



# **CORH**

## **CONNECTION:**

### **Internationalization**

### **Special Edition**

#### **FROM THE EDITOR**

In this edition, we will focus on the international experiences of our faculty and students over the past year. People associated with the department have had the opportunity to travel and learn about religion and other features of societies around the world, and we are pleased to be able to share our insights in this specially themed newsletter. In today's globalizing world, it is extremely important to broaden our vistas beyond our local area and understand how other people around the world are grappling with the challenges and opportunities facing our planet. We hope that our experiences will inspire you to travel as well, and to take advantage of the many opportunities for study abroad available at our university.

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## JOEL ZIMBELMAN—AFRICA



*Lots of chances to share dinners with your Host family.*



*New friends I made on the hike.*

It is becoming more and more difficult for a person to possess a sense of what religion in the modern world is all about if one just spends a teaching or learning career in Chico or even the United States. That's why our Department has, for many years, urged both students and faculty in our department to study or work abroad; consult internationally with colleagues; and interact with visiting international students. When we do these things, the quality of our analysis of religion, our understanding of the complexity of the world we live in, and our ability to suggest efficacious solutions to many challenges we face all increase.

Your faculty in the Department want to think seriously about study overseas. The number of CSU CORH majors going abroad is increasing, and we've arranged a slew of options for you to consider. It starts with some language study, and our department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures offers ten languages to help prep you for this experience (those are French, German, Spanish, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Chinese, Arabic, Russian, and Hebrew).

We have two different sorts of opportunities that you could pursue for study abroad, and both of them mean that all if not most of the units you earn abroad transfer back to CSUC and meet either requirement in your major or in GE. Our CSU system's International Program and University Studies Abroad Consortium provide opportunities to study at one of 45 sites internationally for intersession, summers, semesters, or a whole year—usually courses are in English, but you can combine regular courses with language study. Students from our department programs have lots of sites that work well for majors courses (two examples: Italy for Humanities majors; Ghana for Religious Studies majors). You'll see some of your faculty teaching in these programs from time to time—over the last few years CORH faculty have taught at five sites, and this summer 10 CSU faculty will be scattered around the globe teaching. I'll be teaching in the Ghana program Summer of 2015, so consider taking some courses at that location, including a course on religion in Ghana that will count toward your major.

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CSU Chico also does a number of local Chico-exclusive programs called “Faculty Leds.” On these programs, a few faculty take students from our campus to study for a period of three-ten weeks in specialized or GE programs. I’m particularly excited about this one: In Summer of 2016 three faculty from Chico (I will be one of them) will be doing a 10 week class in Tanzania, where students will be able to 1) complete all 9 units of upper division GE, 2) get GE capstone credit; 3) get Writing Intensive credit; 4) get a double count for religion course credit (RELS 332 ) in that major; 5) get global cultures credit; 6) make optional visits to the game parks in Tanzania (Serengeti, Masai Mara, Arusha); the old slave trading port of Zanzibar; and climb Mt. Kilimanjaro on a six-day trek, as well as 7) home stays and dorm stays with African students. Some of my pictures from our preliminary trip to Tanzania this summer where we set the program up are included here.

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*“To catch the reader's attention, place an interesting sentence or quote from the story here.”*

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Need more information? 1) Attend information sessions sponsored by our Study Abroad office on Wednesday 5-6 pm or Fridays 2-3 p.m. in SSC 150; 2) talk to your faculty in the department and check out bulletin boards in the hallways; 3) e-mail me at [jzimbelman@csuchico.edu](mailto:jzimbelman@csuchico.edu) for more on the Tanzania program or for any other questions; 3) go to <http://usac.unr.edu> or <http://csuip.calstate.edu/> or <http://www.csuchico.edu/studyabroad> to see what your options are.



***Market in Moshi***



***Our hotel for our first few nights***



***Local bookstore in Moshi***

*“...I could not have picked a better location for my first experience teaching abroad.”*



Last day of class with my USAC students, July, 2014.

## KATE MCCARTHY—SPAIN

I spent most of the summer in Madrid, teaching a course on “Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Spain” to seven great students in the USAC program (University Study Abroad Consortium). As someone who has studied interreligious relations for thirty years, I could not have picked a better location for my first experience teaching abroad. The students and I explored the very deep roots of interreligious contact in Spain, from the Muslim encounter with Visigothic Christians in the 8<sup>th</sup> century to the expulsion of the Jews by the Catholic monarchs in 1492, to the current effort to draw the descendants of Sephardic Jews back to Spain with offers of citizenship. The medieval cities of Toledo, Cordoba, and Grenada offered stunning examples of interreligious coexistence and sometimes cooperation, as in the massive translation projects that brought classical knowledge to Europe through the collaboration of Muslim, Jewish, and Christian scholars. We saw everywhere evidence of multicultural layering—synagogues, mosques, and churches built over and within one another, often using common design elements like the red and

white horseshoe arches of the great 9<sup>th</sup> century mosque (now Catholic cathedral) in Cordoba, which are reflected in Spanish architecture to the present. We also saw the frustrating persistence of religious competition and domination, as in the current prohibition against Muslim prayer in the Cordoba cathedral. The city of Madrid itself was a fantastic home base. Our apartment window looked out on a 12<sup>th</sup>-century church built by Muslim architects in the *mudejar* style, and I got to visit the burial of Bartolome de Las Casas, the 16<sup>th</sup> century Dominican friar and defender of Native Americans who is often credited as the founder of Latin American liberation theology. My teenage son and daughter, meanwhile, spent hours wandering through the Prado and Reina Sofia museums, running in the huge city parks, and eating churros at every corner *chocolateria*. For that, for the *tapas* and late-night street culture, for the literally breathtaking experience of walking through the gardens of the Alhambra complex in Grenada, I encourage everyone to find a way to get to Spain!





Images of saints decorate the horseshoe arches of the *Mezquita del Cristo de La Luz* in Toledo, Spain. Originally built as a mosque in 999 CE, the building was converted to a church in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

## BRUCE GRELLE— ENGLAND

In July I travelled to England for the 19<sup>th</sup> biennial meeting of the International Seminar on Religious Education and Values (ISREV) held at York St. John University. ISREV consists of 240 scholars from 36 countries including individuals from various religious traditions as well as secular specialists in religious studies and education. I am among ten members from the United States. The organization's goal is to improve the quality of religion education (RE) in schools worldwide through scholarship and research. I previously presented papers at ISREV meetings in Driebergen, the Netherlands (2006), Ankara, Turkey (2008), and Turku, Finland (2012). In York I served as respondent to a plenary presentation on religious diversity in Catholic schools in Australia, and I also responded to a paper discussing approaches to RE in post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina.

My own paper was titled "Cultivating a Sense of Self-as-Citizen: Making the Academic Study of Religion Relevant to Students' Lives." The paper defends the relevance of the academic study of religion to the personal lives of students, not in the context of their own religious or spiritual development, but in the context of developing their identities as citizens of a pluralistic democratic society. While an academic rather than faith-based approach to RE does not address all the "inner-life" questions that are relevant to the formation of a student's sense of self, it does encourage students to address a question that is at the heart of every search for meaning and purpose – "How can I connect with something larger than my own ego?"

## DANIEL VEIDLINGER—THAILAND

I taught on a summer program in Chiang Mai Thailand with professors Tony Waters and Lee Altier. The program was designed to provide students with all three upper division GE course credits in the Global Development or International Studies pathways, but it also provided so much more. The last time I was in Thailand was 12 years ago and it was great to be back there again. I have studied Thai history and culture for much of my academic life, and it was a pleasure and a privilege to be able to share my knowledge with the students. I enjoy teaching about Asian culture and religion here in Chico, but to teach about a particular Buddhist monastery, and then to be able to go the very next day to actually visit that monastery is a completely different experience. It was very enriching to see the students, many of whom had not travelled very much outside of the USA, grow as they learned about this other culture, its manners and ways of life. We saw



a great deal of different things in the country. We were based in Chiang Mai, a city of about half a million, and had a classroom on the university campus. We also visited a number of monasteries in the area, met with Buddhist monks, and witnessed Buddhist chanting. This is what we call the lowland culture of Thailand, that was influenced deeply by contact with India and its languages and traditions in ancient times. We also visited the highland areas, that have a very different culture, where the so-called Hill Tribes live, with the largest one being the Hmong, many of whom have settled in the Chico area since the violence that rocked Indochina in the 1970s. They have their own, non-Buddhist culture that maintains traditional beliefs in the ancestor spirits often with an overlay of Christianity through the recent efforts of missionaries. We learned so much about the food of the region, and became intoxicated by the variety of tropical fruits available there, such as Dragonfruit, Mangosteen and Durian. We met elephants who could draw really good pictures too, and monkeys who were adept at stealing backpacks, and an Australian man who had been living alone in the forest meditating for a year. We learned about rice cultivation, and had a chance to ride on waterbuffalo, the traditional animal that was used before tractors came to the region. We also volunteered to teach English at a school for blind children, which was a very rewarding experience. There is little doubt that the trip was a great success and all the students and professors learned a lot from the country, its people, and each other.

## SARAH PIKE—IRELAND

Walking alongside elderly couples and young children, my students struggled up the slippery trail to the top of Croagh Patrick, Ireland's holiest mountain. We joined 30,000 other pilgrims on the popular "Reek Sunday" pilgrimage (in Ireland, mountains are often called "reeks") on the Sunday closest to Lughnasadh, an ancient Celtic festival. Although the event was orchestrated by the Catholic Church and a host of volunteers, pilgrims included Pagans and atheists as well. Although the mountain is known to be a pre-Christian religious site, it has come to be associated with the biography of Patrick, Ireland's patron saint, who is said to have fasted on the summit for forty days.

The steep climb took almost two hours and along the way we encountered the pious crawling on their hands and knees or climbing in bare feet to show their devotion. Some climbed for their own health and wellness, while others made the trip for sick ones at home or friends in trouble. On the summit, huge crowds gathered to listen to the priest, go to confession, and participate in Mass at a small chapel, while off to the side, smaller crowds left petitions at "Patrick's Bed," a pile of rocks where the saint is said to have slept. An archaeologist on the pilgrimage told us that a Celtic ring fort had recently been unearthed around the top of the mountain as well, adding another layer to its sacred history.

The field trip was part of a course called "World Religions and Global Issues in Local Context" that I taught last summer in Galway, Ireland. Students learned about Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and pre-Christian paganism in Ireland through the course's focus on the three following areas: views of nature/environment, violence and political conflict, and gender issues. We spent a good bit of time on history as well as on local traditions, ritual practices, and lived religion. The outing to Croagh Patrick was

the final field trip before the end of the course. We had already seen holy wells and rag trees, explored Neolithic burial sites, compared Catholic and Protestant churches, attended the premiere of a film about Irish views of death, and seen a play that dealt with priests and sexual abuse. However, the pilgrimage was the first time students had the opportunity to actively participate in a religious practice, to identify on a physical and emotional level with other participants, regardless of their own religious views. Several students, including one who had struggled to finish the steep climb, told me later that the pilgrimage was one of the highlights of the program.

Coming down from the mountain, pilgrims could visit the tearoom, chat with pro-life demonstrators, purchase St. Christopher medals or prayer cards, or enjoy a pint of Guinness in the local pub. Not surprisingly, the pub seemed the most popular choice, as Irish pubs are not just for drinking, but function as the center of social life and the pilgrimage was as much a social occasion as a devotional activity.



Climbing Croagh Patrick



## JED WYRICK—GERMANY

I spent part of my sabbatical semester (Spring 2014) as a visiting faculty member at the Freie Universität (“Free University”), Berlin, specifically as a guest of the Topoi Excellence Cluster, an interdisciplinary center dedicated to the Formation and Transformation of Space and Knowledge in Ancient Civilizations. The “Free University” is one of the two major research universities in Berlin, Germany. Prior to the unification of Germany, the main university of Berlin (Humboldt University of Berlin) was located in Communist East Berlin. FU Berlin was founded as a “Free” university under American auspices to serve the population of West Berlin and as a counterbalance to Humboldt. The Topoi Excellence Cluster (<http://www.topoi.org/>) is a research institute composed of faculty who teach courses at FU Berlin as well as visiting scholars. The center is funded by huge grants from the German government to promote academic research and scholarship. It is an incredibly vibrant and innovative environment where scholars of the ancient world (including ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, Palestine/Israel, Mesopotamia, Turkey, and even Asia and the Americas) work together to understand ancient science, scholarship, rhetoric, architecture, and other such fields.



As a guest of the Topoi Center, I attended seminars put on by the Center, including a weekly seminar on the Aramaic Magic Bowls led by a scholar of ancient Akkadian, Dr. Mark Geller, and a scholar of Talmudic and Jewish studies, Dr. Tal Ilan. I also attended a weekly seminar at the Institute of Jewish Studies of FU Berlin led by Dr. Tal Ilan involving a team of scholars working on publishing volume 3 of the *Corpus papyrorum Judaicarum* (The Corpus of Jewish Papyri from Egypt). The first two volumes had been completed in 1957; the third will include works not only in Greek but also in Aramaic and Coptic that have been newly discovered or were not included in the first two volumes.

I was also able to attend a number of lectures (for instance on early Jewish writings and history in Russia) as well as colloquia put on by the Center (including one held at Humboldt University on Terminology in the Ancient Sciences). At the same time, I could study and write in the beautiful Philological Library at FU Berlin, where I was able to make progress on my own scholarship on an Egyptian-Jewish biographer and biblical scholar from the 3rd century BCE named Artapanus.

In particular, I was pursuing aspects of Artapanus' work that draw upon the writings of Aristotle on the one hand and Hellenistic and Alexandrian science on the other, and so my participation in both the seminars at the Center and at the Institute for Jewish Studies was perfectly suited for my needs (and the library was ideal). Finally, I was invited by one of my hosts to deliver a guest lecture in her class, “Anthropology and



## CONTINUED...

the Bible;” my lecture was on the relationship between the story of the angels visiting Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 18) and the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19), using the insights of the approaches of Bronislaw Malinowski and Claude Lévi-Strauss.

*“...I would have been prepared to enter the university (all over again!).”*

During the two months I spent in Berlin, I was able to take a month long course in the German language at a popular school in the city called the Deutsche Akademie. It was intense—3 hours a day from Monday through Thursday. The course was great. Allegedly, if I had taken another two months of study, I would have been prepared to enter the university (all over again!). But, alas, I wasn’t able to spend enough time in Berlin and at this school to get truly fluent in German, though I am grateful for what I did learn every time I sit down to read an article or book of German scholarship in my field. Among my other greatest accomplishments on this trip was to buy a German electronic dictionary—it puts a paperback dictionary to shame. Another was to visit Italy, (finally), twice—once to Milan to meet an old friend and climb to the top of the Duomo, and a second time

to Naples, where I got to walk around in the ancient cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum, to see the Farnese marbles and the paintings from Pompeii/Herculaneum in the Museum of Naples, and to drive and walk through the heavenly Amalfi coast cities of Sorrento and Positano. I also got to explore the old Jewish quarter in Berlin, to reconnect with a great friend I had met 20 years ago in Israel, and to meet many young scholars.

## WHAT IS RELIGIOUS STUDIES?

Religious Studies is a multidisciplinary field that takes a scholarly approach to the study of religious experiences, myths, rituals, doctrines, and the institutions of human beings in diverse times and places. It draws on perspectives from the Humanities and social sciences in order to understand the meaning and impact of religious and non-religious ideas, values, and practices.

**We're on the Web!**

**[www.csuchico.edu/corh](http://www.csuchico.edu/corh)**

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## ALUMNI NEWS

### “CORH GRADS—WHAT THEY ARE DOING NOW?”

**Brandyn Gibson**— He is living in South Dakota. Brandyn is currently working for Black Hills State University in the office of Residence life as the Judicial Officer. Aside from that, he is also the Hall Director for the Campus Apartments.

## FACULTY NEWS

**Daniel Veidlinger** — He was promoted to the rank of full professor and has edited a book that was just published by Routledge called *Buddhism, the Internet and Digital Media: The Pixel in the Lotus*

**Jed Wyrick**- Published an article: “The Vanishing Scriptural Scaffolding of The Book of the Words of Jannes and Jambres and Its Kindred Legends,” in E. Tigchelaar, ed., *Old Testament Pseudeipgrapha and the Scriptures*, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 270 (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 231-260.

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