



**UNC
GREENSBORO**

Department of
Religious Studies

SPRING 2022

RELIGIOUS STUDIES — WHAT IS IT AND WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR?

From the Desk of the Department Chair

Why Study Religion?

Before coming to college, most students don't even realize that there is such a thing as 'religious studies,' especially in a secular university such as UNCG. But there is! Religious studies is an exciting and fascinating field, and we hope every student considers making it part of their educational experience."



Photo Credit: Kristina Joyner

What is Religious Studies?

First, we have faculty that is strong in both teaching and research. The department is made up of nationally and internationally recognized scholars specializing in a number of major religious traditions and with expertise in a variety of disciplines, from anthropology to history to philosophy to theology.



Photo Credit: UNCG Photographer

Second, we have a flexible curriculum that allows students to shape their major or minors to fit their needs and interests. The major and minors culminate in a capstone seminar (REL 410) where our students come together and share research and insights from across our course offerings.

Finally, the greater Greensboro area, and North Carolina more generally, offers a range of institutions to help students understand religion in action, whether in contemporary American society, the art and culture of the past, or other parts of the world. As a department, we are fully committed to taking advantage of this unique set of resources.



Photo Credit: Derek Krueger

Article Continued on Page 2.

Alumni Spotlight



Photo Credit: Michael Long

Dr. Michael A. Long is a '08 graduate of UNCG. He currently serves as the Director of Spiritual Formation at Duke Divinity School in Durham, NC.

In this role, he is responsible for providing leadership and oversight of the school's spiritual formation programs, including residential and hybrid programs, master's and doctoral-level degree programs, and all certificate programs with spiritual formation requirements.

He designs and offers a program of retreats for first-year students in collaboration with spiritual formation instructors and leaders. He is committed to the spiritual and overall wellbeing of persons and fosters an environment of inclusion, conversation, and empowerment.

Continued: Religious Studies — What is it and what is it good for?



Photo Credit: UNCG'S Stock Photo Collections

Why is Religious Studies Important?

[Continued-- A Conversation with Head and Professor Gregory Price Grieve](#)

Religion is an inescapable part of our world. It courses through politics, economics, ethics, social mores, domestic values, art, culture, scientific discourse and foreign policy.

According to a recent Pew poll, five out of every six people in the world claim a religious affiliation. Indeed, former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has stated that America's failure to understand the role of religion, in all its diversity, in the world today "poses one of the greatest challenges to our public diplomacy." There is an urgent need for educators, policymakers, news shapers, community organizers, and political leaders who understand how religion and religious convictions and controversies influence culture and society, locally and globally.

Why Study Religion At UNCG?

The study of religion is not "religious." That is, we don't study religion from any particular religious perspective.

Rather, the academic study of religion explores and interprets various religious beliefs, ideas, texts, practices and institutions from a variety of scholarly perspectives—comparative, historical, cognitive, literary, sociological, anthropological and philosophical, among others.

Indeed, religious studies is inherently interdisciplinary, adopting a variety of disciplinary approaches to a variety of religious subjects, from "obviously" religious ones like the Torah, a Buddhist pilgrimage, or the Christian idea of the Trinity, to less obvious ones like a political party's environmental platform, a Bollywood movie, or a video game.

What Can You Do with a Religious Studies Major?

As a religious studies graduate, you will have a great deal to offer to potential employers in a wide range of fields, especially those where cultural diversity plays an important role. For those of you interested in non-profits we also have a concentration in that field. As a liberal arts student, you will know how to communicate clearly in a variety of media, to use reason and logic to think critically and creatively, and to

conduct pertinent research, collect data, and interpret and present it in ways that help an organization be more effective and productive.

Beyond those basic but essential skills, your training in religious studies will prepare you especially well to work in culturally diverse social settings as an educator or community leader. Many of our majors, about one in five, continue their studies on the graduate level. Some recent graduates of our program have gone on to master's and doctoral programs in the academic study of religion.

Others have gone on to professional graduate schools (seminaries and divinity schools) in preparation for vocations as ministers, imams, rabbis or priests, or counseling. Many of our graduates go on to work in nonprofits. Still other graduates have gone on to professional careers in medicine or law. In fact, national research indicates that religious studies majors have a much higher than average rate of acceptance into medical school, law school and other graduate programs.

STUDENT REFLECTION

REFLECTING ON REL 101 INTRODUCTION TO RELIGION 2022



Photo Credit: Kristina Joyner

Student's Takeaway

From Kevin Lee, student in REL 101

“ The concept of religious studies as a whole was what I found most interesting. I had a very simplistic definition of religious studies. Initially, I thought that religious studies meant the study of religion, however, after learning more about the concept throughout the course I realized how little I actually knew about the study of religion. The real definition of religious studies from my interpretation is not about learning how to be more devoted to religious beliefs but rather teaching the concept of religion through the lens of history and how it has shaped us. I found this extremely interesting.

I never took the time to view religion through the lens of history, instead, I viewed the concept as teaching believers how to practice specific religious beliefs. This could be due to being me growing up with one religious belief that my parents taught me, I was not able to learn about more religions or how they practice their beliefs. However, I view this newfound knowledge as something very beneficial to me spiritually. I believe that this helped me understand not only the vast categories of religion but also how history played a major role in how we see religion today.

Learning the concept of religious studies very early on in the course made it a lot easier to understand the complex categories of religion and the study of religion. Overall, this was a very enjoyable class, and I hope to take more religious study courses later on in the future. ”



Photo Credit: Kristina Joyner

Recent Publishings

Alyssa Gabbay "Gender and Succession in Medieval and Early Modern Islam: Bilateral Descent and the Legacy of Fatima"

In *Gender and Succession in Medieval and Early Modern Islam: Bilateral Descent and the Legacy of Fatima*, Alyssa Gabbay examines episodes in pre-modern Islamic history in which individuals or societies recognized descent from both men and women. Fatima, daughter of the Prophet Muhammad, features prominently in this study, for her example constituted a striking precedent for acknowledging bilateral descent in both Sunni and Shi'i societies, with all of its ramifications for female inheritance, succession, and identity.

Covering a broad geographical and chronological swath, *Gender and Succession in Medieval and Early Modern Islam* presents alternative perspectives to patriarchal narratives, and breaks new ground in its focus upon how people conceived of family structures and bloodlines. In so doing, it builds upon a tradition of studies seeking to dispel monolithic understandings of Islam and Gender.



Photo Credit: Alyssa Gabbay



Photo Credit: REL Faculty

Eugene F. Rogers Jr. "Blood Theology: Seeing Red in Body- and God-Talk"

The unsettling language of blood has been invoked throughout the history of Christianity. But until now there has been no truly sustained treatment of how Christians use blood to think with. Eugene F. Rogers Jr. discusses in his much-anticipated new book the sheer, surprising strangeness of Christian blood-talk, exploring the many and varied ways in which it offers a language where Christians cooperate, sacrifice, grow and disagree. He asks too how it is that blood-talk dominates when other explanations would do, and how blood seeps into places where it seems hardly to belong.

Reaching beyond academic disputes, to consider how religious debates fuel civil ones, he shows that it is not only theologians or clergy who engage in blood-talk, but also lawmakers, judges, generals, doctors and voters at large. Religious arguments have significant societal consequences, Rogers contends; and for that reason, secular citizens must do their best to understand them.

Recent Publishings

Eugene F. Rogers Jr. "Elements of Christian Thought: A Basic Course in Christianese"

In the spring of 2020, as the coronavirus pandemic disrupted classrooms around the world, teachers scrambled to convert their lectures and presentations into a format more conducive to online and distance learning.

For Eugene Rogers, this meant transcribing as closely as possible the spoken lectures that have made his Introduction to Christian Thought course at UNC Greensboro, a course he has taught some forty times, justly famous. The result is this book: an insightful, winsome, and engaging introduction to the history of Christian thought by a teacher at the height of his craft.

For Rogers, the history of Christian thought is the story of a language—it's "Christianese," if you will—that participants use to frame their agreements and their disagreements alike. From Anselm to Wyschogrod, Rogers introduces us to the most interesting speakers of Christianese and their importance, enabling us to both listen in on and take part in the living conversation about God's activity in and for our world.



Photo Credit: REL Faculty

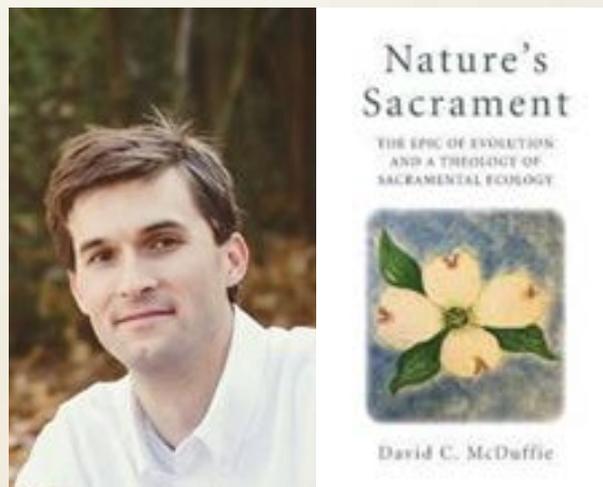


Photo Credit: David McDuffie

David McDuffie "Nature's Sacrament: The Epic Evolution and Theology of Sacramental Ecology"

In October 2021, David McDuffie's book, *Nature's Sacrament*, was published. The book explores the relationship between Christian sacramental tradition and the evolutionary history of life on Earth and how these areas can connect to support ecological conservation. He continued to teach and write on the relationship between religion and the natural sciences and the ways in which conversations between them contribute to ecological protection and public health. McDuffie looks forward to exploring these and many other wonderful topics in Religious Studies with students at UNCG.

Soon, he plans to teach a wide variety of courses, both online and face to face, on topics including World Religions, Christian Tradition, Religion in America, and Religion and Culture (with an emphasis on the relationship between religion and science and politics). McDuffie very much looks forward to continuing conversations with former students and meeting new students as we discuss the fascinating discipline of Religious Studies!

Department News

Dr. Gabby Translates Medieval Persian Poetry

Ever wonder what your professors do while they're on research leave? This academic year, Dr. Alyssa Gabbay has been working on a critical edition and a translation of a work by the medieval Persian poet Amir Khusraw. The *Dibacha-yi Divan-i Ghurrat al-Kamal – The Preface to the New Moon of Perfection* -- is a tantalizing mix of literary criticism, autobiography, and personal rant. It captures a relentlessly colorful time in Indian history through the eyes of a man who served at the courts of the era's most famous sultans, sang devotional ghazals at the feet of Sufi saints, and took part in numerous military campaigns.



Dr. Alyssa Gabbay with a Persian manuscript from Oxford University.
Photo Credit: Alyssa Gabbay

Laced with poetry as well as Qur'anic passages and hadith, the work argues (successfully, Dr. Gabbay believes!) that poetry serves an important function in Islamic civilization. To produce the critical edition and translation, Dr. Gabbay is working with reproductions of manuscripts from libraries in London, Oxford, and New Delhi. As much fun as she is having untangling Khusraw's difficult Persian and rendering his many puns into English, she is looking forward to returning to the classroom in Fall 2022.



Dr. Alyssa Gabbay with various manuscripts of the *Dibacha-yi Divan-i Ghurrat al-Kamal*.
Photo Credit: Alyssa Gabbay

Dr. Krueger's New Course: "The Afterlives of Adam and Eve in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam."



Dr. Derek Krueger. Photo Credit: REL Faculty

Dr. Derek Krueger has developed a new introductory course designed to lure majors to the Department. It's called "The Afterlives of Adam and Eve in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam." The telling and retelling of the story of the first humans illuminates the shared heritage of the Abrahamic religions, their differences with each other, and their diversity within. By focusing on traditions of commentary (whether by rabbis, church fathers, or Quran scholars), Krueger presents these religious traditions as long and varied conversations with sacred scriptures.

He finds that the story of Adam and Eve is perfect for considering how these world religions have dealt with the Big Questions about nature and the meaning of creation, human life, human diversity, gender, sexuality, suffering, misfortune, and the place of humans in the universe.



Adam and Eve in the Garden, from the Anthology of Iskandar Sultan, Iran, Shiraz 1411 CE (AH 813), Callouste Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon Portugal.

To Jewish Studies and Beyond

New Jewish Studies Minor Offered at UNC Greensboro

Religious Studies is pleased to announce the launch of a new Jewish Studies Undergraduate Minor at UNCG, beginning in the 2022-2023 academic year. A collaboration between the faculty of Religious Studies, History, and Communications, the minor offers students the opportunity to specialize in Judaism's culture, history, thought, and practice.



Holiday blessing (Kiddush for Yom Tov) from a Passover Haggadah. Detail from a folio showing the Yom Tov bracha (holiday blessing). Vellum manuscript.

Available courses cover the tradition from the ancient world through the modern period and include topics ranging from biblical literature to contemporary medical ethics. Optional remote Hebrew Language classes through UNC Chapel Hill round out the curriculum. Summer archaeological coursework in Israel is also an option, with funding available. Minor in Jewish Studies is great not just for academic knowledge-seekers, but for those planning careers that interface with the diverse American public, including education, counseling, social work, business, and medicine.

The new program's director will be Ellen Haskell, the Herman & Zelda Bernard Distinguished Professor of Jewish Studies. Opening the minor is the completion of several years spent working toward this goal.



Dr. Ellen Haskell, Jewish Studies.
Photo Credit: John Gibbs

What else has Professor Haskell been doing? This Fall, she published an article on mystical physiognomy in the *Journal of Religion* and contributed a chapter on reincarnation in medieval Judaism to a volume that will be the first scholarly group publication about Jewish reincarnation available to English speakers. She submitted pedagogical reflections to the University of Chicago Divinity School Craft of Teaching blog and currently is at work on a chapter for a festschrift in honor of her Divinity School dissertation advisor, Michael Fishbane.

That chapter, on the kabbalistic macrocosm and the interpretable human body, combined with the writings on reincarnation and mystical physiognomy, make her think it might be time to offer a new course in Jewish mysticism. Let her know if you're interested!

Faculty News

Introducing: John W. Borchert

John W. Borchert recently completed his Ph.D. at Syracuse University and is the latest faculty member to join REL, bringing a fleet of new courses. Two classes are worthy of note:

REL 207: Critical Thinking about Religion, Faith, and Spirituality asks: What does it mean to be a modern human being? And what does this have to do with religion? 207 addresses that question through the lens of religion and its perceived absence. From philosophical texts wondering at the essence of human being, case studies on practices like veiling and yoga, and glances at magic and science in fiction, this course explores the various ways ideas of human being form through a relationship between modernity and religion.

REL 104: Religion, Ritual, and the Arts looks at religion and death through rituals of death: what people do, how they perform, and how they create meaning around death and dying. Rather than focus primarily on the ideas and ideologies of death and the afterlife, this course instead looks to how these ideas and ideologies play out in practice and are made sensible through action in ritualized settings.

John looks forward to meeting new students and talking more about ritual, death, and media!



Dr. John Borchert. Photo Credit: John Borchert

Wabash Center 2022 Hybrid Teaching and Learning Workshop for the Faculty of African Diaspora.



Andrew Mbuvi, Ph.D. Lecturer, Religious Studies Department/ Affiliate, African and African Diaspora Studies (AADS). Photo Credit: Andrew Mbuvi

I am excited about my selection as a participant at the Wabash Center 2022 Hybrid Teaching and Learning Workshop for the Faculty of African Diaspora. I am grateful to the UNCG administration, especially the constant support of Greg Grieve my HOD, for supporting my grant applications and I look forward to learning from colleagues in different institutions and growing in my pedagogy and teaching, as we gather between March and December 2022.

I expect that what I learn will translate into my teaching and research, which in turn will directly greatly benefit my students. While I have already been doing Hybrid Teaching for some time, there is always room to learn new things and to improve the learning experience for my students and that is what I look forward to. Also, as a diaspora scholar, it will help me to connect with others who have a shared academic journey as mine.

Religious Studies Abroad

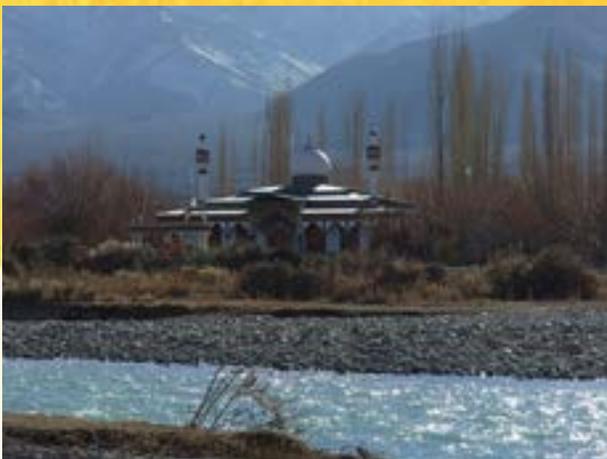
Snapshots with Dr. Rohit Singh

Have you ever wondered what Religious Studies research might look like abroad? Much of my academic career has involved conducting ethnographic fieldwork overseas in the Himalaya mountains. I specialize in the study of Buddhist and Muslim communities in the region of Ladakh in North India.



Dr. Singh in the Himalayas in traditional Ladakhi garb. Photo Credit: Rohit Singh

As an ethnographer, I observe and participate in the religious lives of other communities, interview a diversity of people, and use audiovisual tools to record religious traditions. I often incorporate these ethnographic materials into my courses.



Visiting a mosque near the banks of the Indus River. Photo Credit: Rohit Singh



Visiting the Buddhist Monastery of Thiksay. Photo Credit: Rohit Singh

One advice I would like to give Religious Studies majors is to study abroad at some juncture of your academic career. We even have some scholarship money from the department to help students who want to do so! In the future, I plan to take students with me to the Himalayas for a faculty led abroad trip. Hope to see you there! In the meantime, enjoy these snapshots of my work.



In the Himalayas locals often believe that mountain peaks serve as the abodes of the gods. Photo Credit: Rohit Singh



Enjoying a communal feast with local Muslims. Photo Credit: Rohit Singh

The Online Transformative Seminar “Videogames and the Problem of Evil”

An In-Depth Interview with Dr. Gregory Price Grieve



Professor Grieve at the head of the in-game Seminar table. Photo Credit: Greg Grieve

Tell us about your new seminar REL 245: Videogames and the Problem of Evil

“

All of my courses originate around a question. My question in this course is how, in this precarious, and uncertain educational landscape, with disruptive budget cuts, a pandemic, the seeming death of the humanities, and when many of us have been forced online to teach, do we educators create a virtuous, ethical, and transformative humanities seminar?

What do you mean transformative?

With very limited resources, I find myself attempting to change students' notions of learning, from being trained to being educated. To make a distinction, training improves one's capability, capacity, productivity, and performance. Education facilitates knowledge, morality, values, belief, and personal development. To train a student gives them a set of skills and useful competencies. To educate them gives them a voice and teaches them how to be leaders and take control of their own lives.

Obviously, to become a well-rounded human, students need to be both trained and educated. My problem is that often training is geared to the underserved, while, like a gated community, actual education is a closely guarded resource reserved for the elite.

Ultimately, I am interested in helping students find their voice. I take my notion of voice from the American author, professor, feminist, and social activist, bell hooks, who describes voice as coming from personal experience. As bell writes in, *Teaching to Transgress*, “Hearing each other's voices, individual thoughts, and sometimes associating these voices with personal experience makes us more acutely aware of each other.”

This does not mean that students can, or ought, to be spokespersons for their particular social group. As the scholar of religion, Charles Long, reminds us, often the composition of these groups are ones which have been signified by others, by those in power, on to subordinate groups.

Continued on page 11

Continued: The Online Transformative Seminar “Videogames and the Problem of Evil”

An In-Depth Interview with Dr. Gregory Price Grieve

How do you allow students to have a voice in the classroom?

“

You can think of teaching as having three modes. The first mode is a transmission approach where the teacher most often is talking in front of the class, and the students are listening quietly in rows. Or as we have come to know in our hours of Zoom instruction, a talking head on a screen lecturing at students, often with their cameras and microphones turned off. Don't get me wrong (Grieve said), in many situations the transmission mode is effective and necessary. And if students are engaged in a pedagogical call and response, can be quite effective.



Iron Gate Studio donated copies of their survival/adventure game Valheim to be played in the course. Photo Credit: Valheim Online Galley

The second approach is the generative model of teaching. In this model, the teacher and learners are in it together. Communication flows in several directions at once, and knowledge is an arena of discovery and emerges from this conversation.

I have never been good at getting the generative model to work online. Yet, I have colleagues in my department, such as Dr. Ellen Haskell, who have been quite successful at this. Her students rave about her online courses, and how she can facilitate a generative conversation online.



Valheim gameplay is filled with beautiful scenic environments. Photo Credit: Valheim's Online Gallery

What about the third teaching mode?

Now the generative mode differs from the transformative model, because the real world is still sealed off from the classroom. In the transformative mode students get out into the real world, and in a form of educational praxis, apply the knowledge created to engage in problem solving. In the transformative mode, communication flows freely from learner-to-learner, and the teacher becomes a partner not just in the learning process but in the application of the emergent knowledge to the real world.

How does a multiplayer videogame fit in to all of this?

My seminar meets three times a week on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. This coming week we will be discussing 'Ludic Evil,' which is how the concept of evil functions in videogaming. This past week, week two, was me, attempting to show them what the Humanities are good for today, and we investigated Clifford Geertz's concept of thick description, and Roland Barthes' notion of cultural mythologies.

I had them watch YouTubes on these topics, as well as read just a few pages of original material which we discussed in class. I had them use the online platform Perusal, which tracks the time each student engages with the material as well as allows them as a class to publicly mark and make comments about the texts.

Continued on page 12

Continued: The Online Transformative Seminar “Videogames and the Problem of Evil”

An In-Depth Interview with Dr. Gregory Price Grieve

“

Truthfully, the Monday and Wednesday sessions are at best generative, and often use a transmission mode of pedagogy as I fill in students' lack knowledge on the various subjects

Now on Fridays the course gets interesting, gets transformative. Transformative pedagogy should encourage students to critically examine their assumptions, grapple with social issues, and engage in social action. What do you do, however, if you are stuck at home, and online? I argue that for those of us who teach online, a way to effectively create a presence for a transformative pedagogy is to use multiplayer videogames to:

- **Create a safe environment**
- **Encourage students to think about their experiences, beliefs, and biases**
- **Use teaching strategies that promote student engagement and participation**
- **Pose real-world problems**
- **Help students implement problem-solving solutions**

Why video games? Why in the pandemic?

In our current society, videogames are generally seen at best as mere entertainment or at worst as a dangerous possibly addictive activity— to help players escape from reality, not to engage with it.

Let me lay out the nuts and bolts of what I am actually doing right now.

First, I divided the class into three research groups based on the Bartle Test, which categorizes players into style of play —socializers, explorers, achievers, and killers, and I also divided them further, using the team roles of leaders, researchers, ludographers, and gamers. Second, we all log into Discord, which is a gaming communication application which allows communication outside of a game.



Dr. Gregory Grieve sporting a Valheim T-Shirt.
Photo Credit: Greg Grieve

I have created a central Discord server for the course. Somewhere between zoom and canvas or blackboard, Discord allows for a permanent dedicated online location. Discord is important for the course because it is free, easy to use and runs on any computer. Not every student in the course feels comfortable gaming, and not everyone has a computer capable of running a multiplayer videogame. Discord allows everyone to participate, helping to record, investigate and analyze, if not actually playing the games.

How is it actually going?

About three fourths of the students play the game. We are using Valheim, a survival and sandbox video game created by the Swedish developer Iron Gate Studio. It was published by Coffee Stain Studios in February 2021. Valheim is an open-world survival game played from a third-person perspective. As fallen Vikings, players must craft tools, build shelters, and fight enemies to survive. I chose this game for four reasons.

Continued on page 13

Continued: The Online Transformative Seminar “Videogames and the Problem of Evil”

An In-Depth Interview with Dr. Gregory Price Grieve

“

First, I could create a server dedicated just to the course. Second, it is an open world sandbox game. Third, it can be played on almost any PC. It uses distinctive low-resolution stylized 3D graphics, with a combat system inspired by old fashioned WASD action games. And finally, and most importantly, it requires cooperative gameplay between students. Also, the game is inexpensive, it costs only 20 dollars. And even more, the publisher donated copies of the game for the course.

In the end, however, I don't really think the particular game is that important, and most likely any multiplayer sandbox game would work. Although I love Valheim, and highly suggest it as a game that is fun to play and fun to teach with. What is important is that students work together as a group to solve research problems. I try to stay out of their way, only checking in periodically.



A feast hall in Valheim.

Photo Credit: Valheim Online Gallery

Has your use of multiplayer videogames been skillful? Has it lived up to being educational, has it given students a voice?

To be honest, sometimes this course has been very time-consuming, and the assignments tend to be noisy and messier than I would like. And I am still left, to weakly echo Audre Lorde, with the question “can digital media be used to dismantle the damage that digital media is doing to the current pedagogical landscape?”



Professor Grieve's desk, ready to start the class.

Photo Credit: Greg Grieve

I think, if used skillfully, videogaming offers a new set of tools. What gives me hope, is that for the most part in my current seminar the students have been enthusiastic, the largest stumbling block being their questions about grading, and confusion over digital platforms. Yet, I hold onto another quote by Audre Lorde: “Even the smallest victory is never to be taken for granted. Each victory must be applauded.”

So was it worth it?

In the end, I would maintain that using Valheim has been a useful pedagogic experiment. It has helped with the transformative aspect of an online seminar. At its core, transformative pedagogy encourages us to do much more than just transmit information.

The transformative mode seeks to educate, to fundamentally and respectfully change students' attitudes and to facilitate their growth, regardless of whether the course is delivered through a traditional or online format. Instead of serving as an impediment to transformative pedagogy, my use of Valheim shows that digital media can act as a method for this transformative teaching and learning.

Online teaching offers many tools to facilitate communication, collaboration, and not just the exchange of information, but the creation of presence, and heightening of student voices. If used skillfully, if used mindfully, if used critically, videogaming can help students examine their assumptions, their own biases, seek out additional perspectives, grapple with social issues, and create change — and not just in a videogame, but in the real world.

R & R - Religious Rituals



"A home shrine of one of Dr. Andrews' respondents in Chicago, Illinois". Photo Credit: Ashlee Andrews



Dr. Ashlee Andrews
Photo Credit: Ashlee Andrews

Have you ever noticed how much time and energy can go into a religious ritual? Have you ever thought of a mother's prayers for her family as a part of her work as a mother? Have you ever noticed that women are paid to be religious authorities less often than men, but often do a lot of religious work to support their families and religious communities? Dr. Andrews has, and in her current book project she hopes to make visible and value the work that women, and particularly immigrant women, do for their families and religious communities when they pray and worship at home. In this book, entitled *Ma Prays For Us At Home: The Reproductive Labor of Hindu Women's Domestic Shrine Traditions*, Dr. Andrews explores the ethnographic interviews she began more than eight years ago with Bengali Hindu women living in Kolkata, India and Chicago, Illinois about the shrines they maintain at home, and the rituals of worship they perform at these shrines.

She argues that these women's traditions of creating, maintaining and worshipping at a home shrine are a form of reproductive labor through which they may care for their families and themselves, and sustain their ethnic and religious identities and traditions across generations and in new places. With this research, she hopes to highlight the significant role that women, and particularly women in immigrant and religious minority communities, play as adaptors and sustainers of religious traditions through the rituals they maintain at home. Thanks to the Junior Research Leave Dr. Andrews had last semester, she will complete this book later this year, and she looks forward to soon sharing it with her UNCG students and colleagues.



UNC
GREENSBORO

Department *of*
Religious Studies