

Rocky Mountain Great Plains Regional Meeting

March 24 & 25, 2023

Regis University, Denver CO



**A Joint Meeting of the
American Academy of Religion RMGP Region and the new
Religion & Bible Society of the Rocky Mountain Great Plains Region**

**Hosted by the School for Professional Advancement
at Regis University**

General Information & Welcome

Welcome to the 2023 Rocky Mountain Great Plains (RMGP) Regional Meeting, a joint project of the RMGP Region of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) and the **new organization**, the Religion & Bible Society of the Rocky Mountain Great Plains Region!

The Regis University School for Professional Advancement is this year's host. Founded in 1877, Colorado's Regis University is the only Jesuit university in the Rocky Mountains. Inspired by St. Ignatius Loyola's vision, Regis' mission is to educate people of all backgrounds to take leadership roles and to make a positive impact in a changing society. Regis seeks to build a more just and humane world through transformative education at the frontiers of faith, reason, and culture, always asking the question: "How ought we to live?"

We are grateful to the Regis University School for Professional Advancement and Regis College, as well as AAR, for their financial and in-kind sponsorship of this event. We hope you enjoy our time together.

Sincerely,

The Regional Officers

Dheepa Sundaram (University of Denver), President

Amy L. Balogh (Regis University), Vice President & Program Chair

Zachary B. Smith (Creighton University), Secretary & Treasurer

Jeremy Fricke (Tri-Faith Initiative), AAR Coordinator

Michael Laminack (University of Denver & Iliff School of Theology), AAR Student Representative



Location & Parking

All sessions are held in Peter Claver Hall (red star) on the east side of Lowell Blvd. between W. 52nd and W. 53rd Streets.

There is a paid parking lot adjacent to Claver Hall (teal star) and additional paid parking around campus. You may also park on the street for free, but check street signs for city-imposed regulations.

Luncheons & Breaks

Coffee, tea, and water will be provided at registration throughout the day Friday and Saturday, and both lunches will be provided by [Harvest Table](#). Harvest Table is committed using locally sourced ingredients to create healthy menu options on college campuses. A cocktail reception will be held Friday 4:30-6:30pm, and a dessert event will be held Saturday 2:15-4:00pm.

Student Sessions

The RMGP Regional Meeting features two events created with students in mind:

1. A session featuring undergraduate scholarship will take place on Friday 1:15-2:45pm. Please support their fantastic work by attending this special session.
2. Graduate Student Luncheon on Friday: Details TBA. Grab your lunch in the foyer and come to Claver Hall 303.

Lodging

This year, the RMGP Regional Meeting has made arrangements with Hilton Garden Inn – Arvada for a group rate (\$119.00/night + tax; includes breakfast) and will be organizing shuttles from the hotel to campus and back. See our website for booking information: www.rmgp.org

Who/What is the *Religion & Bible of Society of the Rocky Mountain Great Plains Region*?

We are a new non-profit organization that fosters religious studies and biblical studies scholarship in the Rocky Mountain Great Plains region. We invite scholars in all areas of religious and biblical studies to take part in our annual Rocky Mountain Great Plains Regional Meeting, regardless of organizational affiliation, institutional affiliation, or geographic location.

History: The Religion & Bible Society of the Rocky Mountain Great Plains Region was formerly the Rocky Mountain-Great Plains Region (RMGP) of both the [American Academy of Religion](#) (AAR) and the [Society of Biblical Literature](#) (SBL). In 2022, SBL eliminated their regional structure and withdrew financial support from regional organizations. However, those of us in RMGP remain committed to our region, the scholarship we do, and the important professional development opportunity that the RMGP Regional Meeting has become.

The Religion & Bible Society was incorporated November 3, 2022 in the state of Colorado and was granted federal 501(c)3 status December 16, 2022. At this time, it serves the same functions as the former AAR/SBL regions (AAR maintains its regional structure), with a slightly modified leadership structure that will allow the Religion & Bible Society to expand opportunities for scholars in the RMGP Region, especially its junior and student scholars.

As we develop and have more information, we will share it via email and at www.rmgp.org.

President & Founder: Amy L. Balogh, Regis University

Vice President of Operations: Dheepa Sundaram, University of Denver

Secretary & Treasurer: Zachary B. Smith, Creighton University

Vice President of Programming: TBA

Board Members: TBA

Friday Keynote Address & Interview

March 24th, 3:00-4:15pm • Claver Hall 315

Professor Kareem El Damanhoury

University of Denver

Constituting Online Religious Communities by Extremist Groups



For decades, extremist groups from the Islamist and far-right camps have utilized the internet to constitute imagined communities that support, join, and/or promote their cause. ISIS, in particular, has been amongst the most notorious for not only acquiring followers online, but also for luring tens of thousands of youth to travel to Iraq, Syria, and other conflict zones around the world. To do so, the group appropriated religious discourse in a way that creates a modern-day, adventurous, and apocalyptic pathway to heaven. This presentation will dissect how such discourse factors in ISIS's media.

After the presentation, Prof. Dheepa Sundaram will interview Prof. El Damanhoury to bring his work on Isis into conversation over other forms of religious extremism, such as Hindu Nationalism and White Nationalism.



Kareem El Damanhoury, Ph.D., is Assistant Professor in the Department of Media, Film & Journalism Studies, Faculty Affiliate of the Center for Middle East Studies, and founder of DU Media at the University of Denver. Born and raised in Cairo, Egypt, El Damanhoury is a multimedia journalist who has served as a content producer, news editor, and senior news editor at CNN International and a contributor to other U.S. news outlets.

Dheepa Sundaram, Ph.D., is Assistant Professor of Hindu Studies, Critical Theory, and Digital Religion at the University of Denver. Her research examines the formation of Hindu virtual religious publics, online platforms, social media, apps, and emerging technologies such as virtual reality and artificial intelligence. Her most recent article explores how Instagram helps foster virtual, ethnonationalist, social networks within India.

Saturday Keynote Luncheon & Address

March 25th, 12:00-2:00pm • Claver Hall 315

Professor Amy C. Cottrill

Birmingham-Southern College

The Book of Ruth and the Slow Violence of Environmental Crisis and Forced Migration



The book of Ruth is a deceptively idyllic story. The threat under the surface is difficult to recognize because the book contains romantic declarations of loyalty, a marriage, and the birth of a child who brings new life to two women who have experienced tremendous loss, all in the hopeful context of an abundant harvest after a famine. When read through the lens of slow violence, a kind of violence that slowly accretes and often comes to seem normal to those affected, important elements of the book of Ruth come into focus. Environmental crisis and forced migration power the book of Ruth. Related themes of physical vulnerability, ethnic prejudice, sexual harassment, and inadequate legal protection all

contribute to the potential for violence that bubbles under the surface of this story. In our own 21st century context of environmental crises and transnational immigration, the book of Ruth has uncanny relevance and offers a vital opportunity for ethical encounter.

Amy C. Cottrill, Ph.D., is the Denson N. Franklin Professor of Religion and Chair of the Department of Religion at Birmingham-Southern College in Birmingham, Alabama. Her most recent book, *Uncovering Violence: Reading Biblical Narratives as an Ethical Project*, provides a theoretical vocabulary for the various forms that violence can take—including textual violence, interpretive violence, moral injury, and slow violence—and offers a fresh ethical reading of violence in the biblical text.

Regional Conversations

New Session!

With the launch of the
Religion & Bible Society of the Rocky Mountain Great Plains Region
comes a new annual series that brings together regional scholars for open
conversation on an important and timely topic.

Our inaugural *Regional Conversations* is on the topic of
Religion and Climate Change

How might studying religion impact people's conceptions of and
responses to climate change? How does climate change challenge
current conceptions and practices of religion? After four brief
reflections by regional scholars, we will open the floor for conversation
on this pressing topic.

Saturday, 2:15-4:00pm, Claver Hall 315

Participants:

Ronald Simkins (Organizer), Creighton University
John O'Keefe, Creighton University
Theodore Dedon, Creighton University
Amy L. Balogh, Regis University

In the spirit of informality and collegiality,
dessert and coffee will be served.

*Co-sponsored by the Office of Mission at Regis University & the Rabbi Myer and Dorothy Kripke
Center for the Study of Religion and Society at Creighton University*

Academic Program

2023 Rocky Mountain Great Plains Regional Meeting

All conference sessions are held in Peter Claver Hall on the Regis University Campus.

Friday, March 24th

7:30am-4:00pm Registration

Foyer on the 3rd floor of Claver Hall

Coffee, tea, and water will be served

8:30-10:00am Session 1

1A Rites, Bodies, Theologies: Rhetorical Entanglements (Organized by Wesley Snedeker)
Claver Hall 306

Presider: Sho McClarence (Univ. of Denver & Iliff School of Theology)

Presentations:

Wesley Snedeker (Univ. of Denver & Iliff School of Theology), "Ambient Liturgy and Attunement with the Saints"

Matthew Konerth (Univ. of Denver & Iliff School of Theology), "Though I Walk Through the Uncanny Valley of Death: Why the Uncanny Valley is the New Great Chain of Being, and How New Materialism Can Undermine It"

Tory Moir (Univ. of Denver & Iliff School of Theology), "New Materialism and the Great Vigil of Easter: Ambient Liturgics"

Joshua Hanan (Univ. of Denver & Iliff School of Theology), Respondent

1B Nature and Religion in Dialogue
Claver Hall 307

Presider: Michelle Stinson (Denver Seminary)

Presentations:

Erica Ferg (Regis University), "What Cross-Quarter-Point Celestial Calendar Holidays Tell Us About Religious History"

Steven James (Univ. of Denver & Iliff School of Theology), "Environmental Rights, Nonhuman Animals, and Indigenous Perspectives: An Ecuadorian Case Study"

Zachary Simpson (University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma), "Islands and the Emergence of the Modern Individual"

Jim Sharp (Colorado State University – Pueblo), "Some Recent Islamic Responses to Evolutionary Theory"

1C New Testament and Everyday Life
Claver Hall 328

Presider: Christy Cobb (University of Denver)

Presentations:

Nicole Francis (Brigham Young University), "A Pauline Dress Code or a Rhetorical Analogy? Reinterpreting Paul's Discourse in 1 Corinthians 11:1-16"

James Dominic Romano (Fuller Theological Seminary), "Women's Voices in First Corinthians 14:33b-35"

Mattie Motl (Denver Seminary), "The Divine Breast is Best: Isaiah 49 as Allusion in Paul's Nursing Metaphor in 1 Thessalonians 2:7"

Isaac A. Olivarez (Denver Seminary), "The Significance of Jesus' Meals in Luke's Travel Narrative"

10:00-10:15am Break

Coffee, tea, and water available in the foyer

10:15-11:45am Session 2

2A Queering Religion, Challenging Gender
Claver Hall 307

Presider: Dennis Saavedra Carquin-Hamichand (Univ. of Denver & Iliff School of Theology)

Presentations:

Christy Cobb (University of Denver), "Finding Female Family: Pleasure and the Acts of Thecla"

Isabela Leonor Rosales (Univ. of Denver & Iliff School of Theology), "Queering Our Lady of Guadalupe and Embracing a Theology of Pásale: a Decolonial Latiné Perspective on Pásale: "Come in," "Go ahead," "Move along," "Go on""

Sho McClarence (Univ. of Denver & Iliff School of Theology), "Mystical Space and the Queers that Inhabit It"

Justin Friel (Univ. of Denver & Iliff School of Theology), "Scrolling With Muñoz: TikTok, Ephemera, and Queer Futurity"

2B Religion, Medicine, and Controlled Substances
Claver Hall 307

Presider: Heidi Ippolito (Univ. of Denver & Iliff School of Theology)

Presentations:

Roger Green (Metro State University – Denver), "Psychedelics, Mystical Economy, and the Rhetoric of Religion"

Matthew Gruchow (Univ. of Denver & Iliff School of Theology), "Psychedelic Christianity: A Case for the Use of Entheogens by Modern Christians for Pastoral Care and Personal Spirituality"

Wesley Snedeker (Univ. of Denver & Iliff School of Theology), "Voluntary Active Self-Euthanasia: Medical Aid in Dying, Human Animals, and the Practice of Pastoral Theology"

Madison Tarleton (Univ. of Denver & Iliff School of Theology), "Religious Equity and Inclusion in Osteopathic Medical School Curricula: Incorporating a World Religions & Medicine Course into an Osteopathic Medical School"

2C Thinking About New Testament Thought
Claver Hall 328

Presider: Lincoln Blumell (Brigham Young University)

Presentations:

Zachary Sparkman (Denver Seminary), "If God is for Us: Paul's Use of Isaiah's Third and Fourth Servant Songs in Romans 8:31-34"

J. Seward Gelatt (Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary), "Divine Presence and Divine Justice in Matthew's Gospel"

Hannah Harris (Denver Seminary), "The Place where the Spirit Dwells: Empowered as an Embodied, Collective Temple-ed Holiness in 1 & 2 Corinthians"

Aleah A. Gathings (Denver Seminary), "Commissioned to Repair the Breach: African American Readings of Paul's Letter to the Romans"

11:45am-1:15pm Lunch

Lunch will be served buffet style in the foyer with catering from Harvest Table

12:00-1:00pm Graduate Student Colloquium with TBD

Bring your lunch to Claver Hall 303

1:15-2:45pm Session 3

3A Constructing Religious Realities - Undergraduate Panel
Claver Hall 306

Presider: Zachary Simpson (University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma)

Presentations:

Gerardo Andres Juarez (Brigham Young University), "The Scribal Curriculum for the Elephantine Scribes"

Ally Huffmire (Brigham Young University), "Slaves and Spatial Theory in the Palatial Mansion at Jerusalem"

Ryan Bell (University of Denver), "Holy Overthrow: Religious Nationalism and Pope John Paul II's 1979 Visit to Poland"

Christopher Cox (Brigham Young University), "Towards Orthodox Polity: Episcopal Apology in Eusebius of Caesarea's Ecclesiastical History"

3B Lived Religion, Digital Impacts: Online Engagement in Hindu, Jain, and Muslim Communities (Organized by Andrea Stanton)
Claver Hall 306

Presider: Lynnette Li (Univ. of Denver & Iliff School of Theology)

Presentations:

Soumia Bardhan (University of Colorado – Denver), "'Khilafah' as Ideograph in Dabiq: Islamic State's Religio-Political Rhetoric and Digital Reaction/Response to the War on Terrorism Discourse"

Andrea Stanton (University of Denver), "Mosques of Instagram: Community, Believer Engagement, and National Identity"

Dheepa Sundaram (University of Denver), "Platforming Caste: How Hindu Ritual Apps Produce Virtual Brahmanical Sacred Spaces"

Steven Vose (University of Colorado – Denver), “Mass-Self Communication and the Creation of a Transnational Jain Public: Appeal to Diaspora Jain Youth in the Shrimad Rajchandra Mission’s Social Media Strategy”

3C Early and Late Antique Christianity and Its Influences
Claver Hall 328

Presider: Erica Ferg (Regis University)

Presentations:

Sara C. Winter (Eugene Lang College, New School University), “Mary Magdalene in Canonical and Noncanonical Texts: Bridging the Gap”

Emmanuel Engulu (Denver Seminary & King’s College London), “Gregory of Nyssa’s Trinitarian Apophaticism”

Lincoln H. Blumell (Brigham Young University), “Exegesis Patrum: Scriptural Hermeneutics in the Nicene- and Pre-Nicene-Period”

Galen Goldsmith (Independent Scholar), “The Problem of Gnosticism in Christian Science”

2:45-3:00pm Break

3:00-4:15pm Keynote Event
Claver Hall 315

Prof. Kareem El Damanhoury, University of Denver
Assistant Professor, Department of Media, Film & Journalism Studies
Faculty Affiliate, Center for Middle East Studies

Constituting Online Religious Communities by Extremist Groups
Talk followed by an interview with Dheepa Sundaram, University of Denver

4:30-6:30pm Reception

Meet in the foyer for informal conversation and refreshments

Saturday, March 25th

7:30am-12:00pm Registration

Foyer on the 3rd floor of Claver Hall

Coffee, tea, and water will be served

8:00-9:00am

Business Meeting – Open to all

Claver Hall 330

9:00-9:15 Break

9:15-10:30 am Session 4

4A Ancient Israel and Its Interpretation
Claver Hall 306

Presider: Ronald Simkins (Creighton University)

Presentations:

Knut Heim (Denver Seminary), “The Role of the Imagination in Biblical Interpretation”

Zeev Herzog (Tel Aviv University), “How Archaeology Contributes to the Understanding of Monotheism in Ancient Israel”

Richard S. Hess (Denver Seminary), “Worshiping with Abraham? New Developments in Bronze and Early Iron Age West Semitic Religions”

4B Nationalism and Conspiracy
Claver Hall 307

Presider: Justin Friel (Univ. of Denver & Iliff School of Theology)

Presentations:

Heidi Ippolito (Univ. of Denver & Iliff School of Theology), “Who Controls the Narrative? The Danger of the Single Story in an Era of Rising Religious Conspiracy”

Dennis Saavedra Carquin-Hamichand (Univ. of Denver & Iliff School of Theology), “Is Supporting White Christian Nationalistic Belief Strategic or Sabotage?”

Grego Pena-Camprubi (Univ. of Denver & Iliff School of Theology), “Siempre quedó VOX (There was always VOX)”

4C Boundaries and Categories in Lived Religion
Claver Hall 309

Presider: Dheepa Sundaram (Univ. of Denver)

Presentations:

Aun Hasan Ali (University of Colorado – Boulder), “Qā‘idat al-Ilzām in Imāmī Law”

Trishula Rachna Patel (University of Denver), "Purity Schools and Hindu Daughters: Colonial Education of Indians in Southern Rhodesia, 1930-1960"

Jeeyoung Kim (Univ. of Denver & Iliff School of Theology), “An Act of Creativity in Regressive and Progressive Dynamics: A Korean Woman’s Experience Intersected with Culture and Religion”

4D Philosophies and Theologies of Christianity
Claver Hall 328

Presider: H  l  ne Dallaire (Denver Seminary)

Presentations:

Max H. Sotak (Regis University), "The Defense of Christianity: Berkeley's Responsible Fideism"

Thomas Leininger (Regis University), "The Significance of Feelings in Human Flourishing: Neuroscience and Christian Ethics in Conversation"

Erik M. Hanson (University of Colorado – Colorado Springs), “Kant’s ‘Augustinian’ Account of the Origins of Human Evil”

10:30-10:45 Break

10:45am-12:00pm Session 5

5A Ancient Texts, Modern Questions
Claver Hall 306

Presider: Richard S. Hess (Denver Seminary)

Presentations:

Nicholas Axt (Brigham Young Univ.), "The Book of Joshua and the Arab-Israeli War"

Sidney Fox (Independent Scholar), "Who is Buried in Grant's Tomb?' The Entwined Fates of Amos and Hosea at Bethel"

Michelle A. Stinson (Denver Seminary), "'In Its Time' (Ps 104:27): A Consideration of the Literary and Rhetorical Use of Ecological Boundaries within Psalm 104"

5B Encountering the Other
Claver Hall 307

Presider: Jeremy Fricke (Tri-Faith Initiative)

Presentations:

Mona Moayed (Univ. of Denver & Iliff School of Theology), "Los Herejes: Heresy in Golden Ages Spain"

Sandra Lee Dixon (Univ. of Denver & Iliff School of Theology), "Tracing and Troubling the Basic Model of Religion and Moral Psychology through Aspects of Judaism Described by Michael Fishbane and Mara Benjamin"

Michael Laminack (Univ. of Denver & Iliff School of Theology), "Levinasian Virtue: Infinite Responsibility Between the Child and the Third"

5C Religion and Media
Claver Hall 309

Presider: Jeffrey Scholes (University of Colorado – Colorado Springs)

Presentations:

Howard Kramer (Univ. of Denver & Iliff School of Theology), "Captain Jihad Fights Captain America in Cyberspace: 'Jihadi Cool,' Jihadi Culture, and Resistance to the West on the Facebook Platform"

Sarah Schwartzman Ramsey (University of Colorado – Boulder), "Reading Religiously: Meeting the Ancestors in Contemporary Fiction"

Patrick D. Bowen (Independent Scholar), "Measuring Religious Change: The Use of Alternative Religion Bookseller Catalogs"

5D Living and Theorizing Hybrid Identity
Claver Hall 328

Presider: Zachary Smith (Creighton University)

Presentations:

Taylor Muma (Univ. of Denver & Iliff School of Theology), “The Abnormal God: Exploring Theological and Societal Impacts of Positing Abnormality and Alterity as Core Attributes of a Christian God”

Eunjin Jeon (Univ. of Denver & Iliff School of Theology), “Imagining the Hybrid Image of God as Resisting Anti-Asian Hate Crime”

Lynnette Li (Univ. of Denver & Iliff School of Theology), “The Egyptianization of Joseph and the Peranakanization of Straits-born Chinese in Singapore – Embracing Hybrid Identities in New Realities”

12:00-2:00pm Luncheon & Keynote Address

Grab your lunch in the foyer and head to Claver 315 for the Keynote address

Prof. Amy C. Cottrill, Birmingham-Southern College

Denson N. Franklin Professor of Religion

Chair, Department of Religion

The Book of Ruth and the Slow Violence of Environmental Crisis and Forced Migration

2:00-2:15pm Break

2:15-4:00pm *NEW SERIES!* Regional Conversations

Grab dessert and coffee in the foyer and meet in Claver 315 for our inaugural “Regional Conversations” session

Co-sponsored by the Office of Mission at Regis University & the Rabbi Myer and Dorothy Kripke Center for the Study of Religion and Society at Creighton University

Religion and Climate Change

How might studying religion impact people’s conceptions of and responses to climate change? How does climate change challenge current conceptions and practices of religion? After four brief reflections by regional scholars, we will open the floor for conversation on this timely and pressing topic.

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