

GTU Hosts Consultation on Interreligious Education



Participants at the consultation on “Current and Future Directions in Theological Education,” January 15, 2019. Front Row (l-r); Munir Jiwa, GTU; Boyung Lee, Illiff School of Theology (previously at PSR); Deborah Flemester Mullin, Columbia Theological Seminary; David Mellott, Lancaster Theological Seminary. Back Row (l-r); Ken Walden, Gammon Theological Seminary; Christian Scharen (GTU alum), Auburn Seminary; Uriah Kim, GTU; Heida Hadsell, Hartford Seminary; Stephen Graham, Association of Theological Schools; Rachel Mikva, Chicago Theological Seminary; Teresa Delgado, Iona College; Michael Gilligan, Henry Luce Foundation. (Not shown: Judith Berling, GTU)

On January 14-16, 2019, the Graduate Theological Union hosted a regional consultation on the theme of interreligious theological education as part of a larger study of “Current and Future Directions in Theological Education.” The three-year project, designed to cultivate sustained reflection and conversation on theological education at the field level, is funded by the Henry Luce Foundation, and overseen by Lancaster Theological Seminary. Given its leadership in interreligious theological education, the GTU was an outstanding choice to host this particular event.

Three GTU faculty members were among the presenters at the consultation. Dean Uriah Kim’s presentation

on interreligious theological education and institutional change articulated some of the challenges the GTU has faced in developing and implementing its current PhD

curriculum, which was reorganized in 2016 to maximize interreligious engagement. Dean Kim noted that the GTU’s work in building an interreligious educational community and curriculum is truly unprecedented, making the GTU a trailblazer in its initiative to move into previously uncharted pedagogical territory.

Dr. Judith Berling shared findings that emerged out of her own Luce-funded project, “The Current State of Interreligious Learning in Higher Education.” Looking at

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—Dr. Judith Berling

the GTU through the lens of the Luce project brought up questions for Dr. Berling, such as, “How do we understand, approach, and explain ‘interreligious’ in a context in which the boundaries between ‘religions’ are increasingly fluid?” It also illuminated the need to cultivate “a new generation of faculty with the interreligious training” to teach courses like “Sacred Texts” that exist at the cross-section of many religious traditions. Dr. Berling noted that, “The most successful programs to date are those that have made a commitment, from the leadership down through the faculty, recognizing that success will require some level of institutional transformation. That is indeed a big challenge, but it is also an opportunity to position the school as a leader in this emerging field.”

Dr. Munir Jiwa, founding director of the GTU’s Center for

Islamic Studies, presented in a session focused on interreligious education and public engagement. Dr. Jiwa highlighted the ongoing partnership between the Center for Islamic Studies and the Islamophobia Research and Documentation Project at UC Berkeley, as well as the GTU’s Madrasa-Midrasa Project, a collaborative public education effort between the Center for Islamic Studies and the GTU’s Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies.

Reflecting on the consultation, Dean Kim restated his belief that the GTU provided the ideal location for such an event, as the GTU’s diverse community engages with one another daily both inside and outside of the classroom “to apply wisdom and knowledge from diverse religious traditions” in order to “make a positive impact on the world, to tend to the spiritual needs of their communities, and to pursue truth.” ♦



GTU

Center for the Arts & Religion
Doug Adams Gallery

News



In February, CARE Director **Dr. Elizabeth S. Peña** and GTU faculty member **Dr. Kathryn Barush** (pictured) presented papers at the **College Art Association’s 107th annual conference** in New York City. This conference featured more than 300 sessions on a wide range of art-related topics. As part of the session on Religious Object and Modern/Contemporary Audiences, Dr. Peña discussed the display of Hindu and Buddhist sacred objects in museum contexts, and Dr. Barush (who was session co-chair) spoke on the ways in which religious relics and souvenirs have been incorporated into contemporary art.



CARE Assistant Curator **Lydia Webster** is teaching “Gallery 101” this semester, where she is instructing students on best practices in coordinating and implementing art gallery exhibitions. At the culmination of this class, students will co-curate **CARE’s second annual Bay Area MFA Show** (“Community, Identity, Ritual”) featuring the works of newly graduated Master of Fine Arts students from five Bay Area institutions—UC Berkeley, San Francisco Institute of the Arts, California College of the Arts, San Francisco State University, and Mills College. Students in Lydia’s class are learning the principles of exhibition design, outreach, and visitor experience.



In early March, CARE inaugurated **an exciting new partnership with Cal Performances** with a 3-day program surrounding *XENOS*, a dance performance by Akram Khan. A cohort of CARE members, GTU students and faculty, and others participated in four events designed to advance artistic literacy. Programming included a workshop on “The Exploration of Spirituality and Storytelling in Dance,” a public forum preceding the performance of *XENOS* at UC Berkeley’s Zellerbach Hall, and a gathering in the Doug Adams Gallery the following day to celebrate and reflect on the experiences. CARE looks forward to exploring more music, theater, and dance with Cal Performances!

Read more at www.gtu.edu/care