

VANESSA J AVERY

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Education

Ph.D., The University of Exeter, U.K., Theology

Department: Theology and Ethics

Dissertation: *Vaccines Against Mimetic Desire: Rene Girard & Jewish Ritual*

Advisors: Heidi Hadsell and Mark Wynn

M.A.R., Yale Divinity School, New Haven, CT

Department: Institute of Sacred Music, Religion and Literature

Thesis: *Comedy, Laughter & the Eucharist: The Theological Purpose of Medieval Religious Drama*

Advisors: Margot Fassler and Peter Hawkins

M.Th., King's College, London, U.K.

Department: Hebrew Bible

Thesis: *Lady Wisdom and the Prophetic Tradition*

Advisor: Katrina Larkin

B.A. Honors, McGill University, Montreal, Canada, Comparative Religion

Department: Religious Studies

Degree: Bachelor of Arts (Honors), Comparative Religion

Thesis: *A Comparative Religious Study of Sacred Space in Judaism and Wicca*

Academic Positions

Lecturer in Interfaith Engagement

September 2018 – present

Yale Divinity School

- Courses:
 - REL 954: Sharing Sacred Spaces

Lecturer, Dept. of Comparative Religion & Humanities

Jan 2018 – present

California State University, Chico

- Courses:
 - RELS 381: Sociology of Religion

Instructor of Religious Studies

2000 - 2018

Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, CT

- Courses:
 - RS 101: Introduction to the Study of Religion
 - RS 299: Storytelling and the Bible (Methods in Biblical Studies)
 - RS 299: Human Suffering and the Book of Job
 - TRS 265: Introduction to World Religions
 - Leadership Studies: Case Studies in Religion & Leadership

Affiliate Faculty in Judaism and Ethics

Sept 2016 – Dec 2016

Hartford Seminary, Hartford, CT

- Courses:
 - ET 615: Enduring Question: How do we end violence?

- DI 530: Dialogue in a World of Difference

Visiting Professor of Religious Studies, Western Religions

Jan 2013 – Jan 2015

Webster University, St. Louis, MO

- Courses:
 - RELG 2030: Contemporary Topics: Ending Violence
 - RELG 2350: The Four Gospels
 - RELG 3000: Judaism: Holy Days, Fasts and Feasts
 - RELG 2460: Storytelling and the Bible
 - RELG 2080: Introduction to Western Religions
 - RELG 2420: Religion and Culture: Zen Buddhism
 - RELG 1000: Roots of Religion
 - RELG 1060: World Religions

Professional Employment

Consulting Director to the Sharing Sacred Spaces Initiative Sacred Space International

July 2017-present

US and Canada

- Direct or conduct contextual research, interviews, and investigations into optimal locations for strategic interfaith community-building
- Build and maintain close local partnerships with clergy, community stakeholders, and local organizations to support development, launch, and implementation of program
- Design and facilitate multiple local implementations involving management of volunteer committees, skill-building processes, site visits, coaching, troubleshooting, dialogue and educational activities, civic assessments, and their civic action projects
- Train and coach international team in area assessment and initiative development and implementation
- Design and implement quantitative and qualitative data collection on program effectiveness and impact
- Chair Steering Committees and Planning Committees in participating cities
- Prepare monthly briefings and write-ups on program events
- Prepare annual program budget, budget projections, and submit monthly expenses
- Coordinate documentation when required including photo and/or video shoots
- Participate in weekly team calls on fundraising, grant-writing, program development, promotions, and organizational strategy

Principal, VAST Consultants & Senior Diversity Associate, Cambridge Hill Partners, Inc.

1998 – 2013

NYC, New Haven, CT and Various Locations

- Create on-ground and online training programs to deliver core competencies in diversity
- Assess training needs through interviews, focus groups and consultation with managers and/or organizational leaders
- Use role playing, team exercises, group discussions, videos and lectures to instruct participants in a variety of ways
- Train participants through carefully designed educational and experiential programming and facilitation
- Monitor participant behaviors throughout the training process
- Develop working relationships with executives, community leaders, and diversity partners

- Meet existing customers to review current services, needs, and expand training opportunities
- Prepare for meetings by conducting research on religious diversity, religious freedom, local religious/diversity histories, and related topics
- Research and publish articles and blogs on topical items
- Write proposals on diversity strategy and trainings for prospective clients or donors
- Design assessment tools and provide detailed evaluation of programs

Admissions and Student Support Manager/ Admissions and Recruitment Manager

2005 – 2011

Hartford Seminary, Hartford, CT

- Conducted applicant interviews, academic advising, transcript evaluation, career counseling
- Chaired Admissions Committee
- Supervised team including Residence Assistants, English Language Assessors, Writing Consultants
- Created cultural adaptation program for internationals and provided extra support in challenge areas
- Generated community partnerships with individuals and organizations for cultural adaptation and education
- Designed annual recruitment strategy and goals; admissions policies and processes; on-line application and statistical tracking
- Cultivated new markets through intensive community outreach
- Designed and directed admissions open houses and represented the seminary at conferences and conventions

Awards and Grants

The Thiel Foundation, Imitatio Grant (2012-2014)

Bridge Initiative, Webster University, Interreligious Understanding Student Experience Grants (2013, 2014)

Targum Shlishi Dissertation Grant (2012)

Mimetic Theory Summer Institute Scholarship, The Dutch Girard Society (2012)

Raymund Schwager Memorial Award, Colloquium on Violence & Religion (2010)

Essay Award, The Raven Foundation (2010)

Full Study Scholarship, UCSIA Summer School on Religion, Culture and Society, University of Antwerp, Belgium (2008)

Tew Prize for Scholarly Excellence, Yale University (2001)

Professional Development – Academic

Advanced Blackboard Teaching Tutorials, Sacred Heart University (2012, 2015)

Certified Faculty in Digital Learning and Instruction, Sacred Heart University (2007)

Scholarship

Publications

The End of Violence: Rene Girard and Judaism. MI: University of Michigan Press. Under contract.

"Jewish Atonement in the Book of Jonah: From Violence to Non-Violence," in *Mimesis and Atonement*. London: Bloomsbury, 2016.

"From the Sacred to the Holy in (and out of) World Religions: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism," in *Handbook of Mimetic Theory and Religion*. Bloomsbury, (2016).

"Whither Girard and Islam? Reflections on Texts in Context," in the *Journal of Religion and Violence*, Special Issue. Academic Publishing, Inc. (2016)

"The Jewish Vaccine Against Mimetic Desire," *Contagion* vol. 19, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2012.

Review of *Girard and Theology* by Michael Kirwan, *Reviews in Religion and Theology*, Vol. 17, Issue 3, London: Blackwell, June 2010, pp. 364-369.

Presentations

Colloquium on Violence and Religion, University of Innsbruck, Austria, "Community-Building as Counter-Trend to Tribalism" (2019)

Loyola University, Chicago, IL, Raven Foundation Keynote Speaker on "Scandal and Post-Truth" (2017)

AAR/SBL National Meeting, Atlanta, GA, Section for the Social Scientific Study of the Hebrew Scriptures, "Humans Left Alone? The Book of Esther and the Vicious Cycle of Scapegoating" (2015)

SBL Regional Meeting, Newton, MA, "The Book of Esther and the Vicious Cycle of Scapegoating" (2015)

Heythrop College, London, U.K. "Jewish Atonement in the Book of Jonah: From Violence to Non-Violence" (2014)

Hickey Center for Interfaith Studies and Dialogue, Rochester, NY, "Humans Left Alone: The Book of Esther" (2013)

Colloquium on Violence and Religion, University of Northern Iowa, "Envy, Rivalry and Blame: A Study of Scapegoating and the Sacrificial Organization" (2013)

Colloquium on Violence and Religion, University of Notre Dame, South Bend, IN, "Watchmen and Mimetic Theory: Are We Ready for Rorschach?" (2010)

Colloquium on Violence and Religion, University of Notre Dame, South Bend, IN, "The Blessing of the Children, or *Birkhat ha-Banim*: A Girardian Exploration of a Sabbath Ritual" (2010)

Milton Academy, Milton, MA, "Establishing a New Context for Islam" (2001)

Professional and Community Service

Publications

"The Sacrificial Organization," *Counseling at Work Journal*, UK: BACP Workplace, (January 2016).

"Engaging Difference: Exercises and Tips for Creating Experiential Learning Environments," in *Modern Believing*, Vol. 48:3 (July 2007), UK: Modern Church.

Religious Diversity: A Practical Guide for Corporate Managers and Healthcare Providers, NY: The Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding and The Society for Human Resources Management, 2000.

Sample List of Presentations/Seminars

Temple Beth El, Stamford, CT, "The Book of Esther" (2019)

The Parliament of the World's Religions, Toronto, Canada, "Sharing Sacred Spaces, New Haven, CT" (2018)

The Connecticut Parks and Recreation Association, "Cultural Diversity: Developing Cross-Cultural Understanding and Avoiding Culture Clash"; "Listening and Laundering: Tools for Effective Listening and Communication" (2017)

The Hartford Archdiocese, St. Thomas Seminary, CT, "Mercy in the Abrahamic Traditions" (2016)

The Interfaith Oversight Board, Naugatuck Valley Community College, CT, "Cultivating a Diverse Response to Public Violence at Naugatuck Valley Community College," (2016)

Temple Sholom, Greenwich, CT, "The Book of Esther and the Holy Day of Purim" (2014)

B'nai Amoona, St. Louis, MO, "Sacrifice in the Book of Jonah" (2013-2014)

Sacred Heart Colloquium, "Creating Interreligious Peace: Religion in the Workplace", Fairfield, CT (2013)

Yale University and Yale Learning Center, New Haven, CT, extended training series, "Rivalry, Blame, and Scapegoating," (2012-2013) and "International and Religious Diversity," (2005-2010)

Webster University Global Diversity Summit, St. Louis, MO (2013)

Bryant University, Smithfield, RI, International and Religious Diversity Leadership certification series (2007-2011)

Hartford Seminary, Hartford, CT, "Religious Diversity in the U.S.A." (2007)

The CT Women's Business Network, Middletown, CT, "Books of the Bible" (2007)

Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center, Idaho Falls, ID, Keynote Speaker for Religious Diversity Week (2007)

Connecticut Hospital Association, Manager's Trainings in International and Religious Diversity in Healthcare, with separate trainings in Leadership, Storytelling (2005-2010)

EduCare, Inc., Myrtle Beach, NC, "Religious Diversity and Breast Cancer" (2005)

Bates Corporate Forum, Boston, MA, "A Post 9/11 Context for Islam" (2001)

The Anatol and Arthur Charitable Foundation, White Plains, NY, "Religious Diversity and Cancer Treatment" (1999)

Languages

Human: Fluency in English and French; read and write Hebrew and Greek

Computer: MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Blackboard, Canvas, Web Advisor, SonisWeb, Raiser's Edge, LexisNexis, various social media platforms

Academic Affiliations

American Academy of Religion
Society of Biblical Literature
Colloquium on Violence and Religion
The Parliament of the World's Religions

Community Affiliations

Yale Alumni Association of Greenwich
Yale Women of CT
The Raven Foundation
The Interfaith Council of SW Connecticut

Additional Experience

Blog at vanessaavery.wordpress.com