

UF RELIGION

NEWSLETTER



NEWS

- Professor **Yaniv Feller** published a review of Jeffrey Abt's *Too Jewish or Not Jewish Enough: Ritual Objects and Avant-Garde Art at the Jewish Museum of New York*. *Please see our publications page for more information.*
- Professor **Vasudha Narayanan** recently visited Paris to view the exhibit titled "Angkor Royal Bronzes: Art of Divine" at the Guimet Museum to study Buddhist and Hindu Khmer artifacts. The exhibit was co-curated by Dr. M. Thierry Zephir, an old friend and colleague of Dr. Narayanan.
- Professor **Rachel Gordan** has reached tenure status at the University of Florida. She has also published an essay titled "70 years ago, these beach reads explained Jews to America".

EVENTS

- Summer **A** ended **June 20th**! Congratulations on a successful completion of the first summer term!
- Summer **B** starts **June 30th**! Good luck to everyone on the final half of the summer semester!



Dr. Narayanan with the co-curator of the exhibit, Dr. Zephir in front of an eleventh century bronze statue of Hindu god, Vishnu.



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PRESENTATIONS

- Dr. Terje Ostebo recently gave a lecture on “*The Current Political Situation in Ethiopia and its Regional Implications*” at the University of Messina where he discussed the ongoing conflicts in the Horn of Africa. He talked about the violent insurgencies in Ethiopia leading to the negative impacts on the civilians and widespread corruption, and the possibilities of another war with Eritrea. Dr. Ostebo also discussed Sudan’s ongoing civil war, highlighting the mass displacement of millions and the influential role of external actors such as the UAE and Turkey, who are exacerbating the conflict as they compete for greater access to the region’s resources. While countries like Qatar are increasing their presence in the region, there has been a decrease in presence by the United States.

PUBLICATIONS

- In Dr. Yaniv Feller’s review of “*Too Jewish or Not Jewish Enough*” for the Journal of the History of Collections, he writes in support of Abt’s exploration on the changes in the Jewish Museum of New York and the question of: what makes an exhibit Jewish, and what exactly should Jewish museums exhibit? Dr. Feller discusses how Abt’s book has contributed to the history of Jewish museology by discussing and noting the museum’s various exhibitions since its opening in 1947 to the present. Feller discusses the issues of people deciding whether or not something is “Jewish enough” and commends Abt’s work and noting that the various exhibitions arouse thought and reflection on Jewish identity. The review can be read at <https://academic.oup.com/jhc/advance-article/doi/10.1093/jhc/fhaf019/8160567?login=true>.
- Dr. Rachel Gordan published the essay “*70 years ago, these beach reads explained Jews to America*” in the Jewish Telegraphic Agency based on her research of postwar American Jewish literature. Dr. Gordan examines how American Jews were portrayed in novels during and after World War II, focusing on two works: *Auntie Mame* by Patrick Dennis and *Marjorie Morningstar* by Herman Wouk. Both novels reflect the perceptions Americans held about Jews in the 1950s, but each offers a distinct perspective. *Marjorie Morningstar* centers on Jewish characters navigating assimilation into American society, while *Auntie Mame*, though not focused on Jewish characters, offers a broader critique of mid-century social norms and attitudes, including those related to Jewish identity. The full essay can be found at <https://www.jta.org/2025/06/12/ideas/70-years-ago-these-beach-reads-explained-jews-to-america>.

Dr. Rachel Gordan Receives Tenure!



Dr. Gordan has been a faculty member at the University of Florida since 2017. Her research focuses on American religion and culture, particularly with American Jews and popular culture. Dr. Gordan's research has shaped her recent book, *Postwar Stories: How Books Made Judaism American*.

Reflecting on her research and tenure status, she shares:

"I love discovering the fascinating ways that religion influences identity and the cultural production. My REL class, Jews and Popular Culture has been a really fun setting for exploring this history with my UF undergrads, who are often introducing me to more recent examples of Jewish popular culture.

It is a huge relief to have tenure. It makes it easier to enjoy both my teaching and my scholarship when I don't have this huge concern on my mind."

— Dr. Rachel Gordon

Join us in wishing Professor Gordon congratulations!