Friday Bulletin, June 7, 2013

Department of Religion, University of Florida

Upcoming Events

Our Department graduate student orientation will be on Monday, August 19, 2013, from 9:00 – 4:00 pm in 210 Pugh Hall. The morning session will provide an introduction to our department for first-year students. Continuing graduate students and faculty are strongly encouraged to join us for lunch at noon to greet the new students. Continuing students are also encouraged to stay for the afternoon part of the orientation.

News

Professor David Hackett has just returned from Shanghai, China where he taught a State Department funded, weeklong seminar on “Religion in American Culture” to American Studies graduate students.

Professor Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons is a member of a Gainesville Delegation traveling to Turkey as guests of the Istanbul Center, a US-based Turkish organization that fosters US-Turkish relations. The group leaves for Turkey on June 24th and returns on July 5th. The group meets with religious, political, and educational leaders in four cities in Turkey.

Professor Manuel Vásquez participated in the Spring Institute for Lived Theology at the University of Virginia. The event, which took place May 22-24, was supported by a grant from the Lilly Endowment.

Professor Barry Mesch, a long-time member of our faculty (1969 – 1992) in the Department of Religion, and currently teaching at Hebrew College, will receive an honorary degree [Doctor of Humane Letters] on June 2nd, 2013, from Hebrew College. Congratulations, Prof. Mesch!

Caleb Simmons (PhD Candidate, Asian Religions) has been selected as the Daniel H. H. Ingalls Memorial Fellow by the American Institute of Indian Studies. This named fellowship is the highest distinction amongst the AIIS Junior Research Fellowships. Congratulations, Caleb!

Presentations


Professor Manuel Vásquez gave a paper entitled “Religion, Materiality, and Mobility: Studying Religion in the Present Age” at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy. The presentation was part of a conference entitled “Beyond Critique: New Approaches to the Study of Religion and the Secular,” co-organized by Olivier Roy.
Last month, Kerri Blumenthal (PhD student, Americas) presented the paper “From Mother’s Day to Feast Days: Transitions in Commemorations of Earthly and Divine Matriarchs” at the Palatka All Souls Unitarian Universalist Congregation.

**Publications**

Professor Robin Wright’s new book, *Mysteries of the Jaguar Shamans of the Northwest Amazon* (University of Nebraska Press, release date: June 1, 2013), tells the life story of Mandu da Silva, the last living jaguar shaman among the Baniwa people in the northwest Amazon. Dr. Wright, who has known and worked with da Silva for more than thirty years, weaves the story of da Silva’s life together with the Baniwas’ society, history, mythology, cosmology, and jaguar shaman traditions. The jaguar shamans are key players in what Wright calls “a nexus of religious power and knowledge” in which healers, sorcerers, priestly chanters, and dance-leaders exercise complementary functions that link living specialists with the deities and great spirits of the cosmos. This volume provides the first mapping of the sacred geography (“mythscape”) of the Northern Arawak-speaking people of the northwest Amazon, demonstrating direct connections between petroglyphs and Baniwa sacred narratives as a whole. For more information, see file:///H:\Wright_Flyer.pdf


Professor Vasudha Narayanan’s “Re-writing the Hindu Traditions from Global Perspectives” was published in Pashaura Singh and Michael Hawley, eds., *Re-Imagining South Asian Religions: Essays in Honour of Professors Harold G. Coward and Ronald W. Neufeldt* (Numen Books), Leiden: Brill, pp. 66-88.

Professor Robin Wright’s new anthology, titled “Religion and Healing: Contemporary Perspectives,” is now in preparation for a new online course “Religion and Healing” this coming Fall semester 2013. The anthology, an e-text published by KendallHunt, presents a wide variety of healing traditions, and holistic in arguing for an integrative approach to health and healing. The modules of the anthology cover (1) shamanic traditions of Amazonia, Tibet, and Nepal, Afro-American and Malaysian, and Core Shamanism; (2) Mayan and Taoist Healing principles, especially the concepts of “life-force;” (3) Tibetan Buddhist tradition of the Gyuschi; (4) Hindu Ayurvedic Medicine--its philosophical foundations, history, practice, and globalization; (5) Sufi traditions; (6) Charismatic Catholicism; (7) Naturopathy – various ways in which plants sustain health and nutrition, providing alternative treatments for cancer, for example, or pain; (8) Nature Religions as sources for “Healing the Planet,” recovering destroyed ecosystems, re-empowering oppressed peoples, re-creating the broken link between Western society and natural habitats, and even offering global sacred narratives.
Professor Bron Taylor’s interview on the newly released motion picture The East, entitled “More than a Thriller: The East’s Real-Life Environmental Radicalism,” appeared in an article in The Credits on June 4, 2013; see http://www.thecredits.org/2013/06/more-than-a-thriller-the-easts-real-life-environmental-radicalism/

The Earth Island Journal selected Professor Bron Taylor's chapter from Worldwatch's State of the World 2013 to excerpt and feature online; see http://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/elist/eListRead/resistance_do_the_ends_justify_the_means/