

Western Region

California
Pacific Islands
Nevada

Hawaii
Guam
Arizona

Envisioning Our Future:

**Religion, Spirituality, and
Scholarship in Shifting Times**

Introduction

Welcome once again to the annual conference for the American Academy of Religion Western Region at UNLV! This is going to be an amazing weekend of scholarship, networking, and inspiration, and I am thrilled to be a part of it. Off the bat, I want to give a big thank you to Dr. Roberta Sabbath and the entire UNLV team for their hospitality and all they ways they have welcomed our region for this weekend.

As this is my last year as Conference Manager, I also want to take this moment to extend a big THANK YOU to Dr. Anna Hennessey, who four years ago opened the door for me to step into AARWR leadership and has been nothing but instrumental these final months in organizing conference logistics. If you're staying through Sunday, and I hope you do, please be sure to check out her exhibit, *Rebirth Tunnel Immersive Art Experience & Peace in the Middle East*. It deservedly was awarded a Development Grant from AAR National and is sure to be a favorite this weekend.

And as always, Moderators and Chairs will have my cell number if you need any assistance. You'll see me all throughout the weekend. If you need anything at all, please don't hesitate to ask.

Sincerely,
Jacob Perez, MTS (he/his)
Conference Manager, AARWR

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We would not be here without...

The American Academy of Religion Western Region would like to extend our deepest gratitude and thanks to Roberta Sabbath, our colleague and amazing campus representative at the University of Las Vegas, Nevada, for all of her work coordinating funds and logistics for this conference to take place. We would not be here without you, Roberta! Additionally, we would like to extend our warmest gratitude to the following departments and organizations for their generous giving that made this event possible:

Provost Office
College of Liberal Arts, Office of the Dean
Department of Sociology
Department of Interdisciplinary Studies
Department of Philosophy
Department of Political Science
Department of Anthropology
Jewish Nevada

Thank you for your amazing support.



Envisioning Our Future:

Religion, Spirituality, and Scholarship in Shifting Times

We have witnessed several systemic efforts and actions of nihilism, death, and destruction to human life, human rights, and to our global environment within which humanity lives. In 2024, the world is literally burning. And yet we, as religious scholars, still find ways to hope and “do the work our souls must have” amid the reality quakes of daily life.

Oftentimes as religious scholars, we have the audacity and dare to believe we can be transformative agents. We stare into the face of the multilayered forms of human blight and seek religious and spiritual remediation. The economic blight, the blight of global disparities and injustice, the blight of indifference and ambivalence to human suffering, and its subsequent toll on creation. How do we stare into the blight and move beyond the blight in 2024?

This year’s theme focuses on the role religion, and religious studies, play to help tap into the potentiated hope of an (re) imagined future. We will pause to examine the religious, spiritual, and comparative religious ways in which the human experience can forge a future as scholar-practitioners in the present times.

For example, we might consider the following:

Can religion play a part in helping marginalized communities forge their own pathways as collectives or within the sacred skin of their own individual identities?

How have art and imagination forged footprints of faith or interreligious discourse to address human injustice and environmental destruction and decay?

Can religious scholarship play a role as we grapple with these questions?

What place does religion hold in the discourse surrounding future environmental policy and advocacy for habitats and human displacement?

How has the Anthropocene been imagined and/or can be reimagined from a position of faith and religious scholarship?

In what ways can religious scholars influence or have remained silent in the preservation of or destruction of human hope or in priming human nihilism?

What is the world we are helping to create and what options do religious traditions offer for transformation in a world unceasingly grappling existentially?

How can the past guide us and memory lead us in the creation of new modalities of an imagined future?

What table we are setting for the next generation with new technologies and AI?

What are sites where the sense of imagined hope can provide glimpses into possible futures?

Where can art, imagination, and interreligious cooperation guide us to new solutions and creative collaborative outcomes?

Where can identity, intelligence, and personal freedom to dream culminate...if only temporally?

What are places of joy that are life-giving rather than death-dealing?

What are temporal spaces where can we find them to strategize or to create spaces to thrive?

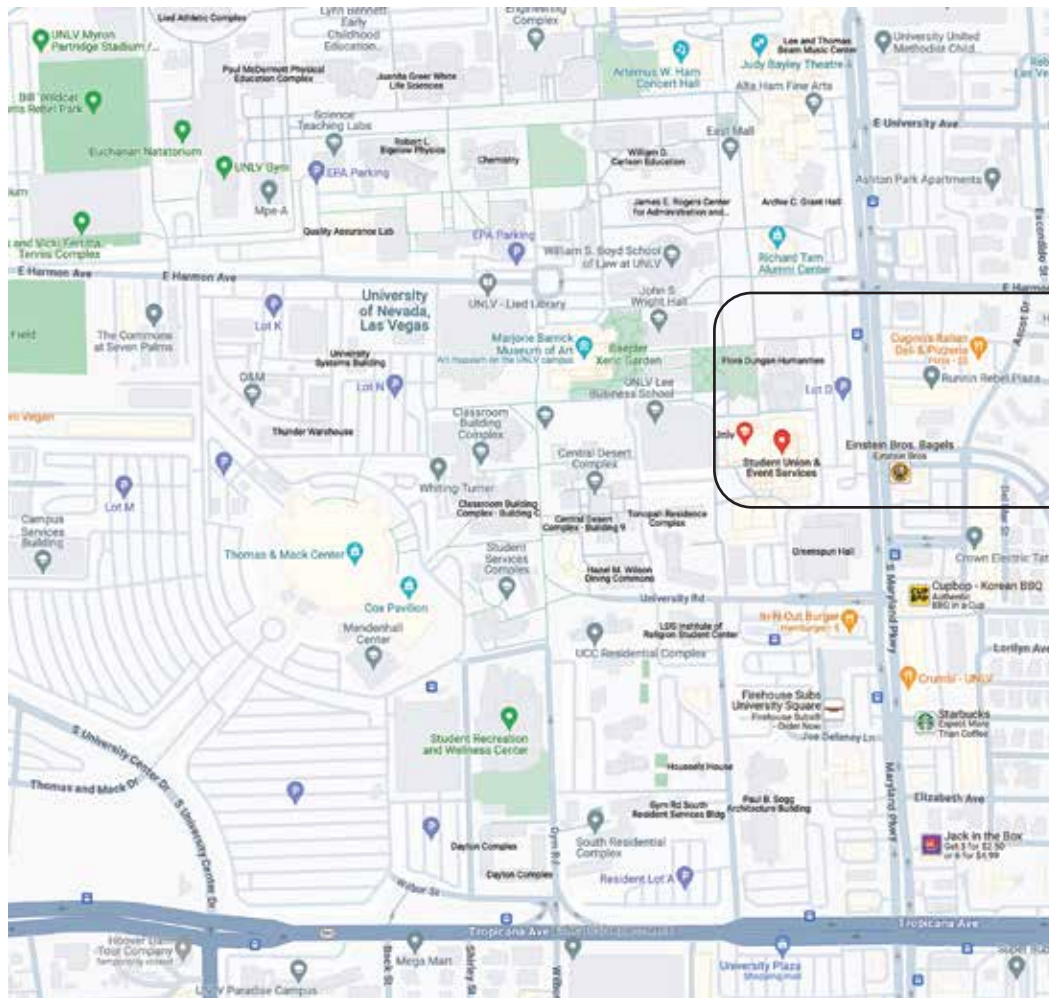
What do they look like?

Who and how can they be inhabited?

This is the challenge of our current time together.

Let us begin. Let us take up the challenge in AAR Western Region 2024.

Sakena Young-Scaggs, PhD., Vice President & Program Chair



----- Student Union
Near Lot D Parking
Closest Road:
Maryland Pkwy

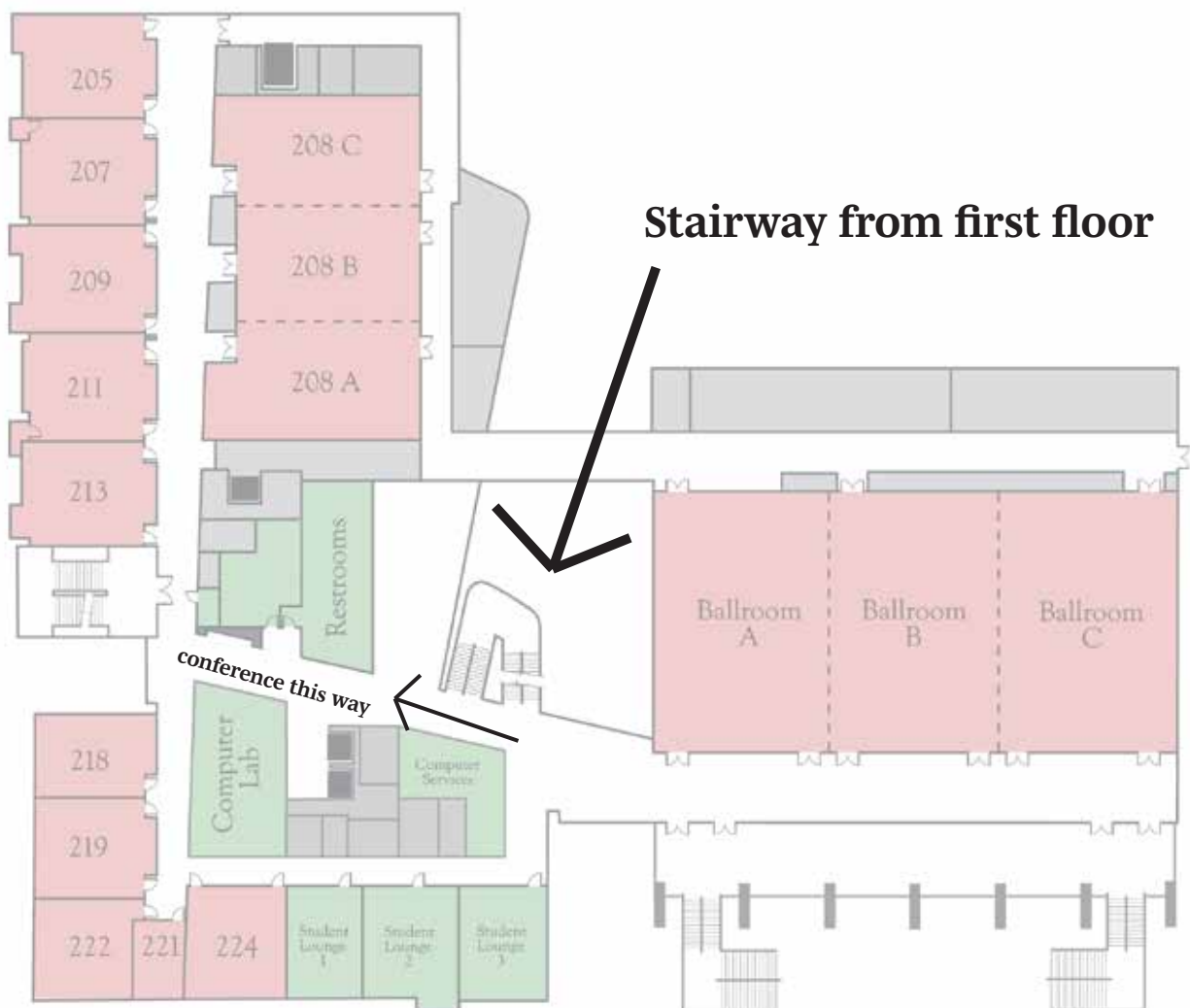
----- Maryland Pkwy

We are happy to report that the entire conference, with the exception of Friday's activities, will take place in one building, the UNLV Student Union on the second floor. The Marjorie Barrick Museum of Art, where Friday's activities will take place is just a short walk from the SU. In the program guide, please refer to the Student Union floor map on the next page to determine where each room is located.

Additionally, we will have a dedicated tech staff member throughout the conference to help with computer hookups, zoom issues, wifi connectivity, etc. More details about our hybrid capabilities will be sent to registered attendees closer to the event. Unit Chairs should plan to assign a volunteer to monitor the zoom room for each session if the session chooses to be hybrid.

Finally, the campus provides complimentary guest wi-fi access. Instructions will be emailed out to registered attendees the week of the conference.

Student Union Floor Plan — Second Floor



SU ROOM 208A

FRIDAY & SATURDAY

Re-mem-bering Ourselves: Re-member and Be-long

An offering to the AAR/WR community by Christina Conklin, MFA, and Colette Walker, PhD

The interactive story-wall Re-member and Be-long, installed in SU208A, is part of an ongoing community-based art inquiry into how we individually and in our circles of relationship move beyond hardship to renewed states of strength and hope. Invoking the imagery of shamanic dismemberment, the project invites viewers to consider the importance of “re-mem-bering” ourselves (reflecting on, metabolizing, integrating, perhaps also purging the effects of collective and personal crises) as well as “be-long-ing” (extending and deepening bonds of community) as means toward regaining equanimity, resilience, and courage in the face of ongoing challenges. Participants will have the opportunity to add their own experiences to the wall, and to share with others those resources and practices that they have found helpful for weathering hard times and envisioning better futures.

Friday, March 15

Pre-Conference

9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.
SU ROOM 205

Women's Caucus

AARWR Women in Religion Wiki Project Edit-a-thon

Join us in our effort to address gender bias on Wikipedia by improving the coverage of women in religion on Wikipedia tied to this year's conference theme. At this workshop, which is being held during the pre-conference, participants will sign up as wiki-editors, create their personal user page, learn the basics of editing, make Wiki stubs, and make their first wiki-edits. We will talk about using Wikipedia in the Classroom. If you have time before the conference, sign up for a Wikipedia account here: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:Create Account](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:Create_Account) (Consider concerns about anonymity when choosing a "username.") Take a quick look at our work list and tasks for the Women in Religion Project (formerly the 1000 Women in Religion Project) here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_1000_Women_in_Religion Participants are also welcome to work on women from any religious, spiritual or wisdom tradition who are not on the worklist. There will be plenty of time for questions and time for hands-on assistance. No need to be a technological expert! All are welcome!

12:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
SU ROOM 205

AARWR Board Meeting

7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.
Barrick Museum, Screening Theatre

Queer View Event (Open to the Public)

Lesbian Love Stories and the Way they are Told BD Watkins

B. Danielle began laying the groundwork for her career at the age of nine, and by the age of 15, Watkins had her first poem published in the "Poetry Gems Collection", presented by the Famous Poets Society. In 2011 her first of 5 novels was published, and by 2013 she'd be introduced to writing film. Taking her career to the next level, Ms. Watkins became the first and only African American filmmaker to write, produce and star in a REVRV original series, "3030". Starting at the end of 2020, Watkins added another amazing title under her belt, becoming the Chief Programmer as well as Long Form Content Coordinator for the new, black LGBTQ+ led and centered television network iElevate +TV. As of 2023 B. Danielle is the Vice President of Media and Film for the upcoming network TGo TV and a Producer for the TV One Number 1 Show "Fatal Attraction." You can currently find her holiday film "Coming Home for Christmas" on Peacock, Tubi, Roku, Amazon Video, and more.



Saturday, March 16

First Session (8:15 - 9:45 a.m.)

SU ROOM 211

Islamic Studies 1

Moderator: Souad T. Ali, Arizona State University

- (1) Nayawiyah Muhammad, California State University, Long Beach
"Envisioning the Future of Islamic Studies Scholarship: Liberation, Healing, and Sustainability"
- (2) John Curry, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
"A Transoxianian Muslim View of Ming Dynasty Spirituality: Assessing 'Ali Akbar Khatayi (fl. 1503-1520)'s Ethnography of Religion in his 'Book of China'"
- (3) Fadime Apaydin, University of California, Riverside
"Profiling Anti-Muslim Hate Crimes in the United States"
- (4) Muhammad Itsbatul Haq, Indonesian International Islamic University
"Revitalizing the Authority of Religion in Shifting Times: A Case Study of How Indonesian Muslim Youtubers Deal with 'Disruptive' References"

SU ROOM 213

Philosophy of Religion 1

Privileged Access, Social Metabolism, and (Re)Enchantment: Philosophy as Method in the Study of Religion

Moderator: TBA

- (1) Emma Hanlon, University of California, Santa Barbara
"Religion in/as Social Metabolism: Ideology, Religion, And the Composition of Revolution"
- (2) Finney Premkumar, University of Birmingham
"Ways of Knowing in Religious Communities: Conceptual Limit and the Problem of Privileged Access"

SU ROOM 219

Ethics Unit

Imagining and Creating Ethical Future(s)

Moderator: Dr. Mahjabeen Dhala, Graduate Theological Union

- (1) Sandeep Singh Dhillon, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
"Knowledge and Sikh Religion's Practice"
- (2) Raya Marie Hazini, Graduate Theological Union
"Working Together for Peace within Our One Plant, One Humanity"
- (3) Sheryl Johnson, Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary
"The Business of God: Ethics and the Church-Industrial Complex"

SU ROOM 209

Christianity Unit

Past, Present, and Future

Moderator: Dyron Daugherty, Pepperdine University

- (1) Yuki Shimada, Aoyama Gakuin University
"Democratic Ideals or Preservation of the Status Quo?: An Examination of Kotaro Tanaka's Post-WWII Stance on the Imperial Rescript for Education and Its Ongoing Influence on Japanese Education"
- (2) Daniel Spencer, Church of Scotland
"Paradise Now: A Theological Examination of Dostoevsky's Christian Mysticism"
- (3) Cole Cloyd, Arizona State University
"The Bright Fiery Cross: Ritual for the Second Ku Klux Klan and its Legacy within Contemporary American Extremism"
- (4) Thomas Davis, California State University San Bernardino
"Apocalypse Now: The Future of Roman Catholic Systematic Theology"

SU ROOM 205

Catholic Studies 1

Catholicism in Image and Imagination

Moderator: Samantha Kang, University of California, Santa Barbara

- (1) Emily Stölken, University of Southern California School of Religion
"Go Into My Vineyard and I Will Give You What Is Just": Labor Rights, Human Dignity, and American Catholicism"
- (2) Sean Dempsey, Loyola Marymount University
"An Inconsistent Ethic: The 'Seamless Garment' in Catholic Social Teaching and U.S. Politics (1970s-1980s)"
- (3) Mark Burchick, Towson University
Choreographing Shadows: Interdisciplinary Collaboration to Orchestrate Ethical AI Image-Making

SU ROOM 207

Religion And Social Sciences Unit

Moderator: Meghan Tiller, University of Southern California

- (1) Josiah Kidwell, University of Las Vegas, Nevada
The Dialectics of Re-Enchantment: Analyzing a Las Vegas-based Megachurch's Engagement with New Media and Entertainment
- (2) Stephanie Milton, University of California, Davis
"God Didn't Tell Me That!": African American Faith and Advocacy in the Face Healthcare Inequities and Power Imbalances
- (3) Porsia Tunzi, Graduate Theological Union
Religion on Instagram: A Site for Reimagining Hope, Authority, and Authenticity

Saturday, March 16

First Session Cont'd. (8:15 - 9:45 a.m.)

SU ROOM 224

Graduate Student Professional Development

Collapsing the Dichotomy Between the Personal and Professional

Moderator: Adam Tyson, University of California, Riverside

(1) Sonja B. Williams and Rebecca Bennett, Eden Theological Seminary
"Black Healers Collective"

(2) Kimberly Diaz, University of California Riverside
"BTS Fandom and the Scholar Activist: Engaging with the Music and Workouts of the Bulletproof Boy Scouts (BTS) as Transcendent Moments of Play"

(3) Rev Jitsujo Gauthier, Ven. Xiandong Shi, and Jieyan Zheng, University of the West, "Buddhist Pedagogy: Dharma Reflections on Developing Ministry of Presence in the Classroom"

Keynote Address

10:00 - 11:00 am

Jennifer Pharr, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

SU ROOM 208A - INTRODUCTORY WELCOME BY UNLV PROVOST CHRIS HEAVEY

This Keynote will be livestreamed over Zoom. A Zoom link will be provided to registered attendees before the Conference.

Dr. Jennifer Pharr has always had a keen interest in health, wellbeing, and fitness, leading her to pursue a Bachelor's degree in nutrition and a Master's degree in exercise physiology while competing as an NCAA Division I scholarship athlete. Upon graduation, she worked in healthcare as an exercise physiologist, an echocardiographer, and as a healthcare administrator. After fifteen years, Dr. Pharr transitioned from providing care to individual patients to caring for populations of people, earning her PhD in Public Health in 2012. Dr. Pharr is currently a Professor of Public Health at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Her research focuses on identifying health disparities experienced by vulnerable populations. Specifically, she examines the impact of laws and policies on mental health; disparities in healthcare access/health service utilization of vulnerable populations, particularly sexual and gender minorities and people with disabilities; disease disparities including HIV, mental health, and chronic diseases; barriers that impede and facilitators that enhance healthy behaviors such as HIV testing, preventive care, and disease prevention; the use of social marketing to promote health; the intersection of sport, physical activity, and health; and using sport to advance health, especially among women. In 2021, there was a tremendous increase in the number of anti-LGBTQIA+ laws and policies being proposed at the state level across the United States, an increase which continues through 2024. This prompted Dr. Pharr to focus her research attention on how protective or discriminatory LGBTQIA+ laws and policies impact the mental health of LGBTQIA+ people. For example, she is examining the mental and physical health impacts of legislation in the United States to ban transgender athletes from participation in sports and the larger social-cultural consequences of such legislation. As a sexual minority person who grew-up in the South, she hopes that her research can help advocate for more protective LGBTQIA+ laws and policies, especially in states with the poorest records for LGBTQIA discriminatory laws and policies.



Saturday, March 16

Second Session (11:15 a.m. - 12:45 p.m.)

SU ROOM 208B

Latinx Religions and Spiritualities Unit

Re-visioning and Constructing Preferred Futures

Moderator: Marlene Ferreras, La Sierra University

- (1) Jon Garcia, University of Southern California
- (2) Saul Barcelo, Loma Linda University
- (3) Marlene Ferreras, La Sierra University

SU ROOM 211

Buddhist Studies 1

Moderator: Alina Pokhrel, University of Virginia

- (1) Constance Chen, Loyola Marymount University
“Envisioning an Enlightened Future: Buddhism, Modernity, and Religiosity in Nineteenth-Century United States”
- (2) Athena Latila, Graduate Theological Union
“Buddhist Philosophy of the Psychosomatic Medicine: Essence of illnesses (Bhūtavidyā)”
- (3) Song Wang, University of the West
“Expressing the Inexpressible: The Mutual Correspondence Idea in Dongshan’s Five Ranks Thought”

SU ROOM 213

Black Religion and Theology Keynote

Raymond Carr Keynote Presentation.

Discussion to follow.

SU ROOM 209

Philosophy of Religion 2

Omnipotence, Uselessness, and Mystical Resemblance: Between Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Theologies

- (1) Asia Baclay, San Francisco State University
“Process Theology Against Perfect Being Theology on Divine Omnipotence”
- (2) Neal Spadafora, University of California, Santa Barbara
“In Praise of Uselessness: Edelman, Eckhart, and the Exile of Philosophy”
- (3) Daniel Spencer, Independent Scholar
“Mystical Resemblance: An Unsolved Puzzle for the Christian Philosophy of Religion”

SU ROOM 205

Islamic Studies 2

Moderator: Souad T. Ali, Arizona State University

- (1) Jusuf Salih, University of Dayton
“Fazlur Rahman and His Assessment of Islamic Studies”
- (2) Souad T. Ali, Arizona State University
“The Concept of Polygamy as ‘Discouraged’ by the Qur’an: Where Does Scholarship Stand?”
- (3) Shamsuddin Waheed, Masjid Ibrahim, Las Vegas
“The future of Islam in shifting times”
- (4) Nicole Herrera, Arizona State University
“Impact of Patriarchal Policies and Practices: Power of Podcasts that Give LDS Women Voice”

SU ROOM 207

Goddess Studies 1

The Divine Feminine Across Traditions

Moderator: Anjeanette LeBoeuf, Saint Louis University

- (1) Jenessa Kenway, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
“Sacred Mother Tongue in ‘Mary of Egypt’”
- (2) Kali (Meera) Tanikella, Graduate Theological Union
“Embracing the Divine Union: Exploring Bridal Mysticism in Saiva Tantra Traditions”

SU ROOM 219

Women And Religion Unit And Religion And The Arts Unit (Joint Session)

Roundtable – Rebirth and Grace Through Poetry

Moderator: Anna Hennessey, Graduate Theological Union

This roundtable is devoted to the topics of Rebirth, the Divine Feminine, and the Quest for Grace in the poetry of Lynore Banchoff and Miera Rao, two Bay Area writers. We look at Banchoff’s poetry from her books, *More Than a Backward Glance* and *Past Tense and Parts of Speech on Beech Street*. Rao discusses her upcoming chapbook, *33 Syllables*, which was inspired by the presence of the goddess Devi in her life.

- (1) Lynore Banchoff, Bay Area Poet & Writer
“Lineage and Family as Rebirth and Regeneration in Poetry”
- (2) Miera Rao, Poet and Director, Top Form Academy, San Francisco Bay Area
“Poetry as a Reflection on the Quest for Grace and Finding Divinity in Unexpected Places”

Saturday, March 16

Second Session Cont'd.
(11:15 a.m. - 12:45 p.m.)

Lunch Break
(12:45 - 2:00 p.m.)

SU ROOM 224

Pagan Studies Unit

The History of Mystery: Pagans in Las Vegas

Moderator: Kahena Viale

Las Vegas has been described in many ways: Sin City, the Entertainment Capital of the World, and more. It has also been said that Las Vegas has more churches per capita than casinos. But what most people don't know is that Las Vegas is also home to a vibrant community of Pagans and that there is even a Goddess Temple nearby. This presentation is a round table discussion with a variety of Pagan groups in Las Vegas, which will touch upon their history, composition, practices, and their future as well as the unique challenges of being Pagan in Las Vegas, home of Formula One and now the Superbowl.

- (1) Marissa d'Aradia Founder and organizer of Sin City Witches
- (2) B J Rogers Leader of larrea Tridenta Grove, ADF (Druid)
- (3) Edmond Costello Priest and founding member of Sanctuary of Solace, an all-inclusive Goddess Community
- (4) Abigail Spinner McBride founder, organizer and visionary of Vegas Vortex - an intentional community of friends, artists, musicians, performers, and wisdom-keepers, centered in Las Vegas, NV. We host an exciting fun series of magickal events, concerts, playshops, drum circles, dances, and empowering retreats. A magickal community.
- (5) Re. Marie Katherine Sharpe member of Desert Moon Circle and serving as ritual priestess for the Temple of Goddess Spirituality dedicated to Sekhmet.
- (6) Erin Lale Author of *Asatru: A Beginners Guide to the Heathen Path* and *Renaissance Women: Collected art and poetry of Erin Lale*.
- (7) Candace Kant, PH.D. Retired History teacher. Former Dean of Students and Academic Dean at Cherry Hill Seminary. Currently department chair of Theology and Religious History at Cherry Hill Seminary. Co-editor of *Heart of the Sun: An Anthology in Exaltation of Sekhmet* (2011) and *Stepping into Ourselves: An Anthology of Writings on Priestesses* (2014).

12:50 - 1:50 PM

Unit Chairs Meeting & Lunch

SU ROOM 208A

Lunch Provided for Unit Chairs

Third Session **(2:00 - 3:30 p.m.)**

SU ROOM 224

Religion and the Arts

Roundtable – Listening and Art as Integral Components to Contemporary Scholarship, Community, and Transformation

In this roundtable, Dr. Katherine M. Kunz of the Center for Religion and Cities will present her research on deep listening and its impact on scholarship and community. Her presentation, which is interactive, encourages audience participation. Dr. Colette Walker will discuss her recent project launched in December, which envisions two complementary trajectories: one a personal art practice that may at times also be collaborative, and the other a community-based oral history project bearing witness to the work of those who employ art in the service of their communities in the midst of crisis. Dr. Anna Hennessey joins the roundtable to present how her research on themes of birth and rebirth in art and the humanities led her to create and build actual interactive rebirth art experiences for participants in San Francisco and other locations, including at the American Academy of Religion, Western Region 2024 Conference itself.

- (1) Katherine M. Kunz, Center for Religion and Cities
Deep Listening, Improvisation, and the Future of Scholarship
- (2) Colette Walker, Graduate Theological Union
Re-membering Ourselves: A Project Investigating the Role of Art, Spirit, and Scholarship in Difficult Times
- (3) Anna Hennessey, Graduate Theological Union
Immersive Rebirth Experiences: When Art and Ritual Merge to Transform Individuals and Communities

Saturday, March 16

Third Session Cont'd. (2:00 - 3:30 p.m.)

SU ROOM 211

Buddhist Studies 2

Moderator: Alina Pokhrel, University of Virginia

(1) Sirinanda Unaleeye, University of the West
"The Importance of the five mindfulness trainings for reimagined mindful future"

(2) Rev. Jitsujo Gauthier, University of the West
Buddhist Pedagogy: Dharma Reflections on Developing Ministry of Presence in the Classroom

SU ROOM 219

Religions Of Asia

Moderator: Adam Tyson, University of California, Riverside

(1) István Keul, University of Bergen
"Literature as Ethnography? Urban Religious Diversity in Mumbai Novels"

(2) Zachary Armine-Klein, University of California, Santa Barbara
"Consuming Ise: Branding and Tourism at Ise Grand Shrine"

(3) Adib Farhadi, University of South Florida
"The Intersection of Gender and Religion in Achieving Afghanistan's Sustainable Development Goals"

(4) Satish Bhatnagar, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
"Affinity: Math & Hinduism!"

SU ROOM 209

Religion, Science And Technology Unit

Moderator: Reed Metcalf

(1) Mitchel E. Hickman, University of California, Santa Barbara
"Wasting Finitude: On the Ecological Import of Sacrificial Expenditure and Videogame Play"

(2) W. Gil Shin, Fuller Theological Seminary
"A Narrative Substructure of Cosmos-Chaos in Technological Dystopian Films in Comparison with Judeo-Christian Apocalyptic Eschatology"

(3) Greg S. Cootsona, California State University, Chico
"An Exploration into a Decentered, Multi-religious Approach to Religions and Science"

(4) Viktor J. Tóth, Fuller Theological Seminary
"Myths We Live By"

(5) Reed Metcalf, Fuller Theological Seminary
"Square Pegs and Round Holes? Addressing 21st Century Concerns with Ancient Religious Traditions"

SU ROOM 205

Catholic Studies 2

Catholicism in Image and Imagination

Moderator: Samantha Kang

(1) Diane Saunders, Graduate Theological Union
"Can Broken Authority and Crippling Freedoms Call Forth a Reimagined Catholicism Rooted in Liberative and Unifying Practices"

(2) Teodor Baba, Independent Scholar
"Transhumanism? Reading Robert Spaemann on Causality and Teleology"

SU ROOM 207

Asian American Studies Unit

Negotiating the Secular in Asian American Religion

Moderators: Laura Snell and Shannon Toribio, UC Santa Barbara

(1) Holly Folk, Professor, Western Washington University
"Refracting the Vision of Sun Myung Moon: Factions of the Unification Church"

(2) Song Wang, University of the West
"White Robe Preaching: Chinese Lay Buddhist Authority in a Transnational Context"

SU ROOM 213

Black Religion and Theology - Student-Scholar Panel

Moderator: Aaron Grizzell, NorCal MLK Foundation

(1) Yoknyam Dabale, Fuller Theological Seminary, School of Mission and Theology
"Black Magic: How People of African Descent Used Their Religions to Fight White European Oppression in North America"

(2) Angela Lintz Small, Graduate Theological Union
"Are all Buddhists Pacifist? Exploring African American Buddhist Responses to White Supremacy and Christian Nationalism"

(3) Rev. Charles Brown, Jr., Family of Faith A.M.E. Church
"Scapegoat: An Indispensable Theological Tool of Police Brutality and Collective Violence Generally"

Saturday, March 16

Fourth Session (3:45 - 5:15 p.m.)

SU ROOM 211

Goddess Studies 2

The Divine Feminine Across Traditions

Moderator: Kali (Meera) Tanikella, Graduate Theological Union

(1) Holly Folk, Western Washington University
“The Only Begotten Daughter: Feminist Theology in the Family Federation”

(2) Thomas Selover, SunHak UP Graduate University, South Korea, and Grace Lee, Independent Scholar
“The Mother of Peace and the Divine Feminine”

(3) Christine Conklin, Artist and Independent Scholar
“Constellate the Goddess: An Artist’s Journey Toward the Embodied Sacred Feminine”

SU ROOM 209

Religion and the Arts

Moderator: Roy Whitaker, San Diego State University

(1) Heather Wetherholt, Arizona State University
“Comics and Conscience - The Social Responsibility of Comics Authors in Turbulent Times”

(2) Norris W. Palmer, Saint Mary’s College of California
“Cinema as Site of the Sacred”

(3) Roy Whitaker, San Diego State University
“Tupac Shakur’s Envisioning of the Future: Death and Rebirth in Hip Hop, Afrofuturism, and Religious Studies”

SU ROOM 205

Catholic Studies 3

Short Film Screening and Discussion of “Ora et Labora”

Moderator: Nathan McWeeney, University of Southern California

This panel is devoted to discussion of the short film, “Ora et Labora,” which explores the fascinating story of the only Trappist monks to operate a brewery in America.

(1) Mark Burchick, Towson University
“Ora et Labora”

SU ROOM 207

Womanist/Pan African Unit

Womanist Panel

Moderator: Valerie Miles-Tribble, Graduate Theological Union

(1) Kimani Francois, Claremont Graduate University
“Dancing from Shiloh to Freaknik: A Womanist Hermeneutical Dance and Subversive-Self Love in Judges 21”

(2) Kimberly Carter – California Institute of Integral Studies
“Examining Womanist Perspectives: The Intersection, Artistry, and Intuitive Inquiry of AI and Biblical Narratives”

SU ROOM 219

Disabilities Studies

Constructing Religious Disability Theologies

Moderator: Anjeanette LeBoeuf, Saint Louis University

(1) Meghan Mercury, Graduate Theological Union
“The Sekenese Opteyned of God be Petition”: Julian of Norwich’s Shewings as Christian Disability Theology

(2) Anjeanette LeBoeuf, Saint Louis University
“All Bodies are Sources of Attachment and Suffering: Buddhist Dharma for Disability Rights and Liberation”

(3) Elizabeth Staszak, Independent Scholar
“A Paradoxical Relationship: Coptic Orthodox Disability Theology and the Cultural Church”

Saturday, March 16

Evening Session

ALL EVENTS TAKING PLACE IN SU ROOM 208A

The Awards and Presidential Address will be livestreamed over Zoom. A Zoom link will be provided to registered attendees before the Conference.

5:30 - 6:15 p.m. Reception & Award Presentation (NO-HOST CASH BAR & HORS d'OEUVRES)

6:30 - 7:30 p.m. Presidential Address, Marie Cartier, Ph.D.

7:45 - 10:00 pm Black Caucus Conversation & Mixer

Marie Cartier, Ph.D.

President, AARWR

Baby, You are My Religion: Women, Gay Bars, and Theology Before Stonewall... Ten Years Later!

Marie Cartier is a teacher, poet, writer, healer, artist, and scholar. She earned a Ph.D. in Religion with an emphasis on Women and Religion from Claremont Graduate University. Additionally, she holds a BA in Communications from the University of New Hampshire; an MA in English/Poetry from Colorado State University; an MFA in Theatre Arts (Playwriting) from UCLA; an MFA in Film and TV (Screenwriting) from UCLA; and an MFA in Visual Art (Painting/Sculpture) from Claremont Graduate University. She is the author of the popular book, *Baby, You are My Religion: Women, Gay Bars, and Theology Before Stonewall*, with its 10th Anniversary Edition releasing in 2024.



(Photo: Kimberly Esslinger)

Sunday, March 17

First Session (8:30 - 10:00 a.m.)

SU ROOM 207

Woman's Caucus Morning Event

SU ROOM 209

Black Religion And Theology - Scholar Panel

Moderator: Aaron Grizzell, NorCal MLK Foundation

(1) Julius Bailey, University of Redlands

“Catching the Jingle but Not the Music’: The Portrayal of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement in Selma (2014)”

(2) Darrell Wesley, Redlands First United Methodist Church

“An Archaeology of Black Churches: Tracing the Prophetic Decline”

2024 Interactive Art Event

10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. & 2:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

SU ROOM 224

A Women's Caucus, Islamic Studies & Jewish Studies Joint Event

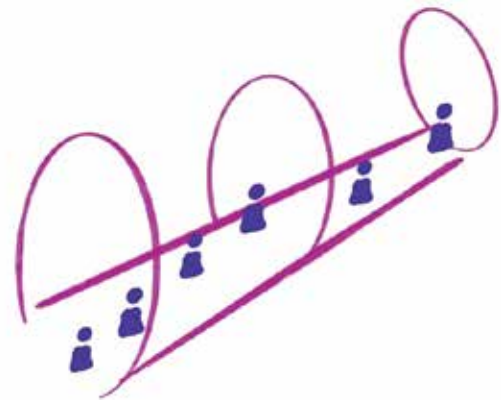
“Rebirth Tunnel Immersive Art Experience & Peace in the Middle East”

At its 2024 Annual Conference, the AAR/WR is excited to present Past President Dr. Anna Hennessey's interactive installation art piece, *Rebirth Tunnel Immersive Art Experience & Peace in the Middle East*. The project, which received a 2024 AAR Regional Development Grant, was originally devoted to creating a unique interactive activity that promotes symbolic rebirth and community in an academic space. Since that time, however, devastating events have taken place in Israel and Palestine. The project is now also communally supported as a tripartite Joint Session of AAR/WR's Women's Caucus, Islamic Studies Unit, and Jewish Studies Unit to acknowledge our hope for peace.

The Rebirth Tunnel recognizes individual journeys and challenges in life, as well as communal hopes for peace at this time of struggle in the Middle East.

Participants first step into a Re-Conception Pod, during which time they begin their own process of being re-conceived. For some, shedding past personal trauma or memory is integral to the process. For others, the hope of a reimagined future of peace in our world is part of the personal re-conception process. Participants then walk down a path and encounter a Renewal Box that transforms how they have been re-conceived. Finally, upon exiting the Rebirth Path, all participants receive a Rebirth Certificate.

The AAR/WR is looking forward to this exciting interactive rebirth art experience for its members and participants!



Sunday, March 17

Second Session (10:15 - 11:45 a.m.)

SU ROOM 207

Jewish Studies Unit 1

Intersectionality in 20th and 21st Century Public Life

Moderator: Roberta Sabbath, University of Las Vegas, Nevada

- (1) Giulia Lorito, Independent Researcher
“A case of denied identity: Margherita Sarfatti and the Jewish tradition in the Italian community”
- (2) Roni Cohen, Columbia University
“Yiddishe Libe’: A Yiddish Seventeenth Century Translation of Lutheran Liturgy”
- (3) Alexander Marcus, University of Pennsylvania
“Israel-Palestine on Campus: Strategies for Mutual Understanding & Respectful Dialogue”
- (4) Avalon Jade Theisen, Arizona State University
“Jewish Ecofeminism as Tikkun Olam”

SU ROOM 213

Psychology, Culture, and Religion

Embodied Beliefs and Beneficial Practices: Techniques for Growing Communities and Ourselves

Moderators: Katherine Kunz, Center for Cities and Religions, Baltimore & Casey Crosbie, Scripps College

- (1) Fadime Apaydin, University of California, Riverside
“Diversity vs. Hate: An Analysis of Hate Crime Incidents Motivated by Racial or Ethnic Identity and Religion in the US Gateway Cities”
- (2) Zeinab Vessal, Graduate Theological Union
“Shaping Utopia: Safavid Transformative Governance Through Shia Belief and Material Culture”
- (3) Azadeh Bahramji, Fuller Theological Seminary
“The Role of Hospitality in Creating Emotional Attachment between the Iranian Muslim Immigrants and Their Host Christian Communities in the USA”
- (4) Terri Daniel, Graduate Theological Union
“Bereavement and Bad Theology: A Toxic Cocktail”

Lunch Break (11:45 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.)

11:45 AM - 12:45 PM
Queer Caucus Lunch
SU ROOM 208A
Lunch Provided

SU ROOM 209

Womanist/Pan African Unit

Pan African Panel

Moderator: Sakena Young-Scaggs, Stanford University

- (1) Glencie Rhedrick, California Institute of Integral Studies
“Creation in Exile: Ecojustice”
- (2) Xavi Luis Burgos, Stanford University
“Possessing the People: Spirit Possession, ‘Mass Conversion’ to African Diasporic Religions, and Societal Transformation”

SU ROOM 219

Queer Studies In Religion Unit

Roundtable: So You Met the Pope, Now What? A Conversation Between Gay Catholics, LGBTQ+ Activists and Allies, and Liberation Theologians

LGBTQ people have long been unable to find houses or communities of worship that are open and accepting of their identities. Frequently, many LGBTQ individuals must leave the religions of their birth for more accepting ones or work to create small changes tirelessly from within. While these tasks can all inflict various levels of trauma, they present options to many in the LGBTQ community to examine what these open and affirming spaces should look like, while also creating structures around how to help others do the same in other religious traditions. This roundtable will be a candidate conversation between Mayor John M. Erickson, Ph.D., who recently met Pope Francis in Rome ahead of his historic announcement allowing Catholic Priests to bless same-sex couples, President Marie Cartier, Ph.D., and liberation theologians on how to work for change within religious traditions and the challenges that still exist that LGBTQ communities must work to overcome.

Business Meeting (1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.)

All members of the AARWR are welcome and encouraged to attend.
SU ROOM 208A

Sunday, March 17

Third Session (2:45 - 4:15 p.m.)

SU ROOM 207

Jewish Studies 2

Biblical and Musical Inter- and Intra-Sectionality

Moderator: Alexander Marcus, University of Pennsylvania

(1) Roberta Sabbath, University of Las Vegas, Nevada
"Ruth and Tamar: An Intertextual Intersectional and Interfaith Reading"

(2) Rachel Colwell, West Chester University of Pennsylvania
"Contrafactum: Jewish-Muslim Musical Interaction Through Shared Melodies"

(3) Sam Long, Great Lakes Christian College
"Sacred Struggles: An Interdisciplinary Exploration of Mental Health in the Hebrew Bible"

SU ROOM 205

Philosophy of Religion 3

Digitality, Ecology, and the Virtual: Techniques and Technologies of Self and World

(1) Mitchel Hickman, University of California, Santa Barbara
"Playing Carefully; or, Between Ecological Virtue and the Virtual"

(2) Dane Sawyer, PhD, University of La Verne
"Playing' with Ecology and Bad Faith: Technologies of Selfhood in Hanh, Derrida, and Sartre"

(3) Shakir Stephen, University of California, Santa Barbara
"Critical Engagement in the Digital World: #Worldliness and the Ambiguities of Christian Media"

SU ROOM 211

Indigenous Religions

Ritual, Repair, and Recovery of Peoples, Spirituality, and Activism

Moderator: Delores (Lola) Mondragón, University of California, Santa Barbara

(1) Janken Gari, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, India
"Shamans and Rituals: An Ethnographic study of Gale tribe of Arunachal Pradesh, India"

(2) Miriam Hamburger, University of California, Santa Barbara
"Repatriation as Spirituality"

(3) Isabella Mondragon and Isabella Saldivar, Institute of American Indian Art, New Mexico
"Displacement, Recovery, and Rematriation Using Education, Art, and Activism"

SU ROOM 209

Black Religion and Theology - Unit Business Meeting

Closing Session (4:30 - 5:30 p.m.)

SU ROOM 211

Woman's Caucus Closing Event

SU ROOM 205

AARWR Closing Mixer

We're hiring! Come meet outgoing Conference Manager, Jacob Perez, and the AARWR Leadership to learn more about the open Conference Manager position as well as a final chance to network with fellow colleagues.



Western Region