

UF RELIGION

NEWSLETTER



NEWS

- **Dr. Vasudha Narayanan** recently gave two lectures in Heidenberg, Germany. See *Page 3* for more details.
- **Dr. Bron Taylor** recently published an article titled “*Religion and climate (in)action*”. See *Page 4* for more details.
- The **Dr. Bron Taylor’s** journal, **JSRNC**, recently published a new volume. See *Page 5* for more details.

EVENTS

- On February 6th, **Dr. Rachel Gordan** will be giving a talk on her book “*Postwar Stories: How Books Made Judaism Become American*” (2024) for the **Toronto Miles Nadal JCC**. See *Page 2* for more details.
- On January 29th, the 2025-2026 Annual Scudder Lecture featured guest speaker **Dr. William Sherman** from UNC-Charlotte to give a lecture titled, “*Raids on the Revelational: Islam, The Humanities, and Experiments with Divine Language in Early Modern Islam*”. See *Page 6* for more details.

PRESENTATIONS

- On February 6th, 2026, Professor **Dr. Rachel Gordan** will be giving a talk about her book, *Postwar Stories: How Books Made Judaism American* as a guest speaker for a “Meet the Author” event at the **Toronto Miles Nadal JCC**.



JCC poster for Dr. Rachel Gordan's book talk.

Before the Holocaust, antisemitic depictions were prevalent in American popular culture. At the time, Judaism was misunderstood as a racial group rather than a religious one. After World War II, “middlebrow” literature emerged as two separate subcategories – 1940's anti-antisemitism publications (such as *Gentleman's Agreement*, an Academy Award-winning film) and 1940-1950's “Introduction to Judaism” literature. Middlebrow literature provided Americans with a deeper understanding of Jews, antisemitism, and the impact and contribution of Judaism within the American cultural and historical landscape. This talk takes a deep dive into these different aspects while providing new insight.

PRESENTATIONS

- On January 20th - 21st, 2026, Professor **Dr. Vasudha Narayanan** gave two talks for the South Asia Institute at the **Heidelberg University** in Heidelberg, Germany.

Dr. Narayanan's first lecture on January 20th, "Kanchi and Kambuja: The Vaikuntha Perumal Temple and Angkor Wat," was part of the university's lecture series titled, "Sacred Spaces, Living Traditions: Visual and Oral Cultures of South Indian Temples". The lecture focused on the cultural and artistic connections between Cambodia and South India, particularly the Kanchipuram region

She also spoke to the South Asia Institute's Departmental Colloquium on January 21st with the lecture titled "The Churning of the Milk Ocean". The talk examined the story of the devas and asuras churning the Milk Ocean, a narrative that, while less prominent in Indian temple art, holds exceptional importance in Cambodian culture. Widely depicted in Khmer temple architecture—most notably in the massive bas-relief at Angkor Wat—the story appears across art, ritual, literature, and performance. By analyzing its representations through texts, architecture, and social practices, Dr. Narayanan suggests that the narrative's adaptability to diverse socio-political contexts explains its enduring and widespread presence in Cambodia.



Logo for Heidelberg University

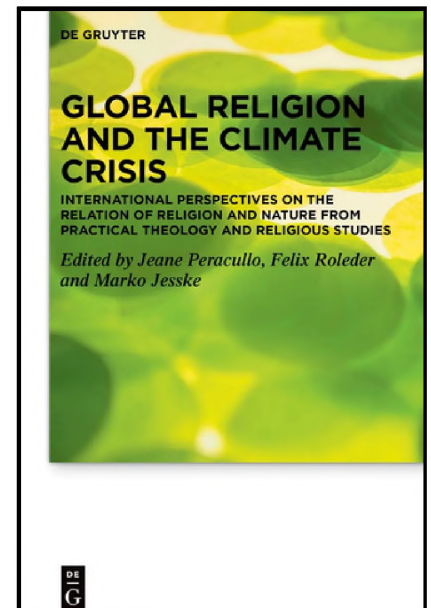


*Logo for Heidelberg University's
South Asia Institute*

PUBLICATIONS

- Professor **Dr. Bron Taylor's** latest article, "*Religion and climate (in)action: Assessing the obstacles and prospects for effective mobilization in response to the climate emergency . . . and facing up to our apocalyptic moment,*" has been published in Volume 34 of *Global Religion and the Climate Crisis*, eds. Jeane Peracullo, Felix Roleder and Jesske Marko (Berlin: De Gruyter Brill, 2026), pp. 11-32.

In this article, Professor Taylor draws on decades of research to examine how religious, quasi-religious, and secular worldviews shape environmental action. He identifies a sobering pattern: dominant global religions remain largely disengaged from environmental crises, while radical green movements lack the influence needed to drive systemic change. Coupled with the rise of anti-environmental authoritarianism, these dynamics place the planet's socioecological systems on a trajectory toward widespread collapse. Although religions have long envisioned apocalyptic endings through mystical frameworks, contemporary science now anticipates a similar outcome grounded in evidence and observation. As humanity moves through this unfolding apocalyptic moment, the enduring mystifying power of religion may continue to hinder the clarity required for meaningful and effective action.



PUBLICATIONS

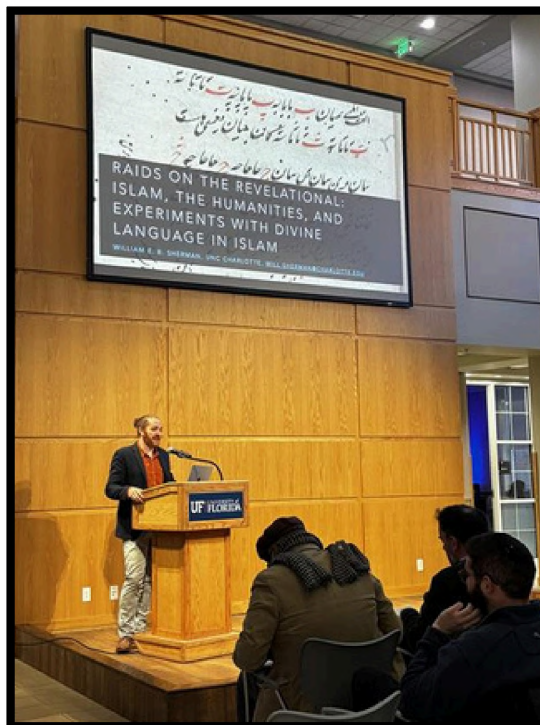
- The **Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture (JSRNC)**, founded by faculty member **Dr. Bron Taylor**, is pleased to announce the publication of Vol 20.1, "*Special Issue: Religious Responses to Climate Crisis*," edited by: Sophie Bjork-James, Sarah Hautzinger, and Cymene Howe. Articles included in the volume are:
 - "*No Nature, No Culture: Chinese Buddhist Vegetarianism, Kinship, and Transmigration*" - Mayfair Mei-hui Yang
 - "*The Uncanny Lords of the Mountains and Valleys: Q'eqchi'-Maya Spirituality, Climate Change, and Planetary Life in Alta Verapaz*" - Eric Hoenes del Pinal
 - "*Climate Crises and Postapocalyptic Futures: Visionary Landscapes in Northern Peru*" - Ana Mariella Bacigalupo
 - "*The Violation of 'Dhimar': Reflections on Religion and Ecopolitics in India*" - Yogesh Chandrani
 - "*Reproductive Futurism in Evangelical and Secular Environmental Politics*" - Sophie Bjork-James
 - "*Inciting Climate Activism in 'Secular-Spiritual' Spaces*" - Sarah Hautzinger
 - "*Afterword: Why Climate Needs Religion: A Provocation, a Manifesto, a Study Guide, a Philosophy of Twins*" - Cymene Howe

The journal emerged from work in the late 1990s on the interdisciplinary Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature, edited by Bron Taylor, which revealed the need for an ongoing scholarly forum in this growing field. Recognizing the lack of a journal that matched the encyclopedia's broad, interdisciplinary scope, Taylor and colleagues began discussions that led to the journal's creation. With support from Equinox Publishing and collaboration with Celia Deane-Drummond, the journal was expanded and reconfigured in 2004 to address the religion, nature, and culture nexus, a vision outlined by Taylor in the journal's editorial introduction.

EVENTS

- On January 29th, 2026, the department hosted its annual **Scudder Lecture** at the Pugh Hall Ocora for faculty and students at UF. Faculty member Professor **Dr. Ali Mian** invited Associate Professor **Dr. William Sherman** from the **University of North Carolina-Charlotte (UNC, Department of Religious Studies)** to give his lecture titled, *“Raids on the Revelational: Islam, The Humanities, and Experiments with Divine Language in Early Modern Islam”*.

The lecture discussed how Muslim and non-Muslims imitate the Islamic “voice of God” beyond the Quran, and how this voice informs thinking about humanistic endeavors more generally in both the past and present. Dr. Sherman explores “experiments” with divine language and revelation in Islam with a focus on modern Qur’anic imitations. Examples cited include “uncorrupted” revelations to works like *Finnegans Wake*. The talk sought to develop a theory of language and literary meaning rooted in the Qur’an and Islamic thought, possibly applying it to read other texts. Dr. Sherman poses the question, “What, then, would it mean to read Joyce through the Qur’an rather than the Qur’an through modern Western theory?”



Dr. Sherman gives the Scudder Lecture for a large student and faculty audience.

STAY CONNECTED!

Follow Us On Social Media!



@ufreligion



University of Florida
Religion Department



@ufreligion



University of Florida
Religion



@ufreligion

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!