

# *University of Oklahoma Department of Religious Studies*

FALL 2024 NEWSLETTER

## *Department of Religious Studies Introduces New Certificate Programs in Islamic Studies and Asian Religions*

This year, the Department of Religious Studies continues its commitment to meeting undergraduate student needs and will launch two new undergraduate certificate programs in Islamic Studies and Asian Religions. Much like a major or minor, a certificate qualification designates a mastery of knowledge regarding a specific academic concentration. While serving our current students, the certificate program gives more flexibility to non-RELS students by allowing them to focus on a core religious studies topic without majoring or minoring in RELS. Concentrations in religious studies through the certificate program can complement all majors, and it is the department's mission to continue to promote culturally enhanced critical thinking across campus by serving all OU students.



If you would like more information on the Department of Religious Studies certificate programs, please contact the department or visit our [website](#).



## *Religious Studies Courses Expand Student Enrichment through Hands-On Experiences*



*Photo taken by Sophia Armoudian.*

This spring, Assistant Professor Wendy Mallette's Introduction to Religious Studies class took a field trip to the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art. Aly Vettese, the museum's learning and engagement assistant, introduced students to Menashe Kadishman's (1932-2015) sculpture, "The Sacrifice of Isaac," and students explored the OU's "Art of the American West and Native American Art" collection as well as the "Picturing Faith" exhibit.

Also, Mallette's Christian Traditions class spent a week in the University of Oklahoma Libraries' special collections to view bibles and other artifacts. Their visit was guided by JoAnn Palmeri, history of science librarian and acting curator of the John and Mary Nichols Collection, who shared about how bibles have intersected with the history of manuscript and print culture. Then, RELS students curated mini-exhibits for the class with titles including: Picture Perfect Bible?, Translating Divinity: Unraveling the Linguistic Tapestry of the Bible and Destruction of Divine Women: Depictions of Biblical Violence.

## *Student Enrichment Remains Key to the Department of Religious Studies*

The Department of Religious Studies is continuing its commitment to student enrichment with events and opportunities geared toward student academic, community and professional enrichment.

Over the past academic year, students had the opportunity to meet with distinguished speakers and alumni at our monthly religious studies student lunch (as well as enjoy some Hideaway pizza!). Guest speakers included:

- Myo Win, human rights advocate and visiting scholar at OU, who spoke with student on social justice for religious minorities in Myanmar;
- Matt Brim, professor of queer studies at the College of Staten Island and executive director of the Center for LGBTQ Studies at the CUNY Graduate Center, who discussed queer pedagogy;
- the Rev. Barbara Boyd, MDiv and former Religious Studies Program outreach director, who engaged with our students on the history of religious studies at OU;
- Morgan Brammer, a RELS alumna and the assistant vice president and executive director of enrollment management at the Office of Admissions and Recruitment at OU, who discussed religious studies and higher education with our students, and,
- our own professors, who held a panel on graduate school with interested students.



Also, in October, the department hosted Steph Gauchel the assistant dean for diversity, inclusion and belonging at Harvard Divinity School, who discussed the relevance of graduate study in religion in a complex world.

In furtherance of our commitment to student enrichment, we again had the honor of awarding four Religious Studies students with travel grants to attend the American Academy of Religion annual meeting in San Antonio on November 17-20 this past year. This opportunity was made possible by the generous support of the Revs. Barbara Boyd and Larry Angus. Students were able to engage more deeply in academic discourse, attending panel sessions on a diverse array of issues from women and the bible to religion and film. We would like to extend a huge thank you to Rev. Boyd and Rev. Angus for providing our students with an academic experience they will never forget.

This year, the department will continue to host our monthly student pizza lunches with exciting guest speakers relevant to our students. Students, the fall semester pizza lunches will be on the following Fridays this semester at noon: August 23, September 20, October 18, and November 15 in the Department of Religious Studies Conference Room (Robertson 118). Join us for our first lunch on Friday, August 23!

Watch for more student opportunities to come in the academic year!

WELCOME BACK  
STUDENT PIZZA  
LUNCH

12:30-1:30 P.M.  
FRIDAY, AUG. 23  
ROBERTSON 118



Follow us on your favorite social media platforms:

Facebook: [OU Department of Religious Studies](#)

Instagram: [oureligiousstudies](#)

X/Twitter: [@OUReligStudies](#)

YouTube: [OU Religious Studies](#)



Also, RELS alumni have their own group on LinkedIn.

Please join us!

LinkedIn group:

["University of Oklahoma Religious Studies Alumni"](#)



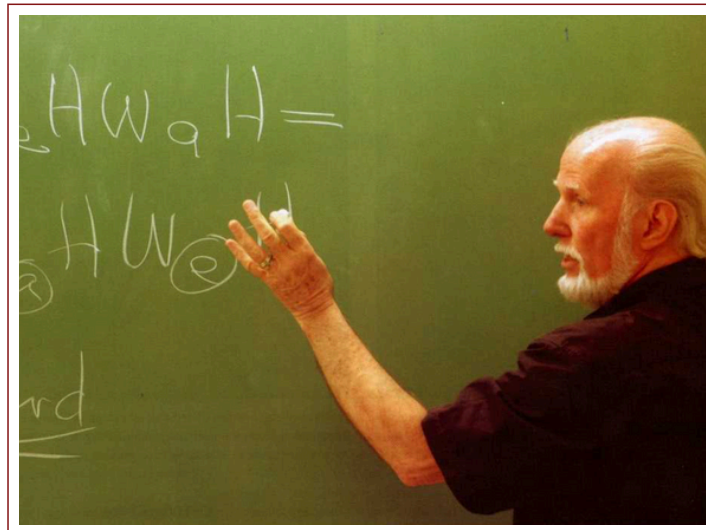
## *A Tribute to Tom Boyd, Beloved Philosophy and Religious Studies Professor*

This February, David Ross Boyd Professor Emeritus of Philosophy and Religion Tom Boyd died at the age of 90. Before helping launch the Religious Studies Program in 2002, Boyd joined the OU Department of Philosophy in 1969 and retired in 1996. Boyd was also an ordained minister who preached regularly and frequently spoke to community organizations, churches and colleges all over the country. His writings focused on the interface between religion and culture. He was known as a legendary teacher, mentor and public speaker, and he greatly influenced our students in the Religious Studies Program.

Boyd received nine teaching awards as well as the Oklahoma Award for Teaching Excellence in 1996. His courses in religious studies included Religion, Culture and the Meaning of Life, Approaches to the Study of Religion, Contemporary American Christianity, Mysticism and the Interreligious and World Religious Dialogue and Religion in a Secular Age, among others. With his provocative ideas and probing style of questioning, he regularly inspired and challenged our students. He and his wife & fellow professor (and outreach director) of the Religious Studies Program, the Rev. Barbara Boyd, influenced countless student lives through their dedication and enthusiasm for the Program, and journeyed with religious studies students abroad to Ireland and Turkey. His enthusiasm, knowledge, encouragement and joy are greatly missed.

Boyd is survived by his wife, the Rev. Barbara Boyd, two children, Dr. Timothy Kyle Boyd and Dr. Katrina Gay Boyd, two step-daughters, Heather Ford and Jennifer Pool, eight grandchildren, a brother and a close cousin.

If you would like to continue Boyd's vision for religious studies in education, please consider donating to the Tom W. Boyd Endowed Scholarship in Religious Studies. This scholarship is given to a promising religious studies student dedicated to a career of service in teaching the field to future generations. You can donate [here](#).



### *Foster Student Enrichment in the Department of Religious Studies*

The Department of Religious Studies looks forward to more exciting opportunities for our students in the future. If you are interested in supporting student enrichment within the Department of Religious Studies, please visit [our OU Foundation page](#). We are always grateful for support of any kind to the department to further our mission of preparing our students to honor difference, embrace complexity and lead with integrity.

[Support RELS at OU](#)



## American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting Student Opportunity



**OU RELS Students will visit AAR again this year!**

The Department of Religious Studies is excited to announce that we will again offer student sponsorships to attend the **American Academy of Religion's annual meeting** to be held in San Diego this year. The Annual Meeting takes place Nov. 23-26. Students who attend will be able to experience everything the meeting has to offer, including attending academic sessions, receptions and tours. A limited number of sponsorships are available to current RELS students.

Students may apply here: **[AAR Student Funding Application](#)**.



**Applications are due by 11:59 p.m., Sept. 4.**  
**All interested OU students are encouraged to apply.**

Thank you to donors for creating such an amazing opportunity for our students!



### *RELS Alumni: Visit Us at This Year's AAR Meeting in San Diego Nov. 23-26*

If you are in the San Diego area or attending the AAR on Nov. 23-26, we'd love to see you!

Contact the department ([rels@ou.edu](mailto:rels@ou.edu)) to set up a time to meet with faculty over coffee or lunch.

### *Religious Studies Faculty Teaching Spotlight: Associate Professor Rangar Cline*

Professor Rienk Vermij (HSTM) and I created a new course called "History of Magic" (RELS/HSTM 4053). Prof. Vermij and I spent over a year developing the course, which traces the origins and evolution of the category of magic from the ancient Mediterranean through medieval and modern Europe and the Americas, until the near present. Much of my own research has focused on magic in the Roman world, including the creation and use of magical amulets and curse tablets. Prof. Vermij's research focuses on Early Modern Europe, especially magical texts and practices in the age of the Scientific Revolution. So, together we are able to teach a course that considers magic and its relationship to normative religion and science from the ancient Mediterranean to the modern world.



Some readers may recognize the title of the course as one that appears on the curriculum at Hogwarts in the Harry Potter series, and that reference is partly intentional. Popular narratives might give us the impression that people believed in or practiced magic only in the distant past, in far-away countries or in creative fantasy worlds like that of Harry Potter. However, magical beliefs are still a potent force in our present reality. In our society the label of magic has mostly been applied to what lies outside the borders of recognized fields like science or religion, and so magic is frequently defined by comparison to socially approved ritual practices and ways of understanding the world. It has been the thing that is forbidden, shunned, feared or despised. At the same time, there have been those who have taken it seriously and turned those forbidden thoughts into actual practice or even an active belief system. In "History of Magic" we examine the documents, artifacts and contemporary voices associated with magic through things like ancient and modern books of magic, binding spells and amulets. In fact, as once of the assignments, students are tasked with designing a magical amulet based on historical examples.

We look forward to teaching the course again in Spring 2025 as we consider the origins and evolution of magic from the ancient Mediterranean to the present!

## *Religious Studies Faculty Research Spotlight: Associate Professor David Vishanoff*

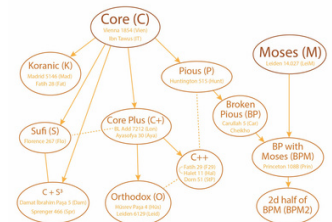


Scattered across libraries from the United States to Iran, and from Timbuktu to Saint Petersburg, lie dozens and perhaps hundreds of manuscripts whose Arabic titles declare them to be the Psalms of David but whose contents sound more like the Qur'an than the Bible. I have spent the last several years digging through these manuscripts to reconstruct and translate the original core collection of one hundred Arabic psalms.

How did an alternative Muslim "scripture" with the title "Psalms of David" come to be written, or even to be dreamed up in the first place? It was not derived from the Psalms of the Bible, but instead by the Qur'anic concept of the Zabur, the scripture that God was said to have revealed to the Prophet David just as he revealed the Torah to Moses, the Gospel to Jesus and the Qur'an to Muhammad. Because the concept of David's Zabur was not attached to any specific text that Muslims had ready access to in the eighth century, it was in effect an imaginary book that early Muslims were free to conjure up, and to supply with content, in accordance with their own notions of prophetic revelation. My research has demonstrated that at some point in the eighth or early ninth century an ascetic Muslim preacher decided to do just that: taking the concept of King David's Zabur as a lofty but convenient hook on which to hang his own sermon material, he composed a set of one hundred Arabic psalms and circulated them as a published book—this at a time when the idea of authoring a book in Arabic was still quite new, and just about the only available model for doing so was the Qur'an itself. Over the following centuries this original core set of Islamic psalms was circulated, copied, edited, improved, expanded and indeed rewritten many times by editors who wished to improve its literary quality, correct doctrinal errors, emphasize mystical or legal dimensions of piety or simply try their own hand at writing scripture.



Publishing this rediscovered spiritual classic will bring to light a rare piece of direct literary evidence for an early Islamic ascetic movement, modeled on Christian monasticism, whose existence was until recently little known or even entirely denied. It will also shed new light on how Muslims have imagined the Bible, on the relationship between the Bible and the Qur'an, and on the fuzzy boundaries between Islam, Christianity and Judaism—topics that are not only current in academia but also important for the public understanding of Islam.



## *Religious Studies Faculty Research Spotlight: Assistant Professor Wendy Mallette*



My book project, *Lesbian Feminist Killjoys: Sin, Pessimism, and Queer Histories*, began six years ago as a dissertation about two rather disparate topics: lesbian feminist movements of the 1960s-1980s and Christian ideas about sin (especially the concept of social sin). What these two divergent topics share is a conviction—for radically different reasons—that something is utterly wrong with the world. While the lesbian feminists at the center of my project have often been dismissed as "killjoys" for their pessimistic views, I hope that their pessimism might serve as a resource to reexamine ideas about sin, guilt and noninnocence as they intersect with homophobia, racism, sexism, colonialism and transphobia.

Six years ago, I could not have imagined the directions this project has taken: reading letters between feminist and queer activists, listening to recordings of Black feminist concerts and examining contemporary legislation about guilt (like Oklahoma's HB 1775). This summer I was able to view the photography of gay and lesbian movements held at the New York Public Library and speak with Karla Jay, a founding member of a group known as the Radicalesbians. My book is now under contract with NYU Press for their series, *Hauntings: Queer/Trans Studies in Religion*. Over the next year, I will be revising the book based on feedback from friends and colleagues. I'm especially looking forward to a Manuscript Development Workshop with the OU Arts & Humanities Forum this fall.



## *The Past Year in Religious Studies*

The Department of Religious Studies was fortunate to host several engaging and informative events over the past academic year.

In September, Associate Professor of History at the University of Dayton Shannen Dee Williams visited with our students and faculty (as well as students and faculty from the Department of Women's and Gender Studies and the Clara Luper Department of African and African American Studies) at a luncheon on her research on Black Catholic nuns in the United States. She later presented the True Family Lecture titled "Still Mining the Forgotten: The Hidden History and Legacies of Black Catholic Nuns in the United States" at the Sam Noble Museum of Natural History.

In October, Department of Religious Studies Associate Professor Rangar Cline lectured at the monthly Judaic Studies Brown Bag Lunch on "Pilgrimage Souvenirs from the Holy Land: From the Roman Period to the Early Middle Ages." Also in October, guest U.K. MP Rehman Chishti lectured on "Advancing International Religious Freedom," in Dale Hall to a wide audience.

In November, the Department of Religious Studies with the Department of Women's and Gender Studies hosted guest Matt Brim to lead a pedagogy workshop on teaching queer studies. The workshop had one slate of events for teachers, faculty, and graduate/teaching assistants, and another slate of events for undergraduate students.

Also in November, guest lecturer Chris Hoklotubbe, Ph.D., assistant professor of classics at Cornell College and Director of Graduate Studies at NAITS, an Indigenous learning community, spoke about his current research during his talk titled "Reading the Bible on Turtle Island: Indigenous Interpretations of the Bible." If you would like to view the lecture online, visit our YouTube channel here.

In February, the Department of Religious Studies hosted a faculty dinner with Malka Simkovich, Crown-Ryan Chair of Jewish Studies and the director of the Catholic-Jewish Studies program at Catholic Theological Union, who later presented the 2024 University of Oklahoma Israel and Judaic Studies Yedida K. Stillman Memorial Lecture on "How Did Jews in the Ancient World Understand Diaspora?"



1:30 P.M., APRIL 4,  
GAYLORD HALL 2030



SATURDAY, MARCH 30  
CONFERENCE REGISTRATION BEGINS AT 8:30 A.M.  
JIM THORPE MULTICULTURAL CENTER,  
THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

In March, the Department of Religious Studies and the University Buddhist Association hosted the 2024 Oklahoma Buddhism Conference. The conference featured Bhante Piyaratna, the founder and abbot of the Oklahoma Buddhist Vihara; Jianhu Shifu, the former dean of Chung Tai Buddhist Institute in Taiwan and the founder of Prajna Dharma; and keynote speaker Ann Gleig, professor of religion and cultural studies at the University of Central Florida, who spoke on "The Dukkha of Racism: Racial Justice Work in American Buddhism."



In April, Nicole Karapanagiotis, department chair and associate professor of religion at Rutgers in Camden, joined us for a public lecture on "Branding Bhakti (Devotion) for a (More) Global Audience: A Case Study." The lecture focused on the global re-branding of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness and the ways in which devotees are transforming their temple-based religious movement into one based in meditation studios, mindfulness lounges and more, all for the sake of attracting new publics.

Also in April, the Department of Religious Studies with the Department of Political Science was pleased to host the Agnes M. & G. Herbert True Family Lecture with Allen C. Hertzke, OU Professor of Political Science and Religious Studies Emeritus for a public lecture on "The Catholic Church on the Global Stage: Promise and Peril."

Finally, the department celebrated our students and their amazing achievements over the course of the year in our annual End of the Year Celebration on Saturday, May 11, following the Dodge Family College of Arts and Sciences commencement. Guests enjoyed lunch from Kebabish Bites in Norman, celebrated our student graduates and scholarship recipients and generally enjoyed each other's company. We are extremely proud of our students' accomplishments over the past year, and we cannot wait to hear what they achieve in the future.



## *RELS Students Continue to Shine*

The Department of Religious Studies is proud to announce that Caroline Perkins, a University of Oklahoma junior majoring in Religious Studies and English, has been awarded the American Academy of Religion Undergraduate Research Grant for 2024. This grant program supports undergraduate students conducting research on religion under the supervision of an AAR member. (You can find out more about the grant program [here](#).) OU's Department of Religious Studies Associate Professor and Chair Deonnie Moodie will supervise Caroline's research project, and Caroline will conduct ethnographic research at four different megachurches in the American south in the summer of 2024.

Also, Perkins received a summer fellowship from the University of Oklahoma Office of Undergraduate and Creative Activity (UReCA) for her research. UReCA exists to serve undergraduate students, providing the entire undergraduate community at OU with open access to grow in knowledge, understanding and collaboration. It was created in 2022 to help support undergraduate students who are involved or wish to become involved, in any kind of research or creative activity. Congratulations, Caroline and well done!

The Department of Religious Studies is proud to announce that Camille Carlington, a University of Oklahoma multidisciplinary studies spring 2024 graduate with a focus on religious studies and psychology, has been awarded the Council on Undergraduate Research arts and humanities scholarship for 2024. The CUR supports undergraduate student research and creative inquiry projects at any stage of development up to and including presentation. The goal of the funding is to encourage diverse, innovative and engaged undergraduate research in arts and humanities. (You can find out more about the CUR arts and humanities student scholarships [here](#).)

Camille's project is called *Reverence Reimagined: Opening the Pews for Diversity*. It aims to highlight how marginalized communities, specifically Black queer communities, navigate traditional religious paradigms and cultural resistance within normative spaces. This exploration underscores the importance of Black performance art as both a beacon of defiance and a vivid display of art imitating life. Congratulations, Camille and well done!



**Caroline Perkins**



**Camille Carlington**

## *RELS Alumni Spotlight: Kenneth Frantz*

*A little over three years after receiving my bachelor's degree in religious studies, I continue to utilize the skills I acquired both as a doctoral student in Sociology and as a freelance writer focusing on religion and politics in the U.S. The Department of Religious Studies not only provided me with the foundational knowledge necessary for both roles, but also taught me how to read, write and think critically about the intersection of religion and politics. For example, as I review my past publications, I can clearly see how my former professors such as Prof. Moodie, Prof. Hicks-Keeton and Prof. Vishanoff have influenced the way I think and frame the questions I ask. I would not have been able to achieve what I have without my training in the Department of Religious Studies.*



**Kenneth Frantz,  
Class of 2020**

## *RELS Alumni Spotlight: Camille Carlington*



**Camille Carlington,  
Class of 2024**

*Since graduating I have been focusing on researching about musicology, theology and ethics. I am interested in the ways those fields intersect as a binding force in black liberation and what those fields tell us about queer identity and the ways it disrupts normative spaces.*

*There is not a true ending goal with this research because there is so much to learn, but I always try to find ways to incorporate black performance art utilizing Beyonce, Lil Nas X and Ashon T. Crawley and his multidisciplinary perspectives on performance and imagination.*

*As I am working on graduate school applications to Duke, Vanderbilt, Emory and many more, I have found that I can utilize all of my research interests in pursuing an ethics and social justice Masters, or something in those fields considering my love for writing about sin, suffering and salvation within African American spirituals and society. I am diligently working on perfecting my writing for the applications and for research endeavors to give myself the greatest chance at success!*

*There is so much to learn, and it is difficult to narrow my focus, but I think with my focus being so broad I have many avenues to choose from. This allows for more creativity in the process of dissecting the branches of identity formation and articulation.*

## *Congratulations, RELS Students*

Congratulations to our amazing students for their accomplishments this academic year!



### *2023-24 Religious Studies Scholarship Recipients*

*The Heather Nicole Stephenson  
Scholarship*  
Paul Roland

*The David D. LeNorman  
Scholarship for Religion and  
Ethics*  
Paul Roland

*The Bernita L. Thompson  
Endowed Scholarship for  
Undergraduate Research and  
Writing*  
Luke Byrd

*The Timothy Cole Stephenson  
Scholarship*  
Amy Hotchkiss

*The Reverend Larry & Gloria  
Angus Endowed Scholarship*  
Caroline Perkins

*The Tom W. Boyd Scholarship  
for Religious Studies and  
Education*  
Amy Hotchkiss

*The David D. LeNorman Make A  
Difference Scholarship*  
Madison Byrne

*Angus Family Scholarship in  
Religious Studies*  
Caroline Perkins

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### *2023-24 Religious Studies Graduating Seniors*

Fall 2023

**Majors:**  
Lauren Gastineau  
Hope King  
Billy Nicholson  
Tyler Rogers

**Minors:**  
Emma Churchill

Spring 2024

**Majors:**  
Camille Carlington  
Ezra Koenig  
Emilio Ortiz

**Minors:**  
Sara Lau  
Joshua Leasau  
Darien Mullins

## *Where Our Graduates Are Headed Next...*

Our graduates make us proud! Here's where a few of them are headed next.

**Lauren Gastineau** will be pursuing a MA in Classical and New Eastern Archaeology at the University of British Columbia. **Hope King** will be pursuing a career in journalism. **Camille Carlington** is applying to graduate schools to pursue a graduate degree in social justice and ethics. **Paul Roland** will be pursuing his MA in History at the University of Oklahoma. **Emilio Ortiz** is currently working in Norman as a church youth director at River Church.



*Faculty Updates**RELS Departmental Faculty*

**Associate Professor Rangar Cline** developed and taught a new course entitled History of Magic in partnership with Professor Rienk Vermij from the Department of the History of Science, Technology and Medicine. The course traced the origins and evolution of the category of magic from the ancient Mediterranean through medieval and modern Europe, until the near present. Students in the course discussed how certain practices or beliefs came to be rejected as “magical” and how such practices nevertheless survived. The topics in the course included books of magic, binding spells, amulets and necromancy, as well as how magic was dealt with in legal, religious and scientific literature. On the topic of magic, Cline also wrote an article about Roman magic that should appear in the winter 2024 issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review*. Cline continues his research into the material culture of pilgrimage, and he presented his research concerning the production and movement of Byzantine-era pilgrimage souvenirs at the Annual Meeting of the American Society for Overseas Research.



**Associate Professor Geoffrey Goble** is completing a *Reacting to the Past* course game on historical Chinese religions. He is testing and refining the game in his Chinese Religions courses, allowing students to imaginatively play the role of a Daoist priest, Buddhist monk, Confucian official or Chinese courtier in historical China. Goble is conducting a major research project concerning the botanical species datura in Asia and Asian religious cultures and has developed a course on altered states of consciousness in conjunction with that project. He is director of the Department's Asian Religions Certificate Program and serves as a faculty advisor for the University Buddhist Association (UBA). In 2024, Goble and the UBA organized the Oklahoma Buddhism Conference at OU, bringing together scholars and practitioners of multiple Buddhist traditions in central Oklahoma.



**Assistant Professor Wendy Mallette** presented her research bridging lesbian, queer and trans studies at the American Academy of Religion and the American Society of Church History. With Mike Sladek and Melinda Chen, she hosted a series of queer pedagogy workshops at OU in November led by Matt Brim. She also enjoyed teaching a new course, *Queer Religion*, last fall. She has continued working on her book manuscript, *Lesbian Feminist Killjoys: Sin, Pessimism and Queer Histories*, and received three fellowships to support its completion, including a Research Associate award from Harvard Divinity School's Women's Studies in Religion Program. This year she had the opportunity to serve on dissertation/thesis committees for three graduate students across History and Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, and she has stepped up to be co-chair of the Lesbian-Feminisms and Religion Unit at the AAR.



**Associate Professor and Academic Chair Deonnie Moodie** continued her research on religion and business this year. Her “Hinduism and Capitalism” annotated bibliography was published in the *Oxford Bibliography of Hinduism*, and her co-edited special issue “Hindu Economicus” was accepted for publication by the journal *South Asia*. In addition, she was awarded two grants: the Dodge Family College of Arts and Sciences Senior Faculty Fellowship to complete archival work and the Provost's Editorial Development Grant. Both will go toward supporting the completion of her monograph *Business School Hinduism*. She also served as a consultant for Crash Course. She continues to present regularly at academic conferences, serves on the steering committee of the American Academy of Religion's “Religion and Economy” unit and sits on the editorial board of *DECISION*, a journal published by the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta.



**Associate Professor David Vishanoff** taught courses on contemporary Islam and Islamic theology, and he traveled to Germany, England and Princeton to present research on how Muslims rewrote the Psalms, how Muslims interpret the Qur'an today compared to a thousand years ago and the tricks and pitfalls of publishing Arabic texts in digital form. The bulk of his time, however, was spent finishing and submitting four articles: two about the Islamic psalms, one about an ancient and disintegrating piece of papyrus bearing early traces of some of those psalms and one on Muslim theologians' views of God's attributes of will, speech and justice. He also had an excerpt from his translation of the Islamic Psalms published, and he began a grant-funded collaborative research project with several philosophers and psychologists about what he calls “Sacrificial Listening.”



## RELS Core Faculty

Religious Studies core faculty who teach and research in the area of religion from different disciplinary homes continue to be an integral part of the Department of Religious Studies at OU. They include: [Professor Thomas Burns](#) (Sociology), [Honors Professor of American Religion and Culture Marie Dallam](#) (Honors College), [Professor Alan Levenson](#) (Judaic Studies), [Associate Professor Roberta Magnusson](#) (History), [Associate Professor Bala Saho](#) (History) and [Associate Professor Jane Wickersham](#) (History). Here are some highlights of their work over the past year:



**Professor Alan Levenson** completed *Jews and Judaism: Facts and Fictions* for Bloomsbury / ABC-CLIO, which will appear in 2025. This series, aimed at introductory college classes, dispels such misconceptions as: Jews are race, all Jews practice Judaism, Zionism is racism and American Jews are uniformly rich and white. Alan taught Judaism and The Bible Since the Enlightenment during the academic year and The Artists' Bible this past summer. His service included chairing a hiring committee for a Hebrew instructor, chairing a tenure and promotion committee and serving on the Dodge Family College of Arts and Sciences Tenure and Promotion oversight committee. Nationally, Alan taught for the Academy of Jewish Religion and serves as an advisor for the Reform movement's new Torah commentary. He was greatly honored to receive the 2024 University of Oklahoma Regents' Award for his nine-year stewardship of the Schusterman Center.

## Staff Updates

**Administrative and Financial Coordinator Rebecca Hall-Davis** handled administrative and financial tasks for the department as well as student, alumni and community outreach. She organized events for the department, including student events such as pizza lunches and the End of Year Celebration; and guest speaker events. Hall-Davis managed program modifications, including the new religious studies certificate programs and submission of new courses. She ventured into learning Adobe InDesign software and researched various departmental data for faculty departmental decision-making. She looks forward to seeing all that our students will accomplish in the coming year!



## Faculty Recognition

The Department of Religious Studies faculty celebrated a number of achievements this past year.

**Associate Professor and Academic Chair Deonnie Moodie** received the Dodge Family College of Arts and Sciences Senior Faculty Fellowship to complete archival work and the Provost's Editorial Development Grant. Both grants will go toward supporting the completion of her monograph *Business School Hinduism*.

**Assistant Professor Wendy Mallette** was named a Harvard Divinity School Women's Studies in Religion Program Research Associate for the 2024-2025 academic year. Mallette, named an associate along with scholars across different disciplines and research areas, will work on her book manuscript, *Lesbian Feminist Killjoys: Sin, Pessimism and Queer Histories* and teach a one-semester course as well as deliver a lecture on her research.

**Associate Professor David Vishanoff** and his colleagues for received a grant from the Templeton Religion Trust. Vishanoff is part of a team of scholars at OU, the University of Kansas and Pepperdine who have been awarded a quarter-million-dollar grant from the Templeton Religion Trust. The grant will provide extra research time throughout 2024 to read, consult with specialists and hold a conference on the relationship between the virtue of intellectual humility, the virtue of courage and interreligious understanding. This interdisciplinary teamwork will bring new perspectives to Vishanoff's long-term project on sacrificial listening.

**Professor Alan Levenson** received the 2024 University of Oklahoma Regents' Award for his nine-year stewardship of the Schusterman Center.

Congratulations to our amazing faculty!



Deonnie Moodie, Ph.D.  
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