

UF RELIGION

NEWSLETTER



NEWS

- **Macodou Fall** recently graduated in August 2025, completing the department's PhD program. ***Congratulations, Dr. Fall!***
- Religion Student Assistant **Kaveri Jadav** graduated August 2025 with her Bachelor's degree. ***Congrats Grad!*** See Page 2 for more details.
- Alumni **Victoria Machado** received an academic promotion. Refer to the *News* section on Page 2 for more information.
- **Dr. Anna Peterson** has received a new promotion. Refer to the *News* section on Page 2 for more information.
- **Dr. Ali Mian** is releasing a new book that is now available for pre-order. Refer to the *Publications* section on Page 3 for more information.

EVENTS

- Dr. Jeyoul Choi moderated an event at **The Lynx Bookstore** here in Gainesville, FL on August 16th. Refer to the *Events* section on Page 6 to find out more!
- The Department of Religion participated in the annual **UF College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) Fall 2025 Kickoff** August 20th. Please refer to the *Events* section on Page 6 for more information.
- August 21st, 2025 marked the **Start of the Fall 2025 semester**. We hope everyone has a wonderful semester!

NEWS

- Alumni **Victoria Machado** (PhD Dual Track Americas/Nature 2021) recently accepted the position of **Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies at Rollins College in Winter Park, FL**. Her position is tenure-track (TT).
- **Anna Peterson** is the new **Coordinator of the BA in Sustainability Studies (BASS)** and the **Director of the Center for Adaptive Integration, Resilience, Ethics, and Science (UF CAIRES)**. She also assumes a new title as the **Cronin term professor in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS)**. Dr. Peterson will continue to teach in the Department of Religion and also to co-coordinate the Ethics in the Public Sphere program.



Kaveri Jadav

Kaveri was a dedicated student assistant within the department of religion who recently graduated August 2025 with her Bachelor's Degree.

"My time with the department was warm and fulfilling. The staff and faculty were kind and easy to connect with."

"I was able to connect with the department personally and professionally, building skills that greatly helped in both my academic and professional pursuits."

"I am grateful for my time there and can't wait to see the work the department produces in the future."

PRESENTATIONS

- **Dr. Jeyoul Choi** recently gave a presentation on Max Weber's thesis on *Protestantism and modernity*. In the presentation, Dr. Choi revisited Max Weber's thesis on Protestantism and modernity to explore the complex ways in which South Korean Protestants have experienced modernity and modernization. He argued that, unlike its European counterpart, Korean Protestantism has played a paradoxical role by both preserving elements of the old Neo-Confucian religious culture and promoting the values of new American modernity. Dr. Choi highlighted that, caught between these influences, many Korean Protestants sought to navigate the contradictions and conflicts through migration to the United States under the broader influence of American modernity.
- **Dr. Jeyoul Choi** recently presented his paper, "*Rupture and Resonance: Negotiating Tradition and Modernity in South Korean Protestant Life*" at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Sociology of Religion in Chicago, Illinois August 9th - 11th, 2025.
- **Dr. Yaniv Feller** virtually presented "*Leo Baeck y sus contextos imperials*" at the Catedra Libre de Estudios Judios Moses Mendelssohn, University of Buenos Aires. This lecture explores the context that shaped Leo Baeck's key positions, beginning with his debate with Adolf Harnack on the essence of religions. It will also address Baeck's views on Jewish missionizing, his distinction between Macht and Kraft—physical power versus spiritual energy—and his reflections on Zionism, highlighting how these themes are interconnected.

PRESENTATIONS

Over the summer, **Dr. Bron Taylor** traveled to the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), where he gave two lectures and attended a conference of the International Society for the Study of Religion (ISSRNC). One of his presentations led a session on “The Greening of Religion Hypothesis Revisited,” which was followed by two University of Florida Religion and Nature graduates, **Bernard Zeleha** and **Robin Globus Veldman**.

“It was especially rewarding to see strong representation from our Religion and Nature program, with seven alumni and one current graduate student all actively participating in the conference,” said Professor Taylor in his reflection of the event.



Pictured from left to right, top to bottom: Robin Globus Veldman, current UF Religion Graduate Student Katherine Usik, Bernard Zeleha, Bron Taylor, Todd Levasseur, Joe Witt, Vicky Machado, Amanda Nichols, and Luke Johnston.

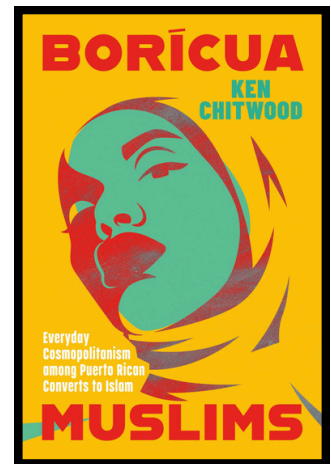
The ISSRNC was established in 2006 through the collaborative efforts of Professor Taylor and a group of graduate students at the University of Florida, marked by a major inaugural conference. The organization also publishes a quarterly publication, *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture*, which has become a respected platform for interdisciplinary scholarship. Both the conference and the journal continue to thrive under the leadership of Professor Taylor and the many alumni who remain actively involved (pictured above).

Professor Taylor also had the honor of presenting the ISSRNC’s Lifetime Achievement Award to UCSB Religion Professor Emerita Catherine Albanese. and was one of two professors invited to engage Dr. Albanese in a plenary session reflecting on her contributions to the field.

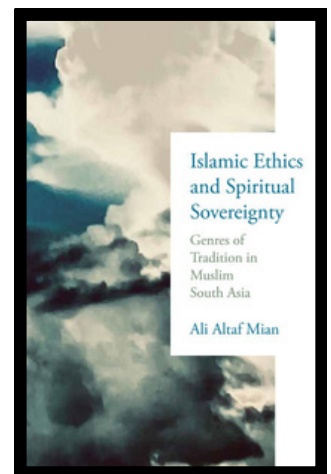
Non-pictured RN students, who have directly contributed to the ISSRNC and/or JSRNC include: Gavin Van Horn, Bridgette O'Brien, Samuel Snyder, Michael Lemons, Reyda Taylor, Luke Rodewald, and Joseph Wilson.

PUBLICATIONS

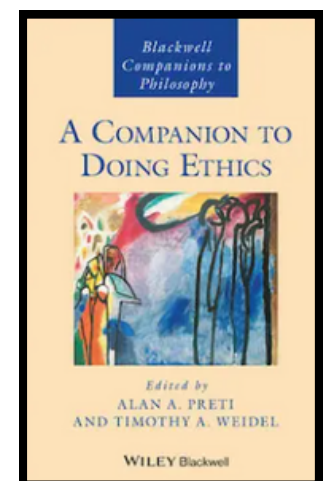
- Alumni **Ken Chitwood** is releasing a new book titled, "*Boricua Muslims: Everyday Cosmopolitanism among Puerto Rican Converts to Islam*". His book delves into the lives of Puerto Ricans in both the United States and Puerto Rico who have converted to Islam. He writes on both the struggles and triumphs that they have faced, as well as the community that they have formed with one another.
- **Dr. Ali Mian** is releasing a new book, "*Islam Ethics and Spiritual Sovereignty: Genres of Tradition in Muslim South Asia*" as part of the University of Notre Dame's series, *Contending Modernities*. His book is currently available for pre-order and will be published in May of 2026.
- **Dr. Terje Ostebo** recently published "*The Religion of Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed: Pentecostalism, Prosperity Gospel, and the Power of Positiving Thinking*", in the *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 63, 1, 2025: 63-84.
- **Dr. Anna Peterson's** chapter "*Doing Ethics in the Public Sphere*" has been published in *A Companion to Doing Ethics*, edited by Alan Preti and Timothy Weidel (Wiley, 2025).



by Ken Chitwood



by Dr. Ali Mian



By Dr. Anna Peterson

EVENTS

- **Dr. Jeyoul Choi** moderated an event at **The Lynx Bookstore** here in Gainesville, FL on August 16th. He discussed *"The Girl Who Baptized Herself: How a Lost Scripture About a Saint Named Thecla Reveals the Power of Knowing Our Worth"*, with author **Meggan Watterson**. Dr. Choi and Watterson discussed significances of her story that resonate with contemporary society from a feminist perspective.
- The Department of Religion participated in the annual **UF College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) Fall 2025 Kickoff**, an event designed to welcome students back to campus and highlight the diverse opportunities within the college. Students were invited to attend the showcase at the Reitz Union and connect with departments while learning more about academic programs and resources.



Dr. Feller speaking to students about our department's work.



Religion Chair Dr. Poceski makes a guest appearance at the kickoff table.



Dr. Choi chatting with a student about what a religion class can do for your undergraduate education.

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Want To Contribute to the Newsletter?

If you have any information that you would like featured in the newsletter, please email **Ashley Tisher (a.tisher@ufl.edu)**.

We can't wait to hear from you!