



ELON

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF
Religion, Culture and Society



Annual Report | 2015-16



Mission Statement

The **Elon Center for the Study of Religion, Culture, and Society (CSRCS)** highlights and promotes the interdisciplinary study of religion. This faculty-led center draws scholars from disciplines across Elon's campus together with students, staff, community members, and experts from the region and beyond. Center initiatives foster teaching, scholarship, and exchange that cultivate intellectual community and civic action. Pursuing fulfillment of Elon's commitment to multi-faith education and engagement, the CSRCS convenes and facilitates dialogue that advances our understanding of the role of religion in society with intellectual rigor and academic integrity.

2015-16: THE YEAR IN REVIEW

FOSTERING INTELLECTUAL COMMUNITY

In a recent meeting I was asked to share my impressions about Elon now that I was in my second year as the director of its fledgling Center for the Study of Religion, Culture, and Society (CSRCS). The answer I gave reflects my observations about the character of relationships here: it was apparent to me, I said, that Elon was an institution committed above all to the value of intellectual community. This is a busy campus: there is top-notch research happening in all of our academic departments, the calendar is packed with lectures and films, and faculty remain primarily devoted to the daily rigors of classroom teaching. But all of this activity seems undertaken with the aim of creating an environment in which students, faculty, and staff are engaged in meaningful conversation about matters of substance. It is in the spirit of fostering that kind of community that the CSRCS pursues its work.

We had plenty to talk about this past year. In 2015-16 the major plotlines of many of the stories in our national consciousness involved religious themes and actors, indicating not only the ways that the importance of religion in our globalizing, interconnected world refuses to abate but also the ways that religion continues to fascinate, terrorize, and inspire us.

Religion stories this year included heartbreaking tragedies: the mass shooting by a white supremacist at Mother Emanuel Church in Charleston and refugees from a war-torn Syria flooding into Europe, to take two examples. I am writing this letter the morning after the Orlando nightclub shootings, where once again we see religion implicated in the hate-fueled violence we have witnessed repeatedly this year: San Bernardino, Paris, Brussels. On the other hand, in the US tour of Pope Francis and in the global gathering of religious leaders at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Salt Lake City, we saw how religion can provide the motivation for positive social change. Finally, I would note that our local and campus communities were no less affected by religious developments: in May a nearby prayer service by opponents of North Carolina's controversial House Bill 2 sparked

angry confrontations with the bill's supporters, each side motivated by its own religious convictions; the city of Burlington welcomed its first mosque, the Burlington Masjid; and Elon's Truitt Center for Religious and Spiritual Life continued to expand its programming and its multi-faith staff to reflect Elon's diversifying community.

As this brief survey of recent stories shows, religion's complexity is maddening. How do we respond to such complicated and powerful forces? At the CSRCS, we study this complexity: we examine its contours and explore its causes and ramifications; we search for the data that helps us to understand how religion impacts our values and choices as individuals and communities. But we don't do so in libraries and laboratories in isolation from one another. We do it in community and in conversation with one another. We undertake our investigations with the confidence that our students and colleagues at Elon have valuable insights that are worth considering and that exploration and discovery are most meaningful when they occur in the context of conversation and collaboration. These are the principles that motivate our support for undergraduate research and faculty scholarship, and they guide our programming decisions about speakers and events that can catalyze important discussions.

I am looking forward to your support for these efforts in 2016-2017, when, I am confident, we will continue to have much to talk about.

Brian K. Pennington

Director of the CSRCS and
Professor of Religious Studies





Fostering Intellectual Community

CSRCS Programming Digs Deeper into 2015-2016's Biggest Stories



Catholic Affairs Reporter & Vatican Correspondent Offers INSIDER VIEW OF POPE FRANCIS'S US VISIT

On Monday, Oct. 5, award-winning journalist, author and filmmaker David Gibson visited Elon to speak about landmark events in the Catholic Church. Gibson has covered the Vatican since the 1980s and is currently a Catholic Affairs journalist for the Religion News Service. He has contributed to several leading newspapers and magazines, including the *New York Times*, *Newsweek*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *New York* magazine, *Boston* magazine and *Fortune*. He has served on the Catholic News Service editorial staff and has been named the nation's top religion reporter several times by the Religion Newswriters Association.

Gibson's talk directed the audience to look behind the plotlines offered in news coverage of the pope's visit to the US to see his vision for the Catholic Church that he is aiming to shape.

According to Gibson, in addition to being the kind and gentle figure he presents to the public, Francis is also a keen political operative working to open up a church that is burdened by a top-heavy bureaucracy and labyrinthine procedures.

MAJOR WOMANIST THEOLOGIAN ADDRESSES

"Stand Your Ground" Culture



Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas, a major influential figure in womanist theology—the theology that developed out of reflection on the experience of African-American women—spoke in the McBride Gathering Space of the Numen Lumen Pavilion on April 21.



Invited by Dr. Toddie Peters's REL 461, "Racism and Black Theology" course, Dr. Douglas spoke about her most recent book, *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God*. Douglas explained that after Trayvon Martin's death and the acquittal of his killer, she was plagued by the questions, "Why is it becoming increasingly acceptable to kill unarmed black children?," "Why are they so easily perceived as a threat?," and "How are we to keep our black children safe?" She writes, "As the mother of a black male child, I find these to be urgent questions. The slaying

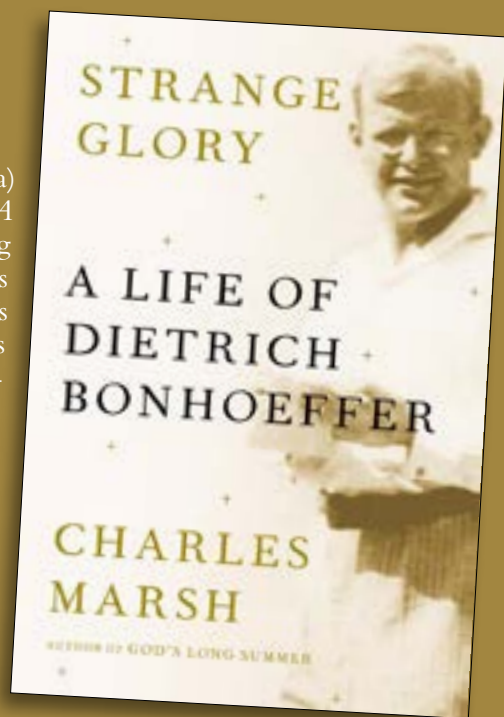


of Trayvon struck a nerve deep within me." In that vein, Douglas's talk was deeply personal, drawing from her experience of wrestling with white racism as a child and venturing a series of proposals about what historical factors have contributed to the recent deaths of Trayvon and other black men. Douglas focused particularly on "one crucial construct: the black body as a criminal black body." This construction, she argued, arrived in the New World with the Puritans, inspired by a belief in the unique superiority of Anglo-Saxon institutions that prized individual freedom and the right to self-protection. "Stand Your Ground" culture emerged, Brown maintained, out of the extension of the English principle that allowed one to protect their castle to the physical body. Transformations in US laws following Emancipation and Reconstruction that produced Jim Crow made the very conditions of black living, such as unemployment and homelessness, illegal. Being black, she said, became the very marker of criminality. Drug laws, stop-and-frisk laws, and stand-your-ground laws today themselves demonstrate that black men in particular are legally prevented from occupying free space, and she called on concerned citizens at the grassroots level, particularly at colleges and universities, to resist these laws and promote dialogue that addresses the massive incarceration of black men.

Charles Marsh:

THE STRANGE GLORY OF DIETRICH BONHOEFFER'S LIFE

On Nov. 11 highly acclaimed author Dr. Charles Marsh (University of Virginia) spoke to students and faculty on his best-selling 2014 book, *Strange Glory: A Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*. Reviewed in several prestigious venues, including the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times*, the book has also drawn many scholars to Marsh's work because of the unique insight his book provides into Bonhoeffer's life and his death at the hands of the Nazi regime for his involvement in a plot to assassinate Hitler. Calling Bonhoeffer "a person of faith for our time," Marsh focused on the transformation that Bonhoeffer underwent in 1930 when he was a visiting scholar at Union Theological Seminary in New York and undertook a 7-week tour of the Jim Crow south and its African-American churches. There he discovered what he came to believe was a true Christianity, one that spoke to people on the margins, and when he returned to Nazi Germany he did so with a commitment to a prophetic Christianity that informed his resistance against Hitler and the Holocaust.



The End of White, Christian America?

National pollster details dramatic shifts in the American electorate

On Feb. 4, CEO of the national polling organization, Public Religion Research Institute, Dr. Robert P. Jones, came to talk to the campus about race, religion, and the radical shifts that are taking place among those American demographics that routinely vote in US elections.



that falls along party lines. Strong majorities of those who identify as Republican or with the Tea Party believe America's best days are behind it, while a strong majority of those who identify as Democrat believe its best days are ahead. The title of Jones's most recent book, which has generated a great deal of press attention, captures the gist of his findings: "The End of White Christian America." Drawing on four decades of polling data, the book describes the stark changes that America is undergoing and argues that we can understand the divisive tone of today's politics in terms of the anxieties that these dramatic shifts engender.

Jones's talk came in the midst of the earliest primaries in the 2016 election season, immediately after the nation's first caucuses in Iowa. Although Jones declined to offer any actual predictions, the trends he urged the audience to watch were clearly in evidence as the parties moved through the remaining primaries and towards their conventions in the summer. Jones used a series of graphs to tell the story of a country whose older white voters, those Jones calls "nostalgia voters," conceive of America's democracy in ways very different from the preferences expressed by its younger and non-white citizens. According to polling data PRRI has collected in the years since the 2012 elections, older Americans strongly identify the United States with a Christian heritage while younger generations do not. Jones's talk featured data showing that 7 in 10 of Americans over the age of 65 identify as white and Christian, whereas 3 in 10 of those between 18 and 29 do. According to Jones's analysis, there is also a strong divide in the US about the direction of the country



Robert Jones meets with Elon Poll director, Kenneth Fernandez

RABBI SHULY SCHWARTZ, Dean of Jewish Theological Seminary meets with faculty and students, lectures on Jewish feminism



Signaling the expanding reputation of Elon's Jewish Studies and Jewish Life program, Rabbi Shuly Schwartz, the Irving Lehrman Research Associate Professor of American Jewish History and Walter and Sarah Schlesinger Dean of Graduate and Undergraduate Studies at The Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, traveled to North

Carolina in November to discuss possibilities for collaborations with Elon. An affiliation agreement with Elon's Study USA program that would allow Elon students to spend a semester at JTS is under development as a result. While she was here, Dr. Schwartz also offered a lecture about the history of American Jewish feminism, "Rugelach, Rumage Sales, Rabbis and Rosh Hodesh Groups: The Transformative Power of American Jewish Feminism." A reception featuring (what else?) delicious rugelach made by Aramark's pastry staff followed.



CSRCS channel on the web!

Learning ON DEMAND



Many of the lectures sponsored by the Center for the Study of Religion, Culture, and Society are available for viewing on its web channel, hosted by Elon's "Learning on Demand" platform

Kosher/Soul:

Food blogger Michael Twitty talks about African-American/Jewish cuisine

There are over 50,000 Jews of African descent in the United States and, according to chef, culinary historian, and food activist Michael Twitty, their stories and intersecting identities are immensely diverse.

Elon hosted Twitty, author of *The Cooking Gene: A Journey through African-American Culinary History in the Old South* and multiple cookbooks as well as the blog, "Afroculinaria," on Nov. 10. Just as African-American Muslims practice halal in distinctive ways, African-American Jews weave the strands of their own culinary traditions together "like a challah," he said. There have been African-Americans cooking kosher since the era of slavery when the cooks of slave-holding Jews had to learn the rules of kashrut for the families that held them, Twitty explained. "Kosher soul food is more than making soul food kosher by Jewish law," however: "it's really about blending the two diasporas."

Twitty kept up a vigorous schedule during his day at Elon, speaking about African-American Jewish identity with Core Curriculum Roundtable students, giving a lunch talk to campus leaders, and offering an evening cooking demonstration and lecture to residents of the Global Neighborhood. A number of campus partners eagerly came together to sponsor a day of invigorating dialogue about race, religion, and identity punctuated by a lot of laughter and great food: Jewish Studies, African & African-American Studies, the Center for the Study of Religion, Culture, and Society, the Global Neighborhood, the CREDE, Elon Hillel, History and Geography, Philosophy, Religious Studies, and the Coordinator of Residential Dining and Engagement.



"SECRETS IN THE CONVENT:

Nuns and Medical Culture in Late Renaissance Italy"

Sharon Strocchia, a professor of history at Emory University and a 2015-16 Fellow at the National Humanities Center in Research Triangle Park, NC, presented her ongoing work in November on the networks of care forged by 16th-century Florentine women in their development of early medical practices.

Strocchia's forthcoming book, *Cultures of Care: Women, Knowledge and the Pursuit of Health in Late Renaissance Italy*, investigates how "increased demand for healthcare services and a renewed emphasis on preventive health opened new opportunities for women's involvement with Italian medical provisioning." Strocchia observes that "as

apothecaries, household experts, hospital nurses, and charitable caregivers working within increasingly coordinated networks of care, female practitioners not only delivered crucial services but also helped transform convents, conservatories and princely courts into important sites of health literacy and knowledge production."

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE TRUITT CENTER

Elon Sends Delegation to Parliament of the World's Religions

When he organized the first World's Parliament of Religion in 1893 in Chicago, Presbyterian minister John Henry Barrows dreamt of a regular convening of spiritual leaders of diverse faiths. That inaugural Parliament was a watershed in intercultural history: the first formal interfaith gathering of such a scale, it also generated a wave of popular interest in non-Christian religions across the US. It would be a full century until the Parliament was convened again for a centenary commemoration in Chicago, but since that event in 1993, the slightly renamed Parliament of the World's Religions has met with increasing frequency to promote peace in a global environment of interreligious conflict.

In October 2015, representatives from Elon, including University Chaplain Jan Fuller and the staff of the Truitt Center for Religious and Spiritual Life, CSRCS Director Brian Pennington, and 11 students attended the Parliament in Salt Lake City to present, participate in workshops, and hear addresses from such global leaders as Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Mairead Maguire, primatologist and activist Jane Goddall,

and US Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, Rabbi David Saperstein.

Elon's delegation made two presentations to the Parliament about its growing multifaith programming. Associate Chaplain for Protestant Life Joel Harter led a session on "Mindfulness for College Students: Cultivating Spiritual Wellness and Compassion across Traditions" that also featured Associate Professor of Communications, Julie Lellis, Elon counselor, Jennifer Brigman and students Miranda Baker and Emily DeMaio Newton, while Chaplain Fuller led "Deep and Wide: Developing an Interfaith Program on a College Campus: Stories and Strategies from Elon University" that highlighted various components of the university's multi-faith projects, including the work of the CSRCS.

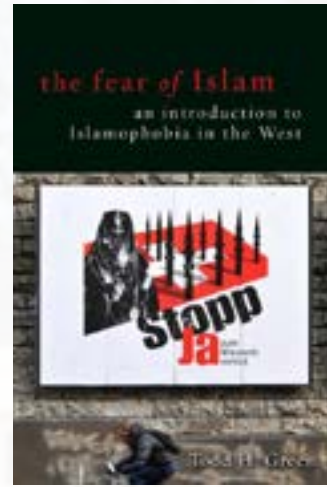
The Parliament was both an opportunity for Elon to showcase the work being done on its campus to promote interfaith dialogue and education.



Confronting *Islamophobia*

With a recent spike in anti-Muslim rhetoric at the national level and a continuing rise in incidents that target Muslims, the general deficit of real knowledge many Americans possess of Islam and of Muslim Americans is today quite clear. Committed to education about religious traditions in our midst and to countering misinformation about Islam in particular, the Truitt Center for Religious and Spiritual Life and the Center for the Study of Religion, Culture, and Society are committed to working together to sponsor events that highlight both the lived experience of Muslims around the world and scholarly research that can educate members of Elon's campus community and the broader public about the role of Islam in our globalizing societies. In commemoration of the Muslim students shot to death in Chapel Hill one year ago, we sponsored a week of events about Islam that reached widely into the community.

Dr. Todd H. Green on Islamophobia in the US



Author of the 2015 book, *The Fear of Islam: An Introduction to Islamophobia in the West* (Fortress Press), Luther College's Dr. Todd Green spent several days on campus meeting with students, speaking to faculty, staff, and the public, and delivering a public lecture about his recent book. On Feb. 24 he led a discussion with campus and community leaders on the topic, "Do Christians and Muslims Worship the Same God?" The following night he delivered the 2015 H. Shelton Smith lecture, "Islamophobia: What Are We Really Afraid of?" Outlining some of the main causes and consequences of Islamophobia, what he calls, "one of the most commonly accepted prejudices in America today," Green argued that Islamophobia operates on two levels. On the one hand, it is "an irrational fear, hostility, or hatred of Muslims and Islam," and on the other, "Islamophobia is also the discriminatory actions and exclusionary practices resulting from

that" anxiety. While Green, who identifies himself as a scholar of Islamophobia and an anti-Islamophobia activist, believes the widespread fear of Islam is dangerous in itself, its most pernicious element, he believes, is the notion that Islam is monolithic because this idea that all Muslims think and believe the same allows prejudice to go unchallenged. Among other factors that contribute to Islam, Green named a history of European and American imperialism, saying, "We have been hostile and continue to be hostile to Muslims because we see them as obstacles to our imperial ambitions." An even greater factor today may be widespread ignorance about Islam. Green explained that "many in Europe and US harbor strong feelings about Islam, but many in the west know very little about it," citing studies that show that 63% of Americans admit they have little to no knowledge about Islam but 55% nevertheless have unfavorable opinions about it. Finally, Green called out those who engage in "professional Islamophobia" by making a career out of demonizing Islam. These well-funded bloggers and media personalities are the visible parts of an unseen but powerful industry that has strategically worked to achieve the mainstreaming of Islamophobia such that what used to be fringe voices are now "experts" in the media.

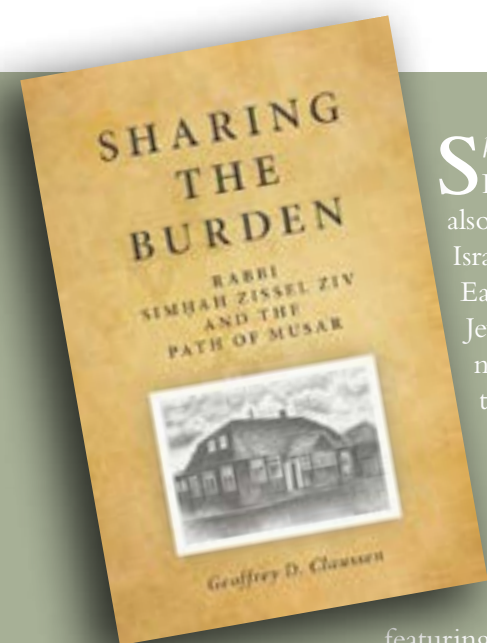


"Hijabi Monologues"

In connection with the Ripple interfaith conference that also happened that weekend, on Feb. 25 the theater production, "Hijabi Monologues," was held in Whitley Auditorium. Performed at colleges and universities around the country, the 90-minute performance of monologues written by Muslim American women about their experience of wearing hijab and being Muslim and female in the post-9/11 world captivated the audience. The monologues themselves are evolving, and new ones are continually added to address the shifting and diverse experiences of American Muslims. The three performers engaged issues of religion, gender, ethnicity, and race. Perhaps the most powerful moment of the evening was a new monologue written about the Chapel Hill shooting of three Muslim students a year prior, in Feb. 2015. Elon's Muslim Life Coordinator, Anna Torres-Zeb led a discussion following the performance, and the performers conducted a workshop for students attending the Ripple Interfaith Conference the next day. The performance is available for viewing on the "Multimedia" section of the [CSRCS website](#).

FACULTY SCHOLARSHIP & FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

This past fall saw the publication of the first book by Lori and Eric Sklut Emerging Scholar in Jewish Studies and Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, Dr. Geoffrey Claussen.



Sharing the Burden: Rabbi Simhah Zissel Ziv and the Path of Musar (SUNY Press) is a critical analysis of the life and work of Rabbi Ziv (1824-1898), also known as the Elder of Kelm. Rabbi Ziv was the greatest student of Israel Salanter, the founder of the modern Musar movement, a 19th-century Eastern European movement that called for the strengthening of traditional Jewish virtues by resisting the paths of both acculturation to European norms and rigorous Talmudic study advocated by rival Jewish leaders of the time. In the 1860s Rabbi Ziv founded a boys' school called the Talmud Torah in the Lithuanian city of Kelm to train them in the path of Musar, emphasizing the virtue of loving kindness while recognizing the difficulty of interior moral change and the cultivation of virtue. Claussen's book brings both the man and his teaching to life.

In March the CSRCS sponsored a panel discussion of Claussen's book featuring scholars of theology, ethics, and Judaism from the area. Dr. Christian Miller, Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Character Project at Wake Forest University tested Ziv's assessment of human character against the findings of empirical psychology. Invoking classic studies of human responses to moral crisis—such as Stanley Milgram's demonstration that subjects could be pressured to deliver painful shocks to other people for trivial reasons—Miller argued that experimental psychology concurs with Ziv that humans have natural inclinations to both cruel and just responses to moral quandaries.

Dr. Andrea Dara Cooper, Assistant Professor and Leonard and Tobee Kaplan Fellow in Modern Jewish Thought and Culture at UNC Chapel Hill underscored the irony of Ziv's expansive view of fellowship and love that nevertheless excluded women and perhaps even his own family. Dr. Jeffrey Pugh, Elon's Maude Sharpe Powell Professor of Religious Studies challenged the rabbi's embrace of biblical texts in which God endorses violence against Israel's enemies. Christian social ethicist Dr. Rebecca Todd Peters of Elon expressed appreciation for Simhah Zissel urging us to "move beyond the virtuous behavior of the individual to take into consideration how moral relationships are built in the communities in which we live." All expressed a deep appreciation for Claussen's deft and sympathetic portrait of the man and his thought as well as his discussion of his own ambivalence about Simhah Zissel Ziv's complex and sometimes contradictory teachings.

All four essays plus Claussen's response will be published in a special issue of the *Journal of Jewish Ethics*, vol. 3, issue 1 (January 2017).

Claussen joined the Elon faculty in August 2011 as an assistant professor of religious studies. In April 2012, he was named the Lori and Eric Sklut Emerging Scholar in Jewish Studies. He is also the founding director of Elon's Jewish Studies program, which launched in Fall 2012.



Blogging on Contemporary Religion and Spirituality

CSRCS Director Brian Pennington blogs regularly for various sites.

Read his pieces about:

- [The 2015 Parliament of the World's Religions](#)
- [The scientific study of religion in Europe](#)
- [Morgan Freeman's National Geographic Series, "The Story of God"](#)

Fostering EXCELLENCE In Undergraduate Research

One of the chief objectives of the CSRCS strategic plan is to develop resources and cultivate opportunities for students to pursue research projects that reveal the many and complex ways that religion and spirituality are entwined with human societies, both now and in the past. In 2015-2016, the center made significant strides forward in establishing two programs that will provide students the chance to undertake extended projects in collaboration with a faculty mentor who will train them in the research process appropriate to their academic discipline. The CSRCS will work with students in two tiers to build a robust research program that extends across campus.



Research student Melina Oliverio '16 with mentor Dr. Amy Allocco and Parminder Soch of the Sikh Gurudwara of NC

SCHOLAR DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

Most Elon students study religion at some point in their first or second years, often through a Core Curriculum 101 class that introduces them to the liberal arts or through popular Religious Studies courses that satisfy a Core requirement. Even those students who are most enthusiastic about these courses do not recognize the many opportunities that undergraduate research can provide for further engaging their interests in religion. Scholar Development Grants are intended to help first- and second-year students design a research project under the guidance of a faculty mentor and prepare them to write competitive proposals for Elon's signature undergraduate research programs like the Lumen Prize and the Summer Research Experience (SURE). The grants provide money to the student and the faculty mentor for research expenses and conference travel that will help them in the early stages of a research project, and they also provide funds for the faculty member's own research needs.

2015-16 Scholar Development Grant Recipients:

NOAH ROSSEN

(Sociology and Anthropology)

"Examining the Impact of Patriarchy and Misogyny on Masculinity,"
(Toddie Peters, Religious Studies, faculty mentor)

SKYLER DEGROOT

(Journalism)

"Framing a Borough: How Newspapers Covered Increased Cultural and Religious Diversity in Queens after the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965," (David Bockino, Communications, faculty mentor)

CARLY GOLDSTEIN

(International Studies)

"Defunding Terror: Targeting Religious Extremism through Funding Networks," (Ariela Marcus-Sells, Religious Studies, faculty mentor)

CSRCS Summer Research Fellowships

CSRCS Summer Research Fellowships grants are available to all students with a developed interest in studying religion from the perspective of any academic discipline. Students work one-on-one with an Elon faculty mentor for 8 weeks in June and July and they are supported by a generous stipend that helps replace the important income from summer employment. CSRCS Summer Research Fellows participate fully in Elon's Summer Undergraduate Research Experience (SURE) program, which administers these grants through an agreement with the CSRCS.

2016 CSRCS Summer Research Fellows:

DANIELA SOSTAITA

(Sociology and Religious Studies)

"Uncovering Religion's Role in Shaping Sexual Attitudes and Behaviors among U.S. Latinas,"
(Toddie Peters, Religious Studies, faculty mentor)

ZACHARY GIANELLE

(Classical Studies)

"Queer Readings of the Bacchanalia," (Lynn Huber, Religious Studies, faculty mentor)



SURF Symposium INVESTIGATING YOGA ACROSS THE DISCIPLINES SYMPOSIUM

There is no doubt that the practice of yoga has grown rapidly across the United States in the last decade, with one recent study showing nearly ten percent of the population involved at some level. Interest at Elon has exploded as well. Weekly meetings of the Yoga Club often number 30-40 students bending and stretching, and a major yoga workshop, [Solstice](#), was held on campus in

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April. Student and faculty interest is more than recreational, however, with several teams of undergraduate researchers and their mentors currently engaged in studies of various aspects of the contemporary practice and politics of this ancient Indian tradition.

The CSRCS convened a symposium of four of these teams from a range of disciplines across the campus—from Exercise Science to Religious Studies to Communications—to present their research during the Spring Undergraduate Research Forum (SURF Day) on April 26th. The symposium team met throughout the spring semester to learn from each other’s work and to develop each of the four presentations. Their session at SURF Day 2016 was an inspiring and impressive display of the fruitfulness of cross-disciplinary exploration.



Amanda Carberry, Molly Sullivan, Dr. Svetlana Nepocatych (Exercise Science) and Dr. Elizabeth Evans (Physical Therapy)

AMANDA R. CARBERRY & MOLLY A. SULLIVAN

“Effects of High and Low Intensity Yoga on Psycho-Social Well Being in College-Aged Females,” (Dr. Svetlana Nepocatych, Exercise Science and Dr. Elizabeth Evans, Physical Therapy, faculty mentors)

STEPHANIE A. BEDARD

“Breaking Barriers to Build More: Portrayals of Females in Advertisements in the Yoga Journal Magazine,” (Julie Lellis, Communications, faculty mentor)

ALEXANDRA F. MCCORKLE

“Clinical Spirituality: A Critical Examination of the Academic Use of the Word “Spiritual” and the Application of Yoga to Clinical Psychology,” (Dr. Pamela Winfield, Religious Studies, faculty mentor)

LILLIAN DENUNZIO

“Branding India: How Prime Minister Narendra Modi is Using Yoga as a Communication and Image-Building Tool,” (Dr. Kenn Gaither, Communications, faculty mentor)



Dr. Kenn Gaither (Assoc. Dean, Communications) and Lillian Denunzio

“ON THE EDGE OF APOCALYPSE”

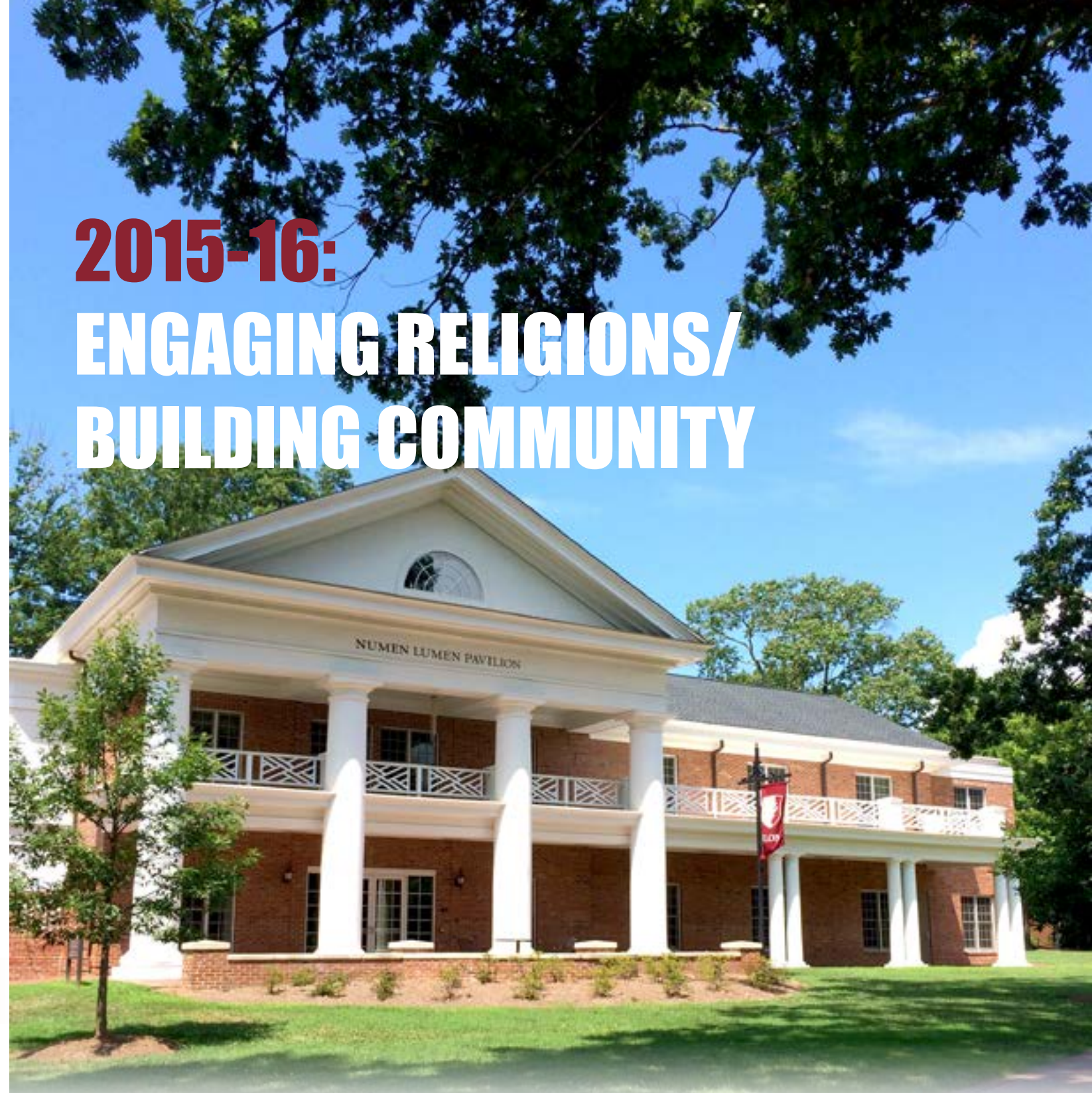


“On the Edge of Apocalypse”
The Inaugural Convening of “On the Edge: New Directions in the Interdisciplinary Study of Religion”

Inaugural CSRCS Symposium Convenes Feb. 9-11, 2017

The CSRCS Advisory Committee achieved another major objective this year as it organized the first of what will eventually be its annual symposium in the interdisciplinary study of religion. These scholarly working groups will each produce a major, collaborative publication in the interdisciplinary study of religion. The 2017 symposium, titled “On the Edge of Apocalypse,” will pursue new methodological insights for studying end-of-the-world scenarios in the world’s major religious traditions. Led by Elon folklorist, Dr. Tom Mould (Sociology/Anthropology),

and New Testament scholar, Dr. Lynn Huber (Religious Studies), the symposium will host 9 other scholars of millennial thought from a range of disciplines to explore the edge of apocalyptic thought and practice. The keynote speaker will be Dr. David Cook of Rice University who studies Islamic apocalypticisms. The title of his talk is “Every Time a Horn Goes, Another Replaces It’: Cyclicity and Conquest in Muslim Apocalypticism.”



**2015-16:
ENGAGING RELIGIONS/
BUILDING COMMUNITY**

*Big Steps Forward
in Elon’s Strategic
Plan for Multi-Faith
Engagement*

In the fall of 2015, Provost Steven House and Vice-President and Dean of Students, Smith Jackson, accepted the recommendations proposed in the report authored by the Numen Lumen Planning Committee. This report, “Engaging Religions/Building Community;”

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provides a blueprint for enhancing global engagement, fostering interfaith dialogue, and promoting multi-faith education at the university. The full plan with its projected outcomes is available on the [CSRCS website](#).

It Proposes Four Major Objectives:

- I. Nurture the Creation of a More Religiously Diverse and Welcoming Campus Community
- II. Develop the ability of the campus community to engage with colleagues and communities from diverse religious identities and worldviews
- III. Provide opportunities for deepened and extended engagement with one another around multi-faith matters of substance
- IV. Enhance campus capacity through clarification of University units and the reformulation of advisory committee structures

Working together, various campus units, particularly the Truitt Center for Religious and Spiritual Life, the Religious Studies Department, and the CSRCS have begun the implementation process that will ensure that Elon meets its objectives and thereby further cements its reputation as a leading US campus for multi-faith education and engagement.

As a result of this plan, 2015-16 saw many new initiatives and programs come to life:

- Consultations with the university's Office of Admissions to expand and focus recruiting territories to better target schools with high religious diversity and to enhance the identification of first-year students well suited for Religious Diversity Living Learning Communities, leadership positions in the residential campus, and a multi-faith scholars program.
- Ongoing consultations and training with international recruiters to identify and encourage students from under-represented religious populations to come to Elon.

- Pre-departure modules for Study USA and Study Abroad that focus on religious and worldview diversity.
- Participation in IDEALS (the Interfaith Diversity Experiences and Attitudes Longitudinal Survey), an instrument developed by Interfaith Youth Core, in order to better understand the nature and extent of our students' engagement with multi-faith issues and to assess our achievement of our long-term goals.

- Establishment of clear responsibilities for each of the primary stewards of Elon's multi-faith initiatives – the Truitt Center and University Chaplain, the Center for the Study of Religion, Culture, and Society and its Director, and the Religious Studies Department – communicating not only discrete areas of responsibilities but areas of overlap and necessary collaboration.
- Development of "On the Edge," a scholarly symposium for the interdisciplinary study of religion to be held for the first time in February 2017.

NEW INTERRELIGIOUS STUDIES MINOR IS APPROVED

Building on a grant received from Chicago-based Interfaith Youth Corps in 2014, a team of Elon scholars, including Religious Studies professors Jeffrey Pugh, Geoff Claussen, Amy Allocco, and CSRCS Director Brian Pennington, designed an innovative minor program in "Interreligious Studies."



One of the first in the nation, this program of study is already achieving recognition for its distinctive approach to the national trend of interfaith work and engagement on college campuses. The minor is broadly interdisciplinary, drawing from departments such as World Languages and Cultures, History, English, Art History and short-term study abroad courses. It will require students to take courses in distinct religious traditions as well as courses that explicitly study the interactions between communities, both now and in the past. It will also require students to conduct direct participant observation studies at different religious communities in the area, and it includes an internship option. The program aims to keep Elon on the leading edge of interfaith work and study in the

US by emphasizing the analysis and assessment of inter-religious engagement. The overarching objective of this approach is to understand past and present successes and failures in inter-religious encounter so that new and better models can be developed. The faculty team that developed the minor has been invited by the Interfaith Youth Corps to contribute an essay on the minor and its approach for an upcoming book about the emerging Interfaith Studies movement on US campuses, *Toward a Field of Interfaith Studies*, edited by Eboo Patel, Noah Silverman, and Jennifer Howe Peace.



COMPLETE LIST OF CSRCS SPONSORED EVENTS 2015-16

SOLE OR PRIMARY SPONSOR

- Oct. 5** David Gibson (Religion News Service), "Pope Francis's U.S. Visit: What Did We Learn and What Can We Expect Next?"
- Nov. 4** Shuly Schwartz (Jewish Theological Seminary), "Rugelach, Rummage Sales, Rabbis and Rosh Hodesh Groups: The Transformative Power of American Jewish Feminism"
- Nov. 5** Julianne Hammer (UNC Chapel Hill), "Marriage is Half Your Religion: Exploring Matrimonial Practices in American Muslim Communities"
- Nov. 11** Charles Marsh (University of Virginia), "Strange Glory: A Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer"
- Nov. 17** Sharon Strocchia (Emory University and National Humanities Center), "Secrets in the Convent: Nuns and Medical Culture in Late Renaissance Italy"
- Feb. 4** Robert P. Jones (Public Religion Research Institute), "Race, Religion, and the Changing American Electorate: What the Data Says"
- Mar. 8** Panel discussion: Dr. Geoffrey Claussen's *Sharing the Burden: Rabbi Simhah Zissel Ziv and the Path of Musar*. Panelists Rebecca Todd Peters (Elon University), Jeffrey Pugh (Elon University), Andrea Dara Cooper (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill) and Christian Miller (Wake Forest University).
- Apr. 6** Bruce Hall (Duke University), "Vernacular Media and Muslim Ethics in Northern Mali"
- Apr. 21** Kelly Brown Douglas (Goucher College), "Stand Your Ground and the Justice of God."

CO-SPONSOR WITH OTHER ELON UNIVERSITY PARTNERS

- Sept. 16** Panel discussion: "Perspectives on the Global Refugee-Migration Crisis: Responsibilities, Rights, and Politics." With International Studies
- Sept. 17** Panel discussion: "Making Sense of Marriage Equality and Religious Freedom." Panelists: Enrique Armijo (Associate Professor of Law), Matthew Antonio Bosch (Director, Gender and LGBTQIA Center), Lynn Huber (Associate Professor of Religious Studies), Randy Orwig (Pastor, Elon Community Church), Brian Pennington (Director, Center for the Study of Religion, Culture & Society). With the Truitt Center and the Gender and LGBTQIA Center
- Nov. 1** Michael Twitty, "Kosher Soul: Black-Jewish Identity Cooking." With Jewish Studies, Global Neighborhood Association, Center for Race, Ethnicity and Diversity Education (CREDE), African & African-American Studies, Elon Hillel, History and Geography, Philosophy, Religious Studies, and the Coordinator of Residential Dining and Engagement
- Feb. 24** Todd Green (Luther College), "Islamophobia: What Are We Really Afraid of?" With the Truitt Center
- Feb. 25** "Hijabi Monologues." With the Truitt Center, the Office of Inclusive Community, and the Center for Race, Ethnicity and Diversity Education
- April 7** Rabbi Irving Greenberg, "Seeing Israel - A Real Life Nation Through a Theological Lens: A Reflection on Jewish and Christian Perspectives." With Jewish Studies, Religious Studies, the College of Arts and Sciences, the Lori and Eric Sklut Emerging Scholar in Jewish Studies Endowment, Wendy and Lee Pake, the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte, and the Greensboro Jewish Federation
- April 14** Dennis and Ralph Zotigh (Kiowa Nation of Oklahoma), "Native American Music 101." With History and Geography.

CSRCS Advisory Committee



Geoffrey Claussen
Assistant Professor of Religious Studies



Jan Fuller
University Chaplain, Truitt Center for Religious and Spiritual Life



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Associate Professor of Communications



Lynn Huber
Associate Professor of Religious Studies



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Assistant Professor of Political Science, Assistant Director of the Elon Poll



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Assistant Professor of Psychology



Kristina Meinking
Assistant Professor of Classical Languages in the Department of World Languages and Cultures



Jeffrey Pugh
Professor of Religious Studies



Elizabeth Zimmerman
Student Communications Intern

ELON UNIVERSITY

Center for the Study of Religion, Culture, & Society
2960 Campus Box
Elon, NC 27244



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