutical ontology and can serve to correct Marion's metaphysical idea of the subject as completely passive and the phenomenon as completely active. I will do this by explaining the role of faith for both thinkers in each of their accounts of biblical encounters with the resurrected Christ. Marion sees faith as compensating a lack of concepts to contain the excessive intuition of the phenomenon that is the resurrected Christ. However, this neither fits his own theory of saturated phenomena, nor the gospel passage he is referring to, very well. Nancy, however, thanks to his hermeneutical ontology, succeeds in thinking the role of faith much more sophisticatedly: not as conceptual understanding, but rather as a receptive, though not fully passive, attitude or fundamental openness for that which is to come. Such a postmodern conception of faith serves as a clear way of overcoming metaphysical Christianity.

Hannah Forbes  
University of Calgary

*"Gie Her a Haggis!": Address to the Haggis Ceremony and Scottish Identity in Diaspora*

Robert "Robbie" Burns was an 18th-century poet from Scotland whose birthday is celebrated annually by Scots around the world. The tradition is known usually as Robbie Burns Night or Robbie Burns Dinner. While the event appears to have started about five years after the poet's death as a posthumous birthday party put on by some Burns enthusiasts, the ceremonial gathering has evolved into more of a celebration of all things Scottish rather than strictly an observance of the bard's birthday. Though each Scottish community may celebrate differently, common elements such as bagpipe playing, highland dancing, Scotch whisky, dressing culturally in tartans and kilts, and the Address to the Haggis can be found at most celebrations. This essay will examine the group event of Robbie Burns Night, with a particular focus on the ritual elements of the Address to the Haggis, drawing from a video of the recitation found on YouTube as an example of the ritual. The Address to the Haggis is a ceremonial ritual that serves to unite the

Scottish people, particularly those in diaspora, in a common sense of heritage. This paper will draw upon ritual studies and diaspora studies in order to explain how the rituals found in Robbie Burns Night celebrations define and reinforce Scottish identity for the participants.

Kimberley Humphries  
University of Lethbridge

### *Trends of Islamophobia in American Politics*

As the 2016 United States of America Presidential election approaches its end, as a follower of the 4 year long campaigns it's crucial to reflect on where each candidate stands on issues such as healthcare, and education, but most of all terrorism. Although Islamophobia has been rampant in North America for quite some time, it had not come to such a culmination before the events of 9/11.

After the terrorist attacks of the Twin Towers, Muslims became overwhelmingly viewed with suspicion in the eyes of the political right. Most notable is presidential candidate and reality television host Donald Trump, whose views on immigration and Islam caught the attention of radical conservatives. Donald Trump has continued to perpetuate stereotypes that view Muslims as violent or threatening by stating things like, "... Islam hates [America]," and calling for a, "total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States." By failing, for example, to call out a supporter stating that the problem in America is Muslims, and making claims that Muslims have training camps to kill Americans, he has contributed to the spread of Islamophobia unlike any other candidate.

The Red Scare of Communism in the USA has slowly transformed into the Green Scare of Islam. In this presentation I will be analyzing the trends of Islamophobia and hate speech in American politics and the American presidential election. I will discuss common tropes Islamophobes use to further their political and cultural aims. Employing interviews, academic articles and studies, and by tracing the events currently unfolding the United States of America I will highlight how fear is used by elements of the American Right as a political tool, and possible remedies to this blight in the politics of the world's most powerful nation.

Kimberly Humphries  
University of Lethbridge

### *The Manson Myth*

Charles Manson founded The Family after he was released from prison in 1967. This 'family' would later be known for murdering 7 people, including the pregnant actor Sharon Tate. The news coverage was diligent and widespread on the trials of Susan Atkins, Patricia Krenwinkel, Leslie Van Houten, and 'Tex' Watson; the main members who killed for the group. With regards to Charles Manson, though, the news media painted a caricature of the man he is, and the group he created; Manson was epitomized as the archetype of evil and coercion. Charles Manson was sentenced to life in prison and put on death row for the conspiring of the seven murders. His sentenced was later dropped to life in prison when the death penalty in California was overturned in 1972.

The Family has been labelled as a cult, resulting in certain negative implications that misconstrued what the group was intending to be. I will argue The Family was a New Religious Movement (NRM), contrary to the manner in which the media has portrayed the group. When The Family

came into light, “Helter Skelter” became ubiquitous and inseparable from the group. However this emphasis of “Helter Skelter” was a result of the media’s doing and framing. It was construed as a race war and pertaining to The Beatles, but little else is known on the subject as well as the rest of The Family’s belief and moral system; due in large part to the media focusing mainly on the most provocative Family myth.

Throughout this presentation I will be analyzing and discussing the religious and moral beliefs that the group held. Using many books, interviews, and documentaries on the group, I will piece together what little information is available to discuss the deeper aspects of the Family, and what consequently lead to one of the most notorious murder sprees in North American history. I will seek to defend the concept that Charles Manson was not a bad man, but a wrong man. By this I mean, that I am not condoning what happened nor the role he had in the crimes, rather I am attempting to construct an alternative perspective based on the religiosity of the group as a whole.

Jessica Knoop  
University of Lethbridge

*Unlikely Symbionts: Exploring the Relationship Between Buddhist Modernity and the Modern Sciences*

This paper explores the relationship between Buddhism and science from its origins up to contemporary manifestations and analyzes the effects of this relationship on Buddhist modernity. After drawing on Donald Lopez’s 2008 book, *Buddhism & Science*, to introduce the history of this relationship, I present a number of recent scientific studies which serve to identify the manner in which this relationship manifests in the modern era. The various papers I present reveal a strong connection between Buddhist practices and the modern sciences in fields of both physical and psychological health. Harnessing insight from several Buddhist figures, I then proceed to explore this relationship and its effects on various factors of Buddhist modernization. I conclude that the modern sciences are beneficial to the modernization of Buddhism in that they support the preservation of its practices, encourage its presence in a secular world, and offer its practitioners new insight into their religious practices without challenging its authenticity.

Rechele Korbie  
University of Lethbridge

*Media Ferocity: Anti-Semitism in 19th Century Imperial Russia*

Anti-Semitism has been a continuous element of Russian history but during the late 19th century a distinct change occurred which intensified the intolerance of the Tsarist state and led to one of the most impactful pieces of anti-Semitic literature: *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. This paper will analyze how this atmosphere of intensifying anti-Semitism was created by state legislation and further propagated by using contemporary media, such as *The Protocols*. Isolated in the Pale of Settlement Jewish peoples of this time faced violent pogroms, reduced rights, and continuous attempts at assimilating them using Russification programs. Looking at Russian officials of the time, such as two of the last Ministers of the Interior, it is clear to see similar threads of thought within their writings and the writings of the *Protocols*. By vilifying Jewish peoples and culture the state also vilified their causes, which were increasingly related to the Russian Intelligentsia and other radical movements.

Kate Korte  
University of Lethbridge

*Hinduism and Feminism*

The paper explores the religious and political elements contributing to the status of women from the Vedic times to today, with particular attention to the feminist movement in India from 1850-today. By tracing the most significant events and leaders throughout the movement, patterns of progress and regression are identified. The paper explores the unifying power of shakti in Hinduism as an empowering force for Hindu feminists.

Chelsea Lamb  
Ambrose University

*Voicing Violence: Lamentations 4 as Verbal Art*

A beautifully crafted work of linguistic art, Lamentations 4 is woven together with words of mourning that prioritize honesty. The poem draws on the traditions of its socio-cultural context and the devices of Hebrew poetics to create a stark and vivid portrait of the experience of siege, famine, violence, and exile. The poetry is graphic, disturbing, and does not hold back from naming YHWH as the one responsible for such horrific suffering. Despite this particular historic location, Lamentations is not bound to history. Rather, Lamentations continues to speak with pain's voice in the contemporary world. Through an analysis of the poetic features of Lamentations 4, I will argue that the poem presents itself as both a space where those who are victims of violence can come to mourn and a model for community practices of protest through artistic expression. It is the artistic form of the text, coupled with its status as communal lament, which allows it to perform for the benefit of the community. Thus, my study will conclude with a reflection on the significance of confronting the horrifying realities of the human condition through creative processes so as to speak violence, give meaning to that which is beyond understanding, and look in the direction of hope.

Brittany Lewis  
University of Lethbridge

*Marathon Monks of Mount Hiei: An Analysis of Tradition, History, and Philosophy*

The Marathon Monks of Mount Hiei are a fascinating group of Buddhists performing extreme rituals and practices on top of this Japanese mountain, only a short drive from Kyoto. For some, their journey includes a 1000-day run/walk in search of spiritual enlightenment by pushing themselves to the edge of human capabilities. The Marathon Monks' theory, philosophy, and practice derive from a combination of ancient Japanese folk religious traditions merging with Buddhist asceticism and Tendai practices, dating from Saicho and his lineage at Enryakuji to the present. My research includes a detailed analysis of the rituals and practices these monks engage in, as well as the participation by lay individuals both on the mountain and down in the cities nearest Hiei. I also provide context to the Monks' practices, through an analysis of the history of mountain worship and an exploration of Tendai Buddhism, specifically in terms of the growth of this particular Buddhist sect as well as key philosophies associated with Tendai specifically. Lastly, I provide an analysis of Saicho and other key figures associated with Mount Hiei in relation to their contributions to the practice of the Marathon Monks both historically and in the present.

Colin J. Martin  
University of Lethbridge

*"Let's Just Ignore Islam, It Will Go Away, Right?" Religious "Indifference" in Russian Central Asia, 1867-1881.*

In the mid-nineteenth century, the Russian Empire expanded into Central Asia, creating a military colony called the Governor-Generalship of Turkestan in 1867. Turkestan's first Governor-General, Konstantin von Kaufman, created a policy advocating "indifference" toward Islam, operating under the belief that by "ignoring" Islam, Islam would naturally decay. This "indifference" was neither explicitly toleration or repression, but rather a peculiar mixture of both. The Shari'ah continued to be used as the legal system for Central Asians in Russian Turkestan, and was expanded by government legislation at the same time as the power of the ulema over the judiciary was challenged. I investigate the nature of Kaufman's policy of "indifference," and how the Russian government policy both promoted and attacked Islam in Central Asia in the nineteenth century.

Ryan Mikalson  
University of Calgary

*Re-placing Rome: Roman Place and Identity as a Papal city in the Early Medieval Period*

The city of Rome is central to any discussion of Early Christianity. Rome, the one-time capital of an empire which marginalized and at times persecuted Christians, became an epicenter of Christian power in Late Antiquity and, by the High Middle Ages, had become a city central to the Papal state. This paper seeks to understand this shift in Rome's identity. Examining coins from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle ages through a Place Studies lens, it becomes clear that Rome's identity was re-placed in a process initiated by the Emperors Constantine and Constans; this process was taken further by the popes of the Early Middle ages who began minting their own coins in an effort to transform Rome into a papal city.

Chris Miller  
St Mary's University

*Awakenings as Phases of American Religious Life*

In this paper I hope to demonstrate that there is much to be gained dividing large spans of history into manageable epochs or periods, as has been done with the construction of a First, Second, Third and Fourth Great Awakening. By examining seemingly unconnected periods within this paradigm, it allows for connections to be made regarding what contributes to these periods of increased religiosity, what separates these periods across the decades they took place in and why is it that American religious history seems to exist within a continuing cycle fluctuating between low and high religious consciousness.

Applying this tool of historical epochs can be helpful in the case of Great Awakenings as it allows for recognition of social causes and elements that affected religious change. One particular case where the Awakening construct is helpful is in understanding the rise of new religious movements during the 1960s and 70s. By examining the rise in NRM activity from the 1960s onwards as another cycle in a continuing wave of religious revival, one can avoid the mistake of assuming that these NRMs emerged 'out of nowhere'.

Grant Sawatzky  
University of Calgary

*Heresy, the Flagellant Movement and the Fluidity of Orthodoxy During the Black Death (1348-1349)*

A curious reaction to the Black Death in the mid-fourteenth century was the religious flagellant movement whereby men and women walked communally in large numbers from city to city - in penitential pilgrimage - publically whipping themselves. The high point of their travels in each city would be a ritual/performance of dramatically drawing blood in the act of whipping. The intriguing nature of this enthusiastic development suggests the following question: How does one account for this remarkable practice in the context of late medieval piety and the church? Modern scholars, such as Anne Autissier and Laura Smoller regard the flagellant movement as heterodox from the perspective of Pope Clement VI's bull of condemnation "inter sollicitudines" (October 20, 1349). This essay will argue that from the start of the Black Death in January of 1348 through until the summer of 1349, the flagellant movement was on the contrary, orthodox.

Grant Sawatzky  
University of Calgary

*Dynamics of Symbols in the Hermeneutics of Paul Tillich and Paul Ricoeur*

The figures of Paul Tillich (1886-1965) and Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005) have cast monumental shadows over the configuration of religious studies in the modern/postmodern world. At the heart of their thought is their theory of interpretation. Given that Ricoeur succeeded Tillich at the University of Chicago as the John Nuveen Professor of Philosophical Theology, it would be worthwhile to explore the substructure of their hermeneutics. As such, this paper will argue that 'symbols' provide the foundation for the hermeneutic organon of Tillich and Ricoeur.

Lisa L. Schalk  
University of Lethbridge

*The Influence of Church in Re-creating Identities: Postwar Dutch Reformed Immigrants in Southern Alberta*

This paper examines the ways in which Protestant Reformed Christianity and church communities informed the re-creation of migrant identities among the post-WWII Dutch immigrants who came to southern Alberta. Because immigration removes migrants from the familiar people and places with which they feel a sense of belonging and connectedness, it follows that immigration forces them to come to a new understanding of themselves within their new context. My study uses oral history interviews which I conducted with nine postwar Dutch immigrants to show how fundamentally important religion was in shaping their new identities during their first few years of adaptation in southern Alberta. Because the nine individuals I interviewed were all members of Calvinist Reformed churches, both in the Netherlands and in southern Alberta, my study focuses on that segment of the Dutch immigrant population. I argue that, despite the dislocation they felt and the steep learning curve they experienced after immigrating, the nine individuals whom I interviewed re-created their identities by firmly grounding themselves in the theologies and communities of the Reformed churches which they joined and created in southern Alberta.

Kalyna Somchynsky  
University of Alberta

*Kazimir Malevich and the Icon of the Absolute*

The Ukrainian/Russian artist Kazimir Malevich (1879-1935) is best known as the founder of the avant-garde art movement Suprematism that developed in the early twentieth century in Russia. Suprematism has been viewed art historically as a radically new art movement that identified itself as the end of painting, however has also been studied as a precursor to the artistic experiments of the Abstract Expressionists in The United States in the 1950's. Although the philosophy behind Suprematism is often explored in discussions of Suprematism, Malevich's desire to elevate Suprematism to the status of an organized religion has only recently been discussed. A key method Malevich used to allow Suprematist works to stand as visual manifestations of his philosophy, was to reference Eastern Orthodox Icons in their form, function and reception. I argue that by viewing Suprematist works through the lens one would use to view Eastern Orthodox Icons it becomes clear how the Suprematist works could function as contemplative images and windows to existing truths. Furthermore, Malevich's choice to reference an established and canonical form of religious art supports the conclusion that he desired to establish Suprematism on par with organized religion. In order to reach my conclusions about the links between Suprematism and Eastern Orthodox Icons, I focused on the intention of the artist as communicated by his own writing with my conclusions from the comparative reading of his works with Icons. Furthermore, my conclusions draw upon existing scholarship where it can be found, most specifically Andrew Spira's book *The Avant-Garde Icon: Russian Avant-Garde Art and the Icon Painting Tradition*. Malevich did not merely hope to establish Suprematism as a religion, he conceptualized various ways it could take form. Establishing a visual language was merely his first step.

Dillon St. Jean  
University of Lethbridge

*In Search of the Bull: Nishitani's 'Emptiness' and Harman's 'Object Orientated Ontology.'*

The Kyoto School of Philosophy is a group of Japanese figures that, in the 20th century, work towards strengthening the philosophical voice of Japan. Zen, as their philosophical framework, allows the Kyoto School to construct a metaphysics that rivals the Western canon. Fundamentally, the Kyoto School figures operate under the Buddhist concept of Śūnyatā or "emptiness".

Keiji Nishitani and other Kyoto School figures recognize that, although Western figures such as Heidegger and Nietzsche come very close to the meaning of Śūnyatā, Western thought does not recognize its total meaning, but is indeed moving towards "emptiness." I will argue that almost 30 years after Nishitani's death, contemporary thought is, more than ever, closer to understanding Śūnyatā as a fundamental philosophical concept.

I will discover parallels between Nishitani's concept of "emptiness" and Harman's "Object-Orientated Ontology." Graham Harman is a leading figure in the "Speculative Realist" movement. Speculative Realism is a contemporary philosophical trend that engages with figures, such as Heidegger, through social media platforms and Internet blogs. I argue that the parallels between the two figures, and their concepts, suggest that Western thought is coming much closer to Nishitani's meaning of Śūnyatā or "emptiness."



Fanny Tamègnon  
Ambrose University

*Elihu, a countercultural voice for today*

This paper will explore the figure of Elihu in the oldest biblical book; the book of Job. This character first appears in Job 32. We will analyze how as an individual, his intellectual and spiritual distinguished him as one who is wisely zealous.

Using their very words, there are scholars who have described Elihu as arrogant, a buffoon, a pretentious interloper, a fool, a hot-headed windbag. While these scholars have depicted Elihu negatively, rarely have studies examined his discerning skills, his self-control, and his unshakable confidence manifested through his intellectual caliber. Furthermore, they have shown very little how these character traits present him to us as a countercultural model for this century.

Using lenses of genre, ancient society, literary structure, history, and theology, this paper will analyze the fact that though Elihu was much younger than the rest of Job's friends (Eliphaz, Zophar, and Bildad), his unsurpassing wisdom reintroduced him as a training model for those seeking to strategically be countercultural voices in this century.

Kira Thibaudeau  
University of Alberta

*The Curious Absence of Japanese Nuns from Buddhist Material Culture*

Academic considerations of Buddhist traditions have spanned a great variety of topics, recently expanding in order to attend to modern concerns such as issues of gender and ethnicity. While it is certainly the case that many avenues of inquiry have yet to be adequately addressed by scholars within the field of religious studies, the question of the role that gender has held within religious traditions acts as a burgeoning area of academic interest. Indeed, within the bounds of Buddhist traditions, numerous scholars have produced work specifically addressing issues relating to gender. Often, however, such studies are rooted in doctrinal and textual contexts, with the question of gender rarely being treated within the framework of more tangible aspects of the tradition, such as Buddhist material culture. Considering the relatively recent academic interest in the study of Buddhist material culture, however, it is not entirely surprising that the study of gender as it relates to the production of, and engagement with, the material aspects of Buddhist traditions has rarely acted as the focus of academic literature. While it is certainly the case that the body of evidence relating to the engagement of nuns (bhiksunis) with Buddhist material culture is far less substantial than that of monks (bhiksus), this does not warrant the conclusion that nuns were exempt from this facet of Buddhist traditions. Many potential explanations may be offered in seeking to discover why nuns appear to have been less involved in this aspect of their religious tradition than monks, with the absence of a substantial body of preexisting work concerning this area of study resulting in a great deal of flexibility when considering possible conjectures concerning gender and Buddhist material culture. It is clear, however, that at various points in Buddhist history and in an assortment of diverse contexts nuns have been actively engaged in the production of, and interaction with, Buddhist material culture yet have had less of a lasting impression upon this facet of Buddhist traditions than their male counterparts. In seeking to explore potential reasons for this trend, my paper will focus on Japanese nuns, particularly from as late as the early seventeenth century CE and stretching back to the initial introduction of Buddhism to Japan during the mid-sixth century CE.



