

DEPARTMENT OF CATHOLIC STUDIES

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2021

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From the Chair

Welcome to another issue of our Newsletter from the Department of Catholic Studies—with all gratitude to Dr. June Ann Greeley for organizing, reporting, editing, and producing our Catholic Studies Newsletter.

First, as the University went online last March and introduced SHU Flex this past Fall, we owe a big thanks to Dr. Dan Rober and all the CIT Faculty for making those changes a great success because we maintained our synchronous CIT seminar of conversation and connection. Students applauded the ability to stay connected with their peers in real time, being able to discuss great books, big ideas, and the even bigger events that were happening in their lives. Also, a big thanks goes to Dr. Jillian Plummer and Dr. Charlie Gillespie who hosted CIT Connections during the Winter Intercession with a very lively and very well attended Open Mic Night and a Holiday Film.

We are pleased that this past summer the Department offered a six part **"Heart Challenges Hate"** series on the racial issues occurring in America this past year. The series, titled "The Legacy

of America's Original Sin" addressed the topics of White Privilege, Racism and the Church, a discussion of '13th' Ana Duvernay's award winning documentary, a frank and full discussion, "Let's Talk About Race," featuring SHU Alumni, members of the University's Board of Trustees, and of course our CIT faculty. Our CIT faculty also offered a special HCH colloquium on "Catholics and Race" and one on "Catholics and The Vote" just before the Presidential election. This special Heart Challenges Hate series is available on YouTube.

In response to the University's aim to address issues of race, diversity, and inclusivity in the curriculum and across the University community, the CIT Faculty have incorporated an entire curricular component in CIT 202 on Race, Racism, and the CIT and Race. The Faculty spent much of the Fall involved in faculty development workshops on teaching about race and racism in the college classroom.

The Department was also awarded a Lilly Fellows Grant to offer university-

wide faculty workshops on teaching about race in the college classroom. In conjunction with CEIT and led by Dr. Bill Yousman, the Department offered three faculty workshops during the Winter Intercession and plans to offer more during May, following Commencement.

Our biggest event this past year was our **Catholic Intellectual Tradition Conference — “Challenges and Opportunities for the Catholic University in the 21st Century”** which was supported by a grant from the Lilly Fellows Organization, and our partnership with Seton Hall University. What a success! We had six very notable keynote speakers including Fr. Greg Kalscheur, Dean of Arts and Sciences at Boston College, Fr. Dennis Holtschneider, President of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, and Dr. Carolyn Woo, Purdue University. We hosted 80 panel presentations with representatives from Catholic Universities across the country, including the University of Notre Dame, Marquette University, Catholic University, Loyola of Chicago, Fordham, Georgetown Villanova, Boston College, Holy Cross and many others, and over 270 people attended and participated in the Conference! Again all thanks to Dr. Brent Little and Dr. Dan Rober for coordinating this conference and to Jason Ebert and Unal Sutman for making the Conference happen virtually. Also, many thanks to all our CIT faculty who moderated the panels and keynote talks.

We are now excited to launch our new endowed Center for Catholic Studies, which in conjunction with *The Human Journey* Colloquia Series is offering this Spring 2021, a superlative and extraordinary set of renowned speakers

including **Rev. James Martin, S.J.,** Distinguished Professor from Fordham University, **Sr. Elizabeth Johnson,** as well as Dr. Catherine Mooney and Dr. Andrew Prevot, both from Boston College, Dr., Nichole Flores from Villanova and Dr Nancy Dallavalle from Fairfield University. **The focus of this series is social justice** including topics on the LGBTQ community, Latinx and Black Americans and the struggle for liberation, Sex, Gender, and Sexuality, and Environmental Justice. Please see the insert in this newsletter highlighting these talks. Thanks here to Dr. Chelsea King and Dr. Charlie Gillespie for their efforts in bringing many of these speakers to our campus.

Finally, we are so excited to welcome new faculty---Dr. Chelsea King, Dr. Jewelle Bickel, and Mr. Brian McLaughlin, and to welcome back Professor Mary Bauer! Please see the section in this Newsletter about our new faculty.

The Department of Catholic Studies looks forward to the New Year and prays for all to stay safe and well.

Michelle Loris
Chair





Meet the Faculty of Catholic Studies

Charles (Charlie) Gillespie, PhD



As well as being a dedicated academic, Dr. Gillespie is also a theatre-maker. He ran a middle and high school summer musical theatre camp and still works with *Theatrum Sacrum*, an experimental troupe that asks transcendent questions with ridiculous drama. He also loves to cook and play board games of all sorts, from classics like *RISK* and *Scrabble* to contemporary greats like *Settlers of Catan* and *Pandemic*.

Dr. Gillespie recently completed his Ph.D. in Religious Studies from the University of Virginia with a dissertation titled: "Drama Alone is Credible: Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Interpretive Work of Theatre and Performance in Twentieth-Century Christian Thought." He has long been fascinated by the connections between philosophy, theology, theatre, and religion and how performance, ritual, and stories move people to action: to change, to remember, to love. He is also interested in why religious communities use these tools to communicate, understand, worship, and question God together, which interest led to the interdisciplinary world of aesthetics, critical theory, and hermeneutics (the fancy

term for theories of interpretation.

Currently, Dr. Gillespie is the co-editor of a special issue of the journal *Religions* on "Religion and Theatrical Drama"

(https://www.mdpi.com/journal/religions/special_issues/Religion_Drama) and he is hoping to transform his dissertation into a first book.

Dr. Gillespie regards the CIT as one of Sacred Heart's lay charisms and he admits that being at SHU has changed how he thinks about the ideas of the CIT. He states that the Catholic Intellectual Tradition provides him with a set of resources to grapple with reality which is also the value in asking SHU students to encounter and join this ongoing conversation. He argues that some questions do not have answers that will translate to a binary yes or no but that works in the classroom since such questions invite students to become open to new and differing perspectives. For Dr. Gillespie, the CIT praise of the universal in the particular, of a world open to wonder, can be something really transformative for students.

Dr. Gillespie champions seminar pedagogy and all forms of "teaching through discussion" because of the unpredictable interplay between shared texts and students' responses. He has been encouraged by the insight of SHU students and their willingness to share questions, ideas, hopes and dreams. He is hopeful that his students will take away from his classes something that they remember how to value, whether a connection to a text, a realization of the dynamic between freedom and responsibility, or how to live a good life. He hopes his students leave his classes with a hunger for more conversations about meaning, with a desire to ask more questions and with a sense of ownership of their own educational experience.

Jillian Plummer, PhD



Dr. Jillian Plummer hails from Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, enjoys eating peach ice cream as well as tap dancing!

She completed her Ph.D. in American History at the University of Notre Dame, where her dissertation research focused on Catholic sisters' encounter with liberation theology in Peru and their reinterpretation of that praxis back in the United States. Before living in South Bend, she earned a Master's in Modern British and European History from Mansfield College, University of Oxford, and a Bachelor of Arts from College of the Holy Cross. Her scholarly interests are located at the intersection of women's/gender history, the study of the U.S. empire, and religious history. Dr. Plummer states that one of the most exciting aspects of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition is its emphasis on how the tradition is an evolving and vibrant tradition, which includes "official church documents" and writing by people whose lives expand the boundaries of how we think about that tradition (like Dorothy Day, Sister Helen Prejean, Father Gregory Boyle, Gustavo Gutierrez). At a critical moment in the lives of students, the CIT seminars create a space for them to reflect on what matters most to them and why. She sees the seminar as an opportunity for students to grow through listening. In her experience, students learn by hearing the "truth" in their peers' "witness". By the end of the seminar course, Dr. Plummer hopes students

will have enjoyed the time reflecting on the unanswered questions of the human experience, what gives their life meaning, and how they might use what they are passionate about to contribute to the common good.

Emily Bryan, PhD



Dr. Emily Bryan admits that she is a "big theater nerd" and total animal lover!

She says that she has more animals than family members: her two 'human kids', Ben who is 16 and Phoebe who is 12, are outnumbered by the family animals: 2 dogs, 2 cats, 3 goats, 4 ducks and 17 chickens!

Dr. Bryan earned her PhD in English from Northwestern, an MA in English from Brown, an MA in Shakespeare Studies from the Shakespeare Institute in Stratford-Upon-Avon. Her BA is from Harvard where she was an English major. She claims a life-long love of the theater and Shakespeare is her particular favorite because of all the possibilities of interpretation. Her other scholarly interests center around historical performance, labor conditions, the performance of gender and now, more recently, new technologies of performance and pedagogy in theater and literature. Dr. Bryan regards the CIT seminar as a place where students can read writers who are thinking deeply about big questions of humanity and also take a journey with those writers, reflecting on their own journeys as well. Everyone can benefit from contemplating their

place in the world and their connections to other human beings. The CIT class offer students the space to make those connections to each other and to writers who have come before. Dr. Bryan truly hopes her students come away from CIT feeling that they are loved, not only by her, but by a tradition and history of humans (from Plato to Dorothy Day) who wanted them to live good and meaningful lives. Dr. Bryan has been very influenced by Henri Nouwen's idea of the hospitable classroom and so she believes strongly in the pedagogy of kindness, and I think that the seminar format allows the students to "see" each other, in a way that a traditional lecture class would not.

Chelsea King, PhD



Dr. Chelsea King completed her Ph.D. in Systematic Theology at the University of Notre Dame. Her dissertation focused on how the Christian tradition has interpreted the meaning of Jesus' death as a sacrifice for sins. She has always wrestled with how to make sense of the crucifixion as a source of salvation, especially because she is committed to the belief that God is a God of love and forgiveness. She recently presented a paper at the American Academy of Religion on the work of Rene Girard and feminist theologians who have critiqued the

cross as salvific and she is planning to write my first book on this topic.

Dr. King decided to become a professor because of a professor. Her dedication and commitment to the pursuit of critical thinking really helped Dr. King to fall in love with philosophy and theology. Dr. King believe that teaching is not about trying to infuse content into students but rather providing students with opportunities to re-think assumptions or dive deeper into their core beliefs. Thus, teaching courses grounded in the Catholic Intellectual Tradition has been valuable to Dr. King because it has allowed her the chance to engage in meaningful conversations with students about their religious and intellectual beliefs.

Dr. King admits that she has been constantly surprised by her students. In the first semester here at SHU, she taught four of the same courses with the same readings (CIT 201), but she had different conversations with each class. She is constantly delighted by how intelligent, unique, and curious our students are.

For Dr. King, teaching CIT in the CS department is a dream come true. Not only does she get to talk about the ideas that have shaped who she is today, but she also has the opportunity to have conversations with others about those ideas. Dr. King believes that here is a tremendous value that the CIT brings to students, whether or not they are Catholic. Dr. King regards her work in the CIT seminars not to catechize or proselytize, but to invite students into a dialogue with some of the most curious and thought-provoking thinkers of a particular religious tradition. The CIT claims to be relevant to all today, regardless of religious affiliation, and that is because it asks questions that continue to be fundamental to who we are as humans. Her hope for her students is that they walk away with a sense

of purpose in their own lives, a broader understanding of the world, and a renewed commitment to the common good.

Department Scholarship: Publications and Conference Presentations



June-Ann Greeley (Languages and Literature)

Publications:

- Book chapter: "The Medieval Spirituality of 'Purity of Heart' and 'Heart-Piercing Goodness' in Selected Works of St. Anselm of Canterbury" in *The Feeling Heart in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Meaning, Embodiment, and Making*. Edited by Barclay, Katie and Reddan, Bronwyn. DeGruyter, 2020.

Conferences:

- Paper presented: "To the Sacred from the Wild: Liminal Place as Transformative Space in Early Medieval Irish Texts". American Conference for Irish Studies, Boston Park Plaza, Boston MA, March 20-23, 2019.
- Paper presented: 'I'll Make a (New) Man out of You': Alcuin of York and the Christian Turn in Masculinity". Conference (virtual) University of Toronto: "Masculinities in the Premodern World: Continuities, Change, and Contradictions". 13-15 November 2020.
- Paper presented: "Epistolary Self: Autobiography and (the Paston) Letters". Conference (virtual) Freie Universität, Berlin: "Autobiography before

Autobiography (1400-1700). 13-14 November 2020.

Joan Kelly (Catholic Studies)

- Delivered a major address to the Synod delegates of the Archdiocese of Hartford on the topic "History of Catholicism in Connecticut" which the Archdiocese has posted online and can be accessed by googling Dr. Joan Kelly and the above title "History of Catholicism in Connecticut." The theme of the Synod was "Go Make Disciples" and was convoked in honor of the 175th anniversary celebration of the Archdiocese of Hartford, 2018-2020.
- Presented at St. Pius X Church in Fairfield a talk titled "What Did Vatican II Say About the Church?" The focus was on *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, a key document of the Second Vatican Council which emphasized the role of the laity. The lecture can be accessed online by googling Dr. Joan Kelly, St. Pius X Fairfield, "What Did Vatican II Say About the Church?"

Brent Little (Catholic Studies)

Publications

- "A Charity of Mutuality and Hospitality: L'Arche's Witness to Catholic Theology." *Horizons: The Journal of the College Theology Society* 47, no. 1 (June 2020): 46-68.
- "Levertov's Ironic God of Hospitality." *In This Need to Dance/This Need to Kneel: Denise Levertov and the Poetics of Faith*. Edited by Michael P. Murphy and Melissa Bradshaw, 83-95. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2019.
- "Analogical Language and Religious Ritual in C. S. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces*." *Religion and Literature* 50, no. 1-2 (2018): 113-34. [Published: Fall 2019]
- "An Anonymous Christian along the Ganges? Grace and Symbol in Rahner's Theology and Endo's *Deep River*." *Philosophy and Theology* 30, no.

- 2 (2018): 575-600. [Published: Summer 2019]
- "Hatred between Belief and Faith: Conversion in *The End of the Affair* and *Till We Have Faces*." *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 22, no. 2 (Spring 2019): 39-63.

Conferences (Little, cont'd)

- "Patterns of Belief in Contemporary Short-Stories." Catholic Imagination Conference: The Future of the Catholic Literary Tradition. Loyola University Chicago, September 19, 2019.
- "The Reluctant Convert: Endo's *The Samurai* amidst the Birth of Global Catholicism." College Theology Society, Annual Convention. Topic Section: Arts, Media, Literature, and Religion. Holy Cross College, Notre Dame, IN, May 31, 2019.
- "'Holy Places are Dark Places': The Limits of Religious Language in Lewis's *Till We Have Faces*." International Meeting of the Conference on Christianity and Literature. The Problem with God: Christianity and Literature in Tension. Harvard Divinity School, Cambridge, MA, March 29, 2019.
- "Rahner's 'Love of Neighbor' and the Hospitality of L'Arche." New England & Canadian Maritimes Regional Meeting of the American Academy of Religion (NEMAAR). Tufts University, Medford, MA, March 22, 2019.

Jerry Reid (Anthropology and Sociology)

Publications:

- *Chief Thunderwater: An Unexpected Indian in Unexpected Places*, monograph which will be published by the University of Oklahoma Press in January of 2021.
- "Beadwork and Border Lines: Kahnawà:ke Women Craftworkers and the Assertion of Rotinonshiónni Border Crossing Rights in the Late Nineteenth Century," which has been accepted for publication in a

forthcoming issue of *Iroquoia: The Journal of the Conference on Iroquois Research*.

Activities:

- August 2020: a featured guest on a podcast episode entitled "Reverberations of Resistance," which focused on the political activities and influence of Chief Thunderwater on Indigenous resistance and Haudenosaunee political revitalization in Canada in the early twentieth century. The episode was part of *Indigenous 150+*, a podcast series focused on Indigenous issues in Canada.
- September 2020: worked with the Kanien'kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitíóhkwa Cultural Center in the Mohawk community of Kahnawà:ke in Quebec to initiate the "Kahnawà:ke Beadwork Oral History Project". The goal of the project is to document through oral history the historical development and economic, social, political, and cultural importance of beadwork in Kahnawà:ke.



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FEBRUARY 17, 2 P.M.

Rev. James Martin, S.J.
America Magazine

Building a Bridge: Reaching out to LGBTQ Catholics



FEBRUARY 24, 7 P.M.

Catherine Mooney, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Church History, Boston College
Catholic Women on Racial, Environmental and Gender Justice



MARCH 17, 2 P.M.

Nichole Flores, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Religious Studies, University of Virginia
Our Lady of Guadalupe: The Art of Solidarity



MARCH 31, 2 P.M.

Andrew Prevot, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Theology, Boston College
Experiencing God in the Struggle for Liberation



APRIL 7, 7 P.M.

Nancy Dallavalle, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Religious Studies, Fairfield University
Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Catholic Thought: A Proposal



APRIL 14, 7 P.M.

Sr. Elizabeth A. Johnson, C.S.J.
Distinguished Professor Emerita of Theology, Fordham University
Annual Bergoglio Lecture: Reshaping Our Imagination of Salvation

To join these virtual lectures, visit: www.sacredheart.edu/csspeakerseries