



Written by Kate Hoeting '19

## Welcome to Assistant Professor Mara Block

### Can you describe your main scholarly interests?

I spend a lot of time thinking about connections between religion, medicine, and sexuality in the Modern West and in 20th-century America. I'm interested in practices of "care" and in sources ranging from psychiatric case histories to underground queer fiction. In the contemporary world, I'm passionate about global health and teasing out consequences of biomedicine, especially when it comes to different understandings of health, healing, and belief.

### What do you think of Carleton so far?

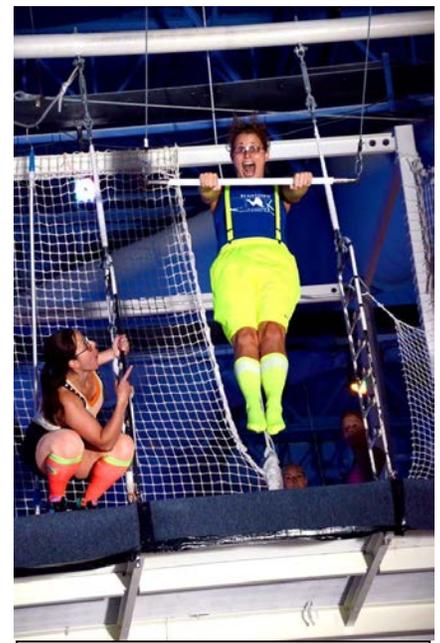
Carleton is wonderful! It's great to be back at a liberal arts college. I've been really struck by the intellectual curiosity and the tight-knit community vibe. And the outdoor spaces around here are fantastic—I've had a blast exploring them with my adventurous little dog. I'm always looking for new running trails... Please send recommendations!

### Can you highlight a course you'll teach this year that excites you?

This spring term I'm teaching a course called "Science, Religion, and the Modern Imagination." As a college physics major who stumbled into a religion class, I've been thinking about science and religion for over a decade, but designing this course gave me the opportunity to stage a conversation between a number of different thinkers, texts, and ideas that don't often get discussed together. I'm really excited about the focus on imagination—I think it's going to be a productive lens for grounding the issues in concrete historical-cultural context.

### I hear that you've been a flying trapeze instructor! Why do you enjoy circus arts? Does your role as a flying trapeze instructor inform your role as a scholar of religion?

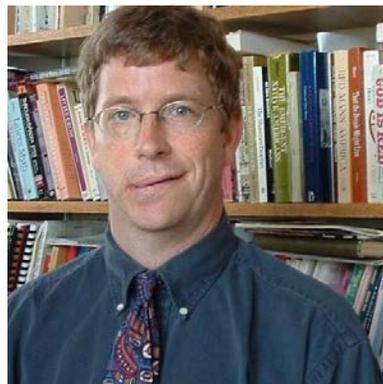
Yes! Whether quirky and fun or sensual and avant-garde, the circus arts are simply exhilarating. I started off with a paralyzing fear of heights and worked my way up to becoming a catcher. Our bodies and minds have limits, but there's nothing more satisfying than surpassing them. I also love teaching flying trapeze, especially with new students who find themselves drowning in panic. I love the challenge of building trust and figuring out how different people operate so I can help them take that first leap and do something extraordinary. I don't know that being a flying trapeze instructor has informed my role as a scholar so much as balanced it. Scholars are in the business of thinking, often about worlds very different from our own. But jumping off a platform 25 feet tall demands that you give your focus to the present. That's mentally and physically refreshing for me, so I guess in a way, it's flying that keeps me grounded.



Mara Block on the trapeze

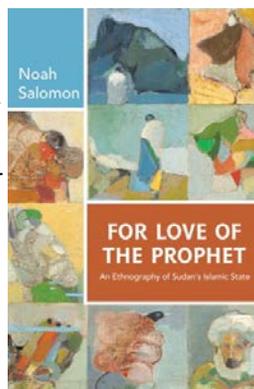
## Professor Michael McNally Receives National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Stipend

Michael McNally (John M. and Elizabeth W. Musser Professor of Religious Studies) has received a summer stipend from the National Endowment for the Humanities to support his upcoming book *Native American Religious Freedom beyond the First Amendment*. The book is expected to make waves in the world of religious studies. Working within religious and legal frameworks, it explores the consequences of excluding Native American faith from religion's legal definition. He also received the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship, one of the humanities' most prestigious fellowships. As *Inside Philanthropy* puts it, "Don't even think about attempting to apply for this fellowship unless you are at the absolute top of your game."



## Associate Professor Noah Salomon Receives American Academy of Religion Book Award

Noah Salomon's recent book, *For Love of the Prophet: An Ethnography of Sudan's Islamic State*, has received the American Academy of Religion Book Award. Each year, the American Academy of Religion chooses just five books to honor, and only one book within the category of Analytical-Descriptive Studies. Award recipients are selected based on "distinctive originality, intelligence, creativity, and importance." *For Love of the Prophet* examines Sudan's 25-year-period of Islamic statehood through the daily lives of Sudanese people.



## Associate Professor Kristin Bloomer Granted Senior Research Fellowship from the American Institute of Indian Studies



The American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) have awarded Kristin Bloomer (Associate Professor of Religion and Coordinator of South Asia Studies) a Senior Research Fellowship granted to "superior Indologists in the humanities." With this grant, she will delve into her project "Kula Teyvam: Family Gods and Changing Places in Tamil Nadu." Her research will engage with gender-bending Hindu rituals in Tamil Nadu, India, where she will work for 9 months.

## Hālau Kiawekūpono O Ka Ua Comes to Carleton

In late October, members of the Hawaiian dance troupe Hālau Kiawekūpono O Ka Ua came to Carleton. Their visit, organized by Kristin Bloomer (Associate Professor of Religion and Coordinator of South Asia Studies), allowed for multiple engaging events that benefited the Carleton and Minneapolis communities. In addition to offering a master class and public performance, the Hālau spoke about the sacredness of water at an event called “Mni Ki Wakan: From the Sacred Waters of Hawaii to Mnisota.” As one Hālau Kiawekūpono O Ka Ua member puts it, “Mohala i ka wai ka maka o ka pua: The face of the flower blossoms because of the water. For us, the pua, or flowers, represent the people. The hidden meaning is: The people thrive when they have access to their source of water.” The event took place at the American Indian Center in Minneapolis and included a special dinner at the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe’s Urban Office.

These events have left an impression on Carleton students, many of whom have met members of Hālau Kiawekūpono O Ka Ua during their previous visits to Carleton. Carleton senior Rinya Kamber shares her deep connection with the Hālau: “My friends from the Hālau are so special to me not only because they teach us so much richness about connections to our earth and the spirit world through dance, but also because of our shared indigenous roots and occupied homelands. They are dear friends and wise teachers.”



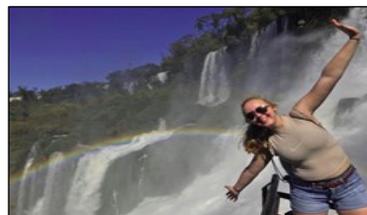
Hawaiian Indigenous Hālau Kiawekūpono O Ka Ua

## Humanities Center and Religion Department Host Panel on Charlottesville

In October, Lori Pearson (Professor of Religion, David and Marian Adams Bryn-Jones Distinguished Teaching Professor of the Humanities) moderated a panel called “Responding to Charlottesville.” The event aimed to help students make sense of Charlottesville and its impact on all communities. Panelists included William Hart (Professor of Religious Studies, Macalester College), Jeanne Kilde (Director of Religious Studies Program, University of Minnesota), Ailya Vajid (Associate Chaplain for Muslim and Interfaith Life, Carleton College), and Serena Zabin (Professor of History and Director of American Studies, Carleton College). Their discussion connected the acute anti-blackness of Charlottesville to the wider framework of systemic racism. In addition, panelists reflected on the history and future of confederate monuments in the context of Charlottesville. The panel also covered the prevalence of white supremacist groups and introduced the ways in which religious communities have fought and continue to fight against them. Finally, the event closed with a moment of hope -in the face of Charlottesville, communities have risen up to redefine the American identity as one that values love and diversity.

## Religion Majors Reflect

“Religion courses at Carleton have pushed me to learn about the minds, bodies, and souls of individuals from a variety of religious traditions. This enriches the pre-med courses I am taking because it has encouraged me to look at healing from a new and equally important angle.”



Madeline Egan '19,  
Religion and Pre-Med

“I am a religion major because I love learning about humanity's passion and search for understanding how the world works and our role in it. Despite the fact that many predict our generation to be less religious, religion remains to be a huge source of inspiration and meaning-making in human nature. Religion is a key ingredient in understanding the human condition, world cultures, and global events, both current and historical.”



Anna McGinn '18  
Religion and Philosophy

“I was interested in understanding why people form such strong convictions in what often seems intangible. The major continues to challenge my notions of perception and it asks you to consider the complexities of being human, as it is reflected in art, culture, and draws from across disciplines.”



Ari Zuaro '18  
Religion and Studio Art