

An Exploratory Session is a complete prearranged session that provides a platform for a group of

**A17–332**

**Hindu Theology of Love**

**Saturday, 4:00 PM–6:30 PM**

**McCormick Place West – 175C\***

Graham Schweig, Christopher Newport University, Presiding

The successful wildcard session on Hindu theology organized at last year's AAR conference beautifully addressed the rationale for having a group at the AAR that focuses specifically on the theology of Hindu traditions. This neglected and very rich area of scholarship now continues to find a vibrant voice, as reflected in this second round of in-depth academic papers. Here we propose a session that presents a range of carefully crafted theological studies that explore fresh perspectives on love as the theme. Five scholars propose textual, dialogical, iconographic, and architectural approaches to framing the question of the human–divine relationship. Drawing on the latest research, scholars will discuss this relationship, variously conceived as "love" (bhakti), "grace" (prasāda), and "faith" (śraddhā). By exploring the different ways in which the question of love is framed in the classical and vernacular traditions and in myth, art, and poetry, this panel explores a range of its theological manifestations in India.

Karen Pechilis, Drew University

*Theology Beyond the Social in the Poems of a Female Bhakti Poet-Saint*

Vishwa Adluri, Hunter College

*Ascensio ad Deum: Garuḍa and Onto-Theo-logic Praxis in the Mahābhārata*

Alf Hiltebeitel, George Washington University

*The Umā-Maheśvara Saṅgīyā and the Hindu Theology of the Mahābhārata*

Isabelle Ratié, Universität Leipzig  
*Polemics, Nondualism, and Love in Utpaladeva*

Vasudha Narayanan, University of Florida  
*Building a Vaishnavite Theology: Angkor Wat and the Churning of the Ocean of Milk Story*

Arvind Sharma, McGill University, Responding

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**A18–232**  
**Irreligion, Secularism, and Social Change**  
**Sunday, 1:00 PM–2:30 PM**  
**McCormick Place West – 178A\***

Per Smith, Boston University, Presiding

Scholars of religion from a variety of disciplines are increasingly focusing their attention on the relationship between the religious and the secular. So what would a sustained discussion of "the secular" look like within the American Academy of Religion; and moreover, how would such a discussion be relevant to religious studies? This exploratory session seeks to provide modest answers to those questions by looking at specific examples. On the heels of the year of the protestor, the session explores how "the secular" is implicated in and affected by social transformations. How did social change make the secular possible? How have the demands of twentieth century social movements shaped emergent forms of secularism? How do contemporary social movements provide fertile soil for secular theologies of resistance? And how are contemporary irreligious identities evolving within a social context that considers them deviant?

Daniel Silliman, University of Heidelberg  
*The Possibility of Secularity and the Material History of Fiction*

Petra Klug, University of Leipzig

*The Dynamics of Standardization and Deviance Using the Way U.S. Society Deals with Atheists as an Example*

Jordan Miller, Salve Regina University

*Occupying Absence: Political Resistance and Secular Theology*

Jonathan VanAntwerpen, Social Science Research Council, Responding

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## **A18–233**

### **Late Antiquity East**

**Sunday, 1:00 PM–2:30 PM**

**McCormick Place North – 135\***

Jorunn Buckley, Bowdoin College, Presiding

Scholars who work in "Late Antiquity East" have long been somewhat homeless in the AAR /SBL. There is no Zoroastrian slot anymore, nor a Manichaean one. This session aims to gather interested fellow-scholars to discuss how we can establish a new unit in the AAR for our interrelated fields of study. We are not Bible-oriented, but work in areas such as eastern forms of early Christianity, Manichaeism, Zoroastrianism, late Babylonian religion, Jewish eastern traditions, and Mandaeism.

#### Panelists:

James McGrath, Butler University

Naomi Koltun-Fromm, Haverford College

Yuhan Vevaina, Stanford University

Charles Häberl, Rutgers University

Zsuzsanna Gulácsi, Northern Arizona University

John Reeves, University of North Carolina, Charlotte

Alexander Treiger, Dalhousie University

Jason BeDuhn, Northern Arizona University

Jennifer Hart, Stanford University

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**A18–330**  
**The Affective Turn in Religious Studies**  
**Sunday, 5:00 PM–6:30 PM**  
**McCormick Place West – 178B\***

Mary-Jane Rubenstein, Wesleyan University, Presiding

Across the humanities, a number of disciplines have recently undergone what Patricia Clough has called the "affective turn," a new interest in the political, cultural, and social modes of embodied, precognitive forces. Emerging out of the late Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's poststructuralist reading of psychologist Silvan Tomkins, "affect theory" orients the humanities to the priority of affect over drives, cognition, and language. In the words of Sedgwick and her collaborator Adam Frank, there is a "crucial knowledge" missed when linguistic constructs are taken to be the "final word" of embodied experience without reference to prelinguistic emotions. This session considers the significance of the affective turn for religious studies, investigating how affect theory can be used to ask new questions from different perspectives within the field.

Donovan Schaefer, Le Moyne College

*What Does It Feel Like to Be an Atheist? Affective Disciplines of Belief and Disbelief*

M. Gail Hamner, Syracuse University

*Religion in the Public Sphere: The Image-Flesh Assemblage of Our National Imaginary*

Abigail Kluchin, Columbia University

*Irreducible Intensities: Affect Theory as Unwitting Theology*

Jenna Supp-Montgomerie, University of North Carolina

*Quilting Points: How Religion Makes Meaning in American Globalization*

*\*Room locations are subject to change. Please check your Program Book onsite to confirm the location when you arrive at the Annual Meeting.*