SHOULD SCHOLARS OF RELIGION TAKE A STAND?
ARTHUR HOLDER ACAD EMIC DEAN

The current President of the American Academy of Religion is Laurie Zoloth, who received her Ph.D. from the GTU in 1993 and was our Alum of the Year in 2005. A bioethicist who teaches at Northwestern University, Dr. Zoloth has selected a theme for the upcoming AAR meeting in San Diego: Climate Change and the Coming Global Crisis. In announcing this focus for the annual meeting, she wrote:

“As many of you know and teach, religion’s texts, traditions, narratives, laws, rituals, and community practices are a rich source for response to the crisis, and provide a long history of thought about the relationship between humans and the living environment, and of the way that the poor, most especially, need to be considered in our response. It is our scholarly duty, I would argue, that we bring forward a scholarship from a wide set of traditions that may suggest a meaningful set of actions in response to an unprecedented and shared crisis.” (http://rel.as.ua.edu/blog/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/A Message-to-Program-Unit-Chairs-from-President-Elect-Laurie-Zoloth.pdf)

Zoloth’s call for scholars of religion to get involved in developing a response to climate change has not gone unchallenged. Professor Russell McCutcheon of the University of Alabama has written that although he is no denier of climate change, he doesn’t think that a response to it lies within the scope of his professional expertise:

“For only if we presume that (A) the object studied by scholars of religion is somehow necessarily beneficial and that (B) those who study it therefore have some special duty to spread the good news of their findings to the benefit of humankind, would a convention of scholars of religion (whether humanists, social scientists, or theologians of whatever stripe) be called upon to apply their research to help solve the climate change crisis.” (https://www.equinoxpub.com/blog/2013/02/critical-thinking-begins-at-home)

I have had to reflect on Professor McCutcheon’s argument. Do I really believe that (A) religious traditions are necessarily beneficial, and (B) those who study them have a duty to spread the good news of those religions for the benefit of humankind?

I certainly don’t believe that every teaching or practice of every religion is a good thing, and as a scholar I don’t believe that my job is to proselytize on behalf of religion in general, or any religion in particular. But I do believe that religion (in the sense of Paul Tillich’s “ultimate concern”) is constitutive of human life. I believe that people need to think critically and act intentionally from within their religious traditions. And I believe that as a scholar I need to help people do their thinking and acting, and do it well. So yes, I do believe that scholars of religion ought to take a stand. That is why I’m looking forward to the annual meeting of the AAR (and SBL too) in San Diego.

ANNUAL GTU RECEPTION AT AAR/SBL

All GTU students, faculty, and alumni attending this year’s annual meetings of the American Academy of Religion and Society of Biblical Literature in San Diego are invited to attend the GTU Reception, where we will celebrate and honor our 2014 Alumna of the Year, Dr. Suzanne Holland (PhD, ’97). The reception will be held on Saturday, November 22, from 8:00 to 11:00 pm in the Harbor Terrace at the Grand Hyatt, 1 Market Place, San Diego, CA 92101.

Members of the GTU community planning to attend the reception are encouraged to RSVP by Friday, November 14, to alumni@gtu.edu, 510-649-2431.

The GTU welcomes prospective students to join us for this evening of good food and company. If you are a prospective student, please contact us so we can connect you with faculty, students, and graduates with whom you might explore your interests. You may confirm your attendance with us at gtuadm@gtu.edu, or call 800-826-4488.

GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION

THE DEAN’S NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 19, ISSUE 3 NOVEMBER 2014

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TRAVEL GRANT RECIP, CIS NEWS & EVENTS, SFTS WORKSHOP

HONORABLE MENTION
November PDP Events

November 5th: Interview Panel
GTU Student Lounge, 1pm
GTU faculty who have recently graduated from doctoral programs will speak about their experiences interviewing for academic and administrative positions.
Panel participants: Yi-Jen Lin, Katia Miles, Sharon Fennima, and Kathryn Barush. If you plan on applying for academic and administrative jobs you are strongly encouraged to attend this panel.

November 12th: Active Voice Workshop
GTU student lounge, 10-12pm
If you have been told that your writing is not clear, that you should use “active voice,” that your reader doesn’t understand your point, if you are concerned that your writing is dry, boring, confusing, too simple, too complicated, or not academic enough then the active voice workshop is for you.

Art as Activism: Human Rights & Sexual Violence
Thursday November 20
5-7pm
Doug Adams Gallery, CARE
Join us for a thought-provoking panel discussion about human rights, inspired by the exhibition “Queer Santas: Holy Violence,” featuring works by Alma López.
Guests:
Kim Thuy Seelinger is the Director of the Sexual Violence Program at the Human Rights Center, UC Berkeley School of Law. With broad field experience, she focuses on refugee law, persecution based on sexual orientation, and health and gender-based violence.
Beverly Allen, Professor Emerita at Syracuse University and CARE instructor, is the author of Rape Warfare: The Hidden Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as several award-winning screenplays on the subject.

Center for Theology & the Natural Sciences: Upcoming Events
Thursday November 6, 5:00-6:30PM
PLTS and CTNS are having a book launch
Ted Peters’ *UFOs: God’s Chariots? Spirituality, Ancient Aliens, And Religious Yearnings in the Age of Extraterrestrials*
PLTS Chapel Classroom 2770
Marin Avenue Berkeley, CA 94708
http://www.plts.edu/peters-book.html

Thursday November 13, 7PM
The Swedenborgian House of Studies and The Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences public lecture
David Dunér, History of Science and Ideas and the Centre for Cognitive Semiotics, Lund University, Sweden
The History and Philosophy of Astrobiology
PSR Chapel
1798 Scenic Drive, Berkeley CA

Sunday November 23, 7PM-10PM
Coronado Ballroom A, Grand Hyatt San Diego
Science and Religion Hospitality Event – AAR/SBL Annual Meeting
This is a joint event of the Institute for Religion in an Age of Science (IRAS), Zygon Center for Religion and Science (ZCRS), Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences (CTNS), & Institute for the Bio-Cultural Study of Religion (IBCSR)
NUFA GUKURU - MY SPIRIT DANCES

November 5, 2014
6pm - 7:30pm
Flora Lamson
Hewlett Library
Graduate Theological Union
2400 Ridge Road
Berkeley, CA

Free and Open to the Public

In celebration of "Formless Form: the Art of Sho, the Majikina Honryu Ryubu Dojo Aigen no Kai presents "Nufa gukuru" (能羽ここる) "My Spirit Dances." The Majikina Honryu troupe will perform a selection of dances and songs taken from kumi wudui, a form of traditional theater that dramatizes Ryūkyūan legends and folklore. The troupe continues the work of Majikina Yūkō (1889-1982), who, after the four-month Battle of Okinawa, together with his troupe, performed in villages throughout the island to uplift and fortify the spirits of a traumatized populace. In 1972 the Japanese Government recognized kumi wudui to be an Important Intangible Cultural Treasure; and in 2010 it was inscribed on the UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

WE REMEMBER YOU: 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UCA MARTYRS

Six Jesuits and their companions were executed during the Salvadoran Civil War on November 16, 1989, at the campus of Universidad Centroamerica (UCA) in San Salvador, El Salvador. Come and remember the lives of those lost, be inspired by their courage, and pray for the healing of our world.

November 1 - 17 | Pray the Stations
Pray the stations of the martyrs, available in JST during the first two weeks of November.

Tuesday, Nov. 11 | Reflect & Learn More
Attend a special liturgy, followed by a pupusa supper and a brief speaker/video (and sharing) that connects the lives of the martyrs to our own.
- 5:15 pm: Liturgy in JST Chapel followed by pupusa supper
- 6:30 pm: Brief speaker/video and sharing

Wednesday, Nov. 12 | Hear the Eyewitness
Make a pilgrimage to Santa Clara University (SCU) to hear eyewitness Lucia Cerna give her account of November 16, 1989. Sign up at the JST front desk by Friday, November 7.
- 2:30 pm: Meet at JST. Transportation provided.
- 4:00 - 5:15 pm: Event at SCU. Reception following.

INTROSPECTION AND RELIGIOUS IDEAS IN THEOPHANIS'S "LADDER OF DIVINE GRACES"

Tuesday, November 11, 2014, 7:30 pm,
Board Room,
Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute
2311 Hearst Avenue
Berkeley, CA 94709

What is the relationship between introspection, prayer and religious thought? We will discuss the living modes of introspection in the Hesychastic Prayer of the Heart and their connection with the ancient metaphor of the Ladder (or in some cases, staircase) associated with the spiritual progression of the soul. From the example of the poem in the Philokalia by the 7th century Theophanis the Monk, I will demonstrate how ideas from Gnostic sects, the neo-Pythagorean legacy and possibly Mithraic influences are interlaced with exclusively Christian introspective prayer, and how historical-textual analysis combined with phenomenological analytic methods further the hermeneutic retrieval of strata of idea-formation in religious history.

Among Prof. Louchakova-Schwartz’s research interests are cognitive phenomenology of religious thought and the neurological correlates of introspective prayer, including previously unreported structure of introspective self-experience underlying the concept of the “ladder of spiritual ascent” in Christianity, as well as homologous concepts in other traditions.

Olga Louchakova-Schwartz
Professor of Psychology and Comparative Religion and Director of Research at Sofia University, and Visiting Scholar at the Graduate Theological Union.
A NOTE FROM THE REGISTRAR’S OFFICE

Intersession and Spring 2015 Early Registration will be available via WebAdvisor from Monday, November 10th through Friday, November 21st 2014.

The procedures are the same as during General Registration with the following exception: during the first week of Early Registration, students planning to enroll in restricted courses should contact the relevant faculty for PIN codes. Faculty should notify you of the PIN code no later than Tuesday, November 18th. After November 21st, WebAdvisor registration will be closed until Spring 2015 General Registration.

If you are planning to cross-register for a course at Holy Names, Mills, or UC Berkeley, or are taking a Special Reading Course, remember to enter the generic course number and the appropriate number of units in WebAdvisor, as well as submit the appropriate form for the course. The generic course number for all cross-registration classes is UCB 9000 01, and for a Special Reading Course is SRC 9999 01. If your Special Reading Course is an upgrade, please register for SRC 8888 01.

Cross-registration forms are due in the Registrar’s Office at the end of the first week of classes. Remember that UCB classes begin on January 20th.

SRC forms are due at the end of the second week of classes.

When submitting an SRC form for an upgrade, please note the class being upgraded on the form!

Your Health Insurance selection remains the same as in the Fall, and you won’t need to enter it again, unless you wish to change your selection.

CENTER FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES: NEWS & EVENTS

The Center for Islamic Studies will be co-sponsoring the Islamic Cultural Center of Northern California’s (ICCNC) Art & Culture and Islam & Authors programs this Fall. The following are events for the month of November:

- Nov. 8-22, 5-7PM: “Freedom & Enlightenment” Art Exhibition. A group exhibition featuring outstanding works of Iranian-American and Iranian artists. Exhibition runs from Nov. 8 – 22 on Saturdays and Mondays at 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. Fee: Free
- Nov. 22, 4-6:30PM: Traditional Persian Painting Workshop by Maryam Vesal. Hands-on introduction workshop to arabesque and floral designs and Tazheeb (illumination) techniques. Fee: $45 regular/ $35 students; Space is limited, register before Nov. 20 at www.ziyaart.com.
- Nov. 14, 8PM: Muslim Writers Collective’s Open Mic Events. A monthly Open Mic event (on 2nd Fridays) to share writings, stories, and spoken word. For more information, sign up to participate, and check each month’s theme please email mwc.bayarca.ca@gmail.com. Fee: Free
- Nov. 9-14, 1-5PM: National Shibori Symposium in Hangzhou, China. CIS Visiting Scholar Carol Bier of the University of Delaware will be giving a paper (to be published in the conference proceedings) titled “Inscribed Cotton Ikat from Yemen in the Tenth Century CE” at the International Shibori Symposium in Hangzhou, China, Nov. 9-14. More information about the Symposium is available at http://9iss.wordpress.com/about-2/.
- Nov. 16, 1-5PM: “Ramadan Tasweeq Workshop” held at Zaytuna College. In the Tenth Century CE, the art of Tazheeb (illumination) was transformed into how an English-language Islamic intellectual project can be crafted today.
- Nov. 16, 1-5PM: “Education of the Heart: The Educational Themes of the Early Followers of Islam” held at Zaytuna College.
- Nov. 16, 1-5PM: “Women and Islam: The Transformation of the Early Followers of Islam” held at Zaytuna College.
- Nov. 16, 1-5PM: “The Islamic Intellectual Project in the Early Followers of Islam” held at Zaytuna College.
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When submitting an SRC form for an upgrade, please note the class being upgraded on the form!

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PACIFIC COAST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY MEETING NOVEMBER 7-8

"Then and Now: 75 Years of Pushing Theological Boundaries"

You are cordially invited to attend the Fall Meeting of the Pacific Coast Theological Society (PCTS) on Friday, November 7 from 1:30-8:30 p.m. and Saturday, November 8 from 9 a.m.–noon in the Tucson Room at Church Divinity School of the Pacific.

As PCTS celebrates 75 years as a society the theme is "Then and Now: 75 Years of Pushing Theological Boundaries" with papers relating to the first PCTS Meeting held in October 1939. The Friday afternoon session begins with a paper by Ted Peters (PLTS) entitled "What is essential in the Christian religion? Is Protestantism a positive principle?" with a response by Jack Crossley (USC). This is followed by the paper, "Christianity in History, Then and Now?" by Andrew Porter (GTU) and respondent Doug McGaughey (Willamette). Saturday morning, the paper entitled, "If That Was Then, What is Now? James Muelenburg. Ourselves and Religious Discourse" by Barbara Green (DSPT) is discussed—Gina Hens-Piazza (JST) will respond. Lastly, Herman Waetjen (SFTS Emeritus) closes the Meeting with his paper, "A Look at 'The Jesus of History and the Church' by Randolph Crump Miller" with respondent Jack Crossley (USC). As is the custom of the Society, reading links are posted on the PCTS website (www.pcts.org/meetings/2014/Fall.html) and texts should be read ahead of time.

Free Public Lecture Friday Evening: Richard Payne, Dean and Yehan Numata Professor of Japanese Buddhist Studies (Institute of Buddhist Studies) will bring insight into the challenges of pluralism, particularly as encountered by Christian theologians in response to Buddhist thought. According to Payne, the tendency of Christian theologians to use their own familiar categories is a fundamentally Procrustean interpretive strategy [that] impedes the apprehension of pluralism." Please join us Friday evening, November 7 at 7 p.m. in the Tucson Room at CDSP, when Dean Payne shares an alternative diacritical in his public lecture entitled “Crossing Streams in the Dark: Orthogonal Wanderings.”

Registration fees are located on the PCTS website (www.pcts.org/register.html) and may also be paid at the Meeting.

PCTS is a professional society dedicated to the exchange of views on topics germane to the theological endeavor. Membership is open to scholars and students interested in the theological endeavor broadly defined. Dues are $45 per academic year and $22.50 for students. Go to www.pcts.org for further information.

DISTINGUISHED FACULTY LECTURE: NOVEMBER 6, 2014, 7PM

Dr. Christopher Ocker, Professor of Church History at San Francisco Theological Seminary (SFTS) will deliver the 2014 Distinguished Faculty Lecture on Thursday, November 6, 2014, 7:00pm at the PSR Chapel. The Distinguished Faculty Lecture is entitled "Reformations that Matter, and why?" Does the Reformation matter? Protestant traditionalists, evangelical activists, Catholic conciliarists, and European and American secularists have all claimed ownership. Pundits say: Islam needs one, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews have had their own, and Christianity is cycling into another Reformation right now. Historians, meanwhile, have broadened, qualified, and relativized the historical concept of the Reformation into a fine powder. So, what must an historian of religion or a theologian tell us about a half-millennium ago that helps us understand the riddle of right now? What are the Reformations that matter, and why? The response will be given by Dr. Augustine Thompson, Professor of History at the Dominican School of Philosophy & Theology (DSPT). Immediately following the lecture, there will be a reception in the Doug Adams Gallery across the courtyard from the PSR Chapel.

GTU GRADUATE FAIR, SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 9

All are welcome to attend the GTU Graduate Fair on Sunday, November 9, 2014, from 2:00-4:30pm in the Dinner Board Room at the Flora Lamson Hewett Library, 2400 Ridge Road, Berkeley, CA 94709. Invite friends, family, and coworkers to explore the opportunities for master’s level study at the GTU and our member schools.

Plan to stay for the whole event! There will be faculty and student panels, refreshments, and time for conversation with admissions representatives from the various schools within the GTU consortium. Please feel free to contact our admissions staff at gtuadm@gtu.edu or 510-649-2460 with any questions and to RSVP.
GTU LIBRARY HOURS FOR THANKSGIVING
Wed. Nov. 26 - close 2pm
Thurs. & Fri. Nov. 27 and 28th closed
Sat. & Sun. Nov. 29 & 30 normal weekend hours

NEWHALL APPLICATIONS DUE FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2014

The 2015-2016 Newhall Awards (competitive awards for GTU doctoral students engaged in collaborative teaching or research with GTU Faculty mentors) proposals are due in the GTU Dean’s Office by 5pm, Friday, November 14. Complete proposals include the Newhall Award Application form available on the GTU webpage and must come from the student, and the professor and student for a project involving both. The form contains all guidelines and criteria the Dean and Core Doctoral Faculty Awards Committee use to select award recipients. If you have questions, please contact the GTU Dean’s Office (amunoz@gtu.edu or 649-2440).

CHAN PRIZE RECIPIENT

Congratulations to second year Ph.D. student in the Systematic and Philosophical Theology area, Henry Kuo whose paper entitled, “Virtue, Law, and the Ethics of Economic Rescue Litigation: Distributive Justice, Civil Law, and the Troubled Asset Relief Program” was selected for the 2014 Chan Prize. Since 1989, the Chan competition’s purpose is to reward the thoughtful, creative work of students who are seeking authentically to bring together theological (including ethical, Biblical, constructive) reflection on the year’s topic (which alternates). The topic for 2014 was Religion and Economics. (Next year the topic will be Identity and Practice Across Boundaries: exploring a particular concept, theme, or practice in two or more religions, e.g. Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, etc.).

PSR: CENTER FOR SPIRITUAL AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

November 12, 2014
Johana Rocha: “People, Profits and the Planet: Prospects in the Face of Corporate Supremacy”
Pacific School of Religion, Badè Museum, 1798 Scenic Avenue in Berkeley
Reception 6:15
Lecture 7:00pm

December 11, 2014
Andrea Smith: “Decolonizing Spirituality”
Pacific School of Religion, Badè Museum, 1798 Scenic Avenue in Berkeley
Reception 6:00 pm, Lecture 7:00pm

Sponsored by the Center for Spiritual and Social Transformation, FOR Peace Presence Tierra Digna, PSR Contextual Learning

Johana Rocha will be traveling throughout the Northeast and Bay Area between October 24th and November 16th to talk to audiences about environmental extractivism and human rights. http://transformationpsr.wordpress.com/welcome/events/november-12-2014-johana-rocha/

Andrea Smith is Assistant Professor of Media and Cultural Studies at UC Riverside. She is the award-winning author and/or editor of several books, including Native Americans and the Christian Right: The Gendered Politics of Unlikely Alliances; Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide; The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Nonprofit Industrial Complex; and Color of Violence: The INCITE! Anthology.

Sponsored by the Center for Spiritual and Social Transformation and the PSR Change-maker Fellowship
The following GTU doctoral students will be presenting at the 2014 AAR/SBL Conferences in San Diego, CA, and other comparable national conferences (listed in that order). Each has received a Student Travel Grant Award from the GTU Dean’s Office.

Wendy Arce “Curanderas, Hechiceras, and Paranormal Activities: A comparison of the Cultural and religious Portrayals of Latina/os in Bless me Ultima and Paranormal Activity: The Marked Ones” and “Fierceness and Four-inch Heels: Exploring the Experiences of Young, Women of Color Professors in the Undergraduate College Classroom”;

Peter Doebler "Seeing the Things You Cannot See: (Dis)-solving the Sublime in Interreligious Aesthetics through the Paintings of Hiroshi Senju";

Sean Gross "Let Your Conscience Be Your Guide: A Catholic Approach to Practical Theology Methodology";

Leigh Ann Hildebrand “High Shine, Heart and Soul/Sole Care: Bootblacking, Families of Choice, and Women’s Leather Community” and “Born this Way? Keshet, AhavaRaba, Gefilte Fetish and Jewish Conversion”;

Eunjoo Kim “A Reinterpretation of North Korean Refugee Women’s Spaces in a Perspective of Postcolonial Feminist Theory”; "Fakaeve: An Island reading of 1 Kings 17:7-24”;

Henry Kuo “An Asian American Theological Awakening: Mondialization and the Church”;

Michelle Mueller “Embracing the Ordeal Path: Sacred BDSM among Contemporary Pagans”;

Sheri Prud’homme “Naturalizing Whiteness: Thomas Starr King’s Theology of Nature and the Project of Nation Building”;

Iknia Fakasiieiki “Fakaeve: An Island reading of 1 Kings 17:7-24”; “Ora et labora: Orientation and Apprenticeship in the Writings of Edith Stein and Simone Weil”;

Mary Wong Cheng “This is Your Brain on Wesley’s Music”;

Elizabeth Ingelton “(Un)making Violence Against Racialized Women through Critical Religious Pedagogies: Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Feminist Perspectives”;

Reem Javed “(Un)making Violence Against Racialized Women through Critical Religious Pedagogies: Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Feminist Perspectives”;

Amanda Kaminski "Scandalous Prayer: Lament as Protest in an Intertextual Reading of Lamentations 1-2 and Pray the Devil Back to Hell”;

Katia Moles “Enfolding Spirituality into the Our Whole Lives Sexuality Education Curriculum”;

Mauricio Najarro “Ora et labora: Orientation and Apprenticeship in the Writings of Edith Stein and Simone Weil”;

Khalia Jelks Williams “Finding Grace: A Womanist Understanding of Liturgy, Spirituality and the Body”;

How Palestinians Read the Bible with Niveen Sarras

Monday November 17 12:30PM Hedco Room 2465 LeConte Berkeley, CA

Center for Jewish Studies: News & Events

All GTU Students and Faculty Welcome
Lunch will be served

Hasidism Reconsidered

November 13th, 2014 at the GTU Library Board Room

From its inception, the phenomenon of Hasidim has provoked a series of still unsettled questions. What accounts for the astounding popularity of the movement? What role did women play in the newly formed Hasidic social formations? How does Hasidim relate to earlier Jewish mystical trends? Was Hasidim a radical or conservative movement? How did Hasidim leave its mark on the Hebrew and Yiddish literature of the modern period?

Join us as we consider these and other themes at a conference hosted by the Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies at the Graduate Theological Union. Additional support for Marcin Wodzin’s visit provided by the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life and Culture.

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HONORABLE MENTION

PHD STUDENTS
*Correction from the October GTU Dean’s Newsletter, these students passed their Hebrew Language Exams
Conrad Bayor, BIBL
Tae Woong Lee, BIBL
Yoon Kyung Kim, BIBL

Comprehensive Exam Proposal Approved
Diandra Chretain, BIBL
Jeannette Henriquez, IDS
Seung Hyun Yoo, THEO
Justin Tanis, IDS
Mohammad Waqas Sajjad, CHSR

Oral Comprehensive Exam Passed
Luke Devine, SPRT
Nathan Bjorge, THEO

Advanced to Candidacy
Kyoung-Hee Lee, SPRT
Austin Leininger, ETHC
Daniel DeForest London, SPRT
Abdul Hamid Robinson-Royal, CHSR

GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION

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THE DEAN’S NEWSLETTER
The Dean’s Newsletter is for official notices from the GTU Dean’s Office regarding academic affairs and for announcements of educational events (lectures, conferences) focusing on academic research and thus of particular interest to faculty and MA and PhD students. Send submissions to Angela Muñoz, amunoz@gtu.edu.