From the Director

I am honored to have been nominated and selected to be the Director of the Purdue Religious Studies Program (June 2009-May 2012). I look back on 2009-2010 with deep gratitude for many people who helped make the transition as easy as possible, especially the administrative help I received from Delayne Graham (IDIS) and Kara Bohlinger (CLA-Business); interim-CLA Dean Irwin Weiser, Philosophy Head Matthias Steup, and Religious Studies Academic Advisor Dennis Bowling; but especially Jackie Mariña for her generosity with so many elements. I am glad she is remaining on the RS Steering Committee. I take this opportunity to thank the other hard-working members of the RS Steering Committee:

- Paul Draper (PHIL)
- Donald Mitchell (PHIL)
- Michael Ryan (HIST)
- Thomas Ryba (PHIL)
- Daniel Smith (PHIL)

Their names appear below, indicating their invaluable contributions to the 2009-2010 RS Program. Finally, I am grateful to the many affiliate faculty members who make this Program strong, intriguing, and enjoyable; and who provide Purdue students with engaging and inspiring courses.

My hope is to use the financial straits that universities across the U.S., Purdue, and this Program are experiencing to find creative and efficient ways to provide the human and financial resources that Religious Studies needs to continue its traditional course offerings and public lectures, and to convert many, many ideas that Religious Studies faculty and students have voiced into reality. The “Events” section below indicates just one way: all of our 2009-2010 public lectures were co-sponsored. Inspired by our hope to pool human and funding sources, these collaborations resulted in – to use the *au courant* word – synergies between and among the collaborating groups. I hope everyone reading this newsletter will contact me whenever they have a question or idea that can help continue the important work of the Religious Studies Program.

Sincerely,
Angelica Duran
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Director, Religious Studies
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In Retrospect

Purdue’s Religious Studies Program experienced a number of changes in 2009-2010:

- Jacqueline Mariña finished her term as Director of Religious Studies in May 2009. In addition to sustaining the program’s important public lecture series and acting as the primary point person for the program’s roughly fifty undergraduate majors and minors, Mariña spearheaded the revamping of the Religious Studies major and minor. It now stands as a model of interdisciplinary study, taking advantage of the course offerings in an array of departments; inaugurating a gateway course that creates a foundation for students’ studies, “REL 200: Introduction to Religious Studies”; and still leaving enough flexibility for students to pursue their main areas of interests.

- Religious Studies welcomed Angelica Duran as its new Director (June 2009-May 2012). Duran comes to the position after spending nearly a decade at Purdue. She came to the Purdue English Department in August 2000, directly after earning her Ph.D. in English Literature from Stanford University. She has been active in other Interdisciplinary Programs: Comparative Literature and Medieval & Renaissance Studies, for which she has been a Steering Committee member; and Classical Studies, for which she is affiliate faculty. Most of her publications focus on the British Renaissance poet and politician John Milton, most known for his epic poem Paradise Lost, most notably her single-authored The Age of Milton and the Scientific Revolution (2007) and edited volume A Concise Companion to Milton (2007). See the Director’s Welcome.

- Thomas Ryba has increased the ability of the Religious Studies program to collaborate on incisive public lectures through a grant received from the Templeton Foundation’s Metanexus Program: three year’s of funding (from the 2009-2010 to 2011-2012 school-year) for the Purdue Science and Religious Group (PSRG), with a focus on increasing the breadth and depth of conversation about religion and science. See events 2009-2010 below for the programs organized through Ryba’s project.

- In conjunction with the CLA Development Office, Religious Studies has entered into a fund-raising initiative for a professorship in Eastern Religions, with a goal of obtaining a single major donation of $1.5 million by its impending 40-year anniversary in 2013. Of course, any size donation for other funding needs are always welcome. See the Religious Studies “Contribute” webpage at http://www.cla.purdue.edu/religious-studies/contribute/.

- Yet another group of undergraduates were sent on their merry – and educated – way. Congratulations to the 2009-2010 graduates with a major or minor in Religious Studies: Xerxes Herrington, Joshua Holloway, Eric Ogle, and Jarrod Wright.

Student and Faculty News

Next year, for our second Religious Studies newsletter, a section on faculty and student achievements is planned. Given the activity and numerous honors of this dynamic bunch, there’s just no way to put together a comprehensive list at the last minute. This year, documenting at least and in brief the Religious Studies Program’s first DURI Intern and its Steering Committee members will give you some idea of just how active this group is:

- Congratulations to Jeane Frederica: an Industrial Engineering major, Jeane was Religious Studies’ first Discovery Undergraduate Research Internship (DURI) Program intern. She worked in Autumn 2010 towards adding a “History” section on the Religious Studies webpage. Her work should make it online in Autumn 2010 through the work of the next DURI Intern, Nisha Saxena (Computer Technology).

- After a busy 2009-2010, Paul Draper will be the 2010-2011 Alvin Plantinga Fellow at the University of Notre Dame. The fellowship is awarded each year by Notre Dame’s Center for Philosophy of Religion to a distinguished senior scholar. In 2010, he edited A Companion to Philosophy of Religion, second edition (with Charles Taliaferro and Philip L. Quinn; Blackwell); God or Blind Nature? Philosophers Debate the Evidence, published on the Secular Web <http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/debates/great-debate.html>; and four issues of Philo: A Journal of Philosophy. He also published three chapters, “The Problem of Evil,” in The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology; “David Hume,” in The History of Western Philosophy of Religion; “Cumulative Cases,” in A Companion to Philosophy of Religion; and “Eleonorean Christianity and Biblical Genocide.” He has travelled near and
Student and Faculty News (cont.)


• Angelica Duran is publishing the first batch of her current research related to pedagogy, and Milton’s influence by and on Spanish-language culture. Her 2010 publications are “John Milton, Englishman,” and his Spanish, International, and Global Reception” in Milton through the Centuries; “Prose Studies, from Bacon, Browne, and Burton,” co-authored with Brady Spangenberg, in Prose Studies; “John Milton, Englishman: Of the Devil’s Party per the Spanish Inquisition,” in Reception Studies; and “Join thy voice: Oral Readings of Paradise Lost” in Milton Quarterly. In recognition of her commitment to pedagogy, she earned a 2009 College of Liberal Arts’ Excellence in Teaching Award. All her publications have been presented at academic conferences, including “Mama, Ph.D.: Reflections on Parenting in a Feminist Academy,” at the National Women’s Studies Association Conference 2009; “Anglo-Hispanic Relations Attempted Only in Rhyme,” at the conference on John Milton 2009; and “John Milton, Englishman: Of the Devil’s Party per the Spanish Inquisition,” at the Reception Studies Society Conference 2009.


• Don Mitchell has dedicated time, energy, and intellectual acumen to his role as Director of the Indiana Center for Cultural Exchange, and has just completed a 2 ½ year grant working with Muslim leaders in Southeast Asia in exchange and peace-building programs, funded by the U.S. Department of State. He shared his syntheses of some of the important elements that drive his work in three presentations: “Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding” (the Philippines 2009), “A Phenomenology of the Lotus Sutra in Interreligious Dialogue,” (Hawaii 2010), and “The Christian Meaning of Suffering and Responses to Suffering in the West Today” (Thailand, 2010). His forthcoming new book and republications are Green Monasticism: Buddhist and Christian Monastic Perspectives on Ecology (2010), The Spiritual Life: A Dialogue of Buddhist and Christian Monastics edited with James Wiseman (re-issue 2010). (Edited with James Wiseman—republication of The Gethsemani Encounter), and Finding Peace in Troubled Times: Buddhist and Christian Monastics on Transforming Suffering, edited with James Wiseman (re-issue 2010).

• We are all excited for the only assistant professor on the Steering Committee, Mike Ryan, as he secured presses for two books: Cornell University Press will publish his monograph A Kingdom of Stargazers: Astrology, Divination, and Authority in the Late Medieval Crown of Aragon; and MacFarland Press published the volume he co-edited with Karoly Kinane, End of Days: Essays on the Apocalypse from Antiquity to Modernity. He also published other articles and other chapters: “Antichrist in the Middle Ages: Plus ca change...” in History Compass 7/6 (2009); “Byzantium, Islam, and the Great Western Schism,” in A Companion to the Great Western Schism (1378-1417); and the “Introduction,” with Karoly Kinane, in End of Days: Popular Conceptions of the Apocalypse.

Keeping him busy have also been conference-going: most recently, presenting “Hunting the Unicorn’s Horn: Secular Authority in Pursuit of the Fantastic” at the 45th International Congress on Medieval Studies, where he also presided for two panels; but also keeping near and far, speaking to community-members and scholars to share his exciting research: he spoke on “The Modern Resonance of the Crusades” to the Rotary Club of Lafayette (West Lafayette, 2010) and on “Magicians, Charlatans, and Late Medieval Crisis” to the Purdue University’s Vincent DeSantis lecture series (Beijing, China, 2009)

• Thomas Ryba wears many hats: he is currently Vice President of the World Phenomenology Institute, adjunct professor in Philosophy and Religious Studies at Purdue; Theologian-in-Residence at St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church, West Lafayette, IN; and co-editor with Sander Goodhart, Jorgen Jorgensen, and James G. Williams of For René Girard: Essays in Friendship and Truth (2009). In addition to his major contributions to the field of religious studies at large, his contributions on campus have been extensive. In addition to teaching the large courses for Religious Studies majors and minors, he continues to promote real conversation on construals of the world through his 3-year Metanexus grant (2009-2012), administered by the Templeton Foundation, to form and sustain the Purdue Science and Religion Group.

• The most recent and forthcoming co-edited collections by Dan Smith speak to his expertise on the important French philosopher Gilles Deleuze: Gilles Deleuze: Image and Text (2009) and The Cambridge Companion to Deleuze (forthcoming 2011). The off-shoots of his work on those book projects are five articles in just 2009 and 2010: “Genesis and Difference: Deleuze, Maimon, and the Post-Kantian Reading of Leibniz” (2009), “Metaphysics and Ontology” (2009), “G. W. F. Leibniz” (2009), “Deleuze’s Concept of the Virtual and the Critique of the Possible” (2009), and “Concepts as Continuous Variation” (2010). In that same time, he has presented five conference papers, including two invited papers, the last one listed a keynote speech: “Deleuze and the Subject of Politics” (Italy 2009), and “On the Nature of Concepts” (Indiana 2010).
Religious Studies tapped into a number of fields and religions in its 2009-2010 lecture series. A highlight was of course the privilege of being the primary coordinator of the 2nd annual Larry Axel Memorial Lecture, commemorating its namesake, a much beloved, much missed former faculty-member and director of the Religious Studies Program. Held in October 2009 and co-sponsored with Director of the Jewish Studies Program Dan Frank and Director of the Film/Video Studies Patricia Hart, the lecture “The Promise of Incorporating the Art of Film into Theological Reflection,” was delivered by Marjorie Suchoki, Professor Emerita at the Claremont School of Theology. Don Mitchell, Bob Melson, and I look forward to working with Dan Frank as Jewish Studies coordinates the 3rd annual Larry Axel Memorial Lecture.

Christianity was the focus of another October 2009 public lecture, this time co-ordinated with the Albertus Magnus group, “Moral Action at the Core of Personhood: The Enduring Legacy of Pope John Paul II’s Moral Philosophy” by Thomas Ryba (Notre Dame Theologian-in Residence/Perdue Philosophy). Judaism was the focus for a double public lecture in September 2009 co-sponsored with the Department of English, as well as the Jewish Studies and Medieval & Renaissance Studies (MARS) Programs: David Nirenberg (U of Chicago) on “The Unbearable Jewishness of Being in Medieval Spain” and Andrew Scheil (U of Minnesota) on "Paradigms of Transition: Jews and the Discourse of Renewal in Anglo-Saxon England." Perhaps the largest collaboration and audience participated the Global China Forum in October 2010. A number of Purdue-WL groups – the Center on Religion and Chinese Society, the Confucius Institute, Purdue’s Indiana Center for Cultural Exchange, the China Center, and Asian Studies Program – and Purdue-Calumet’s Office of Research and Professional Development, coordinated a two-day symposium, with the Religious Studies Program spearheading the keynote speech "Chinese New Confucianism and its American Future" by John Berthrong (Boston University), again with Don Mitchell taking a leadership role. Rather than Trans-Pacific, the focus was Trans-Atlantic with a public lecture, “Bizarre Love Triangles: Sympathy and Deviance in British and Euro-American Folk Songs” by Emily Weglian (Cuyahoga CC) in March 2010. Thanks to Steering Committee Member Mike Ryan for adding music to the repertoire of movies, manuscripts, and more.

Faculty, students, and staff participated in events generously provided by Tom Ryba’s Purdue Science and Religious Group (PSRG). Three afternoon “Religious Studies Reading and Bagel Circles” focused on discussions of Kenneth Miller’s Finding Darwin’s God, followed up by a road trip to Notre Dame to hear the author speak on the book, as well as a public lecture in February 2010 at Purdue, “The Darwin Year: A Retrospective of Status Questionis for Evolution and Christian Faith” by Matthew Ashley (Notre Dame, Theology). With the special help of Tom Ryba and Paul Draper, we enjoyed one last foray into this interdisciplinary area with a public lecture in April 2010 by Robin Collins, “Cosmic Fine-tuning: Evidence for Divine Creation?”
In Prospect

The most updated listing of Religious Studies events can be found on our “Events” webpage at http://www.cla.purdue.edu/religious-studies/events/. You can receive updates by signing up for our “Friend of Religious Studies” e-distribution list by emailing duran0@purdue.edu.

Here are just a few things in the works. Mark your calendars…now!

2010-2011 Meet, Greet, and Eat

Translation: Walk, bike – it’s that close! – (or even drive) for yummy food and good company:

When: Sunday, September 12, 2010; 5:00-7:30 p.m.

Where: Address and directions to the home of Religious Studies Director Angelica Duran provided upon RSVP to <duran0@purdue.edu> or (765) 496-3957.

On Wednesday, November 17, 2010 a Public Lecture (Title TBA) by Richard Kieckhefer (Religion and History, Northwestern) will comprise one part of the Metanexus-funded PSRG series on religion and science. More news forthcoming from Religious Studies Steering Committee members Tom Ryba and Mike Ryan.

SPRING 2011

On Tuesday, February 8, 2011 at 7:00 p.m., the Religious Studies Program will co-sponsor a Public Lecture spearheaded by Venetria Patton of the Purdue African American Studies & Research Center: Dr. Jualyne Dodson of Michigan State will discuss “Religion, the Americas, and African Descendants: What Do We Truly Know?”

AUTUMN 2011

Religious Studies is the primary coordinator for a series of events commemorating the 400-year anniversary of the first publication of the King James Bible. In the works are a 100-minute dramatic reading of the KJV Gospel of Mark by a Chicago Shakespeare actor; a conference co-sponsored by Comparative Literature (thanks to the program’s Director Charles Ross); and an exhibit by the Purdue Libraries Special Collections, with the support of PU Libraries Dean James Mullins.