

NEWSLETTER



NEWS

- **Priyanka Ramlakhan** just graduated May 2025 from the graduate program in the Department of Religion.
Congratulations, Priyanka!
- **Michael Schuster** just graduated May 2025 from the graduate program in the Department of Religion.
Congratulations, Michael! He started our PhD program in the Fall of 2019 and today he is a graduate! His dissertation is entitled "Salafism in Motion: Religion, Politics, and Space in Tunisia."

EVENTS

- On **April 30th, 2025** **Bron Taylor** participated in a virtual discussion about his book, *Dark Green Religion*, with religious and environmental studies faculty and students at Hamilton College who have been reading it as part of their curriculum.
- In relation to this, in **April 2024** a conference titled "Dark Green Religion in Europe" took place at the Leibniz Institute for European History in Mainz, Germany, which focused on **Taylor's** book *Dark Green Religion*. His presentation can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wHzHP5eB_Rw

Spring 2025 Graduation Weekend

(April 30-May 2):

Commencement & Graduation for the Class of 2025



Left: **Priyanka Ramlakhan**
Right: **Vasudha Naryanan**



Russell and Katherine Jaberg Endowment

On *April 25th, 2025* the Department of Religion hosted an award ceremony for students who won the Jaberg award. The *Russell and Katherine Jaberg Endowment* provides support for the UF Department of Religion, including support for undergraduates, graduate students, faculty research, and departmental lectures.

The first place award went to **Rachel Warren** with **Yael Hamaoui** placing second. Both of these outstanding undergraduate seniors received monetary awards for their hard work and dedication. This award is a testament to the students' dedication to scholarship, exemplary work ethic, and notable contributions to our academic community.

We hope that it continues to inspire our students' continued intellectual growth and quest for new knowledge, as they move on from the university and find creative ways to exert positive impact on the world.

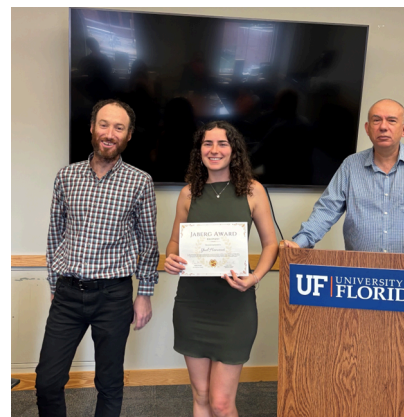


Fig. 1. Dr. Poceski and Dr. Feller with Yael Hamaoui



Fig. 2. Dr. Poceski and Dr. Feller speaking about the Jaberg Award



Fig. 3. Dr. Poceski with Rachel Warren



Fig. 4. Religion faculty and students enjoy the event



Fig. 5. Event attendees Julianne Do and Yuan Zhang smile for the camera!



Fig. 6. The event had many delicious food options!

PRESENTATIONS

- On *April 19th, 2025* The **Religion Graduate Student Association (RGSA)** hosted their **5th annual symposium** to discuss religious practices and their interconnectedness by drawing on diverse methodological perspectives. **Dr. Neil Van Leeuwen** from Florida State University was invited to give a keynote speech about the relations between religious attitudes and violent actions. Many presentations were also given by several UF religion grad students including **Carol Rodriguez**, **Muktar Sanni**, **Yuan Zhang**, and event organizers **Laura James** and **Macodou Fall**. Undergraduate student **Jordan Evans** also presented. Their presentation topics are listed below.
 - o Carol Rodriguez, *Jain Women in Florida Kitchens: How to speak the language of food*
 - o Muktar Sanni, *Culture and Religious Authority Between Salafism and Sufism in Yoruba Land*
 - o Yuan Zhang, *Consuming the Disgust: Reflection on the Repulsiveness of Food in Early Buddhist Traditions*
 - o Laura James, *What is an Embodied Yoga Ethic?*
 - o Macodou Fall, *Baye Fall Religious Practice*
 - o Jordan Evans, *Peacemaking and the Universal Worship of Hazrat Inayat Khan*



Fig. 1. Symposium attendees listening to presenters



Fig. 2. Laura James presents



Fig. 3. Macodou Fall presents



Fig. 4. Jordan Evans presents



Fig. 5. Attendees of Symposium discussing topics



Fig. 6. Muktar Sanni presents

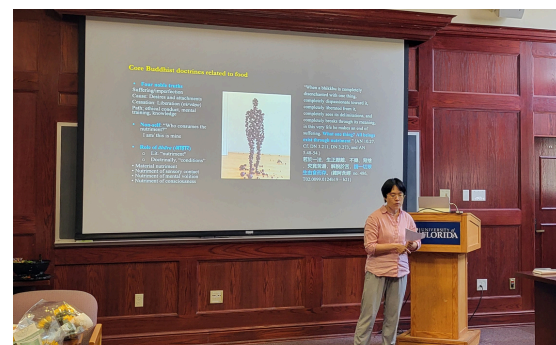


Fig. 7. Yuan Zhang presents

PUBLICATIONS

- **Rajani Maharjan** had an opportunity to contribute to an academic publication as a second author. *April 24th, 2025.*
 - Citation for her forthcoming book chapter as a co-author: Drew, G., Maharjan, R., & Adhikari, A. J. (2026). *Rethinking the Himalayan Megaproject*. In Campbell, B., Cameron, M., & Subba, T. (Eds.). *The Routledge International Handbook of Himalayan Environments, Development and Wellbeing* (1st ed., pp. 373-383). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003450894>

TESTIMONIALS

Last week we featured Reed Jeffries, a UF alumnus who minored in Religion. Here she shares more detail on how studying religion influenced her choices in her education and career.

"This year, I was accepted to several top law schools, including Georgetown, Cornell, Vanderbilt, and UT Austin. I will attend Northwestern Law on a \$180,000 merit scholarship in the fall.

Minoring in religion at UF was instrumental to my success in this year's law school application cycle. The religion department's amazing faculty, small class sizes, and emphasis on writing and discussion sharpened my analytical, critical thinking, and public speaking skills - essential traits for a law student. My religion professors cared deeply about my success and instilled in me the confidence to aim high in my law school applications.

At one law school's admitted students weekend, I was placed at a table with faculty, alumni, and current and potential law students who all had a background or academic interest in religion. It was so cool to connect with others who shared my passion for exploring big questions about ethics, morality, and justice."

