
NumeNews

Newsletter of the Carleton College Department of Religion

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CONGRATULATIONS TO PROFESSORS BASHIR AND MCNALLY ON THEIR FELLOWSHIPS!

Shahzad Bashir, Assistant Professor of Religion, was awarded two fellowships: the Charles A. Ryskamp Research Fellowship from The American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS); and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Fellowship, that will allow him to take a two-year leave (2004-06) to work on a new book.

Shahzad “will utilize the research time to work on a book tentatively entitled *Bodies of Saints: Religion and Society in the Late Medieval Islamic East*. The project concentrates on the late medieval religious history of the Islamic East (western, central, and southern Asia) gleaned from the depiction of the human body in textual and artistic sources. The period saw the solidification of Sufi orders organized around the charisma of great saints whose bodies, whether alive or entombed in majestic shrines, were a particularly potent carrier of religious power and authority. Utilizing recent theoretical discussions, and drawing on literature in various languages, [he] treat[s] the body as an individual, social, and political artifact reflective of the relevant socioreligious environment. The project expands Islamic religious history into the social arena, beyond the concern with famous individuals, movements, and texts that remains dominant to the present.

See *Faculty*, p. 3

From the Chair:

In this issue of the Carleton Religion Department newsletter, you'll find information about the travels of current students, reflections by retired faculty member, Bardwell Smith, and exciting news about recent fellowships awarded to Shahzad Bashir and Michael McNally. We hope this issue of NumeNews helps you keep in touch with happenings in the department.

We encourage you to write us with information about your recent activities, reminiscences of your life as a Religion major, and/or suggestions for features in future issues of the newsletter. Please send your contributions to Jill Tollefsen, administrative assistant to the Religion department, at "jtollefs@carleton.edu" or call her at 507-646-4232. We look forward to hearing from you.

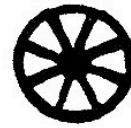
Louis Newman

FEATURE STORY: PROFESSOR EMERITUS BARDWELL SMITH



Professor Smith says that, “as with many faculty at Carleton my career as teacher and my research in religious studies have evolved in ways that neither I nor anyone else might have imagined. In fact, I would confess that virtually everything that has been of genuine importance in my life, for good or ill, I could never have predicted. In any case, I see myself not as a separate being but rather through my relations with family, friends, colleagues (both faculty and students), and many others. In fact, through years of study in Christian and social ethics under H. Richard Niebuhr at Yale Divinity School during the 1950s I discovered that genuine subjectivity is indelibly intertwined in relationship.”

See *Smith*, p. 4



Off-Campus Returners

John Gabrielson '04

was in New Zealand studying Christian theology over the summer and fall of 2003. He was at the University of Otago in Dunedin, the southernmost university in the world. He says, "I'm one of the few who didn't choose to go there for the scenery. I actually picked that university because of course offerings in Christology and the Old Testament Prophets." The courses were "not exactly rigorous," but he learned a lot and was able to further develop his comps project. While on the trip, he decided to go to law school next year instead of divinity school and has applied to Duke, Northwestern, Michigan, and Minnesota.

His best anecdote involves a visit from his father, during which the two got stranded on a tour boat, six hours from Dunedin for the weekend. John had an important final exam on Sunday afternoon. Luckily, they could get on the road Sunday morning and arrived in Dunedin twenty minutes before the exam.

Peter Franklin '05

was in Sri Lanka with the ISLE (Intercollegiate Sri Lanka Education) program fall term, where he "ostensibly" studied "political science and development." However, he believes his time in Sri Lanka was "crucial in helping [him] see the way various religious traditions are lived," meaning that traditions, most notably Buddhism in Peter's experience, are lived differently from how he imagined. He found that people identify with their religious traditions in numerous ways. "Sri Lanka, as a multi-religious forum, was a really interesting place to see how this played out, in the ways people think and interact with each other."

He says his time in Sri Lanka will definitely influence his future studies in religion. He will use classes at Carleton to "try to better understand" his experiences there.

Nick Lienesch '05

went to Nicaragua on an SIT (School for International Training) program. He primarily studied Nicaraguan history, focusing on the Sandinista revolution in 1979 and the revolutionary government of the 1980s. The program examined various economic policies and social movements and how the U.S., in Nick's words, "seems to have played the role of evil step-mother in just about all these areas."

Nick was able to go to Cuba to see a "real, live" revolutionary socialist government and also visited the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua (an area very different from where he spent most of his time). For his Independent Study

Project, he studied Pentecostal mega-churches in Managua, comparing three churches based on their leadership, role in the community, and other factors. Nick says that "the churches were pretty interesting. They each had their own distinctive character. . . The biggest one had some 15,000 members; one was famous for its all-night, revival-style vigils; and one was known for its impressive growth, strong ties to the U.S., including an American pastor, and its unusually wealthy and well-connected congregation."

Nick Kasperek '05

spent 4 1/2 months in or around Mysore, Karnataka in India with the University of Iowa Semester in South India. The program oriented the students to South Indian culture, including history, religion, gender issues, sustainable development, science, and technology. Nick was able to study elementary Hindi and had plenty of time to explore the areas he was most interested in.

He rented a motorcycle for his Independent Study research and "had the chance to live a far more autonomous life," observing 9th and 10th standard classes at some public schools in Mysore to look for Hindutva influences on the curriculum or classroom atmosphere. "Although I didn't have a large enough sample or enough time to really come to any conclusions," Nick says, "I got a good introduction to the school system and their interpretation of values education." Nick hopes to be able to return to Mysore soon and continue his research.

Nick Getzendanner '05

spent last fall in India, Nepal, and Tibet on the SIT Tibetan Studies program. The first month he lived with a Tibetan family in Dharamsala, India, the home of the Dalai Lama. "The city was filled with dharma bums from all over the world seeking Eastern wisdom and cheap drugs." Toward the end of their stay, the SIT group was able to meet the Dalai Lama. "He still had a genuine smile on his face after spending the ninety degree day blessing thousands of people, which really makes you think there's something to this whole 'enlightment' thing," says Nick.

The next month the group traveled to Tibet, spending most days hiking to monasteries and meditation caves. One "unforgettable" day, the group witnessed a sky burial (Tibetan funeral) "where three human corpses were chopped up and fed to vultures as an act of compassion and a lesson in impermanence." Nick spent his final month doing research in Kathmandu on the Nyingma Buddhist religious practice Dzogchen.

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Michael McNally, Assistant Professor of Religion, also received an NEH grant to investigate attitudes towards aging in the context of Ojibwe traditions. He will be doing his research during the 2004-2005 school year. He feels that the important Ojibwe concept to “honor your elders” is the most central ethical tradition in Ojibwe communities. Michael wants to look into how this concept plays out in the Ojibwe oral tradition; one becomes more human, in this worldview, by growing old.

He plans to “nourish such efforts by completing *Honoring Elders*.” In learning about the Ojibwe, McNally writes he “was most deeply impressed by how many old people in that community, today as in the past, come into their own as elders.” He also feels that these lessons need not be “culture-bound nor tied to some inaccessible past.”

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Fellowships are very competitive fellowships that support individuals pursuing advanced research in the humanities that contributes to scholarly knowledge or to the general public’s understanding of the humanities. While it is extremely impressive for a department to carry one during an academic year, we are very proud that two Carleton Religion professors will be funded by NEH in 2004-05.

The Ryskamp Research Fellowship is designed to provide advanced assistant professors in the humanities and related social sciences with time and resources to pursue their research under optimal conditions. These fellowships particularly recognize those whose scholarly contributions have advanced their field and who have well-designed and carefully developed plans for new research.

Off-Campus, continued from p. 2

Michelle Guittar '05

was in Mexico last term on an SIT program entitled “Grassroots Development and Social Change,” based primarily in the southern state of Oaxaca, although she also spent a fair amount of time in Chiapas. The group spent a lot of time looking at how various non-governmental organizations function in Mexico with respect to indigenous rights and perspectives. “There was lots of time spent traveling and on rural homestays,” says Michelle. “I spent a month doing an Independent Study Project on how the autochthonous, or indigenous, Catholic Church functions in Chiapas, as a synthesis of indigenous traditions and Catholic theology and ritual.”

NEWS FROM FALL TERM...



How Far Is Home?

Early last November, Carleton was lucky enough to host a 2003 “How Far is Home?” benefit concert. It was the fourth year the tour has traveled around Minnesota and northern Wisconsin. The annual weeklong series started in 2000 to raise awareness about homelessness in Bemidji, and Carleton was the first concert on this year’s busy eight-stop schedule. Bemidji is near the Leech Lake, White Earth, and Red Lake reservations. The original stimulus for the tour, according to the website, was “that Native Americans represented more than 70% of the homeless population in area shelters.” As a result, all proceeds from the tour benefited shelters around Minnesota, such as Project OffStreets and the Dab Noo 'Igan Battered Women's Shelter. Donations given at the show at Carleton were given to the local food shelf.

Artists Jim Boyd, Annie Humphrey, Sara Softich, and Keith Secola headlined the show, and all of the attendees found the music breathtaking. The performed pieces were thought provoking, touching, and filled with emotion. The songs that stayed with many through the evening were not necessarily those that they had expected to do so; for example, Jim Boyd’s song about playing the “bone game” as a child. Of course, with help from Fry Bread Volunteers, the famous “Fry Bread Song” brought down the house. The “How Far is Home?” tour will return next fall.

Losensky Talk

Translating Indian Style: Sa’eb and the Shapes of Persian Poems; Paul Losensky, Indiana University

According to Professor Bashir, this talk focused on the poet Sa’eb of Tabriz (d. ca. 1676-7), regarded as a master of Persian lyric poetry in the late medieval period. Losensky discussed Safavid and Mughal civilization and what it was like to be the greatest poet in Persia at a time when Persian was one of the most widely spoken languages in the world. He also presented the saga of his own efforts to bring Sa’eb’s poetry into English, including general remarks on the ghazal form and the “Indian style” of classical Persian poetry.

Paul Losensky is Associate Professor of Comparative Literature and Central Eurasian Studies at Indiana University. A specialist in Persian literature, he is the author of *Welcoming Fighani: Imitation and Poetic Individuality in the Safavid-Mughal Ghazal* (1998). In addition to being a scholar of literature, he is regarded today as one of the best translators of Persian poetry into English.

ALUMNI NEWS

Randi (Huber) Sider-Rose '97 graduated summer 2003 with an M.Div. from the University of Chicago Divinity School.

Aimee Burant '95 received a Fulbright (Institute of International Education) Fellowship for 2003-2004 to study theology in Germany.

Craig Forney, visiting instructor at Carleton from 1990 to 1992, received his Ph.D Fall 2002 from the University of Chicago Divinity School.

Carleton alum, W. T. Dickens, Religion '81, currently Visiting Assistant Professor at Cornell University, has recently published *Hans Urs von Balthasar's Theological Aesthetics: A Model for Post-Critical Biblical Interpretation* (Notre Dame, IN.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003). Beginning in fall, 2004, he will be an Associate Professor of Religion and Director of Franciscan and Catholic Studies at Siena College, Loudonville, New York.

of the Russian intellectual Nicholas Berdyaev. In his book, *Solitude and Society*, he spells out the rudiments of that connection. This began to explain to me my active involvement years ago in the civil rights movement and the anti-Vietnam protest alongside my growing addiction to pilgrimage of various sorts and to Buddhist meditation. In recent years I have even brought meditation from the Soto Zen tradition into Lenten programs at the local UCC church. Twenty years ago that would have been rejected as an option. Not so today."

"As a final remark, I'd like to quote Katagiri Roshi (late Soto Zen Master in Minneapolis and lecturer to many groups of Carleton students) when he said to a class in Leighton 402: 'It is more often true that thought comes from life than to say that life comes from thought.' In no way was he denigrating the importance of thought; he was simply saying that there is a profound relationship between the nature of one's life and the thought that emerges from it. In that sense, life is prior."

"Among my greatest priorities is being an active part of an extended family which I share with my wife Charlotte, our several children and grandchildren, and our many friends in Northfield and beyond. From this experience I keep relearning about the universal reality of interdependence that has many centers but no circumference."

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"Upon joining the Carleton faculty in 1960, I started teaching the religions of Asia as well and in the process that basic sense of relationality took an unexpected turn. As the Buddhist doctrine of interdependence sneaked up on me, it began to make its impact on my life and thought, namely--that no one or no situation is self-originating, that there is literally no such thing as 'independence' of other influences, and that selfhood as a separate entity is a fiction however much it may appear to be a psychological reality. The concept of interdependence at least suggests the true reality, however unimaginable or however impossible it may be to live a truly interdependent or harmonious existence. One of life's paradoxes is that true uniqueness flourishes only in this web of interconnection. The greatest surprise is that the potential may already exist in what is called the buddha nature or the image of God. Seeing that we are far from living that reality, personally or socially, the potential often seems to fly in the face of what we call 'reality.'"

"Much of my adult life, I have sought to combine the inner with the outer aspects of my life. One major influence upon my thinking stemmed from the works

- Member of the Carleton faculty from 1960 to 1995.
- John W. Nason Professor of Asian Studies from 1972 to 1995.
- Academic Dean of the College from 1967 to 1972.
- Researcher on Buddhism and social issues in Sri Lanka and Japan, focusing on the Buddhist response to Japanese women and child loss.
- President of the American Society for the Study of Religion from 1996 to 1999.
- Made pilgrimages in Japan, Sri Lanka, Spain, and Ireland.
- Vice President of the Northfield Downtown Development Corporation.
- Member, Northfield Middle School Reuse Committee.
- League of Women Voters "Observer" at meetings of Northfield's Economic Development Authority.
- Board of Directors of 'Just Food,' an organic co-op that will open this year in downtown Northfield.