

Dr Vaia Touna

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Citizenship: Greek

U.S. Immigration Status: Green Card

Academic Work Experience

- 2016/ Present Assistant Professor at the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Alabama.
- 2015 Full-Time Instructor for the Fall semester at the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Alabama.
- 2010 Full-Time Instructor, Department of Religious Studies, University of Alabama (Spring Semester); taught Introduction to the Study of Religion (Honors class) and co-taught an upper level Seminar on The Politics of Religious Authenticity.
- 2010 Instructor, Department of Modern Languages and Classics. University of Alabama (Spring Semester); taught Elementary Modern Greek (101 and 102), and Intermediate Modern Greek (201 and 202).
- 2005-9 English Language Teacher (Elementary and High School) Employer: “Hadzopoulos” (i.e., foreign language centre), Thessaloniki Greece.

Education

- 2015 Ph.D., University of Alberta, Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, Program in Religious Studies. Thesis: “*Acts of Identification and the Politics of the Greek Past: Religion, Tradition, Self.*” Supervisor: Dr. Willi Braun.
- 2008-10 Ph.D, candidate, Aristotle University, Thessaloniki, Greece. Department of Theology, Study of Religion (Transfer to University of Alberta).
- 2008 Master of Arts, Aristotle University, Thessaloniki, Greece. Department of Theology, Study of Religion. Overall Grade Earned: 9.93/10. Thesis: “*Meden Agan: The Tragedy of Man in Euripides’ Hippolytus.*” Supervisor: Dr. Panayotis Pachis.
- 2002 Bachelor of Arts Aristotle University, Thessaloniki, Greece. Department of Theology. Overall Grade Earned: 8.03/10.

Language Competencies

- Primary: Modern, Classical and Hellenistic Greek, English, Italian, French (fluent speaking, writing, and reading competency).
- Secondary: Latin (i.e., reading competency).

Areas of Specialization

- Modern Social Theories of Religion; Theories of Myth; History of the Classic and Hellenistic Worlds; Religions and Society of the Hellenistic and Greco-Roman Worlds; Ancient Greek Literature and Drama; Ancient Greek Myth; Early Christianity.

Publications

Monographs

- *Fabrications of the Greek Past: Religion, Tradition, and the Making of Modern Identities*. Leiden and Boston: Brill of the Netherlands, 2017.

Responses To/Reviews Of Monograph

- My book, *Fabrications of the Greek Past: Religion, Tradition, and the Making of Modern Identities*, is under a review symposium, which will consist of a solicited panel of scholarly responses, at the *Culture and Religion* Journal, edited by Malory Nye, and published by Routledge, to which I will reply with my own essay. (Forthcoming).

Edited Books

- *Strategic Acts in the Study of Identity: Towards a Dynamic Theory of People and Place*. Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2019.

Book Chapters

- “Locating the Past: Religion, Anachronisms, and the Real,” in Gerhard van den Heever (ed.), *Special Sessions on Religion in Antiquity* (Accepted) (Forthcoming with Equinox Publishing).
- “From Out of the Head of Zeus: The Context of a Lost Text,” in Gerhard van den Heever (ed.), *Special Sessions on Religion in Antiquity* (Accepted) (Forthcoming with Equinox Publishing).
- “The Political Utility of the Past: The Case of Greek Fire-Walking Rituals,” in Adrian Hermann, Steffen Fuhrding, Leslie Dorrough-Smith (eds.), *Hijacked!: A Critical Treatment of the Public Rhetoric of “Good” and “Bad” Religion*. (Accepted) (Forthcoming with Equinox Publishing).
- “Scholars and the Framing of Objects” in Leslie Dorrough-Smith (ed.), *The Architecture of the Academy: Processes, Institutions, and Power in the Academic Study of Religion* (Accepted) (Forthcoming with Equinox Publishing).
- “Preface: Show Your Work” in Vaia Touna (ed.) *Strategic Acts in the Study of Identity: Towards a Dynamic Theory of People and Place*, ix-xvii. Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2019.
- “The Constitutive Discourse of Description” in Vaia Touna (ed.) *Strategic Acts in the Study of Identity: Towards a Dynamic Theory of People and Place*, 48-55. Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2019.
- “What’s New is Old Again: The Αναπαλαίωση of Tradition,” in Monica Miller (ed.), *Claiming Identity in the Study of Religion: Social and Rhetorical Techniques Examined*, 191-199. Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2015.

- “Re-describing Iconoclasm: Holey Frescoes and Identity Formation,” in William Arnal, Willi Braun, and Russell McCutcheon (eds), *Failure and Nerve in the Academic Study of Religion*, 218-227. Equinox Publishers, 2012.

Brief Book Chapters

- “One Thing I’ve Learned from J.Z. Smith?: On Articulate Choice” in Emily Crews and Russell McCutcheon (eds.) *Remembering Smith*. (Accepted) (Forthcoming with Equinox Publishing).
- “Maps, Interpretations, and ‘The Territory’” in Vaia Touna (ed.) *Strategic Acts in the Study of Identity: Towards a Dynamic Theory of People and Place*, 194-196. Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2019.
- “Which Past do you Authorize?” in Vaia Touna (ed.) *Strategic Acts in the Study of Identity: Towards a Dynamic Theory of People and Place*, 188-190. Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2019.
- “Frames of Identity” in Vaia Touna (ed.) *Strategic Acts in the Study of Identity: Towards a Dynamic Theory of People and Place*, 207-208. Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2019.
- “Double Standards” in Vaia Touna (ed.) *Strategic Acts in the Study of Identity: Towards a Dynamic Theory of People and Place*, 216-219. Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2019.
- “The Luxury of Nuance” in Vaia Touna (ed.) *Strategic Acts in the Study of Identity: Towards a Dynamic Theory of People and Place*, 248-250. Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2019.
- “What is the Oldest Religion?” in Aaron Hughes and Russell T. McCutcheon (eds), *Religion in 5 minutes*, 68-72. Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2017.
- “What are the Main Differences Between Protestantism, Catholicism, and Greek Orthodoxy,” in Aaron Hughes and Russell T. McCutcheon (eds), *Religion in 5 minutes*, 138-140. Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2017.
- “How Do you Study the Religions of Cultures that no Longer Exist?” in Aaron Hughes and Russell T. McCutcheon (eds), *Religion in 5 minutes*, 272-275. Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2017.
- “Who are you? I’m Greek,” in Russell T. McCutcheon (ed.), *Fabricating Identities*, 29-33. Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2017.
- “Who are you? I’m Vaia and Touna,” in Russell T. McCutcheon (ed.), *Fabricating Identities*, 95-98. Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2015
- “When the Stakes are High,” in Russell T. McCutcheon (ed.), *Fabricating Origins*, 16-17. Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2015

- “Searching for Chimaeras,” in Russell T. McCutcheon (ed.), *Fabricating Origins*, 48-49. Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2015.

Journal Articles

- “Distinction, Privilege, and the Role of *Code Switching*.” *Religion & Theology*, 25, 3-4 (2018): 1-15. (Peer Reviewed).
- “Paul and the ‘Tradition’ of the Founder-Figures: A response to James C. Hanges, *Paul, Founder of Churches, 2011*.” *Religion & Theology*, 20, 3-4 (2013-2014): 284-291. (Peer Reviewed).
- “The Manageable Self in the Early Hellenistic Era,” *Bulletin of the Council of Societies for the Study of Religion*, Vol. 39, No 2 (2010): 34-37.

Book Review

- Peter Gottschalk. *Religion, Science, and Empire: Classifying Hinduism and Islam in British India* (Oxford University Press, 2013). *Religion & Theology* 21 (3-4): 428-432.

Book Series Editor

- *Working with Culture on the Edge Series* (Equinox Publishing). Volumes include:
 - Steven Ramey (ed.). *Fabricating Difference*. Equinox Publishing, Sheffield: 2017
 - Russell T. McCutcheon (ed.). *Fabricating Identity*. Equinox Publishing, Sheffield: 2017.
 - Russell T. McCutcheon (ed.). *Fabricating Origins*. Equinox Publishing, Sheffield: 2015.

Unpublished Translations

- Greek translation of Russell T. McCutcheon, *Studying Religion: An Introduction*, London, UK: Equinox (2007).

Unpublished Manuscripts

- *Μηδέν Ἄγαν: Η Τραγικότητα του Ανθρώπου στον Ιππόλυτο του Ευριπίδη* (Meden Agan: The Tragedy of Man in Euripides’s Hippolytus). M.A. Thesis: Aristotle University, Greece.

Blog Posts

- “How do you Teach a Course on Ancient Religions?” appeared at *Practicum: Critical Theory, Religion, and Pedagogy* [February 20, 2018] (<http://practicumreligionblog.blogspot.ca/2018/02/how-do-you-teach-course-on-ancient.html?m=1>).
- “Something I’ve learned from Jonathan Z. Smith” appeared at the *Bulletin for the Study of Religion* [January 30, 2018] (<http://bulletin.equinoxpub.com/2018/01/something-i-learned-from-j-z-smith-vaia-touna/>).

- Culture on the Edge (<http://edge.ua.edu/identifiers/vaia-touna/>); Blog of an International Collaborative investigating identity and identification practices.
- “How and Why Should You Bring Culture on The Edge in the Classroom” appeared at *Practicum: Critical Theory, Religion, and Pedagogy* (<http://practicumreligionblog.blogspot.com/2014/09/how-and-why-should-you-bring-culture-on.html>).
- Past Perfect (<http://www.as.ua.edu/pastperfect/author/vtouna/>); 2011 study abroad in Greece blog, University of Alabama (trip cancelled due to April 27, 2011 tornado).

Conference Presentations

International

- Invited participant at the SBL (Society of Biblical Literature) conference in Boston. Presented “The Context of a Lost Text: Religion, Meaning, and Interpretation.” (November 18, 2017).
- Participant at the NAASR (North American Association for the Study of Religion) conference in Boston. Presented “The Things We Study When We Study Religion: Scholars and the Construction of Context.” (November 17, 2017).
- Invited participant at the “Hijacked!” conference at the University of Bonn, Germany. Presented “Hijacked!: The Political Utility of the Past.” (June 8-11, 2017).
- Invited participant at the AAR (American Academy of Religion) conference in San Antonio. Presented “Religion After Nongbri: Locating the Past.” (November 19, 2016).
- Participant at the Alabama-Greece Initiative mini-conference at Aristotle University, Thessaloniki, Greece, May 10, 2016. Presented “Digital Humanities: Making the Strange Familiar and the Familiar Strange.” [Presented again at the Alabama-Greece Initiative conference at The University of Alabama, October 21, 2016].
- “Paul and the ‘Tradition’ of the Founder Figures,” a response to James C. Hanges, *Paul, Founder of Churches* (2011). Society of Biblical Literature, annual meeting, Boston. (November 19, 2011).

National

- Invited participant at the conference “Collaborations: Directions in the Study of Religion,” at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, PA. Presented “A Technique of Cosmographic Formation: ‘Tradition.’” (October 28, 2014).
- Invited participant at the Code-Switching conference/workshop at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, PA. Presented “Distinction, Domination, Privilege and the Role of Code Switching.” (April 14, 2014).

- “‘Mystery Cults’: The Technology of Producing Citizens.” Presented at the annual meeting of the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies in Victoria, BC. (June 5, 2013).
- “The Meadows of Artemis and the Marginal Self.” Presented at the annual meeting of the Canadian Society of Religious Studies in Victoria, BC. (June 4, 2013).

Regional

- Invited participant at the SECSOR (Southeastern Commission for the Study of Religion) conference. Presented “There is Data Everywhere.” (March 5, 2016.)

Local

- Invited respondent to the *Power and Struggle Conference*, at the Department of History, University of Alabama, “Conflict and Identity Construction: An Invitation” (October 6, 2018)
- “Re-describing Iconoclasm: Holey Frescoes and Identity Formation” presented at a conference in honor of Donald Wiebe, at Trinity College in Toronto. (October 21, 2011).
- “Re-describing Iconoclasm: Holey Frescoes and Identity Formation.” Presented to the Annual Spring Symposium of the Interdisciplinary Program in Religious Studies at the University of Alberta. (March 21, 2010).
- “The Manageable Self in the Early Hellenistic Era.” Presented at a student conference in Aristotle University, Thessaloniki, Greece. (May 25, 2009).

Invited Lectures

- “*The Anachronistic Use of ‘Religion’ in Ancient Greek Studies.*” Presented at the Department of History and Classics, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (May 16, 2018).
- “*Locating the Past.*” Presented at the Department of Classics and Religious Studies, University of Ottawa (March 6, 2018).
- “*Ancient Greek Myths.*” Presented at the Tuscaloosa County High School (September 1, 2017).
- “*Re-describing Iconoclasm: Holey Frescoes and Identity Formation.*” Presented at the Religion in Culture Lunchtime Discussion at the University of Alabama (March 31, 2010).
- Four guest lectures at the Department of Religious Studies, University of Alabama. Topics: History of Thessaloniki; Beginners Modern Greek Language; Private Religion and the City State in Ancient and Hellenistic Athens. (May 25, 2009).

Teaching

- **Undergraduate Courses in Religious Studies:** REL 100 Introduction to Religious Studies; REL 105 Honors Introduction to Religious Studies; REL106 Introduction to

Ancient Religions; REL 237 Self, Society, and Religion; REL341 Theories of Myth; REL 370 “Religion” in Ancient Greece; REL372 Theorizing Ancient Religions.

- **M.A. Thesis Supervisor:** Savannah Finver, University of Alabama (2018-2020)
- **MA Thesis Committee Member:** Sarah Griswold “Their Throats were Constricted: Nationalism, History, and Memorials in Nana Rao Park” (2018)

On Going Research

Research in Progress

Summer 2017 to present

In the summers of 2017 and 2018 I’ve conducted ethnographic fieldwork research, participant observation and interviews (IRB approval [Spring 2017, 2018]), in the village of Narthaki, in Farsala, Greece. This is the first part of an on going research for a new book project entitled: “Locating the Past: Studies in Ingenuity and Collaboration.” (The project is supported with the CARSCA [The College Academy of Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity] and the RGC [Research Grants Committee] awards).

Awards And Grants

- Submitted my book, *Fabrications of the Greek Past: Religion, Tradition, and the Making of Modern Identities*, for the “Keeley Book Prize” award at the Modern Greek Studies Association (MGSA).
- RGC research award, University of Alabama, for 2017-2019 (total value of the research award: \$6,000).
- CARSCA research funding, University of Alabama, for 2017-2018 (total value of the research funding: \$1,738).
- Dissertation Fellowship, University of Alberta, for 2014-2015 (total value of the award: \$22,000).
- The Andrew Stewart Memorial Graduate Prize, University of Alberta, for 2014 (total value of the award: \$5,000).
- The Izzak Walton Killam Memorial Scholarship, University of Alberta, for 2012-2013; 2013-2014 (one of two Humanities awardees at the University of Alberta: total value of the award: \$70,000).
- The Provost’s Doctoral Entrance Award, University of Alberta, for 2010-2011; 2011-2012 (total value of the award: \$16,434).

Scholarly Collaborations

- *Culture on the Edge*: a fourteen member international scholarly working group devoted to a more dynamic understanding of identity formation. The collaboration involves a group blog, periodic working meetings and conferences, and two book series with Equinox Publishers, UK.
- *Alabama-Greece Initiative*: A collaborative project with Ioannis Xydopoulos, professor at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, that involves developing an exchange study abroad program (On-going).

Related Academic Experience

- Fall 2018/
Present Chair of the “AAR: Method and Theory in the Study of Religion” Section of SECSOR (South Eastern Commission for the Study of Religion) conference.
- Fall 2018 Mentor for the American Examples (AE) workshop, a working group for young scholars funded by the Department of Religious Studies and the Arts & Sciences at the University of Alabama. The working group met on March 23, 2019 on the University of Alabama Campus and will meet again at the annual meeting of NAASR and AAR conference in the Fall of 2019. The workshop will culminate in an edited volume of papers produced by the participants (<https://blogs.religion.ua.edu/ac/american-example-mentors/>).
- Fall 2018/
Present Faculty Senate Alternate
- Fall 2018 Undergrad Committee member
- Fall 2018 REL Events’ Coordinator
- Fall 2018 REL representative to the Alum Liaison Committee
- 2012-Present Editorial board member of Equinox Publisher’s book series *Culture on the Edge: Studies in Identification*. (<https://www.equinoxpub.com/home/culture-on-the-edge/>).
- Fall 2017-
Spring2018 Search Committee Member, Tenure-track faculty line in Social Theory of Race and Religion in the U.S.
- Spring 2017 Completed the “Publisher-in-residence” A&S’s workshop at the University of Alabama.
- Fall 2015 Completed the “Active Learning Initiative” A&S’s workshop at the University of Alabama.
- 2015-2017 Faculty Advisor for the Religious Studies Student Association (RSSA), University of Alabama.
- 2012-2015 Editorial Assistant for the journal *Method & Theory in Study of Religion (MTSR)*, published by Brill of the Netherlands.
- 2012-2013
& 2014-2015 Instructor of modern Greek language and traditional dances at the Hellenic Language School of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

- 2012-2013 President of the RSGSS (Religious Studies Graduate Student Society), University of Alberta, 2012-2013. Under my initiative we obtained a grant to host Prof. Monica Miller as a guest lecturer.
- 2011-2012 Teaching Assistant for Prof. Willi Braun, RELIG 211 (Introduction to Early Christian Writings), University of Alberta (Winter Semester).
- 2012-2013 Executive member of the International House Residence's Council Committee.
- 2012 Indexer for William Arnal and Russell McCutcheon, "*The Sacred is the Profane*," Oxford University Press (2012).
- 2010-2011 Research Assistant for Prof. Willi Braun. University of Alberta.
- 2009 Co-organized a student conference at the Aristotle University, Thessaloniki, Greece, which resulted in the publication of two of the presenter's presentations with responses from North American scholars, in the *Bulletin of the Council of Societies for the Study of Religion* Vol. 39, No 2 (2010).
- 2008-2012 Local Coordinator, Study Abroad Program, organized by Professor Russell McCutcheon, Department of Religious Studies, University of Alabama.
- 1993-1997 Co-editor of the quarterly cultural magazine, *Emmanuel Papas*.

Professional Affiliations

- Member of the Modern Greek Studies Association (MGSA).
- Member of the American Academy of Religion (AAR).
- Member of the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL).
- Member of the North American Association for the Study of Religion (NAASR).