

9-2013

Good News: [A Newsletter] from the Department of Theology and Religious Studies of Saint Joseph's University, Fall 2013

Saint Joseph's University

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarship.sju.edu/trl_news

Citation

Saint Joseph's University, "Good News: [A Newsletter] from the Department of Theology and Religious Studies of Saint Joseph's University, Fall 2013" (2013). *Theology & Religious Studies Newsletters*. 1.
http://scholarship.sju.edu/trl_news/1

This Magazines and Newsletters is brought to you for free and open access by the Theology & Religious Studies Department at Scholarship@SJU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theology & Religious Studies Newsletters by an authorized administrator of Scholarship@SJU. For more information, please contact kmudrick@sju.edu.

Department Welcomes Two New Colleagues

This fall, the Department welcomes to our faculty Dr. Adam Gregerman (Ass't Professor of Jewish Studies) and Dr. Brendan Sammon (Ass't Professor of Systematic Theology). We have asked them to say a few words about themselves.

Dr. Gregerman: I am excited to become a member of the department as a new assistant professor. I began my academic study of religion with a focus on Judaism when I was at Amherst College. As I studied Juda-

ism in the Second Temple and Rabbinic periods, I soon realized the close historical and theological connections between Judaism and Christianity. I also learned of the much longer and less-well known later history of influence and interaction. Much of it was acrimonious, but I was fascinated by the ways Jews and Christians defined themselves in opposition to each other. Much of my graduate work toward an M.T.S. degree at Harvard Divinity School and Ph.D.

at Columbia University focused on classical Jewish sources. However, I've increasingly expanded my research and teaching to include later historical periods while I was a professor at Connecticut College and in Baltimore at St. Mary's Seminary and as scholar in residence at the Institute for Christian & Jewish Studies. I'm especially interested in the recent unprecedented shift away from centuries of hostility. This new relationship is based, among other things, on growing respect

and friendship between members of both communities, new scholarship about earlier periods, and creative new theological approaches. SJU, with its commitment to breadth in religious studies and improved understanding of Jewish-Catholic relations, as seen in its Institute for Jewish-Catholic Relations, is a wonderful place to further develop these interests.



Continued on p. 4 >



From the Chair

Dr. Shawn Kraemer

Recently, I enjoyed the privilege of doing classroom observations for two of the newest members of our faculty. Dr. Susan Andrews specializes in East Asian religions. As a kinetic learner, when she spells things, she writes them out in the air with her finger to recall the memory. On this day, class had been moved to the President's Lounge in Campion. When I arrived, the space was precisely arranged. There were 5 sets of "craft materials" – boxes, scissors, tape, paper, plastic cups, crayons, colored pencils, and clay. Each set of materials included two fact sheets with information that students should have been familiar with from the assigned readings. Students completed a brief 1-5 scale survey: "Right now, I can describe the form and content of Fuhao's Shang tomb and

the Zhou period tomb of Marquis Yi." Then student groups were assigned to construct the two types of tombs, including drawing or shaping the objects found in the tombs and putting them in the proper places. Dr. Andrews moved among the groups, sometimes on hands and knees, asking why someone might build a tomb so shaped, why these particular items might be placed in the tomb, or what the differing tombs reveal about differences in belief. Each group filled out a worksheet that enabled Dr. Andrews to discern what information needed to be reviewed next class. Student surveys completed at the end of the class showed a 40% improvement on the day's learning objectives.

Dr. Brendan Sammon is clearly a philosophical sort. His class session was carefully outlined. He, like Dr. Andrews, is pedagogically years ahead of where I was

during my first year of teaching at SJU. Prezi online presentation software gave his visuals more dynamism than Power Point slides. His talk on Gustavo Gutierrez was interspersed with visuals, a film clip, and a class exercise on analogical thinking. Students were encouraged not merely to copy the slides, which would be posted, but to think about how the ideas connected to their reading. At each step along the way, he connected the highly technical language and concepts found in the readings to student experience.

The two classes I myself taught in between these two observations were a bit more traditional. I used neither high tech nor boxes and glue! As a visual learner, I did a lot of listing and diagramming on the board, and as often happens, I found myself pointing to a spot on the board where a concept had been written a

few minutes earlier to recall that concept to student minds (even though that particular thought had long since been erased and replaced with another!).

After their observations, I offered comments and suggestions to my two colleagues that I hope will assist their teaching. But observing them has also helped me to rethink what I myself am doing in the classroom.

I am delighted to work in a department in which the faculty are truly dedicated to communicate things they find interesting and exciting to our students. I am profoundly grateful and awe-inspired that we allow one another to do this in such different ways, and that we are willing to help one another to do this better, all the while respecting and learning from our own preferred pedagogies and native talents.

Honor Society Inductees

On April 17, 2013, the Department inducted these students into the Alpha Xi chapter of Theta Alpha Kappa, the National Honor Society for Religious Studies and Theology.: Carol Collins, Eric Kindler, Lisa Mariani, and Katherine Smith.

Congratulations!

The New Testament as Social Media?

Prof. Paul Aspan has developed a very creative first-year seminar course in the honors program that will explore the New Testament as a form of social media. Here is a description:

Flash mobs. Virtual communities. Twitter. Viral videos. None of these current English terms existed in the Greek, Aramaic and Hebrew speaking worlds that produced the texts we now call "the New Testament." But all of this terminology could apply to the manner in which first, Jesus of Nazareth, then Paul of Tarsus, and following them, an army of disciples changed their world. The New Testament "authors" produced an explosion of media in antiquity that changed both how people communicated in their world, and thus, how they understood that world, and their place in it. This course uses both traditional means of study as well as innovative forms of communication to achieve an authoritative and thorough understanding of these ancient texts and the people who produced them.

Faculty Publications

James F. Caccamo

"Let Me Put It Another Way: Communication Technology," in *Liturgy* 28/3 (April 2013):7-16.

Peter Clark, S.J.

(Co-author:) "Munchausen's Syndrome: Capacity and the Role of the Surrogate Decision-Maker: Ethical Commentary," *Internet Journal of Catholic Bioethics* 8 Winter 2013.

(Co-author:) "Medical Tourism: Winners and Losers," accepted by *Journal of Health* 2013.

(Co-author:) "Medicine, Buddhism and End-Of-Life Care," accepted for publication *Internet Journal of Catholic Bioethics*.

(Co-author:) "Mercy Health Promoter: A Paradigm for Just Health Care," *Medical Science Monitor*.

Philip A. Cunningham

"Judaism" (with Jan Katzew) in Pim Valkenberg, ed., *World Religions in Dialogue: A Comparative Theological Approach* (Anselm Academic, 2013), 17-76.

"A Catholic Theology of the Land?: The State of the Question," *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 8/1(2013): 1-15.

"Themes in Catholic Post-*Nostra Aetate* Theology," World Council of Churches, *Current Dialogue* 53 (Dec 2012):10-20.

William Madges

(Co-edited:) *Vatican II: Fifty Personal Stories* (Orbis, 2012).

Katie M. Oxx

The Nativist Movement in American History: Religious Conflict in the 19th Century (Routledge, 2013).

Review: S.K. Green, *The Bible, the School, and the Constitution in Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture*, 82/3 (Sept, 2013).

Bruce Wells

"Judges, Early Israelite," "Law, Ancient Near East," & "Ordeals, Ancient Near East," articles in R. Bagnall et al., eds., *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).

"First Wives Club: Divorce, Demotion, and the Fate of Leah in Genesis 29," *Maarav: A Journal for the Study of the Northwest Semitic Languages and Literatures* 18 (2013): 101-129.

Ummeye Isra Yazicioglu

Understanding the Qur'anic Miracle Stories in the Modern Age (Penn State U.P., 2013).



Spotlight on Faculty Interests:

Professor part of Vatican Seminar on New Media

By Jim Caccamo

The Vatican has jumped into the new media world. With YouTube and Twitter presences, Popes Benedict XVI and Francis have reached out to new generations of Catholics and non-Catholics.

Catholic interest in media is not new. Longtime patron of the arts, the Vatican has been talking about "new media" since 1936 when film was the new medium. With each new technology, Catholics worked to come to terms with its implications—both good and bad—to ensure that it served the common good.

Continuing that legacy, over the last two summers the Vatican and the US Conference of Catholic Bishops have hosted a seminar called "Theology and Communications: In Dialogue" at Santa Clara University. The seminar gathered theologians from around the world who work

on the religious implications of new media. Its primary aim was to help inform the work of the Vatican by opening up their perspective on issues, provide alternative viewpoints, new sensitivities, and raise new issues.

I was privileged to attend both years. We studied topics like social media in parishes, images as communication in the Asian context, film in ministry training, and approaching doctrine by seeing Jesus as communicator. This year, I presented a paper, "Hear What I Say, Not What I Do?" In it I looked at how what we actually do when we communicate—like texting in a class, phoning at the dinner table, or browsing alone—adds to the words, shaping the larger meaning of that communication event.

The consultation has been a tremendous learning experience. Specialists in theology and media

are fairly rare, so it has been really great to join with others in the field. It has been very gratifying to see the deep interest of church leaders in the work that is being done by theologians. In the seminar they have been learners who listen, question, and consider deeply the ideas under discussion. Indeed, I could see glimmers of last year's seminar in the pope's last World Communication Day address!

The hierarchy, theologians, and the laity don't always listen to one another. It has been an edifying experience to be part of a truly consultative and collegial dialogue. It has been a glimpse of the vitality and creativity that can happen when we open ourselves up to all the voices in the church. I look forward to what is yet come.



Congratulations to Faculty Award Recipients!

Susan Andrews received a Post-doctoral Fellowship from the Social Science Research Council. Her project, "Replicating Replicas: The Creation of the Pan-Asian Mount Wutai 五臺山 Cult in pre-14th century China, Korea, and Japan," explores the links among seemingly distant locales in East Asia by studying how narratives and practices related to Mount Wutai were preserved,

transformed, and used to new ends in the three nations.

Philip A. Cunningham received the Peace and Dialogue Award from the Dialogue Forum and Peace Islands Institute for promoting interfaith understanding.

Millicent Feske, who specializes in contemporary Christian theologies, was promoted to the rank of Associate Professor.

William Madges' co-edited book, *Vatican II: Fifty Personal Stories* received the Catholic Press Association's Second Place Award in the category of 50th Anniversary of the Second Vatican Council. One reviewer said: "What an interesting and absorbing book! It tells the story of Vatican II through the revelatory experiences and personal assessment of distin-

guished Catholic and non-Catholic authors. Covering a wide scope of topics, this book is a treasure trove of valuable insights."

Katie M. Oxx received a grant from the Office of Diversity to develop a new course: "Race, Region, and Religion in American History" for the spring 2014 semester.

Celebrating the Second Vatican Council



Prof. J. Caccamo, M. Feske, K. Oxx, P. Cunningham, and W. Madges join in a panel to mark the 50th anniversary of the opening of Vatican II. Over the next few years, the department will observe the anniversaries of the sixteen conciliar documents issued between 1963 and 1965.

Faculty Presentations and Activities

Susan Andrews

"Creating Continental Counterparts for the Fujiwara no Kamatari Cult in Kamakura Japan (1185-1333)," Network & Identity: Exchange Relations between China & the World Conference. Ghent Univ, Belgium, Dec 18-20, 2013.

"Japanese Re-Imaginations of Mount Wutai's Significance: An Examination of the Five Terrace Mountain in the Cleric Chōnen's Hagiographies." Sacred Space and Spatial Sacredness Conference. Fudan Univ. 復旦大學, Shanghai, China, Aug 16-17, 2013.

"Replacing Sukhāvati: The Centrality of Śākyamuni and India in Contemporary BCA Dharma School Programming." Pure Land in Buddhist Cultures Conf., Univ of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada, May 31-June 2, 2013.

"Recreating China's Holy Landscapes in Kamakura Japan." University of Alberta. Edmonton, Canada. February 27, 2013.

James F. Caccamo

"Hear What I Say, Not What I Do?: Material Practice and Social Context as Central Factors in the Consequences of Communication" (see Spotlight article).

Philip A. Cunningham

"The State of the Question: A Catholic Theology of the Land?" Consultation of the National Council of Synagogues and the Bishops' Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, USCCB, New York, May 7, 2013.

"Questions between Jews and Catholics as a New Papacy Begins," American Jewish Committee, Philadelphia, May 7, 2013.

Introductory Christian Comments, Moot Beit Din, RAVSAK, Jewish Community Day School Network, Philadelphia, Apr 18, 2013.

"Response to J. Connelly, 'How the Catholic Church Overcame Its Own Theology and Discovered that God Loves the Jews,'" Boston College, Apr 7, 2013.

"Beginning Steps toward a New Catholic-Jewish Relationship," for course, "Religions and Peace in the Holy Land," Princeton Theological Seminary, Mar 27, 2013.

"Monk, Priest, and Nun," panel (with Alain Elkann), University of Pennsylvania, Mar 22, 2013.

"The Gift of Vatican II: How Catholics Relate to Other Christians and Other Religions," College of Saint Elizabeth, Morristown, NJ, Oct 13, 2012

Adam L. Gregerman

"New Testament Texts on the Land: A Jewish Perspective" at "Promise, Land, and Hope: Jews and Christians Seeking Understanding to Enable Constructive Dialogue on Israeli-Palestinian Issues," a research consultation of the International Council of Christians and Jews, Chicago, Aug 14, 2013.

Katie M. Oxx

"Let's Talk About Sects: A Spatial Approach to Encountering Religious Others in Philadelphia," LaSalle Univ, June 2013.

continued on back page >



**SAINT JOSEPH'S
UNIVERSITY**

**Department of
Theology & Religious Studies**

Chair: Dr. Shawn Krahmer, BE209
Admin Ass't: Ms. Joni Porreca, BE218

Phone: 610-660-1850
Fax: 610-660-3217
E-mail: porreca@sju.edu

Meet Our Faculty:

Susan Andrews
Assistant Professor: East Asian Religions

Paul F. Aspan
Associate Professor: New Testament;
CAS Associate Dean

Gerald J. Beyer
Associate Professor: Social Ethics

James F. Caccamo
Associate Professor: Technology Ethics,
Social Ethics

David Carpenter
Associate Professor: History of Religions,
Hinduism, Buddhism

Peter Clark, S.J.
Professor: Medical Ethics;
Director, Institute of Catholic Bioethics

Philip A. Cunningham
Professor: Christian-Jewish Relations,
Biblical Studies; Director, Institute for
Jewish-Catholic Relations

Millicent Feske
Associate Professor: Contemporary
Christian Theologies; Program Director,
M.A. in Theology and Society

Vincent Genovesi, S.J.
Professor: Ethics

Adam L. Gregerman
Assistant Professor: Jewish Studies;
Assistant Director, Institute for Jewish-
Catholic Relations

Gerard Jacobitz
Assistant Professor: Systematic Theology

Allen Kerkeslager
Associate Professor: Religions of the
Ancient World

Shawn Madison Krahmer
Associate Professor: Historical Theology;
Chair

William Madges
Professor: Historical Theology

Kathleen Oxx
Assistant Professor: History of Christianity

Brendan Sammon
Assistant Professor: Systematic Theology

Bruce Wells
Associate Professor: Hebrew Bible

Umeyye Isra Yazicioglu
Assistant Professor: Islamic Studies

Faculty Presentations and Activities

(continued from p. 3)

“Boston Was Nice, But Who’s Running For Philly?” *Newsworks*, May 14, 2013.

Elected to the Board of Managers of the American Catholic Historical Society, December 2012.

Bruce Wells

“Limited Liability: Carrying Guilt in Priestly Texts and Late Babylonian Temple Documents,” Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, Chicago, Nov 18, 2012.

“The Exodus Story as Emancipation Narrative,” presented at “Emancipation Narratives: A Panel Discussion on How Oppressed Peoples Have Used Per-

sonal Accounts to Find Freedom and Fight for It,” Saint Joseph’s University, Jan 31, 2013.

“When Life Isn’t Fair: Psalms of Protest and Complaint.” Main speaker for the Narberth Presbyterian Church Memorial Day Retreat at the Innabah Camp and Retreat Center, Spring City, PA, May 28-29, 2013.

Ummeysa Isra Yazicioglu

“Pregnant with Jesus and within the Whale like Jonah: Mawlana Rumi and Bediuzzaman Nursi on Prophets and Human Potential,” International Symposium on Said Nursi and Mevlana Rumi, Konya, Turkey, May 2013.

“Belief in Hell and Heaven in this Day and Age? Said Nursi’s Interpretation of Hereafter in the Qur’an.” Tadabbur al-Qur’an: Contemplating the Qur’an Conference, Howard University, Washington DC, March 2013.

VISIT US AT:

**WWW.SJU.EDU/
ACADEMICS/CAS/
THEOLOGY**

New Course Explores Catholic Tradition via Urban Lab Approach

Profs. Jim Caccamo and Katie Oxx have developed a team-taught, unique version of THE 154 “Faith, Justice, and the Catholic Tradition,” to be offered first in the spring 2014 semester.

Called an “urban lab,” the course will combine traditional in-class methods with community-based emergent pedagogy. To enhance student learning outcomes and increase rigor through experiential

engagement, it will incorporate the greater Philadelphia urban environment as a “laboratory.”

Through field trips and weekend overnights, students will apply the principles of the Faith-Justice course to their neighbors’ lives. Central to the urban lab model is former Jesuit Superior General Hans Kolvenbach’s call for students to “meet the gritty reality of this world in their lives.”



Interested students and faculty are highly encouraged to contact Prof Caccamo (jcaccamo@sju.edu) or Prof Oxx (koxx@sju.edu).

Two New Colleagues [continued from page 1]

Dr. Sammon: I am compelled to first say what an honor it is to have received membership in the theology and religious studies department at SJU. The Jesuits first became a part of my life during high school at Cleveland St. Ignatius, and again at Loyola MD as well as my last teaching post at Georgetown. It was no doubt that Ignatian desire to find God in all things that put me on the theological path, as well as the *magis* that allowed me to keep getting up after my many

stumbles. I taught two years of high school right out of college before returning to Leuven, Belgium where I had spent my junior year abroad. After completing studies there, I returned to my alma mater to teach for another two years until Fr. Tim Kesicki S.J., the President at the time, no doubt weary of my insatiable desire for intellectual discussion, pushed me into continuing my learning. I was blessed to have met a beautiful woman from the old world (Italy)

during my time as an MA student in Leuven. We were married in 2004 and have two beautifully unruly boys who in many ways have become the center of my theological orbit. I can’t express how excited I am to learn theologically and pedagogically from the members of this fine department and to bring that learning to students here!



The Department of Theology and Religious Studies is committed to a rigorous presentation of the methods and content of the scholarly study of Christian Theology and the academic discipline of Religious Studies. We view these combined disciplines as an important component within the liberal arts curriculum of a Roman Catholic university in the Jesuit tradition. We take seriously our charge to engage students in the serious and critical study of religious experience, practice, thought and inquiry, both historically and today.