



DEPARTMENT of  
RELIGIOUS  
STUDIES

Studying  
Religion in  
Culture

THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**ALABAMA**  
ARTS & SCIENCES

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# RELIGIOUS STUDIES NEWSLETTER

Spring 2004 • Issue 1

## Welcome from the Chair



Russell T. McCutcheon  
Chair

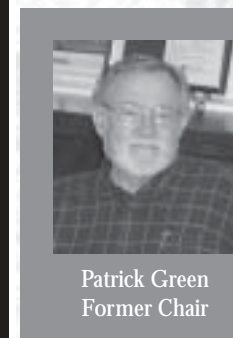
Welcome to our Department's first newsletter! Although we recently produced two issues of a newsletter to communicate the good work being done in our Department's Judaic Studies minor, the faculty thought that readers would like to know about the work being done by all of our students and faculty. So, we pooled our Department's

various mailing lists, compiled the names and addresses of all of our graduates, our current majors and minors, and produced our first Department newsletter, which will be devoted to highlighting the work of our students and telling readers a little about what's been going on in the Department.

Because we realize that older graduates will not necessarily recognize the names and faces currently in the Department, we invited the longtime Chair of the Department, Patrick Green (who retired three years ago), to open the newsletter with an anecdotal history of the Department, which will surely bring back memories for some readers. Also, you'll find articles by some of our current or recent stu-

dents—articles that are timely (such as **Michael Manasco's** background piece on religion in U.S. law and **Kyle Stephens's** book review of John Krakauer's *New York Times* bestseller) and informative (such as **Kathleen Penton's** article on just what a Religious Studies major is). Add to this some information on current faculty accomplishments, some suggested readings the faculty have provided for those who are interested in recent books on religion, and some photos of life in the Department, and you have a first issue, of which we're quite proud. ■

## The Department of Religious Studies—Early Times



Patrick Green  
Former Chair

tee that Alabama had seen since Reconstruction. The Ku Klux Klan was still very much a part of the local culture, and both men were targeted by that group as "liberal trouble makers."

In 1969 the Department became a three person operation with the hiring of **Patrick Green**. He arrived just a few months before the university-wide demonstration that next spring against the bombing of Cambodia and the killings at Kent State. All three members of the department were on the so-called Faculty Student Coalition, a group that attempted to negotiate a settlement with a recalcitrant, and decidedly backward, administration that timidly refused to talk with the students. But a settlement was not to be. After the longest running demonstration of its kind in the United States, the embarrassed administration declared an end to the academic year and sent the students home—with no final exams!

A year or so later the department hired **Mr. Dorsey Blake**, a Ph.D. candidate from Berkeley, who was one of the first black faculty members to be appointed by the University. (The bas-

ketball team had been "integrated" two years before and football was soon to follow.) His classes on "Black Religion" were immediately popular among both black and white students, but his efforts to visit various local churches with his class were not so successful. Two white churches turned the students away, telling them to go to their "own" church. However, after the story ran in the *Tuscaloosa News*, the group was welcomed by a number of other churches, including Calvary Baptist and First Methodist.

Joe Bettis left in 1973 to become an Associate Dean of the School of Public Affairs at the University of Nebraska. Green became Chair at that time and **Joe McCowan** was hired to teach Phenomenology of Religion and Ethics (which Bettis had taught). McCowan was also the first faculty member to teach a course oriented to Feminist Studies. Indeed the early '70s saw a cultural shift in Religious Studies. While courses in Old and New

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Attending our Honors Day 2003 reception were: **Peter von Herrmann** and **Kelly Claverie** (front left); **Kim Davis** (middle), **Clay Arnold** and **John Parrish** (background right), Professor **Catherine Roach** (background middle) and Professor **Ted Trost** (foreground right).



Professor **Tim Murphy** with **Heather Swindler** and **Ruby**, attending our Fall 2003 "Welcome Back" reception in our newly refurbished student/faculty lounge.

## Student Scholarships

Due to the generosity of donors, the Department is pleased that it can award scholarships to some of our students.

Whereas the proceeds from the **Ulysses V. Goodwyn Fund** are used to support the activities of our student association, the proceeds from the **Joseph Silverstein Scholarship Fund** are awarded annually to Religious Studies majors and Judaic Studies minors who have excelled in the past year.

Awarded for the first time in 2002, the recipients of either the \$1,000 or \$500 awards were: **Jeff Brown, Shera Fingerman, Kathleen Penton, Kim Davis, Drew Elmore, Nic Reagan, Chris Anders, Kristal Patton, Clay Arnold, Peter von Herrmann, Michelle Trawick, Jason Wright, Brock Tyra, Catherine Howell, Josh McDonough, Kelly Claverie, and Tracy Jones.**

In 2003 these awards were presented to: **Clay Arnold, Kim Davis, Drew Elmore, Shera Fingerman, Peter von Herrmann, Catherine Howell, Mark Hopkins, John Parrish, Kathleen Penton, Samantha Sastre, Kyle Stephens, and Tom Taylor.**

And, just announced, the 2004 recipients of the Silverstein Fellowship are: **Kristin Bradbury, Guy Cutting, Drew Elmore, Shera Fingerman, Katie Jo Greer, James Harrington, Josh McDonough, John Parrish, Kathleen Penton, Samantha Sastre, Matthew Satcher, and Tom Taylor.** Their awards, along with a few other surprises, will be presented at the April 16, 2004, Honors Day Reception.



Continued from page 1

Testament, the History of Western Religions and Comparative Religions continued to be offered, Black Religion, Feminist Thought, Revolutionary Theology and the first early forays into Deconstruction were making a place for themselves.

The '70s generally saw several educational innovations. A "free university" offered courses for a couple of years with Bettis and Green participating. Green was on the founding committee for **New College** and taught courses there for several years. Green and **Emmett Parker**, a Professor in French literature, designed the first Humanities course for the College of Arts and Sciences with a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

After McCowan took an early retirement in the late '70s his position was lost to "proration," a drastic reduction in the state budget, which of course directly affected the university. Indeed, "Alabama" and "proration" would come to seem synonymous. These were some very lean years for the department. There was virtually no hope of adding faculty even though student demand for classes remained high. Increasingly the department came to rely on part-time instructors. **Sam Haun**, **Barbara Jamestone**, and more recently, **Jon Berry** and **Ana Schuber** were among those who served with dedication and distinction.

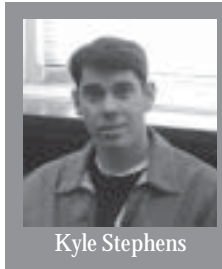
**William Doty** was hired in 1981. He brought with him a vast erudition, an incredible work ethic, a love for his students, and an ability to be at home in a number of disciplines. While Doty would have his hand in an incredibly large number of projects during his tenure at the university, his latest—aiding and abetting the inauguration of the **Blount Undergraduate Initiative**—was perhaps among his finest. He would Chair the Department from 1983 to 1988 and again in 2000 when Green retired. He would himself retire in 2002.

While there are still budgetary concerns in the department and the university, there have been some exciting recent developments. We have established an endowed Chair in Judaic Studies. The Provost's office, to the department's surprise, saw fit to fund the appointment of a faculty member in Asian Religions. And when Leon Weinberger retired in 1998, we were able to hire both **Ted Trost** and his wife **Catherine Roach**, who hold joint appointments in the department and New College.

Even more recently **Steve Jacobs** came to fill the Chair in Judaic Studies, while **Kurtis Schaeffer** came from Harvard in Asian Religions.

One thing has remained consistently true. The department has always and continues to attract some of the very best and brightest students on the campus. They have been an exuberant presence who often taught as much as they learned and who never failed to support this odd, if feisty, department.

With Doty's retirement the "old guard" was gone. **Russell McCutcheon** became the Chair and the department was, in effect, brand new. It is now a young and vigorous faculty that faces the future with a great deal of optimism. The "old guard," who had a hell of a ride, wish them well. ■



Kyle Stephens

## Review: Under the Banner of Heaven

**Jon Krakauer** has forged a career by telling the stories of people who commit what seem to be irrational acts. Included among his tales is the disastrous 1996 attempt to scale Mt. Everest (*Into Thin Air*, 1997) and the young man who braved (unsuccessfully) the Alaskan wilderness armed solely with a bag of rice (*Into the Wild*, 1996). In his most recent book, the best-selling *Under the Banner of Heaven*, Krakauer examines a subject where the line between rationality and irrationality is much more porous, and thus more subjective: faith and fanaticism.

*Under the Banner of Heaven* opens by chronicling the 1984 murder of a suburban Utah woman, Brenda Lafferty, and her infant daughter, Erica. Their murders were committed by Ron and Dan Lafferty—her brothers-in-law—because they believed themselves ordered to do so by God. *Under the Banner of Heaven* is an attempt to understand the context in which this crime was committed, delving



deeply into the history of Mormon Fundamentalism, an element of the only major religion birthed on U.S. soil. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) and the Mormon Fundamentalists are each convinced that the other represents a perversion of God's true revelation. Among their disagreements, the Fundamentalists believe that the LDS Church forewent an essential tenet when, in 1890 and due to pressure from the federal government, it abandoned polygamy as official church doctrine. Tracing the history of this split, Krakauer offers an overview of the origins of Mormonism, and explains the complexities of Mormon Fundamentalism as it is practiced today, from Mexico to Canada.

For example, he focuses on the town of Colorado City, which straddles the border of Utah and Arizona, as an example of a modern American theocracy. Almost entirely composed of Mormon Fundamentalists, its citizens (or, if you prefer, members) live under the rule of a single man, the head of their Church. According to Krakauer, the mayor and police force answer to him, he arranges and approves all marriages (many of the brides being no more than fourteen or fifteen years old) and controls nearly all the property in town. Until recently, this man was a ninety-two year-old "tax-accountant-turned-prophet" named Rulon Jeffs. "Uncle Rulon" no doubt felt obliged to set an example, and carried out the commandment of "plural marriage" to, by Krakauer's count, the extent of seventy-five wives and at least sixty-five children. Colorado City, and others like it, concludes Krakauer, is a society seemingly at odds with itself, in which absolute obedience is demanded and individual thinking little tolerated, all of which happens while emphasizing the need for a personal

communication with God.

Returning to the crime that opens his book, Krakauer sees isolated places like Colorado City, with their seemingly opposed dichotomies, as providing clues to understand the murder of Brenda Lafferty and, more recently, even the abduction of Elizabeth Smart. How is it that intelligent, seemingly sane people commit such crimes, without remorse and in the name of piety? According to Krakauer, "as a means of motivating people to be cruel or inhumane... there may be no more potent force than religion." Although faith, Krakauer suggests, is an inherently irrational phenomenon, for Ron and Dan Lafferty, an act commanded by the Almighty was only too rational. In fact, for strict literalists such as these two brothers, divine dictation is likely the only legitimate rationale for any human action.

Krakauer offers no solutions; he does, however, provide insights into the more general topic of extremism; given the topics of his previous books, Krakauer may be uniquely qualified to offer his concluding assessment: "In any human endeavor, some fraction of its practitioners will be motivated to pursue that activity with such concentrated focus and unalloyed passion that it will consume them utterly.... Through immoderation, he experiences something akin to rapture."

Although viewed as a controversial book by some members of LDS, *Under the Banner of Heaven* describes but one instance of people going to an extreme—and the stories of those who are immersed within it—with tactfulness and aplomb. Krakauer's skill with language and command of the facts result in a cogent narrative that is as absorbing as it is disturbing. ■

—Kyle Stephens is a recent graduate who double majored in REL and History.



## Amy Petersen Memorial Scholarship

One of our students, **Amy Petersen**, died quite unexpectedly last Fall.

Soon after we received this very sad news, Amy's mother visited the Department to let us know how much Amy enjoyed our classes. In her memory, her family has established the **Amy Petersen Memorial Scholarship Fund**, which will be devoted to assisting students in our Department who are in financial need.

Although the fund is currently in its very early stages, we would like to encourage you to consider making a donation—of any amount, whatsoever—so that the Department can develop this fund and be able to assist some of its students well into the future.

Those interested in learning more should visit [www.as.ua.edu/rel/remembering](http://www.as.ua.edu/rel/remembering) or contact the Chair of the Department, at 205-348-5271, or the Office of Development for the College of Arts and Sciences, at 205-348-8538. ■

## Aronov Lecture Delivered by Jonathan Z. Smith

John Parrish

Tuesday, September 23, 2003, marked the second annual Aronov Lecture. This year, the Department was honored to host Professor **Jonathan Z. Smith**, of the University of Chicago, as our speaker. Professor Smith, one of our field's most influential and insightful scholars, proved himself an extremely engaging speaker as he delivered a lecture entitled "**God Save This Honorable Court: Religion and Civic Discourse**," which discussed the role that court cases have played in defining what "a religion" is. Smith is the author of several books published by the University of Chicago Press including: *Map is not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions*, (1978), *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown*, (1982), *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual*, (1987), *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity*, (1990) and the forthcoming *Relating Religion*, which will contain the paper he delivered at the Aronov Lecture.

This event was a great success for the Department; Smith Hall 205, where the lecture was delivered, was literally "standing room only," with many Religious Studies faculty giving up their seats to accommodate the students and guests. In addition to delivering the public lecture Tuesday evening, he also visited Dr. Jim Apple's Wednesday morning REL 100 class, where he discussed the Insider-Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion.

Professor Smith's visit was a thrill and an honor for the Department of Religious Studies, and we extend our thanks to him. ■

—John Parrish is a Senior majoring in REL and completing a Classics minor.



Professor **Jonathan Z. Smith**, of the University of Chicago, delivering the 2003 Aronov Lecture (photo kindly provided by **Niko Corley**, Photo Editor, *Dateline Alabama*).



Professor **Smith** met with **Katherine Lee**, reporter for the *Tuscaloosa News*, in the Department lounge.



Religious Studies majors **Kim Davis** and **John Parrish** join Professor **Tim Murphy** during the reception.

## Books of Interest—Recommended Readings by Our Professors

**God's Secretaries: The Making of the King James Bible** by Adam Nicolson (HarperCollins, 2003). This is a very readable history of the creation of the most widely read English Bible; a great look at the kinds of processes by which religious artifacts are made.

**Traces of the Spirit: The Religious Dimensions of Popular Music** by Robin Sylvan (New York University Press, 2002). The book examines Hip-hop, Heavy Metal, and the music of the Grateful Dead, arguing that there is a spiritual aspect to the production of these songs. A key feature of the book is its interviews with musicians themselves as they struggle to identify the factors involved in the creative process of music-making.

**Communities of Dissent: A History of Alternative Religions in America** by Stephen J. Stein (Oxford University Press, 2000). Stein has written a little, highly readable book documenting the influence of marginal religious groups throughout U.S. history, from Roger Williams, the founder of Rhode Island, who argued for "soul liberty," to the Church of Scientology, Jim Jones, and David Koresh.

**The Goddess: Power, Sexuality, and the Feminine Divine** by Shahruckh Husain (University of Michigan Press, 2003). The book is lavishly illustrated with dozens of beautiful full-color depictions of goddesses from around the world. It explores the significant role of the "feminine divine" from the Great Mother of the Paleolithic period to Wiccan and Pagan goddess-worship today.

## UA Students Studying Abroad

Marianne Stanton

Why study abroad? Some say for adventure, others to learn about a new culture, and still others believe it allows them to travel the world while still receiving college credit. All three of these ideas played a role in my decision to study at Northumbria University in Newcastle upon Tyne, England, through the University of Alabama's **Capstone International Program**. From running through Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris to fitting most of my earthly possessions into the smallest dorm room I have ever seen, this experience has been something I will never forget!

As part of the American Students Program at Northumbria, one of my required classes is "A Colloquium on British Culture." We visit different historical sites in Northeast England, including Durham Cathedral, the Roman Wall, Warkworth Castle, and the Beamish Open Air Museum. We learn the history of the region while experiencing it. The sites we visit are breathtaking, and my mind is opened to a new aspect of England's history, art, architecture and lifestyle with every place we visit.

On the Religious Studies front, I am taking "Jews, Muslims, and Christians in the Middle Ages," a course focusing on the Crusades and the impact they had on certain religions. Although the workload is tough, the class is very rewarding. My other class is "A Psychological Focus on Crime," which examines issues such as psychological intervention, profiling, and the impact of mental illness on the justice system.

If you ever find yourself in England, there are a few things to keep in mind. Remember that in England french fries are called chips, chips are called crisps, and you should always walk on the left side of the stairs or you may find yourself being pushed down them! Cheers!

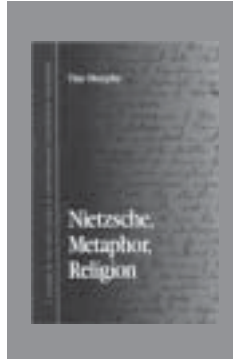
—Marianne Stanton is a Junior, and former President of the Religious Studies Student Association, who is doing a minor in REL, while completing her major in Psychology.

## Publications by Our Professors



**The Discipline of Religion** (Routledge, 2003) is a lively critical journey through religious studies today, looking at its recent growth as an academic discipline, and its contemporary political and social meanings. Focusing on the differences between religious belief and academic religious discourse,

**Russell T. McCutcheon** argues that the invention of religion as a discipline blurs the distinction between criticism and doctrine in its assertion of the relevance of faith as a credible object of study. In the leap from disciplinary criticism to avowal of actual cosmic and moral meaning, schools of religious studies extend their powers far beyond universities and into the everyday lives of those outside, managing and curtailing specific types of speech and dissent.



**Tim Murphy** presents a radically anti-foundationalist reading of Nietzsche's philosophy of religion. Nietzsche argued that metaphor is at the basis of language, concepts, and perception, making it the vehicle by which humans interpret the world. As such, metaphor has profound consequences for the nature

of religion and of philosophy. **Nietzsche, Metaphor, Religion** (SUNY, 2001) connects Nietzsche's early writings on rhetoric and metaphor, especially as understood by contemporary French philosophers and literary theorists, with Nietzsche's later writings on religion. The result is a radically anti-foundationalist reading of Nietzsche's "philosophy of religion" as an unending series of metaphoric-literary agons or contests.



In, **Among Tibetan Texts: History & Literature of the Himalayan Plateau**, (Wisdom Publications, 2001), **Kurtis Schaeffer** edits E. Gene Smith's essays, collected here for the first time.

For three decades, Smith ran the Library of Congress's Tibetan Text Publication Project of the United States Public Law 480 (PL480)—an effort to salvage and reprint the Tibetan literature that had been collected by the exile community or by members of the Bhotia communities of Sikkim, Bhutan, India, and Nepal.

The impact of Smith's research on the academic study of Tibetan literature has been tremendous both for his remarkable ability to synthesize diverse materials into coherent accounts of Tibetan literature, history, and religious thought, and for the exemplary critical scholarship he brought to this field.



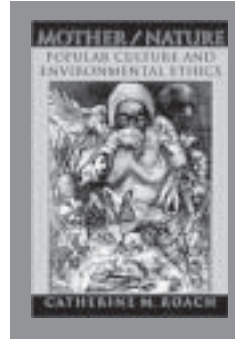
In this first complete biography, **Douglas Horton and the Ecumenical Impulse in American Religion**, (Harvard, 2002) by **Theodore L. Trost**, we are introduced to an extremely important but surprisingly unheralded twentieth-century religious leader. Throughout

his life, Horton worked tirelessly for church and world unity under the banner of ecumenism, and his efforts bore fruit in a variety of venues. Horton introduced Americans to the work of Swiss theologian Karl Barth through his translation of *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (1928). He was the chief architect of the denominational merger that formed the United Church of Christ (1957). He also presided over the transformation of the Harvard Divinity School from a near moribund institution to a distinguished center of religious learning. Toward the end of his life, Horton coordinated the Protestant presence at the Second Vatican Council.



**Dismantling the Big Lie: The Protocols of the Elders of Zion** co-authored by **Steven L. Jacobs** and **Mark Weitzman** (of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, New York) and published by Ktav Publishing House (2003) of Jersey City, NJ, is a unique attempt to address the argu-

ments contained within these so-called "protocols." Each argument is addressed in outline form and then refuted based on examples from Jewish History and Jewish texts (Bible, Talmud, Midrash, etc.). The Protocols themselves have been consistently acknowledged as forgeries, but their enduring availability makes this work relevant, especially given the ongoing Middle East conflict and the upswing in antisemitism on the European continent and elsewhere.



**Mother/Nature: Popular Culture and Environmental Ethics**, (Indiana, 2003) explores our relationship with nature through the imagery we use when we talk about Mother Nature. Employing the critical tools of religious studies, psychology, and gender studies, **Catherine M.**

**Roach** examines the various manifestations of nature as "mother" and what that idea implies for the way we approach the natural world. The book discusses the notion that nature is, or is like, a beneficent and nurturing mother who provides and maintains life. In studying the "green" slogan "Love Your Mother," Roach questions the effects—for women and for the environment—of imputing female gender to nature. She asks us to look at the associations that "motherhood" and "mothering" carry within a culture still shaped by patriarchy. She notes the danger of such an apparently pro-environmental slogan if "mother" evokes the bountiful, self-sacrificing provider who herself requires no care.



Kathleen Penton

## Religious Studies and the Liberal Arts Degree

That person walking toward you on the Quad looks familiar. It is a girl you went to high school with and haven't seen since graduation. She recognizes you too, waves to get your attention and stops to chat for a minute before you go your separate ways again. After exchanging pleasantries comes the inevitable question, "What is your major?" This might seem simple enough, but for a religious studies major, the answer will likely be received in one of three ways: a blank stare, the assumption this person intends on becoming a minister, or an interesting choice the other person didn't know existed.

Maybe this scenario is a bit far-fetched, but the academic study of religion is a viable option at the University of Alabama. And no, not all of the students who choose to major or minor in religious studies or minor in Judaic studies are planning to go into the ministry or become professional scholars of religion. This liberal arts degree can also prepare students for careers in journalism, business, education and publishing.

**Russell McCutcheon**, department chair and associate professor, said the object of the study of religion is people and their productions. "We are not studying the gods," McCutcheon said, "We are studying people who make claims." Religious studies could be characterized as the study of human behavior and at times, "particularly juicy human behavior." Students are able to learn about the history, diversity and ingenuity of human belief systems. In a world that grows smaller every day, the courses' practical skills play an increasingly significant role.

McCutcheon said it is nearly impossible to find a course that does not leave students with a heightened understanding of cross-cultural religious experiences. Course offerings vary by semester but generally range from Introduction to the Hebrew Bible to Viewing "Apocalypse Now Redux" as Religious Text and from American Religious History to Tibetan Buddhism.

The study of religion first began in Europe in the late nineteenth century and appeared soon after in the United States. Initially successful in only a handful of private colleges, the field spread to public universities by the early 1960s, due to such prominent issues as changing immigration policies and increased interest in Asian cultures. Religious studies now functions as a vital part of the humanities.

UA undergraduates, who choose to have a double-major, usually stay within the College of Arts and Sciences in areas such as anthropology, psychology, history, and even chemistry and biology. Of course, students from across the university curriculum attend classes in the department. "It enhances skills for communication, interpretation, understanding, and I think there is a hope that it increases toler-

ance," McCutcheon said of the benefits of the program. ■

—Kathleen Penton is a Senior completing a double major in REL and Journalism.

## Department Installs New Banner



Larry Jones, of University Facilities, installs the Department's new banner, outside the main office.



Local artist and metalsmith **Steve Davis** (right, with Professor **Kurtis Schaeffer**), who designed and fabricated the frame for the Department's new banner. The logo was designed by **Roderick Guillen** of the University's Office of Marketing Communications.



Michael Manasco

## Religion and Law

Recently, the state of Alabama came under the scrutiny of the national media eye regarding events surrounding a two-and-

one-half ton monument of the Ten Commandments. Although the legal issues surrounding the monument are not new ones, there still remain controversies over

the relationship between religious expression and U.S. law. While wishing to avoid supporting either of the sides in this debate, the goal of this article is to examine the legal background that is relevant in deciding cases like this.

According to Alabama Constitutional law (Amendment 328, section 6.10), "the Chief Justice, as administrative head of the Alabama judicial system ... has final authority over the decoration of the rotunda and whether to put any displays in the building." The monument in question was installed as the centerpiece of the rotunda in the Alabama State Judicial building. Judge Moore noted that his intent was to remind all Alabama citizens of the sovereignty of God over the affairs of both state and church. However, three attorneys that work in the Judicial Building filed official lawsuits to have the monument removed because, in their view, it violated the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution. The courts found in their favor; however, Judge Moore appealed this decision, claiming that his actions did not conflict with the Constitution.

The Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment states that "government shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion"; to interpret and apply this clause in specific cases, the court uses a general set of guidelines devised in 1971 by the Chief Justice appointee of the Nixon administration, Warren Burger. His three-part test came to be known as the Lemon Test, since it was developed in deciding the case of Lemon vs. Kurtzman. In that case, religiously-based private schools in Rhode Island and Pennsylvania were also teaching secular subjects and the question revolved around whether the state could fund the teachers' salaries. The Lemon Test's three criteria are: the activity must have a secular purpose; its principal effect must be one that neither advances nor inhibits religion; and it must not foster excessive government entanglement with religion (Lemon vs. Kurtzman 403 U.S. 602, 612-13). Using these standards, the programs in question were found to be in violation of the Establishment Clause, since they were ruled in conflict with the third part of the Lemon Test. The court ruled that the potential for fostering religion was present.

Since then, the Lemon Test has helped the court to maintain a consistent approach to religion-sensitive issues. Applied to the case of the Ten Commandments monument, the court first had to determine whether or not the monument had a primarily secular purpose. Stephen Glassroth, an attorney who filed one of the initial lawsuits, pointed out that Judge Moore's central platform in his campaign when he was running for the office of Chief Justice in 2000 was "to restore the moral foundation of the law." Upon election, he installed the Ten Commandments monument, a symbol of what he affirms to be the law's moral foundation. The two tablets carved into the top of the monument contain passages from Exodus 20:2-17, from the King James translation of the Holy Bible; along with the Commandments, there are several smaller quotations from various other legal, historical documents, but these quotations were

Continued on page 4

## CAPTION CONTEST

The Department recently held a caption contest, using a cartoon published recently in *The New Yorker*. The cartoon, used here with permission, had an original caption of: "The important thing is to stay hydrated."

The three winners, each of whom received an MP-3 Player (made possible by funds that support student activities) were:

"Don't look surprised. It wouldn't be hell if we were all naked and good looking."

—Mark Premo-Hopkins

"You know, even though Sartre left out the lake of fire, he was spot on with the whole 'hell is other people' thing..."

—Guy Cutting

"Boy, there sure are a lot of us."  
"Yeah, and these are just the fornicators."

—John Parrish



placed below the Scripture, since they were thought not to be "on the same plane as the Word of God." Upon the commemoration of the monument, the Chief Justice explained that the location of it was appropriate because it would remind all those who appear before the court of the one God who founded our laws.

With all this in mind, the lawsuits against this monument argued that, in conflict with the Lemon Test, its primary purpose was to promote a specific religion. The court asked Judge Moore what his purpose was by answering questions presented by the plaintiffs. He affirmed that he put the monument in the rotunda to acknowledge God's law and sovereignty, that the Ten Commandments represented God's rule over the affairs of men, and that the God he was referring to was God of the Holy Scriptures in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Agreeing with the plaintiffs, the court ruled that his actions were in violation of the Establishment Clause because the monument primarily promoted religion.

In response, Judge Moore stated that, as defined in law, religion is "the duty which we owe to our Creator, and the manner of discharging it." He argued that his monument does not involve duties that individuals owe to the Creator; rather, it represents moral foundations of secular duties we owe to society. The U.S. Supreme Court, however, has established a different definition of religion, an understanding that all faiths, even those not attributing any belief toward a Judeo-Christian understanding of God, fall under the protection of the First Amendment, which is therefore interpreted by the court to mean equality and freedom of religious expression for all, or the lack thereof. Because this freedom also applies to atheists, Judge Moore's definition was deemed inadequate because it presupposed a belief in God.

Because the intentions behind the monument were determined to include displaying it as more than simply the historical foundations of secular law, it was ruled by the court to violate the First Amendment. By ordering its removal, the court exercised its duty to maintain neutrality on the issue of religious endorsement, since the Establishment Clause prohibits them from acting in a manner that will either advance or inhibit religious practices. For, according to the statutes set forth in our Constitution, the courts must provide a neutral setting in which legal matters can be decided in an equal fashion. ■

—Michael Manasco is a recent graduate who majored in REL and completed a minor in Judaic Studies.

### ATTENTION GRADUATES

We'd like to know what you're doing. We have devoted a page on our website to news about graduates and we'd like to see this page grow. So please visit our web site, <http://www.as.ua.edu/rel/relgraduates.html>, and send us some news, even a photo or two that we can use.

## Religion in Culture Lectures

The **Religion in Culture Lecture Series** invites scholars to address the role played by religious beliefs and practices in creating and contesting culture. Below are a few candid shots taken during the lectures and the receptions which followed. Check our website for upcoming lectures which are sponsored on a regular basis, [www.as.ua.edu/rel/events.html](http://www.as.ua.edu/rel/events.html). The Department's thanks goes to Professor Ted Trost, Betty Dickey and Donna Martin for organizing these events.



Professor **Mindy Nancarrow**, of the Art Department (left, with Professor **William Dooley**, Chair of the Art Department), who presented a lecture in January 2004, on depictions of the Virgin Mary in seventeenth-century Spanish art.



Professor **Cathy Pagani**, Art Department, who presented a lecture in October 2003, on "Jesuits in China: Science, Technology and Art in the 17th and 18th Centuries."



Dr. **Jim Apple**, during his presentation given in November 2003, "The Stone Mandalas of Bodhi Gaya." Dr. Apple made use of our classroom's newly installed multi-media system.



Attending the reception following Professor Nancarrow's lecture are: **Tim Baites** and **Drew Elmore** (REL majors) and Professors **Gabriele Fassbeck** and **Steve Jacobs**.



**Guy Cutting**, REL major, on the veranda talking with Professor **Cathy Pagani** and Professor **Maarten Ultee** of the History Department (middle background).



**Jeppie Sinding Jensen** (right) who presented a lecture on "A Semiotic Theory of Religion" and **Anita Leopold** (left) who presented a lecture on "Syncretism: Why is it a Problem," in November 2003. Both Professor Jensen and Professor Leopold are from Aarhus University, Denmark.

## Our Professors

**Russell McCutcheon**, who joined the faculty in 2001, has begun work on a book series with Equinox Publishers, of the U.K., in which one of his own books will appear, later in 2004. His most recent book, *The Discipline of Religion: Structure, Meaning, Rhetoric*, was published in 2003 by Routledge. He continues to teach courses in the area of religion in society and on the history of the study of religion.

**Gabriele Fassbeck**, Visiting Professor for the last two semesters, studied and taught Protestant Theology with a specialization in New Testament studies at various German universities prior to coming to Alabama. Her research



is dedicated to domestic religion in Judaism of the Second Temple period. She is interested in a synthesis of textual and archaeological evidence pertaining to the topic. In this vein she hopes to join the Kinneret Regional Project's archaeological survey which will focus on domestic remains from the Hellenistic and Roman periods along the shores of the Sea of Galilee.



**Catherine Roach** has two current projects from her research in environmental and feminist ethics. She has an article under review at the journal *Environmental Ethics* called "Ducks, Bogs, and Guns: Stewardship Ethics in Newfoundland." This article is based on research that she conducted as part of an interdisciplinary team on wetland preservation efforts in Newfoundland in April 2002. She also is continuing work on her book *Take It Off! Sex, Stripping, and Society* and presented material from the book about the sex workers' rights movement at the annual American Academy of Religion meeting in Atlanta, GA.

**Steven L. Jacobs** is currently working on cataloging the papers of Raphael Lemkin (1900-1959), author of our word "genocide," father of genocide studies, and the motivating force behind the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Jacobs continues to explore the interface between both institutional religions and intellectual theological underpinnings and genocide. He has recently completed a book titled *Dismantling the Big Lie: The Protocols of The Elders of Zion*, which he co-authored with Mark Weitzman. During the spring semester the courses he is teaching are REL 223, "Holocaust in Historical Perspective" and REL 332, "Contemporary Jewish Thinkers."

**Tim Murphy** is currently working on a book entitled, *Phenomenology, Genealogy, Religion*. This work surveys the history of what is called the "phenomenology of religion," an approach that emphasizes experience as the essence of religion and advocates a static system



classifying religious data. This approach is critiqued in light of contemporary postcolonial theory as reifying a historically specific, Eurocentric type of religion, seeing it as the ahistorical, unchanging essence of religion. In Spring 2004 he is teaching REL 235 Native American Religions. In this course participants will survey several specific geo-cultural groups, including the urban theocratic system of the Aztecs, the agrarian priestly tradition of the Hopi, and the hunting shamanic tradition of the Oglala Sioux. They will also look at new religious movements created as a response to contact and confrontation with Euro-Americans, such as the Longhouse religion, the Ghost Dance, and the Native American Church. Finally, they will look at some contemporary expressions of Native American religion, including Leslie Marmon Silko's novel, *Ceremony*.

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**James Apple** has recently completed his full time instructor position within the department, and continues as an adjunct, teaching Religious Studies 100 in the Spring 2004 semester. In the past year at UA, he has published three articles, eight encyclopedia entries, and three book reviews, along with presenting three conference papers and a Religion in Culture Guest Lecture on cultural artifacts in medieval India

This semester **Theodore Trost** launched a 200-level survey course in American Religious History. The task of organizing over six centuries of history was a complicated one but the course functioned, at times at least, as an exercise in learning strategies. He is very grateful to the participants in the class for their questions and suggestions. He is looking forward to teaching the course again in the next year or two. As for research, Trost presented a paper on religion and popular music at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion. He has also written chapters for two different books: one on the Matrix trilogy of films (edited by **William Doty**) and one on teaching African American Religions.

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**Kurtis R. Schaeffer** returns to teaching this Spring semester, 2004, after a year on research leave (see below). He is teaching an introduction to Buddhism and the Department's senior seminar, in which he and our graduating majors are reading the works of the important historian of religion, Jonathan Z. Smith. Schaeffer's current research focuses on the history of the book in Tibet.



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## Faculty Member Awarded National Research Fellowship

All throughout 2003, Professor **Kurtis Schaeffer** was freed from his teaching duties to pursue his research on Buddhism and culture in pre-modern Tibet. He was enabled to devote himself exclusively to his scholarship because he was chosen as one of fifteen recipients in the inaugural national competition for the Charles A. Ryskamp Research Fellowship. This fellowship, which is funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in honor of Charles A. Ryskamp, and which is administered by the American Council of Learned Societies, supports assistant professors in the humanities and related social sciences whose scholarly contributions have advanced their fields and who have well designed and carefully developed plans for

new research. This fund enabled him to finish his first full length book, *Dreaming the Great Brahmin: Tibetan Traditions of the Buddhist Poet-Saint Saraha* (forthcoming from Oxford University Press) as well as complete his original translation and study of a medieval Tibetan nun's autobiography, entitled, *Himalayan Hermites: The Life of a Tibetan Buddhist Nun* (Oxford University Press, 2004). He was also able to publish in the area of the history of medical literature in Tibet. Due to the generosity of the **College of Arts & Sciences**, the Department was able to hire Dr. **James Apple** to replace Prof. Schaeffer in our classroom for all of 2003.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We'd like to express our debt to the people who help to make the Department a reality: Betty Dickey, our Senior Office Associate, keeps us on track and Donna Martin, Office Associate, formatted the newsletter. As well, our student assistants deserve mention: Kim Davis (REL major), Casey Matz (Judaic Studies minor), Sarah Jones, and John Parrish (REL major). Photographs in this newsletter were taken by: Betty Dickey, Donna Martin, Russell McCutcheon and Kurtis Schaeffer.