A GROWING RELIGION DEPARTMENT

BY

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Deane and I have moved to a retirement community on 7th Street in Northfield. We look back with great gratitude for our years at Carleton.

When I arrived in 1955 there was no religion department and I split my time between the physics department and the philosophy department. With the arrival of Bard Smith and Dick Crouter we were able to offer a religion major, with the first group graduating in 1963. The size and diversity of the department have expanded over the years with the addition of experts in Judaism, Roman Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Native American traditions. There are now as many women as men teaching in the department. Majors have also benefited from the increasing diversity of other departments, for example new courses in Islamic or Japanese history, Chinese art, or Hebrew or Arabic languages.

I am particularly thankful for the encouragement Carleton has given to interdisciplinary courses. In the 1960s I developed a course in science and religion in which I tried out chapters of a mimeographed text that became my first book, Issues in Science and Religion.

In the 1970s I started (with Norm Vig in political science and Mike Casper in physics) a program in Science, Technology and Public Policy, in which I offered courses on ethical issues arising in policies for the environment, pollution, energy, and natural resources. It later became Environmental and Technology Studies (ENTS) and next fall it will become a major in Environmental Studies.

For me, the exciting feature of religious studies is the interaction with so many other disciplines (philosophy, history, anthropology, psychology, literature, art, and area studies, as well as science). Carleton has encouraged all of us to move beyond the departmental fragmentation that has so often dominated higher education.

CONGRESSMAN KEITH ELLISON SPEAKS AT CARLETON

February 12, 2010—Keith Ellison (D-Minn), the first Muslim elected to a seat in the United States Congress as Representative of the 5th Congressional District of Minnesota (which includes Minneapolis), gave an intimate talk at Carleton about his religious identity and political commitments.

In 2007, Congressman Keith Ellison assumed his office amidst controversy stirred up by politicians surrounding his being sworn into office with Thomas Jefferson's copy of the Qur'an.

“'There are as many ways to be a Muslim as there are to be human,' Ellison said during his talk. Passionate about his political obligations to his constituents, he noted his constant struggle against being looked to as a defacto 'representative of Islam'.
**SABBATICAL IN JAPAN**

The NumeNews reports that Professor Asuka Sango, specialist in East Asian Buddhism and Japanese Religions, will be on sabbatical in Japan for the 2010-2011 academic year. Here are Professor Sango's plans (in her words).

During my sabbatical, I plan to (magically!) turn my dissertation into a book. That means that I will be doing research at one of the best historiographical archives in Japan at Tokyo University (Tokyo Historiographical Institute), taking graduate courses at Tokyo University, and writing my book.

More specifically, I will be doing research on Buddhist court rituals that were developed in ancient Japan, and how those rituals were used by competing political figures—emperor, his family members, aristocrats, monks—to legitimize their power.

I plan to walk the Kumano pilgrimage, and visit many Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines that are known for their new, interesting prayers, amulets, etc. This is to update my Japanese religion class.

On a more personal note, I plan to "relearn" Japanese language and customs, and become more Japanese. This is my first time really "living" in Japan since I left Japan in 1997. So I am expecting a big culture shock!

In my spare time, I would like to learn some form of traditional Japanese cultural practice—maybe minyo(a genre of traditional Japanese music), karate, tea ceremony, or calligraphy.

Stay tuned for a follow-up report in 2011.

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**HINDU TEMPLE OF MINNESOTA**

May 16, 2010—Professor Shana Sippy lead a student group along with Chaplain Carol Fure-Slocum to Minnesota’s only Hindu mandir or temple.

Built in 2003 in Maple Grove (just north of the Twin Cities) the Hindu Temple of Minnesota is currently the largest Hindu temple in North America. This massive building houses more than a dozen temples, which are built in both Southern and Northern Indian styles. Remarkably, there is even a Jain temple.

The student group arrived on Sunday for a tour of the temple, a talk with a temple guide and an Indian vegetarian lunch at the temple kitchen. They also had the opportunity to attend a temple service or puja for Ram Parivar and Hanumanji Abhishek.

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**ELLISON SPEAKS**

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At the same time, he acknowledged how being the first Muslim in Congress, in the post-9/11 world, opened diplomatic doors for him that might have been otherwise closed to him as a novice in Congress.

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Hindu Temple of Minnesota

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Senior Comps Projects

“She did not die with us”: The Pious Body as Contested Metonym in John Alexander Dowie’s Late-Nineteenth-Century Faith Healing Ministry  
by Samuel Ritter

Rendering the Moon: The Apophatic Discourses of Ibn ’Arabi and Eihei Dōgen  
by Caitlin McKimmy

Agency, Absence and Amma: A Case of Kali Possession in Sri Lanka  
by Jared Christensen

“Higher Buddhism is Science”: Looking Beyond Protestant Buddhism in the Hybrid Discourse of Anagarika Dharmapala  
by Jen Knight

Christ and Culture and Weight Loss: a Theological Analysis of Evangelical Christian Dieting Programs  
by Julie Conroy

It Shall Not Hurt Them: The Significance of Mark 16 in Pentecostal Snake-Handling Sects of Southern Appalachia  
by Blythe Spraggins

Scoring With Jesus: The Relevance of Sports in the Construction of Masculinity in Christianity Today  
by Kaitlin Barnet

“Task Completed”: Mass Suicide as the Ultimate Display of Commitment and Preservation for the Community of Heaven’s Gate  
by Carolyn Frischer

Who’s the Boss?: The Sōka Gakkai’s Legitimation of Authority in its Sect to Church Transition  
by Lynn Abe

Patriotism, Secularism, and the Invention of State Shintō D.C. Holtom’s Representations of Japan  
by Avery Morrow

Aleph is for Allah, Bet is for Buddha…: The Presence of Religious Pluralism in Conservative Jewish Day Schools  
by Abigail Malis

Spirited Away: The Evangelical Protestant Conversion Phenomenon amid the Poor in Urban Brazil  
by Mundo Garza

Class Schedule

RELG 110: Introduction to Religion  
taught by Shana Sippy

RELG 151: Religions in Chinese Culture  
taught by Asuka Sango

RELG 162: Jesus, Paul, and Christian Origins  
taught by Lori Pearson

RELG 163: The Qu’ran  
taught by Adil Ozdemir

RELG 228: Christian Ethics  
taught by Aimee Chor

RELG 249: Religion and American Public Life  
taught by Michael McNally

RELG 267: Contemporary Jewish Thought  
taught by Louis Newman

RELG 285: Goddesses  
taught by Elizabeth Perez

RELG 286: Religion and Music in Cuba  
taught by Elizabeth Perez

RELG 381: Religion and Nationalism  
taught by Aimee Chor