

# SCHEDULE

## Friday, September 15

**3-4:30PM: A Roundtable on Religion and Politics**

Conference opening and welcome from Dean Robert Knight and CORH Chair Sarah M. Pike

**Moderator:** Eric Michael Mazur (Virginia Wesleyan University)

**Participants:** Vernon Andrews (San Jose State University), Jason Clower (CSU, Chico), Andrew M. Flescher (State University of New York, Stony Brook), Katherine G. McCarthy (CSU, Chico), Sarah M. Pike (CSU, Chico).

## Saturday, September 16

**8:30-9:00AM: Continental breakfast**

**9:00-9:30AM: Welcome and opening remarks**

Sarah M. Pike, Chair of the Department of Comparative Religion and Humanities, CSU, Chico  
Katherine G. McCarthy, Interim Dean of Undergraduate Education, CSU, Chico

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### Session One

**Facilitator:** Sarah Gagnebin, CSU, Chico

**9:30-10:20 AM:**

**"Isolation without Isolationism"** (Andrew M. Flescher, State University of New York, Stony Brook) - Suggests the notion of "just peace" as an alternative to "just war" in the context of global conflicts against stateless actors (al Qaeda, ISIS, etc.).

**Respondent:** Bruce Grelle, CSU, Chico

**10:30-11:20 AM:**

**"¡La Impunidad No Será Eterna! Catholicism and the Commemoration of the Disappeared in Argentina 40 Years after the Dictatorship"** (Loren Lybarger, Ohio University) - Examines the response of one community - the Church of Santa Cruz (Buenos Aires) - to the Argentine dictatorship, 1976-1983, in the context of debate over the role of the national Church and its relationship to the regime and its actions during this period.

**Respondent:** Steve Lewis, CSU Chico

**11:30-12:20 PM:**

**"Are Jails Unjust? Dignity and the American Jail"** (Derek Jeffreys, University of Wisconsin, Green Bay) - Argues that a religious framework can be used to limit the assault on human dignity in American jails.

**Respondent:** Susanna Boxall, CSU, Chico

**12:20-2:00PM: Break**

## Session Two

**Facilitator:** Daniel Veidlinger, CSU, Chico

**2:00-2:50PM:**

**"What Constitutes Scripture? Historical and Contemporary Reflections on Interreligious Dialogue"** (David Bertaina, University of Illinois, Springfield) - An examination of the difficulties of interreligious dialogue when the definition of "scripture" (in this case, the Bible and the Qur'an) is different.

**Respondent:** Najma Yousefi, CSU, Chico

**3:00-3:50PM:**

**"The Gospel According to Luke, or How I Came to Understand Scripture from 'a long time ago and a galaxy far, far away'"** (Eric Michael Mazur, Virginia Wesleyan University) - A "how-to" for those investigating "sacred texts, myths, and parables" in popular culture, using materials drawn from "hyper-real" / "non-history based" religions (Jediism, Matrixism, Dudeism, Pastafarianism) in comparison with more traditional texts (like the Hebrew Scriptures / Old Testament and the Book of Mormon).

**Respondent:** Micki Lennon, CSU, Chico

**3:50-4:15PM:**

**General discussion**, facilitated by Eric Michael Mazur and Sarah M. Pike

## PRESENTERS:

**Vernon L. Andrews, Ph.D.**, received his doctorate in sociology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He also obtained his bachelor's degree in English from California State University, Chico and a master's degree in Public Communication from Chico. From 1996 to 2009, Dr. Andrews served as a faculty member and later, chair, of the American Studies Department at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch, New Zealand. He currently teaches Sociocultural Sports, American Sport, the History of Sports, Global Sports in the Kinesiology Department and African American Sports History in the African American Studies Department at San Jose State University. Dr. Andrews writes for newspapers, magazines, and has extensive radio and television interview experience in addition to his academic publishing and speaking.



**Loren D. Lybarger, Ph.D.**, is an associate professor in the Department of Classics and World Religions at Ohio University, Athens, where he teaches courses on Islam, theories of religion, and religion and violence. He is the author of *Identity and Religion in Palestine* (2007) and is currently finishing a book titled, *Religion and the Crisis of Secularism in Palestinian Chicago: Transformation of Identity in Exile*. He is also co-authoring a book addressing memory, religion, and violence in Argentina since the end of the period of state terror (1976-1983). Lybarger has published in a variety of journals in the fields of religious studies, sociology, Islamic studies, and Middle East studies.



**Andrew M. Flescher, Ph.D.**, is a Professor of Preventive Medicine and Professor of English at State University of New York, Stony Brook, where he is core faculty in the Program in Public Health and serves on Stony Brook's Organ Donor Council and Hospital Ethics Committee. In addition to writing several articles and book chapters, he is the author of four books: *Heroes, Saints, and Ordinary Morality* (2003), *The Altruistic Species: Scientific, Philosophical, and Religious Perspectives of Human Benevolence* (2007), *Moral Evil* (2013), and *The Organ Shortage Crisis in America: Markets, Civic Duty, and Closing the Gap*, also (in press). He is part of the American Public Health Association (APHA) working group on the Primary Prevention of War and also part of the APHA group on firearm epidemic and public health. On July 1st, 2017, Dr. Flescher began a three-year term on the ethics committee of the United Network for Organ Sharing. Dr. Flescher is a Living Donor Advocate at Stony Brook Hospital and regularly plays piano with a singer at Stony Brook Hospital for patients, their families, and staff.



**Derek S. Jeffreys, Ph.D.**, is Professor of Humanistic Studies and Religion at the University of Wisconsin, Green Bay. His research focuses on religion and violence, and he teaches courses in ethics and the philosophy of religion. He also teaches religion and philosophy in prisons and jails. He's author of three books, *Defending Human Dignity: John Paul II and Political Realism* (2004), *Spirituality and the Ethics of Torture* (2009), and *Spirituality in Dark Places: The Ethics of Solitary Confinement* (2013). He will soon be publishing a book titled *American Jails: The Search for Human Dignity in an Age of Mass Incarceration*, which will be out with NYU in the spring.



**Eric Michael Mazur, Ph.D.**, is the Gloria & David Furman Professor of Judaic Studies, professor of religious studies, and the Religion, Law, & Politics Fellow of the Center for the Study of Religious Freedom at Virginia Wesleyan University, where he teaches courses on Judaism, religion in American culture, and the academic study of religion. He is the author, co-author, editor, and co-editor of books, articles, chapters, and encyclopedia entries on religion and ethnicity, film, law, literature, politics, popular culture, race, and American history. Before completing his doctoral work, Eric served as a public interest lobbyist in Washington, D.C., where his portfolio included issues related to civil rights and the separation of church and state. He is currently working on a reader in religion and popular culture and an introductory volume on religion and American constitutional law.



**Jason T. Clower** is Associate Professor of Comparative Religion and Humanities. His publishing to date has focused on Chinese Buddhist philosophy and its incorporation into modern Chinese thought, culminating in two books on the philosophy of Mou Zongsan, leading modern Chinese philosopher and standard-bearer of the New Confucian movement. He also researches the "Asian-inspired spirituality" scene in the New Age movement in California and what one documentary has called "the lost world of Communism"—its art and material culture, its pieties, its intellectual and institutional life, and the shared remnants of Stalinist heritage that can still be found from Pyongyang to Prague.



**David Bertaina, Ph.D.**, is Chair of the History Department at the University of Illinois at Springfield. His research and teaching expertise is on medieval inter-religious interactions in Late Antiquity and the Medieval Middle East. He has authored more than twenty pieces on the history of Christian-Muslim encounters. Presently, he serves as an organizer for the AAR panel on Middle Eastern Christianity and as an editor for the Brill series Arabic Christian Texts and Studies.



**Sarah M. Pike, PhD**, is Professor of Comparative Religion and Chair of the Department of Comparative Religion and Humanities. She is the author of the books *Earthly Bodies*, *Magical Selves: Contemporary Pagans and The Search for Community and New Age and Neopagan Religions in America*. She has written numerous articles and book chapters on contemporary Paganism, ritual, the New Age movement, the Burning Man festival, spiritual dance, environmentalism, and youth culture. She is the current president of the International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture. Her book on radical environmental and animal rights activism, ritual, and youth culture, *For the Wild: Ritual and Commitment in Radical Eco-Activism*, will be published this September by the University of California Press.

**Katherine G. McCarthy, Ph.D.**,

Kate McCarthy is Interim Dean of Undergraduate Education at CSU, Chico, where she was a longtime member of the Religious Studies faculty and also served as Chair of the Department of Comparative Religion and Humanities. She is the author of *Interfaith Encounters in America* (Rutgers University Press, 2007) and co-editor with Eric Mazur of *God in the Details: American Religion in Popular Culture* (Routledge, 2001, 2010). She is currently studying the growth of religiously unaffiliated populations in the United States—atheists, agnostics, spiritual-but-not-religious, etc.—and its impact on how we think about religious diversity and the structures and settings of interreligious engagement.



**The Center for the Public Understanding of Religion (CPUR) was founded in 2012 to promote reasoned dialogue about religion and society and to help create a religiously literate public. By means of scholarly conferences, print and online publications, public roundtables, teacher training institutes, a database of local religious communities in Northern California, and a virtual museum, CPUR will explore topics such as the growth of religion on the internet, the role of religion in democratic discourse, and the place of religion in healthcare, corrections, and the military. CPUR seeks to provide a forum for the investigation and mapping of local religious communities, together with organizations associated with religious movements and worldviews; it also promotes an educational agenda focused on teaching about religion in the public schools.**

For more information about the Center for the Public Understanding of Religion: <http://www.csuchico.edu/cpur/>

For more information about the Department of Comparative Religion and Humanities:  
<http://www.csuchico.edu/corh/>