

**SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:**

- Travel Course
—London and
Paris
- Travel Course—
Greece and
Turkey
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Self-Study
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TRAVEL COURSE LONDON AND PARIS SPRING BREAK 2008

This spring the Department of Religious Studies will offer a new travel course. During Spring Break 2008 (February 29-March 7), Dr. Reddish and Dr. Fant will offer a one-credit-hour course entitled "The Bible in Art and Artifact." Students will visit museums in London (the British



The Louvre

scenes from the Bible. The course will be offered every other year. The next spring break trip will take place in 2010.

Museum and the National Gallery) and in Paris (the Louvre and the Musée d'Orsay). The primary purpose of the course will be to study archaeological artifacts from the ancient Near Eastern world and the Mediterranean world that have a direct bearing on the history, events, or places associated with the Bible (examples include the Cyrus Cylinder, the Mesha Stele, and the Taylor Prism) or that provide important background information about the biblical world (examples include the Law Code of Hammurabi, the Amarna letters, and the Sumerian creation stories). In addition, the course also will include an examination of art works in museums in London and Paris that portray

GREECE AND TURKEY

December 27, 2006-January 9, 2007

A group of 34 students led by Dr. Mitchell Reddish and Dr. Kandy Queen-Sutherland made their way through some of the richest archaeological remains of the Mediterranean world during the 2006-07 winter break. Site visits included the Hagia Sophia and Blue Mosque of Istanbul, the ancient city of Pergamum and the magnificent remains of Ephesus - all located in modern day Turkey. In Greece, the group traveled from Thessaloniki to Athens, visiting the burial tomb of Philip of Macedon in Vergina, Delphi - home of the Delphic Oracles, the cliff-monasteries of Meteora, the ruins of Corinth and the Corinth Canal. The Athenian Acropolis with its Parthenon and Agora highlighted the last day's sights. Taught as a 3 hour course, the next trip is planned for late December 2008- early January 2009 with either a Middle East or Greece and Turkey itinerary possible.



City of Kavala (ancient Neapolis) in Greece. (left to right) Victoria Chiamonte, Kasey Cox, Amanda Reece, Adam Darragh, and Lori-Jene Brazier

In ancient Rome, the general and politician Pompey believed salt was an antidote to any potential poison in his food, so he added a grain of it to everything he ate or drank. That's why when people are skeptical of something, they "take it with a grain of salt." *Real Simple*, September 2006



Chair Comments

As noted elsewhere in this newsletter, the Department of Religious Studies underwent an intensive evaluation during 2006-07. One thing that was evident from the study was the high quality of the students who are majors or minors in Religious

Studies. Those of us on the faculty were already aware of how good our students are, but it was good to have that assessment confirmed by our external evaluator, as well. Not only do our students do well in the classroom, but they are accepted into some of

the best graduate and professional schools and enter challenging and enriching careers. To both our current and former students, congratulations and thanks for enhancing the reputation of the department.

Mitchell G. Reddish

“Experience is not what happens to a person, it is what a person does with what happens to them.”

Aldous Huxley



Spring Break Participants: Gabe Shibly, Brian Bell, Margie Duncan, Paula Nichols, Tiffany Huet, Stephen Mills, Tina Mixon, Philip Muller, Kyle Kamininski, Grace Mikell, and Thomas Parks. Not pictured Hannah Meeks.

Christian and Darragh Awarded the Sam R. Marks Prize in Religion



During the Spring 2007 Academic Honors Convocation the Sam R. Marks Prize in Religion was awarded to two recipients. First place went to Mary Beth Christian, Winter Haven FL, for her essay entitled, “Understanding the Messianic Secret.” Christian graduated in spring 2007 with a major in Religious Studies and minors in Music and Art. Second place went to Adam Darragh, Jacksonville, FL, a senior majoring in Religious Studies and minors in Music and English Creative Writing, for his essay entitled: “The practice of Pseudonymity in the Ancient World.”

SPRING BREAK MISSION TRIP

A large group of Religious Studies majors and minors went on a spring break mission trip to Gulfport, Mississippi, sponsored by the Baptist Collegiate Ministry.

Upon arriving the group was amazed to see that after two years, Hurricane Katrina’s damage was still visible throughout the city. Broken and abandoned buildings and uncleared fallen trees and shrubs were abundant.

The students were divided into a construction and a non-construction group. The non-construction group was stationed at FEMA Park where refugees and relocated people live. Some of the student’s responsibilities were playing with younger kids and helping local families. According to the students, it is hard to imagine living the life these kids live every day. The children were very well-behaved and did not live their lives in despair, but woke up every morning with a smile on their faces. Hannah Meeks described her experience: “I was here to help people and I left this experience fulfilling that desire, but leaving with oh so much more!”

The construction group did a lot of demolition work which included stripping down a house that was donated to one of the local churches for use as a homeless shelter in the future. Another project tackled was a house owned by a man who had Alzheimer’s. His house had suffered a lot of damage from the hurricane and, due to electrical repairs made by the owner himself, the house was in severe danger of an electrical fire. The group encourages people who have the opportunity to go on a mission trip to take the leap and go. It is a worthwhile endeavor!

Department Self-Study...Dr. Mitchell Reddish

Approximately every five years, each department in the College of Arts and Sciences is expected to engage in an intensive self-study that culminates in a visit by an external evaluator. During the 2006-07 academic year, the Department of Religious Studies participated in this process. The department prepared a detailed self-study report that included analyses of the curriculum, the faculty and

staff, majors and minors, facilities, alumni, and graduate school and career opportunities. In March, Dr. Charles Kimball, Professor of Religion at Wake Forest University, spent three days on our campus interviewing faculty, students, and staff and gathering first-hand information about the department. Based on his findings, as well as information from the department's self-study report, Dr. Kimball later submitted a

written evaluation of the department to Dean Ballenger. Dr. Kimball's report made several helpful recommendations for the department and the university. His evaluation was extremely positive about the Department of Religious Studies and its contribution to the university. Participation in these self-studies is one way that we attempt to make the Department of Religious Studies at Stetson even stronger.

Religious Studies Outstanding Juniors and Seniors



Congratulations to our Outstanding Students who were selected by the Religious Studies Department for the 2006-2007 Academic Year.

Juniors: Lori-Jene Brazier and Alicia Hickman

Senior: Mary Beth Christian

Theta Alpha Kappa 2007

Theta Alpha Kappa is a national honor society for professors and students of Religious Studies/Theology. Nine new members joined Stetson's Alpha Gamma Omicron chapter of Theta Alpha Kappa on April 26th: **Lori-Jene Brazier**, a Religious Studies major with minors in Math and Spanish; **Christopher Cavaliere**, a Sociology major with a minor in Religious Studies; **Kasey Cox**, majoring in Religious Studies and Spanish with a minor in General Business;

Alicia Hickman, majoring in Religious Studies and English; **Tiffany Huet**, a Religious Studies major with a minor in Philosophy; **Erin Lea**, a Political Science major with a minor in Religious Studies; **Stephen Mills**, a Religious Studies major with minors in Humanities and General Business; **Amanda Reece**, Elementary Education major with minors in Religious studies and Sociology; **Kristen Vanderloef**, a major in Music and a minor in Religious Studies. To date Theta Alpha Kappa, chapter Alpha Gamma Omi-

cron, has inducted 87 students. The chapter was started in 1996. To learn more about Theta Alpha Kappa, go to the national website at: <http://www-hl.syr.edu/admin/tak>



FACULTY NEWS

Dr. Fant and Dr. Reddish spent this past year working on their new book, *Lost Treasures of the Bible: Understanding the Bible Through Archaeological Artifacts in World Museums*, to be published next year by Eerdmans Publishers. They visited the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, the University of Pennsylvania Museum, the British Museum in London, the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, and the Louvre in Paris this year to complete their research. (Well, it's tough and dirty work, but somebody's got to do it!). The completed manuscript runs 595 pages, without end matter, and it will contain 124 black-and-white photographs and 16 color plates, approximately a hundred of which are by the authors (lovingly and expertly photo-shopped by Dr. Reddish).

Dr. Reddish conducted a weekend seminar April 13-14, 2007, at the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. The seminar, "The Bible: Books that Didn't Make the Cut," was sponsored by the Smithsonian Associates.

Dr. Dixon Sutherland, gave a lecture to the West Volusia Health Care workers on "The Ethical Implications of the Teresa Schiavo Case" and held a dialogue about it. Dr. Musser and Dr. Sutherland team-taught an "Introduction to Religion" course in the Business School at Celebration in fall, 2006. Dr. Sutherland gave a public lecture in Lake Worth, Florida on "Cosmology in Science and Religion" for the Florida Humanities Council. During the summer, Dr. Sutherland revamped the "Introduction to Christianity" course to fit his outline for the future textbook.

Dr. Greg Sapp In addition to his regular teaching duties, Dr. Greg Sapp attended several conferences throughout the year. Several conferences were related to his responsibilities as Marchman Chair including one hosted by the Bonner Foundation in Princeton, NJ, and one hosted by Campus Compact in Chicago, IL. Dr. Sapp attended the Gulf South Summit for service-learning in New Orleans, LA, and reported that the food was "rather good." Dr. Sapp also attended conferences related to Religious Studies. In November of 2006, Dr. Sapp served as an invited member of a panel at the American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting discussing the emerging field of Sports and Religion. In November, Dr. Sapp's essay on Langdon Gilkey's use of myth was published in Dr. Donald Musser's new book on Mormon and Non-Restorationist theological dialogue.

Dr. Kandy Queen-Sutherland authored a five-part series for Abingdon Press entitled "A Party Called Faith," to appear in the work *Pastor's Study Bible, 2007*. The studies focus on the five festival scrolls of the Hebrew Bible. She also reviewed a work by Johanna van Wijk-Bos, *Making Wise the Simple*, for the journal *Interpretation* and continues to work as an area editor for Smyth & Helwys Commentaries on the Bible.

Dr. Leena Taneja traveled to India on a Summer Faculty Grant. For this project, she gathered sacred stories about the origins and significance of a holy mountain called Mt. Govardhan. The mountain is sacred to devotees of Vishnu called Vaishnavas, but its importance extends beyond this Hindu sect. Research from this project will be compiled and presented at two upcoming conferences, the American Academy of Religion in San Diego and the International Interdisciplinary Conference in Dublin in October.

Dr. Taneja spent the early part of her summer in Washington, D.C., (at the Smithsonian Institution) collecting material for a new course she is offering in the fall, "Sacred Arts of Asia." The Freer and Sackler Galleries of Art at the Smithsonian have several standing exhibitions on the arts of India, the Himalayas, Islam, and East Asia. Many long afternoons have been spent at these exquisite galleries. Dr. Taneja also completed a book review on *The Tantric Body* by Galvin Flood, which will appear in the *International Journal of Hindu Studies*. Speaking of publications, Dr. Taneja has a new article appearing in the *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* this summer entitled, "Unmasking a Voice from the Periphery: The Forgotten Story of Narayan Bhatt." The article discusses the contributions of a little-known saint named Narayan Bhatt who discovered many holy sites in the sacred village of Vrindavan, India during the 16th century.

Dr. Phillip Lucas this past April presented a paper entitled, "The Dreamtime Reawakens: Myth, Ritual, and the Sacred at Megalithic Landscapes in Western Europe," at the first annual conference of the International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture at the University of Florida. His article, "From 'Cults' to New Religious Movements: Coherence, Definition, and Conceptual Framing in the Study of New Religious Movements," has been accepted for publication in the *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*. The handbook aims to establish benchmarks for the state of sociological thinking about religion. He also completed an invited 40-page article for the forthcoming (2007) *Oxford Handbook on Millennialism*. His article is entitled "New Age Millennialism: Progressive and Catastrophic Visions of Global Transformation." The volume looks at the many faces of millennialism, past and present.

Dr. Donald Musser spoke at the Forest Community Church at Salt Springs, the Community Unitarian-Universalist Church in New Smyrna Beach, and the Community Church of Barrington, Illinois during the fall 2006. Dr. Musser chairs the university Values Council, directs the Values Council annual theme emphasis, and is the Chair of The Stetson Center for Science, Nature, and the Sacred.

Rabbi Barry Altman collaborated with Dr. John McCollister on a feature length article, "Sharing the Customs of the Season." The article constitutes the first chapter of a book in progress. Rabbi Altman will also lead an ecumenical study tour to Israel with Christian and Jewish community leaders from central Florida. The program abroad is scheduled for June of 2008.

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Welcome to the Stetson University Department of Religious Studies. Our mission is to help students explore the role of religion in shaping human cultures through studies of sacred texts, languages, ethics, beliefs, rituals, spiritual methods, and the history of religious traditions.

Website: www.stetson.edu/artsci/religion

Alumni News

Grace Mikell '07, is teaching for The TeachForNewOrleans program in New Orleans, LA, and future plans include attending an Art School for advanced studies.—Crystal Cason '07, through the Cross Cultural Solutions, a non-profit volunteer organization that coordinates humanitarian relief efforts all over the world, spent a two-month internship in Tanzania, Africa. Her responsibilities included teaching English, working in orphanages, speaking on women's rights issues, and assisting with AIDS relief.—Mary Beth Christian '07 and William McSwain '07, were married in May '07. Mary Beth is pursuing a Master of Divinity degree at the Divinity School, and William is enrolled at the School of Medicine at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN.—Ansley Faulkner '07, is working as Area Manager for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northeast Florida.—Christopher Cavaliere '07, is attending Stetson Law School, St. Petersburg, FL— Tara Holcomb '06, is a firefighter for the Mount Dora Fire Department, Mount Dora, FL —Kenneth Matthews '05, is an admissions representative with Florida Technical College. He is pursuing a Master's of Art in Library and Information Sciences from USF to prepare for collection development and access projects focusing on Tibetan Bud-

dhist texts. He also plans to pursue a Ph.D. in Buddhist philosophy.—Teresa Schwarz '03, recently entered an East Volusia fashion contest sponsored by Adornments in Ormond Beach and won. She participated in a runway show and, since the show, has received orders from buyers.—Jonathan Bailey '03, Army Chaplain (Captain) Task Force Gun Devil, 3rd Battalion 319 Airborne Field Artillery Regiment 1st Brigade Combat Team of the 82nd Airborne Division, was deployed to Iraq for a 15-month tour. Jonathan is busy leading a Bible study, evening prayer, and a Eucharist service through the course of a week, while also counseling soldiers. —Kevin Boyd '01, is Director of Field Education and Church Relations at the University of Chicago Divinity School.—Ryan Wright '99, was ordained as a priest in the Episcopal Church in November of 2007. Shoshana Resnick '97, is working at the office of Legislative Affairs HQ DAE External Affairs, RVI PA Outreach for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. — Laura D. Kicklighter '95, received the 2006 Outstanding Young Alumni Award from Stetson University.

Recipients are exceptional representatives of the many young Stetson University alumni who show great promise in their chosen professions and illustrate the quality of a Stetson University education. — Erica Hruby '95, is the Principal/ Executive Director of Beit Hamidrash at the Jewish Federation of Greater Orlando—Beit Hamidrash. — Troy Varnum '84, is Director of Missions for the Northwest Coast Baptist Association.



We ask alumni to visit our website at www.stetson.edu/artsci/religion and to click on the alumni questionnaire located on our home page and fill it out and send it to us at: 421 North Woodland Blvd. Unit 8354, DeLand, FL 32723, or you may e-mail the questionnaire to ljguenth@stetson.edu. We would love to hear how everyone is doing, including marriages, children, career moves, graduate work, or anything else you might wish to share. Also please contact Mrs. Guenther, Administrative Specialist II, for any corrections to the Alumni News. We can't wait to hear from you!

HUET SELECTED FOR THE 2007 DIVERSITY & EXPLORATIONS PROGRAM AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY



Tiffany Huet, a senior, was selected for and attended the Diversity & Explorations Program at Harvard Divinity School on October 24-25, 2007. She was chosen on the basis of educational and co-curricular experiences that demonstrated a commitment to projects that advance society in the areas of social justice and diversity.

Ten Years Out - Alumni Profile

1997-2007

Beverly (Dozier) Peeples



I graduated from Stetson University in 1997 with a major in Religious Studies and a minor in Political Science. From Stetson I went to the University Of Florida College Of Law and graduated in 2000 with a Juris Doctorate. Today I am a Senior Policy Advisor at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia. I never would have imagined while studying at Stetson that I would be where I am today. Before I came to Stetson, I knew that I wanted to study the law, and I wanted to be a prosecutor. Little did I know what was in store for me. So, as many aspiring law students, I began my studies as a political science major. As I began taking some of the religious studies courses as electives, I quickly discovered how much I enjoyed the courses, and somehow they seemed a nice fit with my political science courses. I switched majors, and I began to understand some things that had never occurred to me before. My studies at Stetson in religious studies were critical to my professional development and were invaluable in my understanding the foundation of public policy and thereby the law which results from that public policy.

While we live in a nation which values the rights of individuals to worship as they freely choose and to enjoy a government 'free from religion,' our choices—personal, political, religious—our morals, ethics and beliefs—are largely founded on our religious perspectives. This is true even when it is not a conscious analysis. The nexus between our political life and our religious beliefs cannot be ignored without losing sight of the basis for public policy and public 'good.' What we consider 'good' or 'right' is the yardstick by which we measure our choices, and that yardstick includes more of our faith and subsequently our view of who we are than we are often ready to acknowledge. The idea that we should suspend our religious beliefs when making political choices is a fascinating and largely uniquely American perspective.

Having studied in the religious studies department at Stetson equipped me with tools that not only assisted me at law school, but everyday in my work at CDC. I assist our nation's leaders in making difficult decisions about allocation of resources—such as vaccines and medical technology everyday. The law is not our only guide in this decision-making process. There are undoubtedly many ethical choices, undeniably made by using the yardstick of our sense of what is 'good' and 'right.' I have responsibility for reviewing and carefully considering proposed legislation before it is introduced on the floor of the House or the Senate and making substantive comments to legislators about how the implementation of legislation might impact our agency's programs and consequently our national and international health assets. Putting our laws and regulations under the microscope of the underlying public policy exposes much about who we are as a people and a nation.

Understanding why you believe something is 'right' or 'wrong,' and being able to effectively translate that into something that may be used to make the world a better place, is an empowering skill you may have the opportunity to attain should you decide to avail yourself of a degree in religious studies at Stetson University.

