Undergraduate Fellows Program

Instituted by the Center for the Study of Religion and Society, our new Undergraduate Fellows Program is focused on mentoring undergraduate scholarship in the social scientific study of religion. To become a Fellow, undergraduates from across the University proposed a religion-based research topic. Of all the candidates, five were chosen to participate in this initial year of the program. Our program is two-fold:

Participation and Original Research—Learning to change individual questions into original research is a hallmark of a scholar. In the Fellows Program we are working with undergraduates to sharpen their questions, work through appropriate methodologies and data collection, and then share their findings with the broader community.

Each Fellow will spend a year conducting their own funded research project of personal interest and writing a paper based on their findings with the aim of presenting it to other scholars.

Mentorship and Training—Combined with this independent research, Fellows will also be mentored by a faculty member. They will participate in the Center’s events by attending meetings, lectures, and awards ceremonies.

Partnering experienced faculty with the undergraduate Fellows is a distinct aspect of the Undergraduate Fellows Program. Scholarly training doesn’t occur in a vacuum; by providing a mentor and promoting the presentation of research, the Fellows Program emphasizes the dissemination of new knowledge to both peers and community.

At the end of the year-long Fellowship, Fellows will have had the opportunity to research a religion-related topic of personal interest in a supportive and resource-rich context, to participate in an intellectual community of scholars interested in religion and society, to learn more about what life is like as an academic scholar of religion, and to prepare for possible application to top graduate programs that involve the study of religion. The Fellows will be equipped to explore the possibility of becoming academic scholars in a variety of disciplines and fields.

Fellows and Their Projects

- **Maura Bailey**, sophomore, “Religion and Politics in Southern States”
- **Emily Conron**, senior, “The Impact of Religious Coping on Mental Health in Individuals with Chronic Illnesses in the Developing World”
- **Hope Feist**, sophomore, “Understanding the Role that Catholic High Schools Play in Helping Students Cope”
- **Chelsea Merriman**, junior, “Religion and Water in Israel and Palestine”
- **Alexa Solazzo**, senior, “Dorm Mass Attendance at Notre Dame”

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**New Videos on the Center for the Study of Religion Website**

CISR Series, an online video archive of our interdisciplinary colloquia sessions, launched this year. Look for videos from invited scholars on the on issues in religion, government, society and more.

Find out more at: csrs.nd.edu/events/cisr-series
Ellen Childs (middle) won the William V. D’Antonio award for Graduate Student Excellence in the Sociology of Religion at the University of Notre Dame, awarded by Christian Smith (right). Ellen’s research, including her dissertation, focuses on congregations as institutions. Brandon Vaidyanathan (left), the previous awardee, is now completing his dissertation. The award is named after William D’Antonio, who joined the faculty of Notre Dame as assistant professor in 1957. He served as Professor and Chair of the Department of Sociology from 1966-1971.

American Sociological Association Presentations
- Bryant Crubaugh, “Competition and Development of Neighborhood Organizations”
- Shanna Corner, “Traditional Gender Ideologies: The Impact of Christian Schools”
- Justin Farrell, “Moral Outpouring and the 2010 BP Oil Spill: Explaining Americans’ Response To Large-Scale Disasters”
- Hilary Davidson, “What Does It Mean To Be Generous?: Defining and Understanding Generosity in America” (ASR)

Society for the Scientific Study of Religion Presentations
- Cole Carnesecca, “Short Memories: Toward an Understanding of Memory, Identity and Discourse Among Unregistered Protestants in China”; Convener, “History and Religion” and “Secularization” sessions
- Shanna Corner, “Religion and Gender Ideology: Uncovering the Relationship Between American Religious Schools and the Gender Ideologies of American Young Adults”
- Hilary Davidson, “Religion and Social Movement Media Coverage: The Case of Humanitarian Activism Along the Sonora-Arizona Border”
- Linda Kawentel, “Gender Traditionalism Among Roman Catholics: Re-examining Religious Predictors of Traditional Gender Attitudes Among U.S. Catholics”
- Megan Rogers, “Contemporary Chinese Religious Scholars’ Views and Opinions of Religion”
- Brandon Vaidyanathan, “On Studying a Minority Religion: Methodology and Ethics in Multi-sited Research” and “Catholicism, Development, and Transnational Professionals in the Neoliberal City”; Convener, “Economics and the Economy” session
- Brad Vermulen, “How Elites Create Momentum: Rethinking Religious Strength in a Strategic Action Field”
- Meredith Whitnah, “Religious Organizations and Gender in South Africa”
The Science of Generosity initiative grant project will convene a conference of its research in Philadelphia, PA, from October 18-20th. At this conference, researchers of the fourteen funded projects and the five dissertation fellows will present their findings about the causes, manifestations, and consequences of generosity to invited guests from philanthropic organizations, non-profit organizations, and the media.

With support from the John Templeton Foundation, this three-day conference will offer the researchers time to think about the complex nature of generosity and to discuss these topics in a broad, interdisciplinary environment. For philanthropists and non-profit executives, it will provide a forum to converse with researchers about how to put into practice these findings and how to move research forward to make it usable to organizations dependent on others’ generosity. For reporters, this conference will afford them exclusive access to cutting-edge findings and intimate discussions with the researchers.

For more information about the conference, please visit: http://generosityresearch.nd.edu/
Andrew Norris continued his work for Kraig Beyerlein and the nationally representative project on US protest events. For this project, Andrew is cleaning the data, coding the causes into categories, and trying to identify which events were covered on the internet in any way.

This May, Meghan Davis and Amanda Varela joined the CSRS team. They split their time between two projects, coding journal articles for a critical realism project of Brandon Vaidyanathan, Mike Strand, and Tom Bushman’s and tracking participants for the National Study of Youth and Religion for Christian Smith.

Over the summer, Aaron Sant-Miller continued his previous year’s work with Mary Ellen Konieczny on the US Air Force project. With the help of graduate student Megan Rogers, Aaron is transcribing the congregant interviews that were gathered in the past 2011-2012 year in preparation for analysis.

Our faculty and graduate students have published much research this year, including:


A NEW WAVE FOR NSYR

A team of over 30 graduate and undergraduate students, faculty and staff members, led by Christian Smith, is involved this fall in preparing to launch Wave 4 of the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR), a national research project on the religious practices of American young adults, funded in large part by the Lilly Foundation.

The first wave of the project, conducted in 2001, collected data from respondents when they were ages 13–18. Dozens of books, scholarly and popular-press articles, research reports, and conference presentations have reported the findings from the first three waves of data in the ten years since the study began. Clergy, lay leaders and staff in multiple religious organizations have applied the lessons learned from the study to their own practices with adolescents and young adults.

This winter, the final wave of the panel survey will gather quantitative survey data, asking about all aspects of participants’ lives, including family and romantic relationships, career trajectories, educational attainment, and physical and psychological well-being, in addition to issues related to morality and involvement in religious organizations and activities.

Next summer, several hundred interviews from a subset of those surveyed will supplement these data, allowing for a rich examination of the complexities and meanings of respondents’ experiences. These data will provide numerous opportunities for researchers at Notre Dame and beyond to continue to examine the evolving influence of religion on American young adults’ lives.

To assist in this final phase of the data collection, the CSRS has brought Sara Skiles on-board as the project manager. Sara (photo below) is currently completing her PhD in the Sociology department here at Notre Dame.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

Christian Smith won the 2012 Distinguished Career Award from the American Sociological Association section on Altruism, Morality, and Social Solidarity and the 2011-2012 Rev. Edmund P. Joyce, C.S.C. Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching from the University of Notre Dame.


Justin Farrell’s paper, “The Young and the Restless? The Liberalization of Young Evangelicals” won the 2011 Honorable Mention Best Student Graduate paper of the ASR.

Justin Farrell’s paper, “The BP Oil Spill and Americans’ Response to Large-Scale Disasters” won the Graduate Student Paper Award for the Environment and Technology section of the ASA and the 2011-2012 UND department of Sociology’s Jeanine Becker Best Paper award.

Kari Christoffersen won the 2011-2012 University of Notre Dame department of Sociology’s Dodge Memorial Teaching Award for teaching excellence.


Undergraduate Students (cont’d)
Robyn Przybylski
Aaron Sant-Miller
Anne Schoewetter
Alexa Solazzo
Monica Spitzer
Charles Stephen
Amanda Varela
Rachel Zajdel

Faculty Fellows
Kraig Beyerlein
Kevin Christiano
Jessica Collett
Edwin Hernández
Mary Ellen Konieczny
Atalia Omer
David Sikkink
Jason Springs
Erika Summers-Effler
Andrew Weigert
Michael Welch

Visiting Scholars
Ines Jindra
Michael Jindra
The CSRS offers an ongoing colloquia series, the Colloquium on the Interdisciplinary Study of Religion (CISR), which brings together graduate students and faculty from disciplines including sociology, history, and political science.

Last year’s speakers included:

**Spring Semester**

John Shields  
Government  
Claremont College

Loren Lybarger  
Classics and World Religions  
Ohio University

**Fall Semester**

Rhys Williams  
Sociology  
Loyola University

Melissa Wilde  
Sociology  
University of Pennsylvania

**Upcoming 2011-2012 Speakers**

**Fall Semester**

October 26th:  
Stephen Monsma  
Sociology  
Calvin College

November 19:  
Omar McRoberts  
Sociology  
University of Chicago

**Spring Semester**

Chris Bail  
Sociology  
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Jim Nolan  
Department of Anthropology and Sociology  
Williams College

Loren Lybarger presenting on a paper entitled, "The Contingency of the Religious Return Amongst Palestinians in Chicago"

For upcoming CSRS events, visit:  
[csrs.nd.edu/events](http://csrs.nd.edu/events)