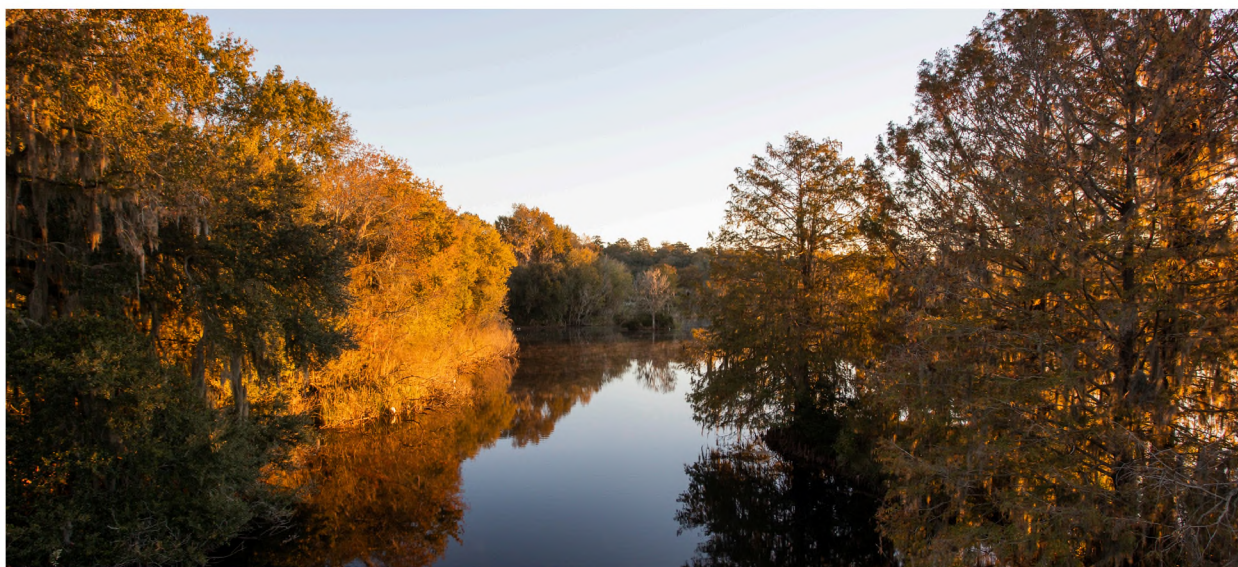


UF RELIGION

NEWSLETTER



NEWS

- **Dr. Terje Ostebo** recently gave an interview for the newsletter *Sawahil*. See the *Publications* section on Page 2 for more information!



EVENTS

- **Dr. Jeyoul Choi** will be leading the department tabling events to advertise the religion Spring 2026 courses starting October 13th through October 29th. Refer to Page 3 for the list of Spring courses!
- **Dr. Vasudha Narayanan** the Center for the Study of Hindu Traditions (CHiTra) presents a Hindustani Music concert featuring Swarnendu on Sarod and Satyanath Howladar on Tabla. The event will take place October 23, 2025, at 6:30 PM in the Keene Faculty Center. Seating is limited—please email your name and affiliation to vasu@ufl.edu to reserve a spot. This event is supported by CHiTra's Classical Indian Music Fund.

Publications

Dr. Terje Ostebo was interviewed by the newsletter *Sawahil* in the article titled “Seven Questions on Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed’s Pentecostalism for Dr. Terje Ostebo”. Dr. Ostebo spoke to Professor **Alex Thurston**, an Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Cincinnati, about Ostebo’s perspective as well as his recent article “*The Religion of Ethiopia’s Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed: Pentecostalism, Prosperity Gospel and the Power of Positive Thinking*.” This recent article examines the Pentecostal faith and leadership style of Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, highlighting Abiy’s belief that he is divinely chosen to lead Ethiopia and his blending of religious conviction with nationalist politics.

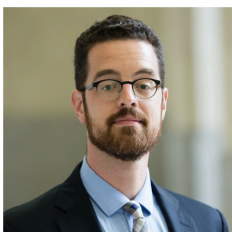
During this interview, Ostebo explains that since 1991, Ethiopia has experienced a major religious revival following the fall of the militaristic Derg regime combined with the rapid growth in expressions of Protestant and Muslim movements and increasing government attempts to monitor and co-opt religious communities. Under Abiy, the state’s approach to religion shifted—as he seeks to unite religious groups rather than label them as “extremist,” though political space has tightened dramatically.

Abiy’s Pentecostal faith is tied less to preaching and conversion and more to a national, messianic vision of “saving” Ethiopia. He sees himself as divinely chosen to lead the country toward prosperity, holding nightly prayer meetings and framing his leadership as spiritually guided. Unlike other leaders who promoted overt religious agendas, his message is more inclusive and rooted in national unity rather than religious conversion.



Sawahil (Newsletter)

The newsletter encompasses a wider geographic scope—including the Sahel, North Africa, and the Middle East—and explores broader themes such as Islamic thought and politics.



Alex Thurston is an **Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Cincinnati**. He was an *International Affairs Fellow* at the *Council on Foreign Relations* (2013–14) and has held fellowships with the *Wilson Center* and the *American Council of Learned Societies*. His research focuses on Islam and politics in twentieth- and twenty-first-century Northwest Africa, with fieldwork in Nigeria, Senegal, Mali, Mauritania, and Burkina Faso.

Spring 2026 Courses

REL 2121: American Religious History — Rachel Gordan

REL 2334: Religions of India — Vasudha Narayanan

REL 2362: Introduction to Islam — Terje Ostebo

REL 3191: Death and Afterlife in World Religions — Vasudha Narayanan

REL 3294: Apocalypticism — Robert Kawashima

REL 3305: Global Christianity — Jeyoul Choi

REL 3381: Religion in Latin America — Jeyoul Choi

REL 3931: Junior Seminar — Mario Poceski

REL 3938: Special Topic: Sufism — Ali Mian

REL 4092: Ethics, Utopias, Dystopias — Yaniv Feller

REL 4221: Pentateuch — Robert Kawashima

REL 4368: Global Islam — Ali Mian

Public Profile

IDS 2935: Post-Holocaust American Jews — Rachel Gordan

IDS 2935: Religious Extremism — Terje Ostebo

IDS 4942: Sustainability in Action — Anna Peterson



**Learn more about these courses at our
tabling events, starting October 13th through
October 29th!**

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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 look forward to hearing from you!