



# GTU currents

*Where religion meets the world*

NEWS OF THE GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION

SPRING 2012

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ANNUAL  
REPORT**  
2010 - 2011



## M.A. in Interreligious Studies

*Engagement at  
the intersection  
of religion and  
cultures*



“

*As faculty, we can  
bring in the  
interreligious  
component to  
'regular' classes,  
such as ethics or art.*

”

**Marianne Farina, C.S.C.**  
Assistant Professor, Dominican  
School of Philosophy and  
Theology

The Graduate Theological Union is “where religion meets the world,” but for 50 years, it has also been a place where the world’s religions engage each other. The establishment of the Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies and the Center for Islamic Studies, and the partnership with the Institute of Buddhist Studies allows and encourages students to critically engage faith traditions inside and outside the classroom. Despite this culture of dialogue, there has not yet been an explicit field of study.

The M.A. in Interreligious Studies resulted from a faculty-led initiative inspired by the work that students were already doing. Thomas Cattoi, Assistant Professor of Christology and Cultures at the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University, said “In my six years at the GTU, I’ve served on a number of thesis committees with

interreligious topics, especially Christianity and Buddhism. Much of this research has been under the guise of theology, history, or spirituality.”

By formalizing this work into an official concentration, students can focus their coursework rather than cobbling components together from other areas. They will also be able to take more courses in interreligious dialogue, comparative religions or theologies, or simply in different traditions which they then synthesize on their own.

Marianne Farina, C.S.C., Assistant Professor at the Dominican School for Philosophy and Theology, adds, “The interreligious perspective is not exclusive to classes designed to be comparative or dialogical. As faculty, we can bring in the interreligious component to ‘regular’ classes, such as ethics or art.”

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GTU

currents

*Currents presents the news, people, and progress of the Graduate Theological Union. Published two times a year, Currents is distributed to alumni, faculty, students, staff, and friends of the GTU.*

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# Beyond Berkeley

## Religion and Cultural Exchange



Berkeley and the greater Bay Area are well-known for their diversity of cultures and religions. It's one of the reasons the Graduate Theological Union is the perfect place to study a faith tradition other than your own or different religions side-by-side.

Courtney Bruntz came to the GTU unsure of exactly what direction she would take. "At that point I was really interested in interreligious work, but thought at some point I would focus solely on Buddhism and the religions of Asia. GTU was a really good place to start that process because of all the different member schools and centers of distinction."

Bruntz's journey beyond her Lutheran upbringing in Nebraska began at the age of 19 when her sister got married. Her brother-in-law is a third generation Japanese American. She recalls that her brother-in-law's grandmother kept initiating conversations on the wedding being interreligious and intercultural. "I hadn't thought about the intersection of two cultures and faith traditions until then. That experience shaped my initial years at college."

In her junior year, she went to study abroad in China and Japan. "It was my first time in China. Growing up, I was told that religion wasn't

*"At GTU we intentionally cultivate lifestyles learning about other traditions. Then we move to other parts of the country where the work must continue."*

– Courtney Bruntz, Ph.D. Student

Photos left and right of Mount Putuo by Nov Heaven on Panoramio



really practiced there. But what I saw was much different.”

Connecting with lived religions in Asia led her to a job for a year after graduation teaching conversational English to freshman and sophomore English majors at Huazhong Normal University in Hubei province. She deferred beginning her Masters at the GTU for the opportunity.

“I had students from all across the country, including Tibet. Some were Muslim. Many were practicing Buddhists. Some weren’t religious at all. Others had converted to Christianity. It furthered my interest in studying religions of Asia.”

After completing her Masters in 2009, she stayed to pursue a Ph.D. in the Buddhist Studies track of Cultural and Historical Studies of Religion, because of the relationships she developed and the vast resources at the GTU and UC Berkeley.

Next spring, Bruntz will teach *Women in Chinese Islam* as a Ne-whall Fellow. Xinjiang province, which primarily borders Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Pakistan, and India, has a large population of Muslim Chinese. In the past few years, this area has been in the media because of ethnically and religiously charged riots. “Those stories need to be nuanced with other stories of Muslims in China,” she says. “In general, it’s a pertinent time to talk about Islam and China. Focusing on women makes it really interesting because there’s a lot of

activism by Muslim women there.”

Bruntz returned to Omaha following two years of coursework. She notes how much more culturally diverse it is than when she left. Interesting exchanges happen when people ask her about studies and she

The topic of her dissertation is religious tourism at Mount Putuo – a sacred Buddhist mountain in China’s Zhejiang Province. Her focus on diverse communities and how they affect people and places is a lived interest not just an academic one. “We think we’re so educated



Courtney Bruntz

talks about her Ph.D. in Buddhist Studies. “They reply, ‘There’s Asians in Nebraska.’ Now I’m seen as an expert on everything Asian. I serve as a bridge for people who have now have neighbors from different countries.” She also observes that people ease into crossing cultural boundaries through food. Bruntz will be accompanied by a local food writer while completing fieldwork in China in May.

and multicultural living in the Bay Area. But even among the diversity of the Bay Area there is still room for learning. At GTU we intentionally cultivate lifestyles learning about other traditions. Then we move to other parts of the country where the work must continue. We are agents of these conversations and experiences.”

Photo by Quentin Lueninghoener



A portrait of Daeseop Yi, a man with short dark hair and glasses, smiling. He is wearing a dark blue shirt. The background is a blurred stone wall with architectural details.

# Integrating Practices

## Christianity and Buddhism

Daeseop Yi

**D**aeseop Yi is a Ph.D. candidate who hails from South Korea. He came to study at San Francisco Theological Seminary in 2004 in the Doctor of Ministry program. During his program, he discerned a desire to study more deeply about how transformation within the spiritual process occurs. With this focus he entered the Ph.D. program.

“While I was doing coursework in the Christian Spirituality Area, we had to study a religion and a discipline in addition to Christianity.” He became fascinated with Buddhism, he focused on comparing Christian and Buddhist traditions. “I realized that I had been living, integrating, and adopting Buddhist and other Indigenous practices, but studying in an academic way made it really interesting for me.”

Yi was motivated to study the integration of Buddhist and Christian practices based on a profound experience that blended the two for him in his native Korea. “I experienced an 8-day retreat on the [Ignatian] *Spiritual Exercises* with a Jesuit. That experience of contemplation made for a profound transformation. The priest integrated it with Buddhism. Three hours a day of Buddhist meditation, four to five hours Ignatian contemplation. That contemplation made me go deeper. As a Protestant I didn’t know what si-

lence means or how to get there. Without saying anything, these Buddhist meditations made me go deeper with God and the Bible.”

“That experience nurtured me and expanded me. It doesn’t mean that Christianity is not enough, rather, that experience nurtures me to understand my own religion too.”

Yi has since been on the retreat for the *Spiritual Exercises* three times. Since coming to the GTU, he has studied the *Spiritual Exercises* academically and has been trying to structure them towards his own community, as well as his own academic endeavours.

Yi recently taught a course, via a Newhall Fellowship, that focused on Christian Buddhist Interreligious dialogue by looking at the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* and Theravada Buddhism. This course combined both traditions by alternating between Christian and Buddhist theologies (on the understanding of human beings, God, and ultimate goals) and also incorporating practices of both traditions. For Yi, the practices are where transformation occurs. “Understanding practice makes doctrine more understandable. Then, reading made me practice more deeply. It’s like a circle, they promote each other.”

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*“Through learning, struggling, and working, the GTU has learned how to live together and learn from each other.”*

— Daeseop Yi, Ph.D. Candidate



# Cross-Cultural Lens

Using multicultural theory to interpret Jesus

**K**ayko Driedger Hesslein's daily life is both multicultural and multireligious: she is Canadian of Japanese and German descent and Lutheran. Her husband is both American and Jewish. Her two children have inherited all of these identities. Both as a pastor and as someone diving more deeply into theology, she has been trying to develop a language that explained her and her family's multiplicitous identities on a theological level.

During her maternity leave in Toronto, she began investigating theology programs to study covenant entry between Jews and Christians, and how adherents can look at the similarities between both religions. While applying to the GTU; her son was baptised and had a bris. Driedger Hesslein, who had started with praxis, wanted to articulate how this worked on the level of theory and theology.

Since arriving at the GTU, Driedger Hesslein's project has shifted to examine the Jewish identity of Jesus, and the influence this identity has had on theologies of the Incarnation. To do this, she uses multicultural theory to explain how Jesus can be both divine and human, and particularly a Jewish human. The foundation of her argument is that Jesus' Jewish religious identity contributes something vital to his person. "If we continue to say that Jesus was so many things, but ignore that he comes out of Jewish influences, it is easy to set him up against his own community, but it is from his own community that he learned care of the sick and care of the other."

Driedger Hesslein explained that the GTU is ideal for her project in part because of its diverse multireligious resources, such as the Center for Jewish Studies, but also the multicultural and multireligious (and multid denominational) perspectives. "The GTU is really good at teaching doctoral students from a critical lens and seeing things from the position of the marginalized. It's really easy to fall into one way of thinking about an issue, and the GTU really challenges that and encourages us to think in new ways."

*continued on page 8*



Kayko Driedger Hesslein



Reacting to her recognition as the Graduate Theological Union's 2011 Alumna of the Year, Barbara Green, O.P., (M.A. '76, Ph.D. '80) said, "I wonder how I received this great honor. Some of my colleagues at GTU who are influential in such decisions were nice to put my name forward." Green has been teaching as Professor of Biblical Studies at the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology for twenty years.

"I tend to think of alums fundraising or giving large sums of money. I've done neither. However, we can keep our time, talent, and networks cycling through the school. It's an envelopeless way to pay back." Green has given generously to GTU through her contributions to scholarship and mentorship of Masters and doctoral students.

When her religious congregation in San Rafael chose her to pursue Biblical Studies, GTU was a natural place to study for its proximity to the community in addition to its relation to UC Berkeley. Green earned a Masters in Biblical Studies and her joint doctoral degree in Near Eastern Religions. "I wandered out through the back door of Near Eastern Religions and into courses in anthropology, comparative religion, religious studies, literature and comparative literature, because I didn't want to do any more languages besides the six required. I developed a humanities base for my Biblical studies," she explains.

Green tries not to let her students wander and flounder as much as she did. "Doctoral students now are not going to be able to fill the chairs and podiums of my generation easily. There will be radically fewer positions in the years to come. Our students will have to be competitive. They have to go into

the workshop with a vision of what they want to do and put it together rather than choose something off the shelf. Our job is providing successful frameworks to give it structure."

Despite studying literature and developing a taste for Bakhtin, it was



only after she graduated that she discovered a passion in writing. Green found herself immersed in collegial circles for writing and publishing during her first position at Dominican College in San Rafael.

Green describes writing as challenging and expansive, providing the opportunity to integrate huge numbers of thoughts. It's more creative than teaching, in her opinion, because so much instruction must be focused on the foundation students require.

Now it seems she can't stop. When not drafting works on Bakhtin or biblical scholarship (she's currently working on a coherent way of presenting the jumbled plot of Jeremiah), the witty Dominican sister is weaving tales of mystery. Her first venture into fiction was a tale set in Deuteronomy, "a new experience in old words," as she puts it.

Since then, she has published two mysteries following fictional GTU professor Brendan Byrne and completed a third manuscript. Her mysteries are drawn from familiar stories of scripture. "I want to remind readers that what happens in Biblical stories can happen in ordinary lives. They are deep stories, about human relationships and the way God works, (or the way we think God works)." Green also seeks to present intriguing fiction that isn't steeped in sex and violence.

*"I want [my students] to love learning. Realize that there is no reason to stop."*

She sees the values that she wants to instill in her students reflected in a recent book by Robert Bellah, *Religion in Human Evolution*. "I want them to love learning. Realize that it's their responsibility given all the resources at their disposal. And that there is no reason to stop."

## Interreligious Studies

*continued from page 1*

The term Interreligious Studies is a break from the commonly used terms like Comparative Theology or Comparative Religion. Dan Joslyn-Siemiatkoski, Associate Professor of Church History at Church Divinity School of the Pacific, who also served on the proposal's committee, noted the distinction, "The word theology is Christian specific. Colleagues from Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism didn't recognize themselves in the word theology. We also did not want a course of study in which Christianity was the primary reference point with another tradition. So, in choosing the term "interreligious" (acknowledging the problem with the very term "religion" as a Western category), we wanted to describe this area of study as inclusive ... not theological study per se, but rather critical reflections upon the intersection of religious traditions and cultures."

*Five students have been admitted to the new M.A. in Interreligious Studies for fall 2012.*

"The methodology of comparative religion is one legitimate approach in Interreligious Studies. Comparative religion often assumes the role of an outsider observing religious phenomena. In Interreligious Studies, a committed practitioner of one tradition can engage and study with other traditions while maintaining their religious subjectivity. Not to say that's what everyone will do, but it's another approach one could take," Joslyn-Siemiatkoski explains.

The potential for this area is promising as practitioners of the world's religions are in closer proximity than ever, particularly in the developed world. Joslyn-Siemiatkoski hopes that eventually Interreligious Studies will become a doctoral area. And Cattoi

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## Kayko Driedger Hesslein

*continued from page 4*

Courtesy of a Newhall Fellowship, Driedger Hesslein will soon be teaching a class titled *The Jewish Body of Jesus*, where she will be using theories of difference to examine the ways in which Jesus as a Jew, and his Jewish identity, has been obscured or erased. This is especially pertinent given Christianity's long history of supersessionism (covenants with God made through Christ replace covenants made through Moses to the Jews) and anti-Jewish rhetoric. She maintains that a refusal to grapple with these realities, concepts, and histories means that these traditions will persist. Instead, it is important for change to begin in the seminaries, to prevent the passing of destructive or incomplete theologies onto the parish level.

Illustrating her imperative, she says: "The more ways we can talk about Jesus, the more people feel like they can participate in the discussion."

*"The more ways we can talk about Jesus, the more people feel like they can participate in the discussion."*

— Kayko Driedger Hesslein, Ph.D. Candidate

## Daeseop Yi

*continued from page 4*

"An openness to other religions is the primary ethos of the GTU's environment." For Yi, the GTU's interreligious context is more than just academic, it's a way of living. The GTU has a space and an openness to study between the boundaries of religions, but also practices and openness to difference and different needs on a very practical level. "The GTU is more inclusive and embracing as an ESL student. They care about my English but they also care that we study in a comfortable way."

As a Korean and now also as an American and raising a family, Yi lives out the tension of being more than one identity at once, while holding onto both. "It's not possible to leave a totally Korean mindset. I'm living between religions and cultures. This makes me excited and worried that I might lose both of them. That makes for a struggle that influences me, my work and my life."

## Interreligious Studies

*continued from page 7*

thinks it might lead to theological immersion trips or exchanges with international theological schools. Farina hopes that it will draw more students of various faith traditions into the classroom where they can foment the interreligious experiences.

The proposing committee noted growth in this academic discipline in the past decade. Other institutions, including Boston College, Georgetown University, and Catholic Theological Union have begun offering concentrations in comparative theology, religious pluralism, and Interreligious Dialogue, respectively, in their graduate degrees.

The creation of an Interreligious Studies area at the GTU places the school among only a few theological institutions embracing this emerging field.

**To learn more about Interreligious Studies, visit the GTU website and look under Academics > Areas of Study.**



## GTU at 50 Years

September 2012 marks the 50th anniversary of the Graduate Theological Union. To commemorate this historic milestone, the GTU will hold a gala celebration in the Fall. And to set the stage for the next 50 years, we will be rolling out a series of programs designed to more fully engage the institution and its member schools in the most pressing global issues of the day, such as human rights, human development, the environment, war and peace transition, religion and natural sciences, and art, culture and technology.

Check back frequently on the GTU website for further details.

## Website Enhancements

Since January, the GTU has been upgrading to a new content management platform and enhancing the user interface for students, faculty, alumni and external audiences. The improvements will make finding needed information and resources cleaner, crisper and easier to find. In addition, the upgrades will allow for more media rich content to share GTU's work with a broader audience. The new website will go live in mid-May.

## NEW BOOKS

**... BY ERIN BRIGHAM, PH.D. '10**

*Sustaining the Hope for Unity: Ecumenical Dialogue in a Postmodern World*

Liturgical Press

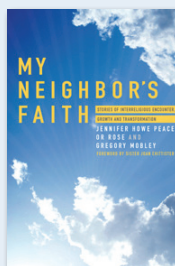
"[T]he book develops a framework for exchanging religious narratives in a postmodern context marked by pluralism and ambiguity." — publisher

**... BY PETER FELDMEIER, PH.D. '96**

*Encounters in Faith: Christianity in Interreligious Dialogue*

Anselm Academic

"Feldmeier explores Christianity and mysticism and investigates the role of spiritual masters ... He also examines Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism and considers the notion of the soul." — publisher



**... BY JENNIFER HOWE PEACE, PH.D. '05,**

Or Rose, and Gregory Mobley

*My Neighbor's Faith: Stories of Interreligious Encounter, Growth, and Transformation*

Orbis

Contributors include: Judith Berling (GTU), Ibrahim Farajajé (SKSM), Charles Gibbs (CDSP M.Div.), Rita Nakashima-Brock (SKSM), and Rebecca Parker (SKSM).

Discover more publications by faculty and alumni by visiting [www.gtu.edu/news-events/publications](http://www.gtu.edu/news-events/publications).



# GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION

*Where religion meets the world*

## ANNUAL REPORT 2010–2011

In a time when applications to theological schools are in decline, applications to the GTU remain strong. This year we received 141 doctoral applications and 100 Masters applications compared to 126 and 92, respectively, from the previous year. I see this as an indication of the compelling nature of GTU programs. Throughout our history we have developed a set of distinctive qualities that characterize our academic programs.

There are certain marks of distinction that make the GTU standout.

- 1) We are known for bridging differences. Our interreligious focus and ecumenical history have been exemplary and are at the forefront of theological education.
- 2) We offer programs that combine theory and practical reality. Our graduates are passionate doers as well as seasoned thinkers. The GTU is a place where religions engage the world.
- 3) Our academic programs build on communities of faith. Each member school brings a specific community of faith into the intellectual landscape of the GTU.
- 4) We are an institution that has a public face and is a community resource. We strive to engage our

theological ideas in conversation with the communities around us.

As the practice of religion changes, teaching religion also must change. A constantly shifting, increasingly pluralistic, interdependent, yet conflict-ridden world points to the need for understanding, dialogue, and collaboration. In the vanguard of religious and cultural collaborations since 1962, the GTU has been creating new methods and tools for teaching, studying, and practicing religion with attention to the globalization of religious experience. GTU prepares leaders who are creating new structures to serve our increasingly pluralistic and multi-religious landscape.

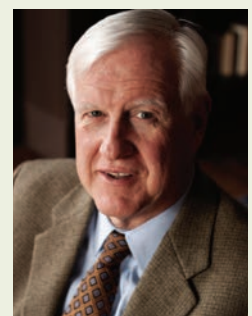
Thank you for your continued participation in the GTU community.

*James A. Donahue*

**JAMES A. DONAHUE, '84**

*President,*

*Graduate Theological Union*





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Following is a list of donors whose gifts and pledges were received between July 1, 2010 and June 30, 2011, including gifts supporting the President's Circle, the Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies, the Center for Islamic Studies, the Flora Lamson Hewlett Library, student scholarships, endowments, capital, and other special funds. We have made every effort to ensure that this list is accurate. If there is an error, please contact the Office of Institutional Advancement: 510-649-2531.

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*“My gift comes from a deep sense of gratitude for what I’ve received from the GTU over the years.”*

— Karen Lebacqz, donor, former professor of ethics at Pacific School of Religion





# 2010-2011 Financial Results

## FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Assets .....	\$ 44,772,918
Net Assets.....	\$ 43,000,334
Increase (decrease) in net assets.	\$ 2,804,119
Market value of	
endowment funds .....	\$ 28,072,943
Loans payable.....	\$ 919,358
Revenues .....	\$ 6,991,226
Gains net of draw	
on investment .....	\$ 3,521,830
Expenditures .....	\$ 7,708,937
Capital expenditures.....	\$ 555,736

## REVENUES

Net Tuition and fees .....	\$ 1,655,209
Government grants.....	\$ 60,616
Member school allocations .....	\$ 3,857,620
Contributions	
Unrestricted.....	\$ 255,297
Temporarily restricted.....	\$ 202,672
Permanently restricted.....	\$ 68,633
Investment income	
Unrestricted.....	\$ 37,097
Temporarily restricted.....	\$ 168,975
Permanently restricted.....	\$ —
Net gains on investments	
Unrestricted.....	\$ 847,368
Temporarily restricted.....	\$ 3,332,812
Permanently restricted.....	\$ 9,444
Auxiliary enterprises .....	\$ —
Gain on property sales.....	\$ —
Other sources .....	\$ 17,313
Total revenues .....	\$ 10,513,056

## EXPENDITURES

Programs	
Instruction .....	\$ 977,681
Research .....	\$ 100,989
Public service.....	\$ 11,221
Academic support.....	\$ 286,610
Library .....	\$ 3,044,663
Student services .....	\$ 838,838
Auxiliary enterprises .....	\$ 1,746
Support	
Development.....	\$ 429,667
Institutional support.....	\$ 2,017,667
Total expenditures .....	\$ 7,708,937

Operating revenue.....	\$ 6,922,593
Operating expenditures .....	\$ 7,708,937
Operating surplus (deficit).....	\$ (786,344)



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## Spring 2012 *Currents* Newsletter and GTU 2010-2011 Annual Report

# GTU calendar

### GTU Prospective Student Day

Prospective Master's degree students meet representatives from the GTU member schools and centers. Faculty and student panels.

**April 14, 9:30 am–1:30 pm**

Church Divinity School of the Pacific, Denniston Commons,  
2451 Ridge Road, Berkeley. Contact: [gtuadm@gtu.edu](mailto:gtuadm@gtu.edu).

### Sacred Snapshots

Sacred Snapshots is day-long celebration of the spiritual practices of many traditions where each hour participants can choose to attend experiential workshops featuring diverse spiritual practices, a range of academic lectures, or a worship experience.

**April 21, 9 am–6 pm.** Registration begins at 8:15 am. \$10.  
Pacific School of Religion, 1798 Scenic Avenue, Berkeley.

**All events are open to the public and free, unless noted.  
Visit [www.gtu.edu](http://www.gtu.edu) for more information.**

### Scripture, Tradition, and the Problem of Incommensurability in Rabbinic and Early Christian Sources

**AZZAN YADIN**, *GTU/UC Berkeley Ph.D. '99, Associate  
Professor of Jewish Studies, Rutgers*

**April 24, 5 pm**

Dinner Board Room, Flora Lamson Hewlett Library, Graduate  
Theological Union, 2400 Ridge Road, Berkeley. Sponsored by the  
Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies.

### Tolson Fellow Lecture

*Salvation History and the Role of Jesus in Christian and  
Muslim Eschatology*

**MAHMOUD AYOUB**, *2011-12 Tolson Fellow, Pacific School of  
Religion; Visiting Professor of Islamic Studies and Comparative  
Religions, Temple University*

**May 3, 6:30 pm**

Badè Museum, Pacific School of Religion, 1798 Scenic Avenue,  
Berkeley. Sponsored by the Pacific School of Religion and the  
Center for Islamic Studies.