Roger Jackson Retires after 27 Years of Service to Carleton

In May the Religion Department was proud to honor Roger Jackson, John W. Nason Professor of Asian Studies and Religion, at a series of events marking his retirement from Carleton. Roger first came to Carleton in 1983 as a sabbatical replacement professor for Bardwell Smith, and then returned in 1989 when he was hired for a tenure-track position. For more than 27 years he taught courses ranging from “Religions of India,” “Hindu Traditions,” and “Introduction to Islam” in his early years, to “Religions of South Asia” and “Mysticism” in later years, and most recently “Buddha,” “Tantra: Secrecy, Sex, and the Sublime,” and “Gandhi.” Known for his attentive mentoring, rigorous expectations, and willingness to entertain any intellectual idea from students, Roger continues to stay in touch with Carleton alums around the world. At the College, he served on countless major committees and was an anchor for programs in Asian Studies and Cross-Cultural Studies. In the larger profession, he has been a leading scholar of Buddhist philosophy and especially of Indian and Tibetan poetry, meditation, and ritual, authoring or editing 7 books and more than 50 articles, and serving as editor of two major journals. He enters retirement in the middle of two book projects, with two others projected beyond those. We look forward to the work he will continue to produce and to share in the next phase of his career! The following excerpts are from longer remarks delivered at a festive celebration for Roger held on May 21 in Great Hall:

Richard Crouter, John M. and Elizabeth W. Musser Professor of Religious Studies, Emeritus: “More than most persons of my acquaintance Roger's intellectual work and life combine cosmopolitan worldliness with a love of what is zany in popular religious expressions and cultural practices.”

Katie Ryor, Tanaka Memorial Professor of International Understanding and Art History: “Ever since I came to Carleton twenty years ago, Roger has been simply one of the best mentors and colleagues ever. So much of what made me stay at Carleton and develop a satisfying career can be attributed to his example. Perhaps even more important to me was Roger's support and guidance in navigating everything from dealing with the various complexities of Carleton culture, to running an off-campus studies program, to directing Asian Studies. Maybe it sounds commonplace to a Buddhist, but it truly has been his wisdom and compassion that has been a beacon of sanity in an environment that can get a little crazy from time to time. Roger has been the calm center of Asian Studies, always treading the middle path between enthusiasm and criticism, advocacy and acceptance, big picture and individual concerns. He will remain the model to which I (and I think others) aspire, even after his retirement.”

Katie Berringer ’09: “As a professor, Roger combined multiple seemingly paradoxical qualities—he was both demanding and also incredibly supportive, both serious about our work and also lighthearted, joyful, and cleverly funny. Above all, Roger was kind, generous, and unwaveringly dedicated to his students. For me and for many of my friends, Roger’s support and encouragement challenged us take on new experiences, to ask difficult questions, and to have the confidence in ourselves that Roger always had in us. I have been so lucky to have Roger in my life as a teacher, mentor, and friend over the years. Thank you so much, Roger, for everything!”

Louis Newman Accepts Prestigious Post at Stanford

The Religion Department congratulates Louis Newman, John M. and Elizabeth W. Musser Professor of Religious Studies, on his new position (effective July 1, 2016) as Associate Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Director of Undergraduate Advising and Research at Stanford University. Cherished Carleton teacher, colleague, friend, and mentor since 1983, Louis will be dearly missed. This fall, the Religion Department and the College will honor Louis and celebrate his numerous contributions as professor and scholar of Jewish Studies. (Stay tuned for details!) For decades Louis was a devoted teacher who transformed the lives of students with his courses in Jewish Ethics, Hebrew Bible, and the study of topics such as the Holocaust, the book of Job, Genesis, and the State of Israel. In recent years he led the college as Director of the Learning and Teaching Center and as Associate Dean of the College. We wish Louis and Amy the best on their move to the Bay area, and we look forward to paying tribute to Louis’s career this fall!
This year’s Spring 2016 Lindesmith lecture, held in honor of the legacy of Professor Roger Jackson, was delivered by José Cabezón, Professor of Religious Studies and the Dalai Lama Endowed Chair at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He taught at Carleton in 1986-1987 and for decades has been one of Roger’s closest colleagues. The two co-edited a book on Tibetan Literature in 1996. Cabezón’s lecture, titled “The Foul, the Beautiful, and the Buddha: Reflections on the Possibility of a Buddhist Aesthetic” focused on themes of gender and sexuality in classical Indian and Tibetan texts.

Professor Cabezón’s talk focused on Buddhism’s problem with beauty: the act of seeing something beautiful gives rise to the experience of pleasure, which in turn engenders desire for the beautiful object; this desire, however, is the principal cause of eternal suffering, which Buddhism seeks to overcome. For many schools of Buddhism, the body is the most dangerous object because of its relationship with sex, therefore requiring Buddhist practitioners to devise certain “therapeutic approaches” to quell the desire that results from beauty, particularly from the beautiful body.

Professor Cabezón explored three typical responses to desire: physically distancing oneself from the object of desire, modifying the way one perceives the beautiful object to render it objectionable, and contemplation of the foulness of the body. Some Buddhist philosophers note, however, that none of these approaches results in the complete eradication of desire: they assert that the only way to achieve this is to meditate on the concept of emptiness.

In Madhyamaka’s philosophy of emptiness, for example, one seeks to understand that there is nothing onto which desire can attach. This is seen as a kind of wisdom, but is often based on notions of the illusoriness of bodies, and especially female bodies. These problematic tropes make the question of a Buddhist aesthetics even more difficult.

Professor Cabezón asked, in closing, whether Buddhism leaves any room for aesthetic appreciation. He acknowledged that the presence of visual arts, music, and verbal arts in Buddhism allows for the existence of beauty as a concept and he also pointed to the Buddha as the paradigmatic example of physical beauty, representing the sustained acknowledgement of beauty in Buddhism throughout history. His current research, supported by a Guggenheim Fellowship, will continue to explore these issues.

The department sponsored a celebratory panel discussion of Asuka Sango’s book published last fall, *The Halo of Golden Light: Imperial Authority and Buddhist Ritual in Heien Japan*. Moderated by Noah Salomon, the event featured comments by Roger Jackson and Visiting Benedict Professor Peter Gregory, as well as Professor of Art History and Asian Studies Katie Ryor. Here are excerpts from their remarks:

**Peter Gregory:** Sango’s study makes a significant contribution to our understanding of medieval Japanese political and religious history. It examines the interplay of Buddhist ritual and imperial authority over the course of the four centuries of Heian period. Her examination of the complex and changing forms that this interplay takes provides a particularly useful perspective from which to clarify the shifts in the institution of kingship, and the more nuanced understanding that her approach yields thus rewrites some of the prevailing historical narratives in the field.

**Katie Ryor:** Asuka's analysis of how the jun misai-e rites brought Buddhist rituals and political authority together and were instrumental in the refashioning of political power made me rethink the conventional interpretation of Byodoin, a small family temple of the Fujiwara regents. This raised questions for me about possible links between the related designs of temples at which the largest number of jun misai-e rites were performed and the changing emphasis within Tendai doctrine.

**Roger Jackson:** As a scholar of Tibetan Buddhism, I was drawn to Asuka’s discussion of scholarly debate, which is a central element of religious life on the Tibetan plateau and in diaspora. Like the court debates described by Asuka, it can be used to secure power and prestige, but the Tibetan practice differs from the Japanese in several ways. Asuka's analysis leads us to consider the lines we draw between "philosophy" and "ritual," the search for truth and the pursuit of power.
The annual picnic for religion majors and faculty was held May 25th, 2016. We began by welcoming our new cohort of 15 majors in the class of 2018. Two students, Maggie Lloyd’16 and Prathiksha Srinivasa’16 prepared remarks to honor Roger Jackson on the occasion of his retirement; they spoke of his profound influence on them as a teacher who deeply shaped their intellectual development and as a mentor who unfailingly offered them personal support and guidance. Department Chair Lori Pearson then honored the graduating seniors with personalized tributes written by faculty, celebrating the unique traits (and quirks!) of each student. In light of a politically charged year, the theme of the evening was cabinet positions; each senior was awarded a day-time position in the White House and a night-time position that unsurprisingly, subverted institutional, hierarchical roles of power. After donning political paraphernalia and chic, light-up glasses, the senior class posed for a picture with the juniors and sophomores. The party then moved to the bald spot where a grueling game of wiffle ball between the professors and students ended in an amicable tie. Professors stayed to take pictures with students and enjoyed a warm, spring evening.


Carleton Thanks Peter Gregory
Benedict Distinguished Visiting Professor of Religion

Professor Peter Gregory recently retired from a long career at Smith College to join us to teach two classes spring term. Peter taught “Zen Buddhism” and “Buddhism and the Beats.” He stated that the discussions in his classes were some of the very best he has experienced during his entire career of teaching and the students made a lasting impression on him. We hope he will come back to teach with us again someday!

**ANNUAL RELIGION DEPARTMENT PICNIC FOR FACULTY AND MAJORS**

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Religion seniors (l to r): Zuki Ragde, Todd Campbell, David Do, Maggie Lloyd, Prathiksha Srinivasa and Colleen McCarty

Religion Professor and Chair Lori Pearson posing with seniors: Todd Campbell, Colleen McCarty and Prathiksha Srinivasa
SENIOR COMPS TITLES 2015-2016

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<tr>
<th>Student</th>
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<tr>
<td>Todd Campbell</td>
<td>A Sideline Church: The Role of the Black Church in Social Movements and its Unfortunate Shift</td>
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<td>David Do</td>
<td>Religious Narratives in Korean American Christianity</td>
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<td>Maggie Lloyd</td>
<td>Embodied Sikhism: Hair and the 5 Ks in Sikh Diaspora</td>
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<td>Colleen McCarty</td>
<td>Maintaining Faith Despite Resistance: How the “Good Catholic Woman” uses Birth Control</td>
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<td>Zuki Ragde</td>
<td>Defending the Nuclear Family: Political Neo-Evangelicalism at Bethlehem Baptist Church</td>
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**Prathiksha Srinivasa**  
+ The Ultimate Question: A Nietzschean Critique of Paul Tillich’s Conception of Doubt  
+ Awarded Distinction in Comps

**Recipient of the Bardwell Smith Prize for Excellence in the Study of Religion**

PHI BETA KAPPA LECTURE BY DR. VINCENT L. WIMBUS

Vincent L. Wimbush, founding director of the Institute for Signifying Scriptures) delivered the Phi Beta Kappa Lecture at Carleton titled, “Signifying on Scriptures: The Black Atlantic Reads King James.” Professor Kristin Bloomer organized a day of conversations between students and Dr. Wimbush. He also visited two classes: Kristin Bloomer’s “Introduction to Christianity” and Shana Sippy’s “Introduction to Judaism.”