

## Hope and Resistance in Public Art

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# currents

Fall 2015

The news, people, & progress of the Graduate Theological Union

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**On Our Cover:** Detail from “The Historical Mural” (aka “Heroes”) by Victor Ochoa, one of the murals of San Diego's Chicano Park. “The Historical Mural” was designed to reinforce the positive contributions of indigenous, Mexican, Chicano, and Latin American persons. Artist Victor Ochoa, co-initiator of the Chicano Park Community Mural Project, states, “We thought that it was very important that our community realize that we had very important people in our history.” Mr. Ochoa wishes to acknowledge artists Guillermo Aranda, Guillermo Rosete, Armando Nunez, and Salvador Barajas who contributed to “The Historical Mural,” as well as Mario Chacon, Hector Villegas, and Eduardo Gallindo who helped restore “All the Way to the Bay” (page 11). For more about the murals of Chicano Park, see the article on pages 10-11, or visit [www.chicanoparksandiego.com](http://www.chicanoparksandiego.com). Mural images used with the permission of Victor Ochoa.

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## Graduate Theological Union

2400 Ridge Road  
Berkeley, CA 94709  
510-649-2400  
[www.gtu.edu](http://www.gtu.edu)

## Member Schools

American Baptist Seminary of the West  
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Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University  
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Hindu Studies Initiative  
\*New College Berkeley  
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\*School of Applied Theology  
Sikh Studies Initiative  
Women's Studies in Religion

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**WE ARE ENTERING THAT TIME** when planning and theories are transposing into concrete realities.

Last week, two young Sikh students visited my office for an hour and expressed enthusiasm for the new GTU MA degree with a concentration in interreligious studies. One of these women had earned her undergraduate degree in management systems; the other had majored in public health—but both now feel a passionate need to explore their religious tradition as part of their adult identity formation. At the end of a fascinating conversation, I thought to myself, seeds have been planted at the GTU, and they are beginning to grow.

Yesterday, I visited a class on Hindu and Jain ethics that is normally taught by Dr. Purushottama Bilimoria. Teaching class that day was Dr. Nirmal Baid, a prominent Jain leader whose day job is in Silicon Valley, but whose passion is the deep exploration of Jain philosophy and religious ideas. His lecture was about how the Jain view of “self” contributes to their profound commitment to a life of non-injury and non-violence. Dr. Baid is one of the prominent leaders helping the GTU to build a chair in Jain Studies.

Dr. Bilimoria and Dr. Rita Sherma are in conversation with Dr. Thomas Cattoi of the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University about the possibility of teaching a joint class on Christianity and the Dharma traditions in Fall 2016. The Jesuit School of Theology and the Dharma Civilization Foundation are also exploring the possibility of organizing a joint trip to India to visit sites connected with Dharma religions and the Jesuit heritage of the Indian subcontinent.

**Seeds  
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These educational activities are surfacing at the GTU today because people are genuinely interested in finding ways to make connections with the new resources and faculty members entering the community.

In this issue, you’ll read a piece by Academic Dean Arthur Holder introducing the new doctoral curriculum that will be in effect for students beginning the program in fall 2016. We believe this reshaping of our doctoral program will create numerous synergies among faculty and students and will ignite conversations and research projects that are truly interreligious in nature. We think you’ll be excited to see how this new curriculum offers even greater potential for deepening the kind of interreligious, cross-disciplinary scholarship that has become the GTU’s hallmark in the twenty-first century.

There are many global challenges facing us: climate change, environmental degradation, water resources, economic disparity, conflict. Finding solutions will require the human family to peacefully negotiate how to share and support one another in the midst of difference and conflicting claims. This has been called “sustainability of relationship”—and it’s closely connected to the work we do as we continue to build an educational and working space for all the religious traditions of the world to deeply engage one another.

It feels like the yeast that we have added to the GTU is beginning to yield new types of bread, pita, roti, nan, and pan dulces. Our hope is that you will find your place at the table to feed and be fed.



*Rita Sherma*

by Arthur Holder

# The GTU Creates a Doctoral Program

*for the 21st Century*

**R**ESPONDING TO THE CHANGING LANDSCAPES OF THE ACADEMY AND THE wider society, the GTU has created an innovative approach to doctoral education that features new opportunities for interdisciplinary scholarship and interreligious conversation. Students who enter the PhD and ThD programs at the GTU in fall 2016 will be able to take advantage of this new approach. The curriculum recently adopted by the Core Doctoral Faculty builds on the historic strengths of the GTU while making the doctoral program more responsive to the diverse research interests and religious commitments that students bring to their studies.

This curricular revision is the product of several years of conversation among faculty and students, strong encouragement from the GTU board of trustees, and recommendations from a distinguished group of external reviewers who visited the campus in spring 2014. The consensus of opinion is that the revised doctoral program will be more flexible in its requirements, less compartmentalized in its structure, and even more thoroughly engaged with the religious diversity of today's world.

The new doctoral curriculum represents another step in the GTU's evolution toward becoming more fully interreligious. When the GTU was established in 1962, its faculty was entirely Christian, and all the doctoral students were studying some aspect of Christianity. That began to change in 1968 with the appointment of a professor in Jewish Studies, and then in 1971 as some students were admitted to work in the field of comparative religion. Further strides came with the affiliation of the Institute of Buddhist Studies in 1985, the opening of the Center for Islamic Studies in 2007, and the establishment of the Hindu Studies Initiative early in 2015. But despite this growing interreligious diversity, the doctoral program has largely continued to reflect the shape of the

traditional Christian seminary curriculum.

In addition, the doctoral program has been organized according to areas of study that functioned largely independently of one another. The names of the areas have changed over the years, with new areas being added and others closing. But the faculty in each area have been responsible for determining course requirements, approving comprehensive exam and dissertation proposals, and making sure that students receive academic advising appropriate to their fields.

This familiar structure has served the GTU and its students well, but it had some limitations. Faculty with multiple fields of expertise have had to choose one or at most two areas in which they could advise students. With each area offering its own set of required courses, seminars were often too small to foster a robust exchange of ideas. Students could choose to study an allied field outside their own area, but doing so might require them to take additional courses and even an additional comprehensive exam. Perhaps most importantly, students and faculty studying religions other than Christianity were usually grouped together in isolation, even though they were using many of the same methodologies as their colleagues working on topics in Christianity.

In the future, the doctoral program will feature more than thirty concentrations, grouped into four interdisciplinary departments, each designed to allow greater opportunity for interreligious collaboration. The new curriculum will retain all of the fields existing in the current doctoral program, but will also include a host of new additions such as Qur’anic Studies, Religion and Literature, Hindu Theology, and Practical Theology. Other concentrations will be added as faculty resources become available to support them.

Dr. Marianne Farina of the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology believes the new curriculum embodies a bold new era in religious education: “These four interdisciplinary departments in the GTU’s new doctoral program represent the future of theological study. Many colleges and universities are discovering the inadequacy of arranging concentrations in the classical or systematic categories of Western Christian theological study. This new reformulation for the GTU fosters mutual philosophical and theological enrichment between global cultures and religions.”

Suzanne Miller, a member of the GTU Student Advisory Committee that helped shape the new cur-

riculum, says she is “extremely excited” about the new direction. “Even as our world becomes increasingly interreligious, it is easy for scholars in more traditional Christian disciplines to remain isolated from, or even avoid, interreligious study and dialogue. As a doctoral student in biblical studies, I am keenly aware of my need to participate in conversations with other religious traditions, particularly about their approaches to their sacred texts. I am encouraged by the ways

*“The four interdisciplinary departments in the GTU’s new doctoral program represent the future of theological study.”*

—Dr. Marianne Farina



the new curriculum deliberately incorporates areas of study that are typically Christian into a wider interreligious dialogue.”

Dr. Farina concurs: “The new configuration of the doctoral program is a creative response to the research interests of students and faculty at the GTU. We see in this effort a desire to foster positive engagement across disciplines of philosophical and theological studies that embrace cultural and religious difference.”

## ***New Doctoral Curriculum Begins in Fall 2016***

The GTU’s new doctoral curriculum builds on the ecumenical, interreligious, and interdisciplinary strengths of the GTU, and enhances opportunities for both specialization and cross-disciplinary study.

Beginning in fall 2016, students entering PhD and ThD programs at the GTU can choose their fields of study from among more than thirty concentrations grouped into four interdisciplinary departments:

### **Sacred Texts & Their Interpretation**

Hebrew Bible/Old Testament  
Hindu Sacred Texts  
Islamic Sacred Texts  
New Testament  
Qur’anic Studies  
Rabbinic Literature

### **Historical & Cultural Studies of Religion**

Anthropology of Religion  
Art and Religion  
Buddhist Studies  
Christian Spirituality  
Comparative Religion  
History of Christianity  
Hindu Studies  
Islamic Studies  
Jewish Studies  
New Religious Movements  
Religion and Literature  
Sociology of Religion

### **Theology & Ethics**

Aesthetics  
Christian Theology  
Comparative Ethics  
Comparative Theology  
Ethics  
Hindu Theology  
Islamic Philosophy and Theology  
Philosophical Theology  
Theology & Science

### **Religion & Practice**

Homiletics  
Liturgical Studies  
Missiology  
Practical Theology  
Religious Education

Contact the Admissions Office to explore which concentration might be best for you. Please call 510-649-2460 or e-mail [admissions@gtu.edu](mailto:admissions@gtu.edu).

As of fall 2016, doctoral students will take an introductory course on methods in the study of religion, a course on the art of teaching, and an interdisciplinary departmental seminar. These courses will help each entering class of doctoral students form a cohort of colleagues, and hopefully friends. Each student will work with a faculty advisor with expertise in the primary concentration to design an approach to additional course work at the GTU, the University of California, Berkeley, and other Bay Area schools. As in the current curriculum, proficiency in at least two research languages other than English will be required.

After completing coursework, the student will take four comprehensive exams that cover 1) the student's primary concentration, 2) a secondary concentration, 3) a university discipline outside of theology and religious studies (or for ThD students, a tertiary concentration within theology), and 4) the background for the dissertation (which will always be situated with-

in the primary concentration). With a streamlined system for approving exam and dissertation proposals, students should be able to make progress more rapidly and graduate more quickly. That will make the GTU an even more attractive option for dedicated students who want to make a difference in the world.

Throughout the current academic year, the Core Doctoral Faculty is making plans for the implementation of the new curriculum next fall. The Admissions Office is ready to guide prospective doctoral students through a revised application process. If you know someone who might be interested in theological and religious studies at the graduate level, please let them know that a great program is going to be even better in the future. The GTU's new doctoral program will be ready for them in 2016!

*Arthur Holder is GTU Dean & Vice President for Academic Affairs.*

## GTU Core Doctoral Faculty by Department

**The faculty resources at the GTU are unparalleled—with more than 50 core doctoral faculty and 120 consortial faculty. Current core doctoral faculty include:**

### Sacred Texts & Their Interpretation

Deena Aranoff (Rabbinic Literature), David Balch (New Testament), Aaron Brody (Hebrew Bible/Old Testament), John Endres (Hebrew Bible/Old Testament), Marianne Farina (Islamic Sacred Texts), LeAnn Snow Flesher (Hebrew Bible/Old Testament), Barbara Green (Hebrew Bible/Old Testament), Munir Jiwa (Islamic Sacred Texts), Gina Hens-Piazza (Hebrew Bible/Old Testament), Eugene Park (New Testament), Jean-François Racine (New Testament), Rita Sherma (Hindu Sacred Texts), Annette Weissenrieder (New Testament)

### Historical & Cultural Studies of Religion

Deena Aranoff (Jewish Studies), Jerome Baggett (Sociology of Religion, Anthropology of Religion), Judith Berling (Comparative Religion), Kevin Burke (Christian Spirituality), Ronald Burris (History of Christianity), Thomas Cattoi (Christian Spirituality), John Endres (Christian Spirituality), Marianne Farina (Islamic Studies), Eduardo

Fernández (Art & Religion), Lisa Fullam (Christian Spirituality), Arthur Holder (Christian Spirituality; History of Christianity), Munir Jiwa (Islamic Studies; Anthropology of Religion), John Klentos (History of Christianity), James Lawrence (Christian Spirituality; History of Christianity: New Religious Movements), Bruce Lescher (Christian Spirituality), Elizabeth Liebert (Christian Spirituality), Eugene Ludwig (History of Christianity), Gary Macy (History of Christianity), Hilary Martin (History of Christianity; Comparative Religion), Mary McGann (Christian Spirituality), Scott Mitchell (Buddhist Studies), Michael Morris (Art & Religion), Ron Nakasone (Art & Religion), James Noel (History of Christianity), Christopher Ocker (History of Christianity; Comparative Religion), Richard Payne (Buddhist Studies; Comparative Religion), Bernard Schlager (History of Christianity), Rossitza Schroeder (Art & Religion), Naomi Seidman (Jewish Studies; Religion & Literature), Rita Sherma (Hindu Studies), Augustine Thompson

(History of Christianity), Randi Walker (History of Christianity), Seigen Yamaoka (Buddhist Studies), Devin Zuber (Religion and Literature; New Religious Movements)

### Theology & Ethics

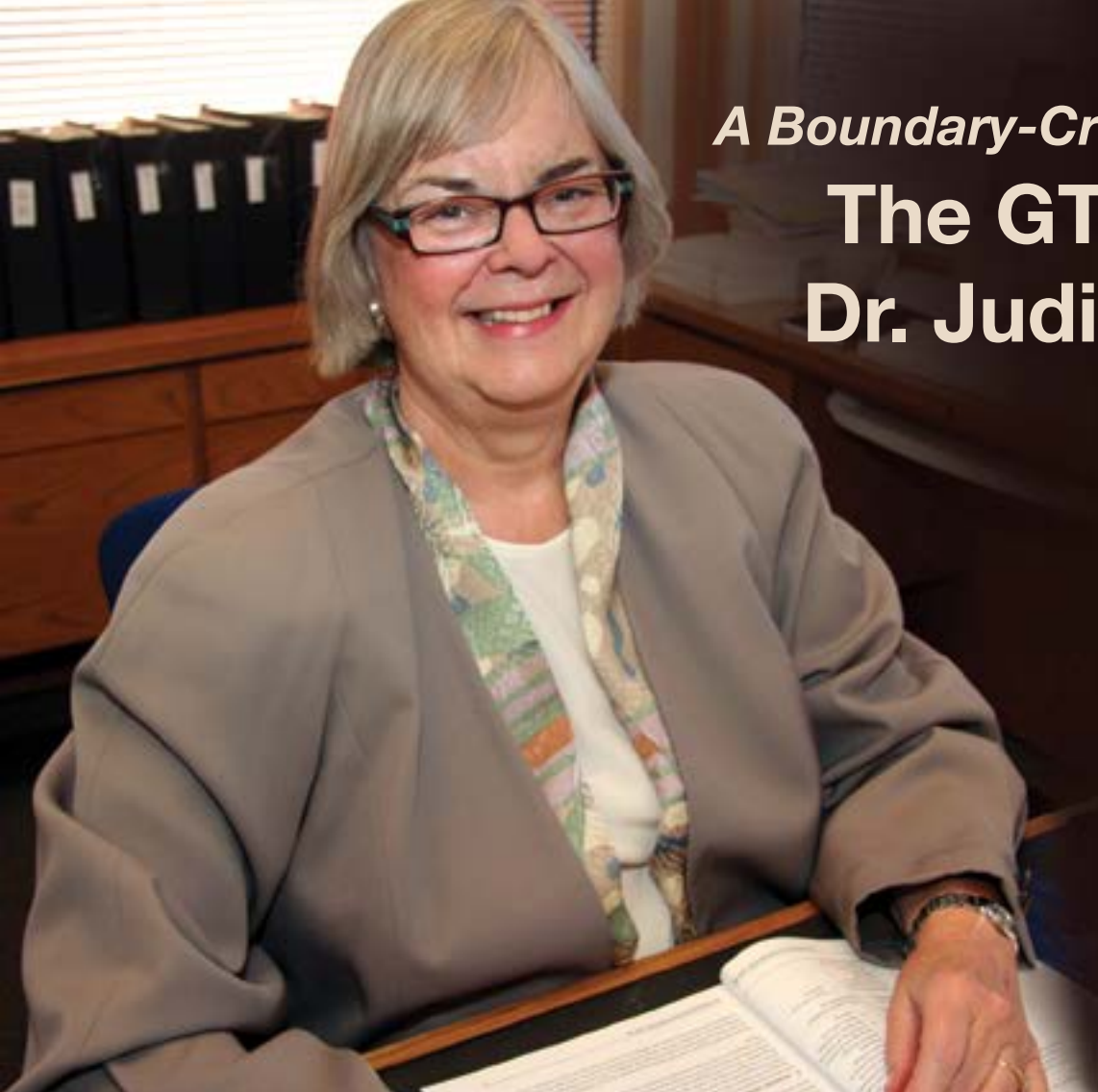
Kevin Burke (Christian Theology), Thomas Cattoi (Christian Theology; Comparative Theology), Michael Dodds (Christian Theology; Philosophical Theology; Theology & Science), Marianne Farina (Ethics; Islamic Philosophy & Theology), Eduardo Fernández (Christian Theology), Lisa Fullam (Ethics), George Griener (Christian Theology; Philosophical Theology), Jay Johnson (Christian Theology), Bryan Kromholtz (Christian Theology; Aesthetics), Gregory Love (Christian Theology), James Noel (Christian Theology; Aesthetics), Ted Peters (Christian Theology; Theology & Science), Anselm Ramelow (Christian Theology; Aesthetics; Philosophical Theology), Robert John Russell (Theology & Science; Christian Theology), Rita Sherma (Hindu



Philosophy & Theology; Comparative Theology; Ethics)

### Religion & Practice

Jana Childers (Homiletics), Eduardo Fernández (Missiology; Practical Theology), Shauna Hannan (Homiletics; Practical Theology), John Klentos (Liturgical Studies), Boyung Lee (Religious Education; Practical Theology), Gary Macy (Liturgical Studies), Mary McGann (Liturgical Studies), Ruth Meyers (Liturgical Studies), Sangyil Park (Homiletics), Mary Donovan Turner (Homiletics)



## *A Boundary-Crossing Scholar* **The GTU Honors Dr. Judith Berling**

*By Emily S. Wu*

**I**T IS AN UNDERSTATEMENT TO SAY THAT DR. JUDITH BERLING IS A PILLAR of the Graduate Theological Union. In her 28 years of service as faculty and administrator within the consortium, she has been instrumental in fostering GTU's culture of inclusiveness and appreciation for diversity.

As a scholar of Chinese religions, Dr. Berling has led many GTU students on their explorations in Daoism and Confucianism and, more importantly, the religious world where these traditions coexist and mingle. Her seminal work on the Ming dynasty religious teacher Lin Chao-en (*The Syncretic Religion of Lin Chao-en*, 1980) provides a detailed analysis of the process and methodology of Lin's intentional and careful syncretism of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. The now out-of-print case study is an important parallel model for interfaith, interreligious dialogues in our pluralistic global society.

The uniqueness of Dr. Berling's later work in religious education lies in how deeply she embodies the spiritual modes of the Chinese traditions—the openness to diverse worldviews and the emphasis on self-cultivation—while also embracing her self-identi-

ty as an Episcopalian Christian. Her most celebrated publication, *Understanding Other Religious Worlds: A Guide for Interreligious Education* (2004), outlines the process of genuine interreligious learning, a process in which boundary crossing between religious worlds lead to invaluable and irreversible transformations.

Boundary-crossing occurs on all levels of Dr. Berling's personal and professional life. When she was recruited from University of Indiana to become Dean of the Graduate Theological Union in 1987, the boundary-crossing was between nine Christian denominations that sponsored the member schools of the GTU. Later, as convener of the area of Cultural and Historical Studies of Religions and the area of Interdisciplinary Studies, the boundary-crossing has been between different religious cultures and between academic disciplines that intersected with religions. The

students Dr. Berling teaches and advises come from a wide range of ethnic, cultural, disciplinary, and professional backgrounds, and she takes joy in both guiding and learning from their individual boundary-crossings. Most recently, she is training with an acting coach and learning to cross the boundaries from one character to the next, directly embodying their contexts, experiences, personalities, and emotions.

Dr. Berling's rich experiences and clear articulation of the boundary-crossing processes has influenced the work and personal outlooks of countless students and colleagues who have worked closely with her. Her dedication and holistic participation in boundary-crossing should be recognized as one of the signature models of GTU education—a model marked by effective and inclusive methods in interdisciplinary, interreligious, and intercultural learning, teaching, and communication.

Confucian elites and Daoist practitioners, with different approaches of course, cultivate themselves to become aligned with both the heavens and the earth. In Dr. Berling's practice of always crossing new

boundaries and her willingness to be constantly transformed, one wonders if she is increasingly aligned with something essential yet indescribable in the cosmos.

On May 25-26, 2016, the Graduate Theological Union will host "Learning as Collaborative Conversation: Celebrating the Scholarship and Teaching of Judith Berling" a two-day symposium marking Dr. Berling's contribution to the global society, the academy, and our consortium. Her students, colleagues, and friends from near and far will gather to share how Dr. Berling has influenced them in their personal, educational, and professional development. We hope that all those within the GTU community who have been shaped by Dr. Berling's extraordinary scholarship over the years will plan to join us in Berkeley next May 25-26 for this celebration.

*Emily Wu (PhD, 2010) is an Instructor in the Religion Department, and Assistant Director of Community Outreach and Project Development of the Service-Learning Program, at Dominican University of California.*

*By Sophia Park*

## **My Mentor, My Teacher, Judith Berling**

If you spend much time around the GTU, you'll become accustomed to seeing Dr. Judith Berling sitting on one of the benches in front of the library, reading a student's paper with pen in hand. Her comments on students' papers are often critical and sharp, but at the same time, they are full of affection and understanding. I believe every doctoral student who has encountered Dr. Berling has appreciated her scholarship, her pedagogy, and her engaging personality. Many students got to know Dr. Berling in her classes on Pedagogy or Interdisciplinary seminars, and others encountered her in dissertation committees. As a mentor, professor, and supporter, Dr. Berling created a living tradition at GTU, which

celebrates openness to new learning and collaborative engagement with others.

Hundreds of stories about Dr. Berling could be told, but I want to share my experiences of her as my long-time mentor. When I started writing my dissertation, I asked her to be on my committee. Upon her simple "yes," I began to learn about her living pedagogy. She was, first and foremost, at my side through all the ups and downs of the process. Despite her huge workload, she was always available, and her direction was highly effective. Whenever I saw her reading student papers and writing comments, I could feel her warm mentorship. After I completed my dissertation, Dr. Berling continued to be my mentor. As a fledgling

new scholar, I had so many things to learn to survive in academia, and Dr. Berling was there for me. Even now, whenever I am frustrated with my teaching, I visit her. Often, Dr. Berling tells me how precious it is for her to have opportunities to connect with people from all over the world, beyond religious and cultural borders. At those moments, I experience how seriously she engages with her students and I am able to regain my passion for teaching, from a desire to merely imitate her.

In my experience with Dr. Berling, I have learned the power of her optimism and the trust she places in her students. No matter what subjects were brought to her Interdisciplinary Seminar, they



## Call for Poster and Multi-Media Sessions

On May 25-26, 2016, the GTU will be holding a two-day symposium celebrating the scholarship of Dr. Judith Berling. The planning committee for **Learning as Collaborative Conversation: Celebrating the Scholarship and Teaching of Judith Berling** is inviting current GTU students to submit poster and multi-media presentation proposals. The content of the proposed poster or multi-media presentations must be related to Dr. Judith Berling's academic areas of interest—pedagogy, comparative religion, or theory of interdisciplinary studies. Proposals (no longer than 500 words) must specifically describe how the presented project will engage, reflect, and build directly on Dr. Berling's work in one or more of these areas. Please specify whether you plan to present with traditional poster or with multimedia display.

The selected posters will be exhibited during the symposium, and multi-media presentations will be shown during symposium reception. Selected posters and multi-media presentations will be officially recognized. The planning committee strongly encourages creative and collaborative work, which is Dr. Berling's personal pedagogy. Inquiries and proposals should be sent to Dr. Sophia Park (park@hnu.edu) or Dr. Emily Wu (emily.wu@dominican.edu). **The deadline for proposal submission is December 10, 2015.**

were accepted with a great "yes." Based on trust, all kinds of creative academic endeavors unfolded. Her living and loving pedagogy taught me much of what I know about teaching, and I seek to bring that same spirit to the liberal arts college where I teach, with its incredibly diverse population. I believe Dr. Berling's mentorship, based on her caring personality, has been the teaching spirit of GTU.

When I heard that Dr. Berling would be retiring from full scholarship at the GTU, it was difficult to accept. My colleague Emily Wu and I immediately began to think of how we could create a memorable space for her great scholarship and teaching of interreligious pedagogy and

Chinese studies. In our imagination, we dreamed that all students who have encountered Dr. Berling would gather together, deepen her theory, and explore the application to the future of teaching spirituality, theology, and religion in a more diverse and multicultural society. The seminar honoring Dr. Berling came out of this dream. From the bottom of my heart, I want to celebrate her selfless teaching service and honor her caring mentorship. I would like to bow deeply and say, "Thank you, my teacher and mentor."

*Sophia Park SNJM (PhD, '08), is an Assistant Professor in the Religious Studies Department at Holy Names University.*



## JOIN THE GTU's *Legacy Circle*

If you value the Graduate Theological Union, as Alda Morgan and her husband Donn do, please consider becoming part of the GTU Legacy Circle by leaving a bequest to the GTU in your will or living trust. Gifts left to the GTU through a will or trust provide help sustain our critical work into the future, and entitle your estate to a federal tax charitable deduction.

Alda and Donn Morgan have been major contributors to the success of the GTU in various ways for more than four decades. Donn served as President and Dean of the Church Divinity School of the Pacific (CDSP), and was a faculty member at GTU from 1972 to 2013. Alda received her PhD in Theology and Education from the GTU in 1984, and served as the Director for Continuing Education at CDSP, in addition to working in campus ministry and with St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Berkeley.

"Donn and I are delighted to support the GTU and CDSP with estate gifts," says Alda Morgan. "And we are particularly supportive of the GTU's recent efforts to broaden participation in its life and work of other religious traditions."

We celebrate Donn and Alda Morgan for all the ways they have supported the life of the GTU over the years. We invite you to consider joining them as members of GTU's Legacy Circle. For more information about how you might include the GTU in your estate plans, please contact The Rev. Dr. Alan D. Kelchner, Vice President for Institutional Advancement, at 510-649-2425, or by email at [akelchner@gtu.edu](mailto:akelchner@gtu.edu).

# Beauty that Empowers



Lauren Guerra examines the public theology of the murals of San Diego's Chicano Park.

**G**TU doctoral candidate Lauren Frances Guerra believes beauty can be transformative. “Beauty breathes hope into communities—and as such it is source of empowerment,” she contends. “But true beauty must always be connected to justice.” This core insight about the nature of beauty has shaped Guerra’s work throughout her studies at the GTU, first as a master’s student in Theological Aesthetics, and now as she pursues her doctorate in the field of Systematic and Philosophical Theology.

Guerra is bringing together her interest in both art and Latino/a theology in a dissertation that examines the communal importance of the murals in Chicano Park in Barrio Logan, San Diego. In the 1970s, in an effort to reclaim and beautify their neighborhood after it had been invaded by freeway construction, community members and artists began the multi-year project of painting murals on and under the freeway overpass, humanizing this impersonal, industrial space. Today, Chicano Park is home to the largest collection of outdoor murals in the country.

Lauren Guerra sees the murals as a form of public theology, and her work seeks to unpack the spiritual insights of the community that are being expressed visually through the murals. “One of the things that strikes me so much about the murals is resiliency,” she reflects. “Beauty points to a sense of resilience—that despite very difficult circumstances, daily life challenges, there’s still a sense of hopefulness. The murals serve as a visual text; they’re preserving Latin American history in a visual way. There’s a sense that this is a dangerous memory

of the past; some of the murals portray figures like Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, and Cesar Chavez. They serve as a source of empowerment for people who are in the community. These are people who have gone before and who have overcome many obstacles, and inspire us to be more, to be better human beings.”

Guerra was drawn to the GTU because of the school’s “great track record of Latino/a doctoral graduates.” A number of the scholars whom Guerra’s admires and incorporates into her own work had come through the GTU, including Cecilia Gonzalez-Andrieu, who is serving on Guerra’s dissertation committee. She also appreciates the openness to creative inquiry and dialogue across lines of difference. “GTU offers a space for important conversations that might not otherwise happen, because everyone here is coming from a place of curiosity, of respect for their fellow classmates. The GTU is a place where people take their faith seriously, and the academic discipline of religion is also very rigorous.”

Guerra has also benefitted from the interdisciplinary

nature of the Graduate Theological Union. Her doctoral work builds on the insights of U.S. Latino/a theological aesthetics in which God is the most beautiful, and therefore, perspectives on God must always be paired with concepts of justice. Guerra has long been captivated by this notion of beauty and justice that she encountered while studying US Latino theology, Latin-American liberation theology, and feminist theology. “In studying those fields, I was able to find the right vocabulary for things I was experiencing or had noticed in my own faith life or within my community.”

The murals of Chicano Park and Guerra’s theological reflections highlight the importance of issues of justice and empowerment within the Latino/a American community. “It’s very hard to ignore or dismiss the power of colonization—the colonial, or the colonial past. I think many Latinos and Latin Americans still carry that in some way, and finding empowerment is really important.” For Guerra part of power of the murals in Chicano Park is their ability to inspire the community through visual representation of great individuals from its past. “These murals are an important visual documentation of the community’s self-identity and history.” She adds, “I think seeing people who look like you is really important. When you don’t have those images, you don’t feel that it’s possible to be that.”

For Guerra, the importance of seeing “people who look like you” extends beyond the murals; in fact, it is one of the primary reasons she desires to become a professor. “I noticed how few professors of color I had in my education, after high school in college and graduate programs.” Although she studied under many wonderful teachers, “I felt that very few of them fully understood where I was coming from. And, outside of Spanish Literature or Chicano Studies courses, I never heard anything about my culture, or about the history of Latin America.”

But Guerra experienced something very different when she had opportunity to take an undergraduate theology class at Loyola Marymount University under Latina theologian Michelle Gonzalez, the GTU’s 2015 Alumna of the Year. In fact, Gonzalez played a large role in inspiring Guerra to pursue graduate studies at the GTU and become an educator. Guerra fondly remembers Gonzalez saying to her, “You’re really good at this—keep going. It’s so important to have many voices represented in the academy and the classroom. We need to get there.”

Lauren Guerra’s work emphasizes the importance of crossing borders—not only in academia, but also in our physical world. Because San Diego is located on the U.S./Mexico border, Guerra’s study of the murals of Chicano Park engages political issues of immigration policy and borders. For Guerra, the realities of immigration are “very real, very fresh, and very close.” Her father immigrated to the U.S. from Ecuador in his early 20s, while her mother’s parents came from Guatemala. “I am very aware that I would have a very different life if I had grown



*“Beauty points to a sense of resilience—that despite very difficult circumstances, daily life challenges, there’s still a sense of hopefulness.”*

—LAUREN FRANCES GUERRA



up in Guatemala,” she reflects, “and I would not have the opportunities that I’ve had here for education. That’s why I’m so passionate about social justice and education, because I see the impact it’s had on my life—in a very concrete way.”

Guerra’s educational path has opened doors for her to study abroad in Madrid and to receive mentorship and a fellowship from the Hispanic Theological Initiative. She also was awarded a 2015 Forum for Theological Education Fellowship for Latino/a, Asian, and First Nation doctoral students.

Lauren Guerra hopes to give back to her community, inspire young minds, and empower the next generation of scholars by pursuing a professorial position in a college or university. She believes college is the perfect time to encourage young people to “start thinking about deeper questions: who they are in the world, their faith, what they want to contribute to this life.” For now, the Graduate Theological Union is very pleased to have an emerging scholar like Lauren Guerra contributing to the life of our community here in Berkeley.

*Suzanne E. Miller is a doctoral student in Biblical Studies and communications assistant at the GTU.*

By Doug Davidson

# From Mosques to Museums

*Sarlo Award-winner Dr. Munir Jiwa reflects on art and Muslim identity, interreligious dialogue, and the growth of the GTU's Center for Islamic Studies*



*Dr. Munir Jiwa, recipient of the GTU's Sarlo Excellence in Teaching Award*

**W**hat does it mean to be Muslim, and how does Islamic tradition find expression in contemporary life? Some might expect to find the answer to such questions by visiting a mosque or speaking with an imam. But throughout his academic career, Dr. Munir Jiwa has sought to address these questions more expansively. “Being Muslim is not just a theological commitment,” says Jiwa, “it can also be a cultural or political identity.” As a graduate student at Columbia in the late 1990s, Jiwa began studying Muslim artists as a way of thinking outside of the normative frames or expectations about where Muslims can be found. “There are many Muslims who don’t necessarily identify as religious, but are still very much Muslim in terms of identity. While working with many mosque communities throughout the United States, I also want to think about the multiple locations where Muslimness is expressed, and the diversity of those expressions. So a lot of my work has been focused on thinking about Muslims in America through artists and their art, and what shifting from mosques to museums can teach us.”

Today, as the director of the GTU’s Center for Islamic Studies (CIS), Dr. Jiwa continues to explore issues of Islamic religious and cultural identity. His effectiveness in working with diverse student scholars—including those who identify as Muslim and those from other traditions—is one reason Dr. Munir Jiwa is the recipient of the GTU’s 2015 Sarlo Excellence in Teaching Award. In announcing his selection, the award committee highlighted the exemplary manner in which Dr. Jiwa embodies interreligious sensitivity and commitment, an interdisciplinary approach in teaching, sensitivity to diversity, and

creative pedagogical methods.

Since coming to the Graduate Theological Union in 2007 to become the founding director of the CIS, Dr. Jiwa has seen significant shifts among the GTU student population in his classes. In the years immediately following the Center’s establishment, most students in Islamic Studies classes were Christian seminary students from across the GTU consortium, along with a few students pursuing Jewish Studies, and some from UC Berkeley. The GTU’s establishment of an MA concentration in Islamic Studies in 2010 brought with it a more intentional outreach

to bring more Muslim students to the GTU, and the need to offer more advanced-level classes. “We still get a wide range of students, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, and our classes are open to all. But in our more advanced classes, where many students are Muslim, we see the intra-Islamic studies diversity expressed, including scholarly debates on theories and methodologies in the study of this vast intellectual tradition. So there’s a lot more engagement with interpretations of texts and understanding them within the tradition. This makes for a very dynamic learning environment.”

Teaching amid the diversity of the GTU can be a challenge, especially in today’s charged political climate. “We all work from our own traditions and assumptions, and we tend to understand the richness and complexity of our own traditions. But when studying other traditions, we can forget that they are just as complex and diverse.” Jiwa’s interreligious experience includes two years with the Pluralism Project at Harvard University while a graduate student at the Divinity School in the mid-1990s, and working internationally with Religions for Peace from 1996 to 1998 in both Sarajevo and Sierra Leone. Jiwa says that those experiences “completely changed how I thought about religion, dialogue, and justice, and how we engage with others in a conflict situation.” Such training, along with other interreligious work throughout the Middle East and Japan, helps him remain mindful that the questions one might ask or the approaches one might take within one tradition are not necessarily the most relevant to another tradition.

Jiwa was in the midst of his doctoral work in anthropology in New York City at the time of the 9/11 attacks. Up until that point, his project had focused on how artists

who were Muslim were navigating art and identity in the New York art worlds. “I’d done all this preparatory field work where I was looking at artists through ethnic and cultural categories, national categories, gendered categories, and art-historical categories. But after 9/11,

*“My pedagogical commitment is to increase religious and cultural literacy by mediating and translating across seeming divides, and by studying how sacred texts and traditions are continually interpreted and lived.”*

they became *Muslim artists*. It was a political category and a minority classification that was largely created after 9/11. So that’s what I ended up studying: What was this transition to becoming a ‘Muslim artist’ and what did it mean to be identified as such by the art worlds, and how was this expressed in the artists’ narratives and in their art?

Many artists found that the public perceptions of Islam changed the way their work was received. “An Egyptian painter might think of herself as an Arab artist, or a woman artist, or an abstract expressionist; but in post-9/11 America, she also was identified as a Muslim artist,” Jiwa reflects. “She could show her art work in an African art exhibit and people will ask one set of questions. But when she exhibits the same work in a Muslim artist’s context, people will ask a whole different set of questions.”

Political associations also shape the classroom context for Islamic studies today. “Whenever

you’re trying to teach the Islamic tradition in the context of current affairs, the discussions are often very political. Students come with contemporary, political, media-driven questions that then get projected onto the entire history of a tradition. The constant joy and challenge of teaching is that you’re confronting contemporary questions. Students are trying to make meaning of this today, and my pedagogical commitment is to increase religious and cultural literacy by mediating and translating across seeming divides, and by studying how sacred texts and traditions are continually interpreted and lived.”

Dr. Jiwa believes the vibrancy of the GTU educational experience is shaped by the religious commitment of its students: “Practice of faith actually matters here at the GTU. People can bring their faith into the classroom. So, for example, when I teach about modernity and secularism, it is very refreshing to draw on the positive role of Islam and Muslims in society. The kind of interdisciplinary, interreligious, and global approach within and across traditions that happens at the GTU is education at its best.”

The questions he encounters in his daily work with students at the GTU take Munir Jiwa back to his own days as a graduate student. “The reason I applied to divinity school was that I was interested in questions of religion, both academically and in terms of practice. I was asking what it would mean to engage in an intellectual search of the Islamic tradition, alongside personal interests in the immense diversity of my own religion, and in the context of other religious traditions. So I feel like I have come full circle in my teaching here at the GTU—and that makes this a very fulfilling place for me.”

*Doug Davidson is the Director of Communications at the GTU.*

by James Lawrence

# GTU Celebrates the Center

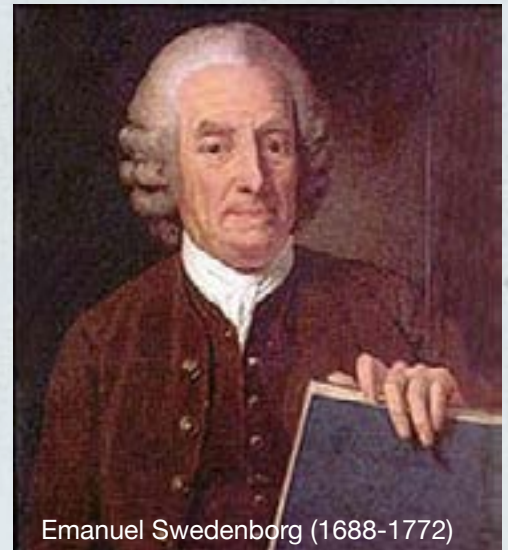
## Longstanding School Launches New Era

**T**HE CENTER FOR SWEDENBORGIAN STUDIES (CSS), a graduate program for religious training and scholarship that has operated continuously since 1866 in four successive locations, recently became the GTU's newest Center of Distinction. CSS provides academic and vocational studies for students affiliated with or interested in the Swedenborgian tradition, functions as a think-tank for Swedenborgian studies globally, and is the official seminary of the Swedenborgian Church of North America. The Center's offerings are multi-disciplinary, emphasizing theology, the arts, spirituality, history, and biblical studies, while also giving significant attention to interreligious engagement, cultural studies, and personal spiritual formation.

The Center seeks to develop Swedenborgian studies in both a ministerial-formation framework as well as cultural and historical frameworks. Though these dual objectives will routinely involve fruitful intersections, a crisp distinction between them is planned. Many of the vocational students served by CSS are in schools and programs elsewhere in the world and are supported via distance learning with occasional local intensive courses, whereas support for students in the MA and PhD programs at the GTU will occur locally.

The Center features three core full-time scholars: Devin Zuber, Assistant Professor of American Studies, Literature, and Swedenborgian Studies; Rebecca Esterson, Scholar-in-Training, Ph.D. Candidate at Boston University; and James Lawrence, Dean of CSS and Assistant Professor of Spirituality and Historical Studies. Additional adjunct faculty in practical theology support students preparing for vocational ministry paths.

For more than a century, Swedenborgian scholarship in seminary settings has related Swedenborgian thought to the standard array of classical and practical fields of theological education, including theology, biblical studies, ethics, spirituality, and pastoral care. Yet the approach of the GTU's Center for Swedenborgian Studies includes opportunities for scholarship in a wide range of additional fields, such as literature, art and architecture, science and spirituality, pluralism, and New Religious Movements.



Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772)

Swedenborgian thought draws on the spiritual insights of the Swedish Christian mystic Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772). The tradition that has developed from Swedenborg's work has followed two distinct channels—one via Western artists, poets, novelists, and philosophers and the other via several sectarian church movements. As to the first channel, Swedenborg's most significant cultural influence can be located in nineteenth-century England, Germany, and the United States, as his metaphysics was appropriated broadly by Romance writers and artists, Transcendentalists, Spiritualists, utopian communitarian groups, and healing theorists, as well as by Christian clergy and laypersons of many denominations.

The denominational tradition that arose from Swedenborg's influence began developing within a generation of his death. Though Swedenborg confined his reforming activities to a largely anonymous ministry of publication, a church movement in England devoted to his vision of Christianity arose among enthusiastic readers of mostly Anglican, Methodist, and Baptist backgrounds. A separatist controversy in 1787 led to a new ecclesiastical structure that was distinctly Swedenborgian: the General Conference of the New Jerusalem. Other Swedenborgian denominations formed during the subsequent century in the United States, Canada, Switzerland, and Australia; over the second half of the twentieth century organized Swedenborgianism took root with some vigor in sub-Saharan Af-

# for Swedenborgian Studies

rica, Japan, and South Korea. Today, five Swedenborgian denominations worldwide total 60,000 members. The oldest Swedenborgian denomination in the United States—the General Convention of the New Jerusalem, formally organized in 1817—is the tradition connected to the Center for Swedenborgian Studies.

Swedenborgianism embodies the commitment to interreligious dialog that is a hallmark of the GTU. The landmark 1893 World Parliament of Religions was the brainchild of a Swedenborgian jurist, Charles Carroll Bonney. In his keynote address at the Parliament, Bonney lifted up the ideal of an “absolute respect” toward all traditions, quoting passages from several of Swedenborg’s works. The first Buddhist publication in the United States, *The Buddhist Ray*, was conceived and published in 1888 by a Swedenborgian minister, Herman Vetterling (1849-1931), who later changed his name to Philangi Dasa. The Zen Buddhist scholar widely regarded as bringing Zen to the West, D.T. Suzuki (1870-1966), considered Swedenborg as an especially appropriate dialog partner with his tradition, and translated several of Swedenborg’s works into Japanese.

Swedenborg and his successors have also made historically significant contributions to the discourse between science and religion. Swedenborg produced approximately 150 written works in at least a dozen science disciplines, and the sheer quantity and breadth of his work in natural science analysis is of note. The Swedish Nobel laureate Svante Arrhenius has detailed Swedenborg’s importance in the history of astronomy, while Princeton’s Charles Gross lists Swedenborg as a potent figure in the history of anatomical research. Swedenborg’s work on anatomy and consciousness remains relevant to such contemporary topics as Altered States of Consciousness (ASCs), Near-Death Experiences, and the mind-body problem.

The Library and Archives of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies, located in Holbrook Hall at Pacific School of Religion, contains a wealth of materials for research and scholarship in all areas of Swedenborgian studies. In addition to the complete works of Emanuel Swedenborg in all translations, one can explore



*Swedenborgianism embodies the commitment to interreligious dialog that is a hallmark of the GTU.*

monographs, pamphlets, periodicals, and secondary research materials by and about authors, artists, and thinkers influenced by Swedenborgian thought. For example, the collection features indexed notebooks containing more than 200 original items of correspondence to a prominent nineteenth-century intellectual sometimes called George I:

George Bush (1796-1859), an ancestor of presidents George H. W. Bush and George W. Bush. Other archival materials include a large traveling trunk of Henry James, Sr., with his collection of Swedenborg’s works annotated in his own hand, a pair of oil desk lamps that once adorned Swedenborg’s writing desk in Stockholm, and rare first editions of many of Swedenborg’s works. All books and monographs have been added to GRACE, the GTU library’s online catalog.

CSS hosts occasional lunch conversations, lectures, and public educational discussions on a broad array of topics connected to aspects of Swedenborgiana. The Center also produces *Studia Swedenborgiana*, which published as a print journal from 1974-2006 and continues as an online journal.

*James Lawrence (PhD, '12) is Dean of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies and Assistant Professor of Spirituality and Historical Studies at the GTU.*



GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION

2400 Ridge Road  
Berkeley, California 94709

510/649-2400



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*"I love the GTU, because it builds religious scholars who understand our responsibility to speak to the critical issues of the day, and who insist that the preferential option for the poor must shape and organize our work."*

— Dr. Laurie Zoloth (PhD, '93)

2014 President, American Academy of Religion

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## Upcoming Events

### 2015 Distinguished Faculty Lecture

Dr. William O'Neill lectures on "A Terrible Beauty: Reimagining Human Rights."

**November 5, 2015, 7:00 pm**

Pacific School of Religion Chapel, 1798 Scenic Avenue, Berkeley

### "Disgraced" at the Berkeley Repertory Theatre with GTU Panel

GTU faculty members Munir Jiwa, Naomi Seidman, and Som Pourfarzaneh will lead a panel discussion following this Pulitzer-prize winning play about Islamophobia and the role of faith.

**November 18, 2015, 7:00 pm**

Berkeley Repertory Roda Theatre, 2015 Addison Street, Berkeley

### GTU Reception at AAR/SBL Annual Meeting

Connect with GTU faculty, students, alumni, and administration, and celebrate our 2015 Alumna of the Year.

**November 21, 2015, 7:00 pm**

Savannah Ballroom A, Westin Peachtree Plaza, Atlanta GA

### Learning as Collaborative Conversation: Celebrating the Scholarship and Teaching of Judith Berling

A two-day symposium honoring Dr. Berling's scholarship and 28 years of service to the GTU.

**May 25-26, 2016**

2400 Ridge Rd., Berkeley

All events are open to the public, unless noted.  
Visit [www.gtu.edu/events](http://www.gtu.edu/events) for more information.