THE WABASH CENTER
JOURNAL ON TEACHING

ARTICLE

Politics and the Pedagogue of Late Antiquity

Kristi Upson-Saia
Occidental College

Maria E. Doerfler
Yale University

ABSTRACT

This essay serves to situate this special issue within its temporal, disciplinary, and pedagogical context. It aims to set out the uniquely inflected challenges and opportunities that the study of late antiquity confronts at the beginning of this new decade. The increasing deployment of pre-modern sources for the construction of political ideologies; students' desire for relevant education; and increasing urgency of confronting both phenomena in an intellectually and pedagogically responsible fashion, provide the impetus for both this issue and the 2017 workshop on politics and pedagogy that initially brought its contributors into conversation. This essay provides readers with background on workshop participants' initial discussions about motivations for teaching politically-relevant (and sometimes politically-charged) courses; the relationship between such courses and the mandates of higher education; and the relevance of both religious studies and late antiquity to political discourse. The essay then charts the conversation's trajectories beyond the workshop, provides definitional clarification of politics and the political, and offers a more focused theorization of the value added by our position as scholars of religion in late antiquity. In the process, this essay, in conjunction with the guest editor's Note, lays the theoretical foundation for the special issue at hand and orients readers to the articles and pedagogical materials gathered therein.

KEYWORDS

politics, pedagogy, religious studies, late antiquity

Encountering 2020 in the Late Ancient Classroom

In the lead-up to the U.S. general election of 2016 and in its aftermath, scholars of religious studies have found ourselves confronted with a particular and newly urgent sense of political relevance and responsibility. The subjects that preoccupy us in our professional and pedagogical capacities have always intruded in the public sphere, but now these intrusions appear to be not only more frequent, but more potent, as they are manifesting within a public discourse marked simultaneously by expanded access to public platforms and extensive fragmentation into partisan polemical echo chambers. A confluence of factors has resulted in a political sphere in which individuals and interest groups have more power than ever before to shape

public awareness of their positions (whatever they might be), and to translate this into real-world activism and public policy.[1] The stakes are high—when our material is used in public discourse we feel more urgently than ever that it needs to be addressed.

Even more than the intrusion of our material into public discourse, many academics have come to experience the political climate in this historical moment as politicizing the way we teach. As educators we strive to ensure that the voices and positionalities of minoritized groups are taught alongside the voices and positionalities of those in power; yet this impulse has been caricatured as left-leaning politics and cast pejoratively as politically correct. As pedagogues, we work to ensure equitable learning opportunities for underrepresented students, which we regard as a straightforward defense of their civil rights; yet this concern has been regarded by some as a political act of coddling or privileging minoritized students. Moreover, the political climate in this historical moment has butted up against not only our pedagogical values, but also some of our central methods. As experts in our fields, we insist on reason- and evidence-based claims; yet this insistence has been discounted by political discourse that regularly trades on emotions (such as fear and hatred) and that carelessly (or maliciously) spreads misinformation. As scholars, our value of deep expertise—and the time and training required to develop expertise—has been undermined by a political discourse that holds equal the views of experts and nonexperts.[2] As members of scholarly communities who strive to set discussions and debates within frames of respectful listening and disagreement we compete with a political discourse structured on antagonism, misrepresentation of others' views, and *ad hominem* arguments.[3] Finally, political views about the religious communities we study—and opposition to those groups—are blending into an increased scrutiny and politicization of the *scholarship* on those communities.[4] In short, academic values, methods, and scholarly production, now more than ever, are either bound up as politically partisan or subverted by new forms of political discourse. As such, instructors and institutions are struggling with how to stand against racist, xenophobic, homophobic, Islamophobic, sexist, ableist, etc. positions; to stand for reason- and evidence-based claims; and to exert our authority as expert facilitators of intellectual discussions without drawing charges of being political activists. Our commitments as academics—and the intellectual values they reflect—have, in our current political climate, become both more controversial and more urgent.

For those of us who are scholars of pre-modernity, we have been distressed by the ways our materials have been introduced into public discourse in service of political positions. When scholars point out the ways in which presentist uses of our materials distort their meanings in their original historical context, our critiques of ahistoricism and our corrections are likewise politicized. For instance, white nationalists have mobilized Greco-Roman marble statues (Bond 2017), and more broadly classical subjects (packaged as "Western Civilization," [Dozier 2019]), to justify the legitimacy of the white ethnostate and to corroborate fear and suppression of racial, religious, sexual, immigrant, and other minorities.[5] When scholars pointed out the inaccuracies in this use of history—such as the failure to recognize that marble statues were originally painted in vibrant colors and have merely lost their paint over time, that most people on the ancient Mediterranean were brown and black-skinned, and that ancient Greeks and Romans did not define race in terms of skin pigmentation (Kennedy et al. 2013)—they become targets of vicious attacks, personal and professional.

It is within this context that our collective of late ancient religion scholars felt an urgent desire to more intentionally enter a conversation taking place in the public square.[6] History and religion have long been sources of fascination for "lay" audiences, and continue to be pressed into service, in the political realm, of what are, at best, naively misleading arguments, and, at worst, consciously conceived strategies of misinformation. Against such efforts at exploitation and revisionism, many of us reject both the alleged isolation of the Ivory Tower and the cognitive dissonance we experience in our lives as scholar-teachers and engaged members of our broader

1 Aspects of these dynamics have been recognized and called out for scholarly consideration already in the preceding decade, as, for example, in the case of the Teagle White Paper (AAR-Teagle Working Group 2008). But as legal developments are a difficult-to-deny bellwether of societal change, it is worth noting that the U.S. Supreme Court has recently considered a striking number of religion-related questions. Over the course of its past three terms, the Court has witnessed arguments concerning the role of religion in shaping the country's immigration policy (*Trump v. Hawaii*); in determining employers' rights to terminate employees on the basis of their gender identity (*Harris Funeral Homes Inc. v. EEOC*) or sexual orientation (*Bostock v. Clayton County, GA*); and the circumstances under which religious symbols can be displayed on public grounds (*American Legion v. American Humanist Association*).

2 As, for example, when expert opinions on topics such as climate change are viewed as merely "political" positions instead of positions based in research.

3 Just seven years ago, these academic values were regarded as suprapolitical. The American Academy of Arts and Sciences were charged by a bipartisan request from Congress to write a report in which they concluded: "As we strive to create a more civil public discourse, a more adaptable and creative workforce, and a more secure nation, the humanities and social sciences are the heart of the matter, the keeper of the republic—a source of national memory and civic vigor, cultural understanding and communication, individual fulfillment and the ideals we hold in common" (American Academy of Arts and Sciences 2013, 9).

4 Take, for instance, the review of Title VI funding to Duke/UNC's Middle East Consortium. The criticisms leveled by Assistant Secretary King suggest a disjuncture between how the government would like religions of the Mediterranean taught and the standard practices of academics. King thus asserts unilateral authority to judge the merit of academic enterprises, without discussions with experts in the field who would be able to explain how the programming fulfill the goals of the Title VI program. Pressures from government-funding sources will certainly exert influence on the future programming of colleges and universities dependent on this funding, with the potential of reshaping the direction of the field (Rose 2019).

5 This work relies both on distortions of the historical record, and plucking selectively from inequitable and inhumane elements of ancient Mediterranean societies, as Rebecca Futo Kennedy demonstrates (2017).

6 This was in order to, as Rebecca Futo Kennedy puts it, not be complicit in the spread of historical inaccuracies and misinformation that have significant social ramifications (2017). For further discussion of the particular features of late antiquity that make this desire more urgent, see Fruchtman (2020).

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License

communities. We wish to publicly claim our position as experts. More pressingly still, by modeling the skillful use of religious history, we aspire to empower the public (just as we seek to empower our students), providing them with the tools to read, analyze, and assess for themselves both primary sources and the arguments structured around them.

We feel an impulse to intervene into political discourse also by designing courses that address issues of current relevance and that model academic methods of analyzing sources. We can take our cues from the pedagogical efforts of scholars and instructors in neighboring disciplines who have developed courses centered on, for example, Hurricane Katrina;[7] the racial injustices and civil unrest in Ferguson, Missouri;[8] Hurricane Maria (Puerto Rico Syllabus 2017; Gonchar 2017); clerical sexual abuses (Daily Theology 2018); and the discourses of race and racism in pre-modernity.[9] These pedagogues have inspired us with their courage to take on politically-charged subject matter, without either ignoring or embracing the specter of universities as sites of political indoctrination. Their work exemplifies how instructors might create intellectually stimulating and methodologically sound syllabi, reading lists, and class exercises.

Such pedagogical projects couple our impulse to respond to current events with a wider range of pre-existing motivations to teach politically-relevant courses. First and foremost, many of our students are expecting a college education that is relevant, engaged in real-world issues, and that prepares them for meaningful work that will “have a positive impact on the world” (Seemiller and Grace 2014, 103-4; cf. Musil 2015, 245). Students push faculty to articulate the relevance of their coursework to students’ chosen careers, day-to-day lives, or holistic formation. Moreover, as students take on more activist work, they clamor for tools and skills that serve their social and political ambitions, regardless of their political persuasion. Indeed, even in the absence of student pressure, studies have shown that establishing a link between course content and practical utility makes for more deeply engaged participants (Theall and Franklin 1999; Keller 2008; Chapman 2000).

Additionally, as most of us are acutely aware, enrollment in the humanities in general and religious studies in particular has taken a precarious downturn at many colleges and universities. We observe that courses with clear connections to contemporary concerns attract greater numbers of students. In a time when many departments are striving to justify their place in the academy, these numbers (rightly or wrongly) are leveraged as marks of success. Moreover, universities and colleges increasingly encourage their faculty to assume the role of public intellectuals to bolster public awareness and renown for their institutions. Teaching courses on politically-relevant subjects positions faculty to address these topics beyond the classroom, and being recognized as potentially media-savvy spokespersons for our institutions.

Yet, as our motivations for teaching politically-relevant courses accumulate, we must be intellectually responsible in how we approach this pedagogical task. Those of us who work in different historical periods and regions of the world must think carefully about how to pair our sources with contemporary topics, how we draw parallels and make distinctions, and how we make transparent our methods with respect to how knowledge of other times, places, cultures, and peoples might inform twenty-first-century discourses. At this moment, we find ourselves without theoretical guides beyond our own improvised processes of trial and error. While previous scholars have examined the question of whether and how academics should engage with politics in higher education (see Fish 2012; Smith, Mayer, and Fritschler 2008; Kimball 1990, 2008; and Berg 2005), these general pedagogical studies do not think about the unique methodological tools and content knowledge provided by the discipline of religious studies. And while there is prodigious scholarship on the politics of teaching religious studies in particular,[10] members of our collective wanted to think more specifically about teaching our own subfield—late antique Mediterranean religions—in this particular political climate.

In the remainder of this essay we describe the first meeting of our collective in which we discussed how we might design intellectually responsible courses and pedagogical practices. We list the questions guiding our inquiry and report on our initial findings. We then discuss steps we have taken since our first meeting: further clarification of what we mean by “politics” and further reflection on what our positionality as scholars of late antiquity has to offer. Finally, we discuss the importance of collaboration in pedagogical projects like ours that aim to make a broader cultural impact.

7 See, for example, “New Orleans and Hurricanes: Past, Present, and Future” (Nelson 2015); “Disaster Politics: New Orleans in the Wake of Hurricane Katrina” (Heldman 2007); “The Katrina Practicum” (McDowell, Thompson, and Carmin 2006); “Hurricane Katrina and its Aftermath” (Johnson, Caron, Rodrigue, and O’Connor 2006); and “The Katrina & Disaster Law Seminar” (Van Cleave 2011).

8 See the crowd-sourced “Ferguson Syllabus” (Chatelain 2014) and the Sociologists for Justice’s “Ferguson Syllabus” (2020).

9 See, for example, “Race, Racism, and the Middle Ages” (Teaching Association for Medieval Studies 2018) and “Race and Medieval Studies: A Partial Bibliography” (Orlemanski and Orlemanski 2018).

10 See, for example, Westfield (2008), Kwok, González-Andrieu, and Hopkins (2004), Walvoord (2007), Riswold (2015), Teel (2014), Wright (2019), Byron (2012), and Trelstad (2008).

Politics, Pedagogy, and the Profession: Beginning the Conversation

In November 2017, approximately fifty scholars of late antiquity convened in Boston for a two-day workshop, “Politics, Pedagogy, and the Profession.”[11] We hoped to think together about how to carefully and responsibly calibrate our teaching to this new context. On the first day we asked: How ought we design a course that enables our historical sources to speak to issues of contemporary significance, while acknowledging the real and incisive differences between twenty-first-century America and the world of the ancient Mediterranean? How do we structure our classes to be relevant, without letting the current discourse set the terms of our discussion and without skewing our material in anachronistic ways? How can our sources—that regularly touch upon social inequities, oppression, and violence; migration and immigration; torture, enslavement, and imprisonment; climate and the environment—and our disciplinary methods equip students wishing to address current social and political concerns? How do we broach politicized topics without playing into the stereotype of universities as hotbeds of liberal brainwashing? How can we connect the sources on which we are expert with contemporary considerations, without presuming or conveying misleading levels of expertise on the latter? What pedagogical strategies can facilitate conversation around politically divisive issues in the classroom? And, finally, what are the intellectually responsible uses of the past in public discourse and what is our responsibility—as scholars—to contribute? In order to answer these questions, we structured our first day’s sessions to analyze the ways in which teaching politically-relevant courses fit within our institutional, departmental, and discipline-specific mandates, and then to investigate the disciplinary skills cultivated in religious studies courses that transfer also to the realm of political discourse.

First, we investigated how our institutional structures impel us to design politically-relevant courses. Specifically, since the eighteenth century, one of the stated aims of higher education has been to cultivate a skilled and responsible citizenry.[12] In recent decades, this objective has enjoyed sustained public attention, popularized largely through the work of Martha Nussbaum (1998, 2010).[13] This directive is instantiated most tangibly in institutions’ mission and vision statements, wherein many explicitly state their intent to create students whose skills can be applied to pressing national or global challenges. Columbia University’s mission, for instance, includes an aim “to advance knowledge and learning, conveying the products of its efforts to the world” (2018); Harvard University “is devoted to . . . developing leaders in many disciplines who make a difference globally” (2020); and Mt. Holyoke College aspires “to [prepare] students, through a liberal education integrating curriculum and careers, for lives of thoughtful, effective, and purposeful engagement in the world” (2020). Other mission statements go further, emphasizing not merely the institution’s desire to provide students with the knowledge and skills to contribute to society, but acknowledging the need for academic learning to advance individuals’ and society’s well-being. Cornell, for instance, “aims to enhance the lives and livelihoods of students, the people of New York, and others around the world” (2020); University of South Carolina acknowledges the “university’s responsibility to state and society to promote the dissemination of knowledge, cultural enrichment, and an enhanced quality of life for all” (2020); while Dartmouth “encourages a culture of integrity, self-reliance, and collegiality and instill[s] a sense of responsibility for each other and for the broader world” (2020).[14] Although there are those who wish to change the missions of colleges and universities, excising these aims—such as Governor Scott Walker’s attempt to remove from the University of Wisconsin’s mission the university’s dictate to “search for truth” and “improve the human condition” and to add instead an aim to “meet the state’s workforce needs” (Strauss 2015)—for now, participants in the workshop found that most of our institutions provided mandates and authorization to design courses that would nurture students’ ability to address contemporary local, national, and global concerns.[15]

11 Participants included graduate students, early career, and senior faculty from public and private institutions. Participants held tenure-track/tenured, instructor, and lecturer positions and a few had yet to teach their own class. Approximately two-thirds of workshop participants identify as women and the majority of participants were white. Most of the participants teach about Jewish or Christian communities in late antiquity, with only a few who work also on late ancient Islam.

Funding for the workshop was provided by a Wabash Center Small Projects Grant and a North American Patristic Society Study Group Initiative award. We are grateful to both organizations, as well as to our hosts at the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard, for providing the support that made the workshop possible.

12 See Ronis and Proctor (2020) in this issue for additional points about the aims and missions of higher education in the U.S.

13 Nussbaum is not alone in this call. The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement made an argument along similar lines, calling on institutions of higher education to reclaim, rather than to shirk, their missions of civic learning and democratic engagement (2012). Two years later, the *Journal of General Education* published a special issue that included articles on actualizing the civic mission of institutions of higher education (see especially Levine 2014; Lewis 2014; Myers 2014).

14 See also, the University of California at San Diego mission which claims that the institution aims to “transform California and a diverse global society by educating, by generating and disseminating knowledge and creative works, and by engaging in public service” (2020); and Yale’s express commitment “to improving the world today and for future generations through outstanding research and scholarship, education, preservation, and practice” (2020).

15 Most of these mission statements are not new, but reflect long-standing commitments of institutions of higher education. On the long legacy of civic development as an aim of higher education, see Musil (2015), Heiland and Huber (2015), and Harper (1905). For a detailed articulation of the ways institutions of higher education educational systems cultivate democratic, global citizens, see Nussbaum (1998, 2010). Nussbaum argues that higher education cultivates citizens: (1) who are capable of engaging in robust critical discourse, possessing the skills to sift and analyze evidence, to articulate well-structured positions, and to evaluate the arguments of others; (2) who are sensitive to the heterogeneity of the nation (and of the world), possessing the ability to identify the structural, socio-cultural, and personal bases for differing perspectives, a willingness to see things from others’ points of view, and a recognition of all humans’ equality and dignity; and (3) who hold themselves responsible for their ideas and actions—or inaction—which shape human conditions. For a more in-depth discussion of institutional

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License

When turning to our own disciplinary homes, we found that our professional societies expressed similar commitments to cultivating socially engaged citizens. The Society of Biblical Literature, for example, has set itself the goal to "[promote] cooperation across global boundaries," (2020) while the American Academy of Religion asserts: "In a world where religion plays so central a role in social, political, and economic events, as well as in the lives of communities and individuals, there is a critical need for ongoing reflection upon and understanding of religious traditions, issues, questions, and values" (2020). In short, both our academic institutions and our academic discipline provide for us the justification that we *should* be teaching politically-relevant courses.

In light of this strong mandate, workshop participants turned to scrutinizing the field of religious studies in search of tools that would enable us to address these goals in disciplinarily responsible ways. Specifically, we sought to identify the knowledge, skills, and methodologies we aim to instill in students that likewise have a bearing on how well students are able to engage with contemporary global issues and contribute to political discourse. First, we acknowledged the importance of critical empathy to our field.[16] Although religious studies scholars engage in critical analysis, we first aim to understand the position of religious individuals, communities, and societies. We attend to "the life of a religious community within that culture and to its literary, musical, iconic, and architectural expressions; cultic practices; social organization; political strategies; and the like" (AAC&U 1990, 172). From these—often mundane—elements of religiosity, we grasp something of the rhythms of religious peoples' lives, their hopes, their fears, and the manner in which they make meaning, assert agency, and shape their identities. Moreover, by appreciating the ways in which religiosity is situated in a specific context—shaped by the cultures through which it lives and moves, informed by societal interests and constraints, and molded by the historical trajectories when it has developed—we come to better understand the reasonableness and function of religion in people's lives. As such, religious people are thoroughly humanized. And, because the academic study of religion is necessarily multicultural, this humanization extends to religious people who seem to the scholar both familiar and strange.

The empathetic grounding of religious studies thus forces our students to occupy a particular orientation with respect to difference. Students might occasionally study religious people with whom they identify, but they will eventually be exposed to a wide variety of religious communities across the globe and throughout history. They will be required to study people whose ideas, practice, and values appear strange, and sometimes even abhorrent, to them. Yet religious studies (ideally) enables them to become comfortable with difference and primes them to engage with difference in a particular way: seeking to understand people who at first do not seem legible or reasonable.

Cultivating this charitable orientation to the "other" in religious studies classrooms translates neatly to political discourse, especially in cases in which students engage with others who hold different political views. Rather than taking an immediately antagonistic stance, religious studies students have had practice forming habits that mediate such encounters: humanizing those holding different views; they have developed an impulse to attempt to understand the motivations behind others' positions; and they have learned to seek out the contexts that make different—sometimes strange—positions reasonable.

Furthermore, the field of religious studies is grounded in a recognition of heterogeneity. Scholars of religion resist the urge to depict a religious tradition or community through a single perspective.[17] Rather we make visible the multiple instantiations of religiosity within a given community, as well as changes over time. We seek explanations regarding what conditions or contexts gave rise to different religious ideas and practices, and we attempt to ascertain how competing positions coexist (through cooperation, negotiation, competition, and outright hostility). In our classrooms, our materials open space for a variety of experiences and voices that must be held together. As instructors, we rarely ask students to pick sides, but rather to understand why and how this heterogeneity coexists.

Students who are exposed repeatedly to heterogeneity as a characteristic feature of religion enter the field of political discourse also primed to expect and become comfortable with the existence of a multiplicity of viewpoints and positions. As such, they are able to acknowledge others' positions without seeing them as a direct threat to their own stance. In fact, their ability to humanize and contextualize a range of coexisting views results in their ability to form more nuanced and complex positions themselves. Finally, seeing exempla of the ways religious communities have held competing positions in a given society—through cooperation, negotiation, competition, and outright hostility—they glean models of engagement they can seek to avoid or to adopt.

missions, see Ronis and Proctor (2020) (in this issue).

16 There is a place for critique in our field, but the above features of our field underscore the need first to attempt to understand. The authors of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) task force on the field of religious studies write: "If criticism [of scholars of religious studies] is uninformed by an empathetic understanding of the criticized, it chiefly serves to confirm the moral or cultural superiority of the critic. For that, a liberal education scarcely is needed" (AAC&U 1990, 175).

17 See Gibbons and Fruchtman (2020) (in this issue) for more theorization and elaboration on this point.

The insights above proved foundational as workshop participants moved on to our second day of work together. At this point, we split into small groups, each of which devised teaching materials for a late ancient religion course on a politically-relevant topic: (im)migration, refugees, and exile; race, ethnicity, and religion; slaves, strangers, and other marginalized persons; prisons, torture, and punishment; humans and the environment. All of the materials we generated in small groups were shared with members of the collective.[18]

Finally, we created space at the workshop to have frank conversations about the vulnerabilities and risks involved in teaching courses on politically-charged topics and in engaging in contentious public discourse around our sources (Chronicle of Higher Education staff 2017; Flaherty 2017). With the profusion of tactics used by watchdog groups (for example, recording, doctoring, and distributing footage of professors in their classrooms, mobilizing networks through social media, coordinating pressure on institutions of higher education to police the curriculum and speech of its professors), as well as the amplified consequences (such as calls to terminate scholars' employment, threats of personal violence and even death), the stakes can be high. We recognized that not all instructors are equally vulnerable: graduate students, contingent and junior faculty, faculty of color and women faculty, and those who find themselves in unsupportive academic environments run disproportionate risks.

Yet, many of the workshop participants who enjoy a degree of institutional stability or personal privilege remarked on feeling a heightened consciousness of our own complicity and a heightened sense of responsibility to intervene. We note that our heightened consciousness reflects not only the new historical moment in which we live, but also reflects our positions of privilege that have shielded us from politicization up to this point. What we now perceive and experience is nothing new to our minoritized faculty colleagues who have long endured charges of being overly political in their scholarship and teaching.[19] At the workshop—as well as in this special issue, we—especially those of us in positions of privilege—hoped to work through our responsibilities to our students, to the field, and to the public. Relatedly, as we learn from the experiences and strategies of our underrepresented colleagues, we understand ourselves to bear responsibility not to let the burden fall exclusively on them.

Our 2017 workshop could facilitate only the initial steps of our collaboration. Since then, conversations about the foundational principles outlined above have continued, fueling further reflection in sessions dedicated to these topics at our professional associations' annual meetings (the North American Patristics Society, Society of Biblical Literature, and American Society of Church History); the development of a spate of new courses, pedagogical experimentation with readings, media, assignments, in-class exercises, and community-based work; and new scholarship. Some of us have also taken the project to our home institutions, conducting similar workshops with our departments and teaching and learning centers. Thus, the articles in this volume represent one of many steps along our journey of scholarly and pedagogical collaboration.

Next Steps: Clarifying the Terms and Foundations of Our Work

Soon after the workshop, we discovered two important lacunae in our work together. We had not sought to articulate what we meant by "politics"—and what possible differentiations might exist between the "political," the "politicized," the "politically relevant," the "politically charged," and so forth—nor thought about what our specific positionality as scholars of late ancient religion brought to bear on our project. In this section, we offer preliminary considerations of each, considerations that provide grounding for the essays in this special issue.

Politics, Political, Politicized

We convened the workshop on the premise that we wanted to better engage with politics in the late ancient religion classroom with no explicit consensus as to how we defined politics; each of us were moved to attend by our *own* senses of what politics referred to and what it might mean to address it in the classroom. At the workshop, we did not pause at any point to construct a shared definition—reflecting on this omission later, we noted two likely reasons that this had not presented an obstacle to our collaboration:

18 Workshop participants discussed whether we wanted to make this repository of materials public (and thus accessible to all instructors) or closed only to members of the collective. After a discussion of the risks involved for contributors without the security of a job, without tenure, or others for whom the risks involved in making oneself vulnerable to being targeted by watchdog groups, we decided to use a Facebook group (that requires an application to join) as our interface with the collective. In an attempt to ensure commitment among members, we expect all new group members to contribute teaching materials to the repository. For more information, see https://www.facebook.com/groups/760110884387955/.

19 See the essays in Westfield (2008) for some stark reminders of this.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License

first, we seem to all have found our differing understandings of politics mutually intelligible; second, no matter our definition of politics, we found conversations, ideas, and intellectual tools that were helpful to our varied goals.

As we prepared this special issue, we were helpfully pressed to articulate a definition;[20] rather than generating a singular, shared definition, we chose to identify the assumptions and intersections that had undergirded our discussions and subsequent writings, and in so doing, to honor the multiple different coexisting definitions we had already been working with. In the pieces collected in this issue, then, readers will find a variety of understandings of politics, reflecting the variety of definitions that the workshop participants brought to the table. But all of these understandings of politics are, as they were at the workshop, mutually intelligible, because their diversity is a result of varied focus, rather than contradiction: they do not conflict with one another so much as reflect different vantage points and different objects of concern. While, in some of the pieces, politics refers primarily to governmental power that is exerted through formal civic institutions and, in other pieces, it refers to hot-button issues around which contemporary discourse has anxiously crystallized, *all* of the pieces, concurrently, share a broader understanding of the political as our universal human reality, a feature of our existence as participants in and subjects of various overlapping social and institutional polities. This expansive understanding—in which politics affects every aspect of our lives and comprises the power dynamics that shape us and that we, simultaneously, shape—includes power dynamics broadly speaking, civic engagement of all varieties, ideologies of community and governance, and also, of course, politics as partisan playmaking. These are all connected and interwoven, though rarely in clear or generalizable correspondence.[21]

Our definitional approach immediately anticipates two objections. First, in embracing a wide variety of definitions all grounded in a diffuse and expansive overarching understanding, are we in reality ceding concrete definitional power either to public discourse (as we react to things labeled political) or to scholars in various disciplines who seek to define politics such that it can be excised from educational settings? Second, if politics is "our universal human reality"—if everything is political—what does it even mean to say that some topics are politically charged or politically relevant and how do we apply these labels to some courses more so than others? On our broad understanding of politics, it becomes difficult to see how a classroom could ever be rendered an apolitical space, or how a class could ever hope to avoid being politically relevant and dealing with politically charged topics. In short, why do we name and embrace "the political"?

Our answers to these objections are deeply intertwined. To some extent, we are ceding definitional power to public discourse: the topics we are endeavoring to incorporate in our classes are only controversial because they are emphasized as such in the public discourse of a particular time and place and because they are identified as grounds for policing some courses and not others. Even though we regard everything to be political, not everything is *equally* so at any given moment in time. Public discourse coalesces around various points of contention, bringing those issues to the foreground and thus rendering them more important to address in the classroom. But because of our broad understanding of politics, part of the intent in allowing public discourse to identify issues of political relevance is to nuance, problematize, and challenge that very identification.

By focusing our attention on topics that have been labeled political on these axes—and which are thus received as politically charged, politically relevant, or politically sensitive—we are harnessing the crystallizing power of politics as colloquially defined to problematize that same understanding of politics, and to help our students plumb the complexities and intricacies of our materials and their receptions.[22] As an example, the instructor of religion in late antiquity who chooses to emphasize (im)migration, race, ethnicity, slavery, marginalization, prisons, or ecology (the topics around which we generated materials in our workshop) is taking topics that her students are already thinking about and offering those students new information, new avenues of intellectual and historical approach, and new social paradigms (those modeled in the classroom) with which to complicate any simplistic or binary understanding of the topic at hand, no matter how politically charged.

While it should go without saying, we want to be clear: we are not advocating that instructors indoctrinate students with their own values and party political persuasions. The whole object of the workshop and its offshoots was (and is) to find pedagogically effective

20 We owe a debt of gratitude to our anonymous reviewers for prodding us to be more explicit and for their insights that shaped our subsequent discussions.

21 This understanding is influenced by scholars like Chantal Mouffe (1993), who argue that "the political cannot be restricted to a certain type of institution, or envisaged as constituting a specific sphere or level of society. It must be conceived as a dimension that is inherent to every human society and that determines our very ontological condition" (Mouffe 1993, 3). While Mouffe distinguishes between "the political" and its systematization in "politics" (see Mouffe 2005, 9), not all of our authors found that distinction helpful, given the variability and instability of identities we encounter in our materials and in our classrooms.

22 Indeed, the assumption of neutrality is its own form of politics. Once we begin to understand all human interaction as political—that our topics and the students we teach are all already politicized—we understand that *avoiding* engagement with politically charged topics is as much a political action as overt activism. And, on the contrary, we understand that leaving naturalized systems and discourses unexamined is itself a political act whose consequences mask the operations of power and further entrench existing dynamics. One of those dominant, naturalized ideas (particularly in the United States) is that politics is separable from daily life, that it is focused on promoting political parties and public policy agendas, that it is marked by inherent and dualistic antagonism, and that it is primarily concerned with which party or candidate one votes for.

and intellectually responsible ways of incorporating the political into our classes in such a way that students are free to arrive at different conclusions. Dictating ideologies to our students would contradict almost every tenet of good pedagogy, as we are aiming to enhance our students' ability to think for themselves, even if that means they come to conclusions different from our own.[23]

Tools of Late Ancient Studies

Our next step was to consider what the study of late antiquity had to offer. Whereas our query of religious studies provided us with tools and evaluative premises (critical empathy, comfort with difference, and the recognition of heterogeneity), late ancient studies provides us with a set of sources and research questions that regularly address issues of contemporary relevance, as well as methodological and theoretical approaches that serve as guides to thinking through these topics and provide us a special vantage from which to speak.

The study of late antiquity from its very origins has sought to center the marginal and marginalized, as well as the means of their marginalization. The works of Arnaldo Momigliano, Peter Brown, Elizabeth A. Clark, and those who have succeeded them in the field reverberate with the very constituencies whose presence—or poignant absence—continue to shape political discourse, with questions of gender; of social and physical displacement; ethnic and racial differentiation; slavery, incarceration, violence, war, and natural disaster. Part of the very DNA of the field, in other words, is its attentiveness to voices deemed political in contemporary popular discourse, in large part because they complicate visions of a pristine "classical" past. The process of uncovering these voices entails rereading and reinterpreting established sources with an eye to the nonmajoritarian perspectives they (inadvertently or intentionally) inculcate—a task that has benefited both from the discovery of new source material and from the revalorization of previously disregarded materials as sources.[24] At least equally significant for late antiquity's ability to ask—and, at times, answer—previously unasked questions, however, has been the identification and appropriation of new methodological lenses. Drawing on the resources of other disciplines—of anthropology, sociology, literary and political theory, and an ever-widening array of others—late ancient studies brings to bear tools forged in the study of contemporary social phenomena on premodern texts and artifacts. The resulting give and take between late antiquity and other disciplines has urged scholars towards deeper reflection on both ancient and modern communities, on their disjunctions and points of commonality, and on ways in which each offers the other a mirror by which to discern blind spots, misapprehensions, and facile equivalencies.

In recent decades, both the discipline of late antiquity and its foci have been able to command more intellectual and pedagogical real estate in college and university classrooms.[25] There remain, of course, courses in which history, theology, or religious studies are taught without reference to the "margins." For most instructors, however, the pedagogy of premodernity—including late antiquity—has become ineluctably tied to categories and questions beyond the experience of elites.

Moving Ahead: Collaborative Pedagogies

The articles in this special issue bear in their bylines the names of the scholars and pedagogues who have had a primary hand in their conception, construction, and execution. By the same token, however, these authorial attributions obscure the collaborative nature of this project: just as the original workshop was conceived and designed as a team effort, so too this special issue has been thoroughly collaborative. From the initial idea of a special issue through the final round of editorial comments, the articles in this special issue have been a group effort. The contributors have met regularly, contributed to outlines, read drafts, and supplied scholarly references and research data for more than merely their own pieces.

23 Even if we were inclined to political proselytizing—as many critics of higher education charge—research shows that such "advocacy" is ineffective: the *presumed* political ideology of instructors has less influence on college students' political views than parents, family, and news media (Gross and Simmons 2014; Woessner and Woessner 2009; Mariani and Hewitt 2008).

24 New discoveries that have helped expand our understanding of late ancient heterogeneity include, for example, the discoveries at Nag Hammadi (see Fruchtman and Park 2020) and popular sermons by Augustine of Hippo (354-430) that deal with day-to-day life in late ancient North Africa. Revalorized sources include, for example, hagiographies, the writings of authors judged heterodox or insufficiently insightful by later generations of religious or academic authorities, including those of Evagrius of Pontus and Epiphanius of Salamis, and, not least of all, the relevance of material culture and everyday objects for the study of religion.

25 A sampling of these courses include: "Slaves, Prostitutes, and Convicts: Writing the History of the Outcast" (Bond 2018); "Racial Politics and National Belonging in Early Christianity" (Kotrosits 2019); "Race and Ethnicity in the New Testament" (Krawiec, Luckritz, and Park 2018); "Poverty: From the Bible to Beyoncé" (Dalton 2018); "Immigration and Migration in the Classical World" (Mazurek 2017); "Marginality in the Ancient Greek World" (Weaver 2018); "Early Christians and Incarceration" (Larsen 2020); "Humans and/in/vs. the Environment in the Ancient Mediterranean" (Upson-Saia 2018). In addition to undergraduate courses, collections of scholars are assembling around these topics. For example, Yale University's 2017-2018 Workshop in Ancient Studies' theme "Slavery, Dependency and Genocide in the Ancient and Premodern World" and scholars at the 2018 Classical Association of the Atlantic States hosted a session on teaching the "Ancient Other."

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License

This approach, while common in other parts of the academy, is still sufficiently underutilized in religious studies (and in the humanities more broadly) to require a note of justification. While attribution and attributability are of manifest value in the process of peer-reviewed publication—and, for pragmatic reasons, including the tenure system, unlikely to lose ground—collaborative scholarly efforts like the workshop and this special issue provide both authors and readers with considerable benefits. Among the more obvious boons are the networks these efforts create, connecting instructors (faculty, graduate students, and independent scholars) across disciplinary and institutional boundaries. These networks allow for swift and efficient dissemination of data; word of one successful pedagogical experiment need not necessarily beget dozens like it, but the ability for instructors to share expertise,[26] crowdsource questions, and draw on the counsel of peers in addressing challenges are invaluable for pedagogues at all stages of their professional development.

More than a matter of expediency, however, collaboration on the part of scholars in the humanities is itself also a distinctly political choice. The discomforts it engenders mirror in important ways those of bringing politics into the classroom: they invoke anxiety over polluting something academics have traditionally accepted as pure, the pursuit of knowledge for knowledge's sake, as well as fears of debasing our disciplines, our data, and our expertise.[27] That we have nevertheless embraced both practices reflects our conviction that this collaboration, despite starting as a grassroots effort initiated by teacher-scholars (rather than by a professional organization), has the potential to shape the future of our field. Together we established a vision of learning objectives, curricula, and pedagogical approaches that will focus and shape knowledge production on our sources. From liberal arts colleges to research institutions, these courses we all agree are worth teaching, as well as the manner in which we teach them, will in turn orient a new generation of students (and future scholars) to a particular view of the past and of religion. As such, our collaboration has not only an impact on our immediate concerns, but also has the potential to impact the shape of our fields in the long-term.

Similarly significant, our collaborations have afforded us the opportunity to diversify the experiences on which we were able to draw in constructing courses and in crafting these articles. Authors include scholars at public and private, teaching- and research-intensive, theologically affiliated and unaffiliated institutions, schools in "red" and "blue" states, drawing on student populations from across the ethnic and socioeconomic spectrum. That is not to say that the pool of contributors to this special issue, nor even of workshop participants, has been fully diverse. Our numbers include persons of color, immigrants, and queer scholars; neither individually nor in aggregate, however, do we plumb the range of pedagogical, personal, and interpersonal experiences.[28] As such, we publish this special issue with the hope that it will connect our network with others who are engaged in similar projects, expanding the voices and experiences contributing insights. And, as this special issue will be published in the run-up to the 2020 election, we imagine that the ground will be fertile for such contributions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

AAC&U (Association of American Colleges and Universities). 1990. "Religion." In *Reports from the Field*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

AAR-Teagle Working Group. 2008. "The Religion Major and Liberal Education—A White Paper." *Religious Studies News* 23, no. 4 (October): 21–24. http://www.teaglefoundation.org/Teagle/media/GlobalMediaLibrary/documents/resources/The_Religion_Major_and_Liberal_Education.pdf?ext=.pdf.

American Academy of Arts and Sciences. 2013. T*he Heart of the Matter: The Humanities and Social Sciences for a Vibrant, Competitive, and Secure Nation*. Cambridge, MA: American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

American Academy of Religion. 2020. "American Academy of Religion: About: Mission Statement." https://www.aarweb.org/about.

American Legion v. American Humanist Association, No. 17-1717, 588 U.S. ___ (2019).

26 When devising syllabi at our workshop, for instance, participants drew on their varied areas of specialization. As a group, our ability to gather readings representing multiple religious communities; varieties of materials (texts, material culture, artistic sources, and so forth); and different theoretical orientations laid the foundation for richer course content overall.

27 None of these concerns are entirely unfounded: destructive collaborations exist, as do harmful approaches to expanding pedagogical discourses, and throughout this volume contributors have sought to be transparent in our wrestling with these challenges.

28 Gibbons and Fruchtman's article, of course, goes some ways towards reminding us that self-disclosure, whether in the classroom or in the pages of an academic journal, is both risky and, in the last instance, impossible (2020).

Berg, Steven L. 2005. "Two Sides of the Same Coin: Politics in the Classroom." *Community College Enterprise* 11, no. 1 (Spring): 7–28. https://www.schoolcraft.edu/pdfs/cce/11.1.7-28.pdf.

Bond, Sarah E. 2017. "Why We Need to Start Seeing the Classical World in Color." *Hyperallergic*, June 7. https://hyperallergic.com/383776/why-we-need-to-start-seeing-the-classical-world-in-color/.

Bond, Sarah. 2018. "Slaves, Prostitutes, and Convicts: Writing the History of the Outcast." University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA. https://sarahemilybond.files.wordpress.com/2017/08/honr-1670_outcast-syllabus.pdf.

Byron, Gay L. 2012. "Race, Ethnicity, and the Bible: Pedagogical Challenges and Curricular Opportunities." *Teaching Theology and Religion* 15, no. 2 (April): 105–124. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9647.2012.00778.x.

Chapman, D. W. 2000. "Designing Problems for Motivation and Engagement in the PBL Classroom." *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching* 11, no. 2-3: 73–82.

Chatelain, Marcia. 2014. "Ferguson Syllabus." Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.. https://twitter.com/hashtag/FergusonSyllabus?src=hash.

Chronicle of Higher Education staff. 2017. "Special Report: Professors in the Political Cross Hairs." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 26. https://www.chronicle.com/specialreport/Professors-in-the-Political/129.

Columbia University. 2018. "Mission Statement." http://ftp.columbia.edu/content/mission-statement.html.

Cornell University. 2020. "Mission and Vision." https://hr.cornell.edu/our-culture-diversity/mission-vision.

Daily Theology. 2018. "Catholic Abuse Crisis Syllabus." https://dailytheology.org/2018/09/18/a-catholic-abuse-crisis-syllabus/.

Dalton, Krista. 2018. "Poverty: From the Bible to Beyoncé." Kenyon College, Gambier, OH.

Dartmouth College. 2020. "Mission Statement." https://www.dartmouth.edu/~tenyearreport/introduction/mission.html.

Dozier, Curtis. 2019. "'Western Civilization' Means Classics . . . and White Supremacy." *Pharos: Doing Justice to Classics*, January 25. http://pages.vassar.edu/pharos/2019/01/25/western-civilization-means-classics-and-white-supremacy/.

Fish, Stanley. 2012. *Save the World on Your Own Time*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Flaherty, Colleen. 2017. "Threats for What She Didn't Say." *Inside Higher Ed*, June 19. https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/06/19/classicist-finds-herself-target-online-threats-after-article-ancient-statues.

Fruchtman, Diane Shane. 2020. "The View from Late Antiquity." *The Wabash Center Journal on Teaching* 1, no. 3: 3–8. https://doi.org/10.31046/wabashcenter.v1i3.1676.

Fruchtman, Diane Shane, and Chan Sok Park. 2020. "Accepting the Inevitability of Politics in the Classroom: A Proposal for How to Identify Best Practices in Effective and Inclusive Religious Studies Pedagogy." *The Wabash Center Journal on Teaching* 1, no. 3: 57–72. https://doi.org/10.31046/wabashcenter.v1i3.567.

Gibbons, Kathleen, and Diane Shane Fruchtman. 2020. "Positionality and Disclosure in the Religious Studies Classroom." *The Wabash Center Journal on Teaching* 1, no. 3: 41–56. https://doi.org/10.31046/wabashcenter.v1i3.577.

Gonchar, Michael. 2017. "Island in Crisis: Teaching about Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria." *New York Times*, October 4. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/04/learning/lesson-plans/island-in-crisis-teaching-about-puerto-rico-after-hurricane-maria.html.

Gross, Neil, and Solon Simmons, eds. 2014. *Professors and their Politics*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License

Harper, William Rainey. 1905. "The University and Democracy." In *The Trend in Higher Education*, William Rainey Harper, 1-34. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Harvard University. 2020. "About Harvard." https://www.harvard.edu/about-harvard.

Heiland, Donna, and Mary Taylor Huber. 2015. "The Role of the Arts and Humanities in Civic Learning and Engagement: The US Debate." *Arts & Humanities in Higher Education* 14, no. 3: 231–38. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1474022215583945.

Heldman, Caroline. 2007. "Disaster Politics: New Orleans in the Wake of Hurricane Katrina." Occidental College, Los Angeles, CA. https://web10.fcny.org/projectpericles/programs/classroom/cec/CEC_2007-2009/Project_Pericles_CEC_Heldman_pdf.pdf.

Johnson, Patricia-Anne, Tim Caron, Christine Rodrigue, and Dan O'Connor. 2006. "Hurricane Katrina and its Aftermath." California State University, Long Beach, CA. https://studylib.net/doc/7433322/univ-300i-syllabus---california-state-university--long-beach.

Keller, J. M. 2008. "An Integrative Theory of Motivation, Volition, and Performance." *Technical Instruction, Cognition, and Learning* 6, no. 2: 79–104.

Kennedy, Rebecca Futo. 2017. "We Condone It By Our Silence: Confronting Classics' Complicity in White Supremacy." *Eidolon* May 11. https://eidolon.pub/we-condone-it-by-our-silence-bea76fb59b21.

Kennedy, Rebecca Futo, C. Sydnor Roy, and Max L. Goldman. 2013. *Race and Ethnicity in the Classical World: An Anthology of Primary Sources in Translation*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing.

Kimball, Roger. 1990, 2008. *Tenured Radicals: How Politics Has Corrupted Our Higher Education*. Chicago, IL: Rowman & Littlefield.

Kotrosits, Maia. 2019. "Racial Politics and National Belonging in Early Christianity." Denison University, Granville, OH. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Pa1YB51jDWUntecjUgmVy3k47u7_R_di/view.

Krawiec, Rebecca, Tim Luckritz, Chan Sok Park. 2018. "Race and Ethnicity in the New Testament." Canisius College, Buffalo, NY; Moravian Theological Seminary, Bethleham, PA; College of Wooster, Wooster, OH.

Kwok, Pui-Lan, Cecilia González-Andrieu, and Dwight N. Hopkins, eds. 2004. *Teaching Global Theologies: Power and Praxis*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press.

Larsen, Matthew. 2020. "Early Christians and Incarceration." Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

Levine, Peter. 2014. "A Defense of Higher Education and Its Civic Mission." *Journal of General Education* 63, no. 1: 47–56. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/539553/pdf.

Lewis, Dan A. 2014. "Engagement and Citizenship." *Journal of General Education* 63, no. 1: 57-63. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/539554/pdf.

Mariani, Mack D., and Gordon J. Hewitt. 2008. "Indoctrination U.? Faculty Ideology and Changes in Student Political Orientation." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 41, no. 4: 773–83. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096508081031.

Mazurek, Lindsey. 2017. "Immigration and Migration in the Classical World." Bucknell University, Lewisburg, PA. https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BoRrqRAWqGc9MUZkdUExdGJsZDQ/view.

McDowell, Ceasar, J. Phillip Thompson, and JoAnn Carmin. 2006. "The Katrina Practicum." Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA. https://ocw.mit.edu/courses/urban-studies-and-planning/11-945-katrina-practicum-spring-2006/syllabus/.

Mouffe, Chantal. 1993. *The Return of the Political*. London, UK: Verso.

Mouffe, Chantal. 2005. *On the Political*. London, UK: Routledge.

Mount Holyoke. 2020. “Mount Holyoke’s Mission.” https://www.mtholyoke.edu/about/mission.

Musil, Caryn McTighe. 2015. “‘A Step Away From Complacent Knowing’: Reinvigorating Democracy through the Humanities.” *Arts & Humanities in Higher Education* 14, no. 3: 239–59. https://doi.org/10.1177/1474022215583950.

Myers, Sondra. 2014. “The University’s Sacred Mission.” *Journal of General Education* 63, no. 1: 64-71. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/539555/pdf.

National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement. 2012. *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy’s Future*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Nelson, Stephen. 2015. “New Orleans and Hurricanes: Past, Present, and Future.” Tulane University, New Orleans, LA. https://www.tulane.edu/~sanelson/New_Orleans_and_Hurricanes/index.htm.

Nussbaum, Martha. 1998. *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Nussbaum, Martha. 2010. *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Orlemanski, Jonathan, and Julie Orlemanski. 2018. “Race and Medieval Studies: A Partial Bibliography.” https://docs.google.com/document/d/18JClsma1BMKYCxvgeWqwPej3ZSCrQXlAlXbLoCdqWmE/edit.

Puerto Rico Syllabus. 2017. “Hurricane Maria.” https://puertoricosyllabus.com/hurricane-maria/.

Riswold, Caryn D. 2015. “Teaching the College ‘Nones’: Christian Privilege and the Religion Professor.” *Teaching Theology and Religion* 18, no. 2 (April): 133–148. https://doi.org/10.1111/teth.12275.

Ronis, Sara, and Travis Proctor. 2020. “The Past, Present, and Religious Studies Future of Civic Engagement in American Higher Education.” *The Wabash Center Journal on Teaching* 1, no. 3: 23–40. https://doi.org/10.31046/wabashcenter.v1i3.574.

Rose, Christopher. 2019. “Wading into the Duke-UNC Middle East Consortium Mess.” *Academe Blog*, September 23. https://academeblog.org/2019/09/23/wading-into-the-duke-unc-middle-east-consortium-mess/.

Seemiller, Corey, and Meghan Grace. 2014. *Generation Z Goes to College*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Smith, Bruce L.R., Jeremy D. Mayer, and A. Lee Fritschler. 2008. *Closed Minds? Politics and Ideology in American Universities*. Washington DC; Brookings Institution Press.

Society of Biblical Literature. 2020. “Society of Biblical Literature: Mission: Strategic Vision Statement.” https://www.sbl-site.org/aboutus/mission.aspx.

Sociologists for Justice. 2020. “Ferguson Syllabus.” https://sociologistsforjustice.org/ferguson-syllabus/.

Strauss, Valerie. 2015. “How Gov. Walker Tried to Quietly Change the Mission of the University of Wisconsin.” *The Washington Post*, Feb. 5. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2015/02/05/how-gov-walker-tried-to-quietly-change-the-mission-of-the-university-of-wisconsin/.

Sullivan, Winnifred Fallers, Robert A. Yelle, and Mateo Taussig-Rubbo, eds. 2011. *After Secular Law*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.

Teaching Association for Medieval Studies. 2018. “Featured Lesson Resource Page: Race, Racism, and the Middle Ages.” https://teams-medieval.org/?page_id=76.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License

Teel, Karen. 2014. “Getting Out of the Left Lane: The Possibility of White Antiracist Pedagogy.” *Teaching Theology and Religion* 17, no. 1 (January): 3–26. https://doi.org/10.1111/teth.12156.

Theall, Michael, and Jennifer Franklin. 1999. “What Have We Learned? A Synthesis and Some Guidelines for Effective Motivation in Higher Education.” *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* 78 (Summer): 99–109. https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.7810.

Trelstad, Marit. 2008. “The Ethics of Effective Teaching: Challenges from the Religious Right and Critical Pedagogy.” *Teaching Theology and Religion* 11, no. 4: 191–202. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9647.2008.00470.x.

Upson-Saia, Kristi. 2018. “Humans and/in/vs. the Environment in the Ancient Mediterranean.” Occidental College, Los Angeles, CA.

University of California at San Diego. 2020. “Mission, Vision, and Values.” https://plan.ucsd.edu/report#mission-vision-values.

University of South Carolina. 2020. “Our Mission.” https://sc.edu/about/south_carolina_at_a_glance/our_mission.php.

Van Cleave, R. 2011. “The Katrina & Disaster Law Seminar.” Golden Gate University, San Francisco, CA. https://www.ggu.edu/courses/syllabus.do?id=29791.

Walvoord, Barbara E. 2007. *Teaching and Learning in College Introductory Religion Courses*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Weaver, Carrie Sulosky. 2018. “Marginality in the Ancient Greek World.” University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA. https://drive.google.com/file/d/18eojt-oITXJoXrsbSchgNOxzirulMzRm/view.

Westfield, Nancy Lynne, ed. 2008. *Being Black, Teaching Black: Politics and Pedagogy in Religious Studies*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon.

Woessner, Matthew, and April Kelly Woessner. 2009. “I Think My Professor Is a Democrat: Considering Whether Students Recognize and React to Faculty Politics.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 42, no. 2 (April): 343–52. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096509090453.

Wright, Almeda. 2019. “Whose Voice Counts?: Gender, Power, and Epistemologies in the Seminary Classroom.” *Teaching Theology and Religion* 22, no. 3: 176–190. https://doi.org/10.1111/teth.12489.

Yale University. 2020. “Mission Statement.” https://www.yale.edu/about-yale/mission-statement.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Kristi Upson-Saia is Professor of Religious Studies and Director of the Center for Research and Scholarship at Occidental College. She is a specialist in religions of the late ancient Mediterranean world whose research focuses on religious dress and performativity in late antiquity, as well as medicine and healing in late antiquity. She is the co-Founder and co-Director of the international working group ReMeDHe (pronounced “remedy”) that supports and coordinates scholars working at the intersection of Religion and Medicine, Disability, and Health in late antiquity.

Maria E. Doerfler serves as Assistant Professor of Late Antiquity in the Department of Religious Studies at Yale University. Her scholarship explores how individuals and communities read their authoritative texts—whether laws, philosophical writings, or Scriptures—in times of crisis. Her most recent monograph, *Jephthah’s Daughter, Sarah’s Son: The Death of Children in Late Antiquity*, focuses on the deployment of biblical narratives to negotiate parental bereavement. She is currently at work on a volume examining the intersection of law and sacred historiography, a project reflected also in her teaching, including a course on “Biblical and U.S. Constitutional Interpretation in Dialogue.”