

Summaries of Doctoral Dissertations

■ Jennifer Haasis De La Guardia [PhD]

“Recte Perficitur”: Sermons to the Jews and the Rhetoric of Conversion (1572–1585)

“Recte Perficitur” examines the rhetoric of Jewish conversion during the institutionalization of the Roman Catholic practice of preaching to the Jews under Pope Gregory XIII (1572–1585). The institutionalization of the compulsory conversion sermons to the Jews (*predica coattiva*) coincided with the first publications of sermons delivered to the Jews on the Italian Peninsula. Focusing primarily on the sermon volumes of two preachers, this study considers how the sermons to the Jews, the papacy, and an English priest named Gregory Martin (d. 1582) articulated the Catholic mission to the Jews and Jewish conversion. It argues that both the official rhetoric emanating from the papal pronouncements and the sermon rhetoric demonstrate that orthopraxy was the foremost goal of the institution as well as the Church’s official measure of the institution’s success.

The first half of the dissertation contextualizes the practice of preaching to the Jews. It contributes a historiographical essay for the field and provides revisions to the standard narrative for the *predica coattiva* under Gregory XIII. A close reading of the papal bulls sanctioning the practice and Gregory Martin’s *Roma Sancta* (1581) highlights the theological rationale for the establishment of the practice. These texts demonstrate a reform of the language regarding Jewish mission and a focus on the correct action of the Church and the preacher in the conversion of the Jews. While in constant tension with tangible success (i.e. Jewish conversions), the rhetoric for preaching to the Jews served as a reminder that the attention of the Church and the preacher ought to remain on conversions “*recte perficitur*” (rightly accomplished), a qualification expressed by Pope Gregory I (590–604) in 591.

The second half of “*Recte Perficitur*” focuses on the rhetoric of Jewish conversion conveyed in the sermon volumes of Evangelista Marcellino (d. 1593) and Faustino Tasso (d. 1597), two Franciscans. An analysis of Tasso’s *Venti ragionamenti* is introduced to scholarship for the first time here. Close readings of Marcellino’s *Sermoni quindici* and Tasso’s *Venti ragionamenti* highlight the way in which the preachers framed their series and the language of their appeals

to the Jews to convert. Their sermons to the Jews demonstrate how Marcellino and Tasso viewed their role as preachers to the Jews in an economy of salvation that ultimately depended upon God's grace rather than any persuasive arguments. In their focus on the importance of hearing the truth as the impetus for conversion, Marcellino and Tasso reveal that a preacher's orthopraxy, or in other words, his success, is measured by his perseverance in preaching to the Jews.

Adviser: Kevin J. Madigan

■ Farah El-Sharif [PhD]

Kitāb al-Rimāḥ of 'Umar Fūṭī Tāl: Sealing Muhammadan Sainthood in Nineteenth Century West Africa

This dissertation offers an in-depth exploration of the key themes, sources and contributions of *Kitāb Rimāḥ ḥizb al-Raḥīm 'alā nūḥūr ḥizb al-rajīm*, West Africa's "most widely circulated text" written by Shaykh 'Umar Fūṭī Tāl (d. 1864). Because it is often found printed on the margins of the Tijāniyya's primary source, the *Jawāhir al-ma'ānī*, its importance risks obscurity and its significance is, literally, marginalized. Through the *Rimāḥ*, Tāl would define what a *ṭarīqa* in West Africa, as we know it today, looks like. By emphasizing the doctrine of *khatm al-wilāya al-Muḥammadiyya* ("the Seal of Muhammadan Sainthood"), the Tijāniyya quickly gained considerable ground in the landscape of Islam in West Africa. This dissertation posits that Tāl's project singlehandedly spurred a renaissance of the rhetoric of *khatmiyya* in the nineteenth century, enlisting it in the ranks of the most vividly articulated, coherent claims to the Sealing Sainthood in Islamic intellectual history. Its distinguishing features—its approach as a culmination of Sufi thought informed by a rich *dhawq*-sphere of sages past and its gnostic-driven methodology to knowledge production and *sharī'a*—reaffirm the text's rightful place as a sorely underappreciated masterpiece of nineteenth century Islamic textual history and as a missing centerpiece of Sufi studies.

Adviser: Ousmane Oumar Kane

■ Andrew Richard Pottorf [PhD]

Social Stratification in Southern Mesopotamia during the Third Dynasty of Ur (ca. 2100–2000 BCE)

This dissertation addresses social stratification during the last century of the third millennium BCE when the Third Dynasty of Ur governed southern Mesopotamia and its neighboring regions. With over a hundred thousand administrative texts uncovered from this time, known as the Ur III period, its socioeconomic history can be thoroughly analyzed, including its social stratification. Three strata are proposed in this dissertation: 1) citizens, 2) serflike UN-IL₂, and 3) slaves. In order to identify and elaborate upon these strata, several features are presented: native terminology, origins, family lives, housing, legal rights, and economic conditions. There is also

a history of scholarship focusing on works by Soviet scholars, such as V. V. Struve, A. I. Tyumenev, and I. M. Diakonoff, which are generally challenged in this review, as well as on contributions by Ignace Gelb, Kazuya Maekawa, Marcel Sigrist, Piotr Steinkeller, and Natalia Koslova, which are fundamental to this dissertation. The three strata differed particularly with regard to their legal rights and economic conditions. Citizens were mostly native individuals or former prisoners of war granted citizenship. They were the most prevalent and had the fullest extent of legal rights and economic autonomy. Slaves were generally either former citizens enslaved temporarily due to impoverishment or nonnative individuals enslaved permanently due to violent capture, among other reasons. They were the least prevalent and had the least extent of legal rights and economic autonomy. UN-11₂ were probably impoverished native individuals lacking citizenship. They were between the extremes of these two strata, possessing some legal rights and limited economic autonomy. Occupations significantly impacted economic conditions, and they were unequally accessible to the three strata. Textual data are cited throughout, and prosopographical evidence is frequently utilized. Eight appendixes are included, which provide details about prosopography, family and house sizes, conscription, land tenure, and text collations, among other topics.

Adviser: Piotr Steinkeller

■ Becky Revalk [PhD]

Discerning Humanity's Edges: Cleckley, Nietzsche, and the Interpretative Dilemma of Psychopathy

This dissertation explores the philosophical presuppositions of psychopathy as a diagnosis and asks whether epistemological certainty is possible in discerning the disorder. The current psychological literature on psychopathy suggests that the disorder can be empirically discerned through observable symptoms. However, I argue that this construct of psychopathy is at odds with the original conception articulated by Hervey Cleckley, who suggests that the disorder is sensed rather than just empirically perceived. Through a careful reading of Cleckley's *The Mask of Sanity*, I show how he conceives of psychopathy as the negation of the full, striving subject. Because this negation is not observable in itself, I argue that interpretive effort is required for the discernment of the psychopath, and I suggest that the disorder is co-constructed as opposed to empirically observed.

I furthermore explore the philosophical implications of Cleckley's account of the psychopath by attending closely to Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Nietzsche's claims about the blond beast and priest, I argue, clarify Cleckley's claims about the psychopath and human. Both thinkers construct a framework that pits a moral agent against its antithesis, which, I suggest, places Nietzsche and Cleckley in the same interpretive dilemma: because moral categories structure human consciousness, the ability to perceive its absence in the blond beast (for Nietzsche) or the psychopath (for Cleckley) is compromised.

I furthermore argue that Cleckley's indebtedness to philosophical and psychoanalytic traditions helps illuminate society's paradoxical responses to the character of the psychopath. Attending to the figure of Donald J. Trump, I offer a reading of the increased polarization in the United States through the lens of psychopathy. I suggest that Cleckley's psychoanalytic understanding of the disorder helps explain Trump's contradictions and the U.S. electorate's contradictory responses to him.

Adviser: Amy Hollywood

■ Rachel Slutsky [PhD]

Divine Law and the Gentile Enigma: Law and Identity in Early Judaism

The subject of this dissertation is the phenomenon of ancient Jewish laws that seek to regulate Gentile behavior. While scholars of biblical, Second Temple, or rabbinic literature will be familiar with Jewish laws concerning Gentiles, scholarship usually chooses one of two paths: either, it focuses on the vast majority of these laws, which are intended for Jews; or, less frequently, it focuses on the question of historicity, namely whether Jews could have ever enforced law upon Gentiles. The present study assumes a theological and philosophical posture and does not consider laws as they might have been practiced. I build on the work of scholars like David Novak, Shaye J.D. Cohen, Ishay Rosen-Zvi and Adi Ophir, and I address one lacuna that emerges, namely the role of law in early Jewish conceptions of "Gentility," which I define as the Jewish theological idea of non-Jewishness. Abundant laws for Jews—initially Israelites—in certain early Jewish texts bespeak a conviction that Jews can be in right relationship with God by being the recipients, and adherents, of divine law. How do these specific sources understand the relationship between divine law and Gentiles? Can Gentiles be right with God without being Jews, and if so, how? I argue that three different positions emerge, congruent with three canonical periods. Ch.1 demonstrates that Pentateuchal law makes Gentiles subject to a short list of divine commands—the "resident alien" subjected to many more—and affords Gentiles the ability to be in right relationship with God fully while remaining Gentile—without the possibility of conversion. Ch. 2 argues that in the Second Temple period, *Jubilees*, Acts, and the *Sibylline Oracles* challenge this, claiming Gentiles are never in right relationship with God; some propose conversion as a solution, while others leave Gentiles without means to divine approval. Ch. 3 shows how, in the tannaitic and amoraic periods, t.'Avodah Zarah, Genesis Rabbah, and b.Sanhedrin all reflect a profound concretization of the notion of "Noahide law," in which Gentiles can become right with God *either* by choosing to become Jews *or* by adhering to a list of these seven central laws.

Adviser: Shaye J. D. Cohen

■ Kera Street [PhD]

For Purity's Sake: Piety and Black Women's Religious Networking in the Digital Age

From the turn of the century up to the present, evangelical Christians have given theological and cultural primacy to purity and sexuality, often linking the sexual subject to larger issues in the religious, social, and political world. Though scholarship on evangelical purity culture has provided interesting ways to think about this ideal, no full-length study has interrogated how media and the particular experiences of Christians of color impact its pursuit. Based on two years of ethnographic fieldwork with an evangelical women's group called Pinky Promise, this dissertation examines how evangelical concerns for purity continue to surface in the contemporary moment—one marked increasingly by new media and the explosion of digital technologies. It considers the ways new media factors into pursuits of purity for born-again black Christian women, creating new sites where lived experience and religious practice happen. Merging scholarship on lived religion; religion, media, and culture; African American religious thought; and the anthropology of evangelical Christianity, the project privileges the place of black women in evangelicalism and argues that their daily faith practices of disciplining the mind, heart, body, senses, and desires must be understood in light of the digital technologies that accompany them. Ultimately, this dissertation provides an example of how religiosity, religious identity, and religious community take shape in a mediated world, and paints a portrait of what lived religion looks like in a digital age.

Adviser: Amy Hollywood and Marla Frederick

■ Laura Anne Thompson [PhD]

Who Speaks for the Sacred?: The Politics of Blasphemy in Tunisia from the Nineteenth Century to the Present Day

From the Ottoman and French colonial periods, through independence, actors supporting and opposing Tunisian blasphemy prosecutions have consistently argued that blasphemy against Islam “hurts Muslims’ feelings.” These hurt feelings have then been framed as dangerous because they threaten public order. This dissertation focuses on three sets of little-studied blasphemy cases in what is now modern-day Tunisia (1857, 1904, post-2011/Arab Spring), all of which occurred during transitional moments where control of the state seemed up for grabs. The dissertation begins in 1857 Ottoman Tunis, with the prosecution of a Tunisian Jewish cart-pusher for blasphemy; it moves next to 1904 Tunis under the control of French colonial authorities, and the prosecution of a young, brash Muslim reformist. In the post-Arab-Spring moment, the dissertation examines the prosecution of seven Tunisian citizens for blasphemy allegedly committed via various art forms (2011–2012); and the dissertation closes in a small coastal courthouse, with the prosecution of young Tunisian men for *sabb al-jalāla*, or insulting the majesty of God (2019–2022).

This project leaves room for anthropologist Saba Mahmood's contention—that there is something “particular” in Muslims' embodied relationship with their religion that makes them particularly vulnerable to blasphemy—while bringing in blasphemous acts' political and historical underpinnings (which Judith Butler has criticized Mahmood for neglecting). It argues that the repeated affective framing of blasphemy—as a crime that wounds Muslims' feelings—enables actors, who lack religious authority or training, to intervene in the name of preventing social disorder. By naturalizing a public order that they are in fact bringing into being, these actors then claim to rightly sit at the helm of the state whose people (and feelings) they are allegedly protecting. This recourse to the affective sidelines—or reconstitutes—the political, allowing plaintiffs to disavow the political work these prosecutions do for them, while evacuating the alternate visions of the Tunisian public sphere contained within said blasphemous acts. It also points to a prevailing vision of the caretaker State as responsible for protecting its citizens from some (though not all) bad feelings, by the curbing of others' personal freedoms. In this sense, then, blasphemy prosecutions allow the state to reassert itself as properly “state-like,” particularly during transitional moments in which its “stateness” has been put into question.

Finally, this project lays the groundwork for a new comparative project on hurtful speech more broadly, as hate speech legislation has emerged over the past thirty years as blasphemy laws in Europe have declined in use or been repealed. Like blasphemy prosecutions, hate speech prosecutions draw upon affective articulations of the crime and its consequences.

Adviser: Malika Zeghal

■ Thomas E. I. Whittaker [PhD]

The Missionary Republic: Missionization, Improvement, and the Remaking of American Protestantism, 1787–1837

This dissertation seeks to explain the rise of missionary activism to a place of cultural prominence in the early American republic from the 1780s, when missions were dilapidated holdovers of British philanthropy, to the 1830s, when an ever-increasing army of missionaries worked to revive the frontier, convert Native Americans, and evangelize the world. My thesis asks why and how missions went from relative obscurity to cultural dominance in American Protestantism. The explosion of missionary enthusiasm, I argue, first developed in the 1790s, influenced by events in Europe, where the French Revolution prompted a wave of missionary activism that rapidly reached the United States. New regional missionary societies sought to evangelize the frontier. These societies were tied to an evangelical project of nation-building that aimed to provide a stable basis for virtue and republican government through what I term the “missionary republic.” The participants in the missionary republic hoped to enter the United States in the ranks of Christian nations as a full participant in the evangelical international. Especially after the foundation of the

American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in 1810, which built upon a new youth movement of missionary enthusiasm, American evangelicals came to understand participation in missions as a binding requirement on themselves. In part because of a shift towards a practical, populist exegesis, the definition of a missionary became democratized even as the formal missionary role was expanded to include women. Especially in the 1820s and 1830s, a process of “missionization” spread missionary influence beyond its original base of support among northeastern Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Baptists, leading to missionary movements in non-anglophone, sectarian, and heterodox denominations, as well as among freemasons and African Americans. Increasingly, missionary activism became the benchmark of religious truth. For missionaries and their supporters, the language of “improvement” was omnipresent. On the frontier, they believed, the religious future of the country would be decided. The improvement driven by Christian advance created small outposts of civic virtue and gospel order that could form the seedbeds for the advance of “civilization” across the western United States. A similar fixation on improvement governed Indian missions and the African colonization movement, which sought to transform Native Americans, Africans, and African Americans through missions. These were also nation-building projects, which sought to Christianize the United States by establishing the missionary republic as a surrogate national establishment while building a new missionary republic in West Africa. Not all Protestant denominations participated in missionary work, including the Society of Friends, whose engagements with the Indians should not be termed “missions.” The Quakers focused on cultivating agriculture and educating children and did not demand immediate conversion to Christianity. But the Senecas with whom they worked ultimately preferred to tie themselves to the conversionistic evangelicalism of the missionary republic. Between 1787 and 1837, the missionary republic remade the contours of American Protestantism.

Adviser: David N. Hempton

■ Jeremy L. Williams [PhD]

Making Criminals: The Rhetoric of Criminality in Acts of the Apostles

The Acts of the Apostles writes criminals into existence. Acts, a second-century text that narrates the origins of the messiah movement or “the Way”—its term for Christ-followers—has often been read as a straightforward history of the church. In this understanding, those communities are considered persecuted. This dissertation shifts the lens from religious persecution and instead examines how Acts portrays the communities as prosecuted and criminalized, and it seeks to understand that criminal status within larger ancient notions of law and justice.

This dissertation focuses on the Acts of the Apostles in order to reconsider how to historically reconstruct the first communities that followed Jesus as messiah. Particularly, I seek to investigate how Roman conceptions that hierarchize humans manifest in Roman criminal law, courts, and procedure (real and imagined), and how

those conceptions for both Acts and Acts' earliest audiences contribute to how the messiah movement is portrayed as criminalized. Using insights from critical race theory, I argue that the writer of Acts takes on the role of a criminographer: one who creates criminal characters. Acts presents the messiah movement as exposing Roman travesties of justice; at the same time, Acts too often does not attend to those most marginal in Roman society, such as an enslaved girl.

This dissertation critically assesses Acts among other contemporaneous legal and social discourses—that is, both laws, insofar as we have evidence of them, and literary imaginations regarding law and justice. To understand Acts' characterizations of criminals and criminality, this dissertation uses these contemporaneous resources, as well as the insights of scholars attending to topics of law and crime in antiquity, to examine the legal and social discourses around criminality in the Roman Empire. To examine these discourses, I investigate the operational and organizing logics of justice functioning within Roman legal texts like Justinian's Digest, rabbinical texts like the Mishnah, other elite Roman and Jewish literature, and evidence from material culture like a second-century stele dedicated to Dionysus. Those who first read and heard Acts would have been familiar with these surrounding cultural currents and artifacts, not to mention legal pressures.

To analyze the legal and social discourses that Acts incorporates to portray the early Jesus followers as criminalized, this dissertation explores: 1) the concerns of the elite (legal charges and economic commitments), 2) the critical analysis of myths and stories, 3) the classification of humans, and 4) the confines of judicial structures. These categories are heavily influenced by critical race theory, critical criminology studies, Black studies, womanist cultural criticism, and myth criticism. These contemporary theoretical frameworks aid in my project of more accurately reconstructing ancient sociopolitical processes, especially those around criminalization, imperial power, and judicial structures.

Adviser: Giovanni B. Bazzana and Laura Nasrallah