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Illuminations

NEWSLETTER FOR NEW FACULTY

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Ann Gleig Discusses Buddhist Geeks, Technology & Public Transportation

May 3, 2013



*Dr. Ann Gleig joined the UCF Department of Philosophy in August 2012 as an Assistant Professor of Religious Studies. She earned her Ph.D. in religious studies from Rice University in 2011. Her areas of specialization are Asian religions in America as well as religion and psychology. She has published and presented on numerous aspects of her research, and is presently co-editing a book titled *Homegrown Gurus: From Hinduism in America to American Hinduism*. She is an editor for *Religious Studies Review* for the sections on the “Sociology and Anthropology of Religion” and a sub-editor for “Mysticism, Asian Religions, and Psychology.” She also is interested in innovative feminist, queer, and contemplative pedagogies.*

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Ann Gleig Interviewed by Richard Harrison

Welcome to UCF. Had you been teaching elsewhere before arriving on campus?

Yes, I taught at Millsaps College, a small liberal-arts institution of approximately 900 students located in Jackson, Mississippi. I was a member of the Religious Studies department from 2010 until spring 2012.

What are your research and teaching interests?

Broadly speaking, my research is centered on Asian religions, Asian religions in the U.S., and religion and psychoanalysis. More recently, though, I have been focusing on Buddhism, technology, and global culture. Thus far at UCF, I have taught the survey course on world religions, as well as courses on religion and medicine and Buddhist thought.

Could you elaborate on your interest in Buddhism and technology?

Currently I am working on an actual community called **Buddhist Geeks** (<http://www.buddhistgeeks.com/>). It's comprised mainly of Westerners, especially in North America, who have adopted Buddhist teachings and practices but use blogs, social media, and other forms of communication to support and disseminate Buddhist religion and philosophy. The group has regular **podcasts** (<http://www.buddhistgeeks.com/category/podcast/>), an **online magazine** (<http://www.tricycle.com/magazine>), and a **website** (<http://www.buddhistgeeks.com/>). They even host an **annual conference** (<http://www.buddhistgeeks.com/conference/>), which this year will be on the campus of the **University of Colorado—Boulder** (<http://www.colorado.edu/>).

I see that your dissertation also addresses North American Buddhism.

You've been checking up on me! Well, in point of fact, my dissertation actually deals with contemporary American assimilation of Asian enlightenment traditions, including Buddhism. I argue that there are several trends in American adoption of these traditions, one of the chief of which is an embrace of world-affirming Tantric forms of Asian spirituality over world-negating renouncer traditions such as Theravada Buddhism and Advaita Vedanta.

You also are co-editing a book.

Yes, if all goes according to plan, **SUNY Press** (<http://www.sunypress.edu/>) will release first in print late this year and then, later, online, *Homegrown Gurus: From Hinduism in America to American Hinduism*, which I am co-editing with my former colleague at Millsaps, Lola Williamson. The book contains essays that explore what we call in the title "American Hinduism," or an increasing Westernization of Hindu practices and spirituality, and an examination of a variety of teachers and movements, including Siddha Yoga and Ram Dass, and Kripalu Yoga and Amrit Desai.

Are there other projects in which you are involved?

I am an Associate Editor for the revised edition of *The Springer Encyclopedia of Religion and Psychology* (<http://ucf.catalog.fcla.edu/cf.jsp?st=CF021858562&ix=pm&I=0&V=D&pm=1>). The first edition was published in print format in 2010. This new edition is being completed online as a much expanded second edition. It is intended to be "dynamic," so that articles will be peer-reviewed in a timely manner and, if accepted, immediately will be available online.

To shifts gears a bit, what are the trends in your field and how do they affect your publishing or scholarship?

As I have just alluded in discussing the Springer *Encyclopedia*, so much scholarship is going digital now. I see the biggest impact in my field to be the digitization of journals and open access publishing. But at the same time, quite often my research involves "gray literature," such as written reports or even online sites and blogs – open source material, if you will. It is difficult to discern at times to whom one should go for assistance or where to begin searching for this information.

What does your ideal library look like?

I always have heavily relied, since grad school, on obtaining materials via Interlibrary Loan, and both the Rice and **UCF ILL** (<http://library.ucf.edu/ILL/>) departments have offered great service. Whenever I request materials for purchase at the UCF Libraries, the Acquisitions department is most helpful and efficient. As I read about the possibility of renovations at the Hitt Library, I hope plans will include space reserved for graduate students and cubicles for adjunct faculty.

What are your expectations for students' use of the library?

Well, I think there's a danger in over-emphasizing online resources. I want my students to know how to do "old-fashioned" research – to know that a wealth of books and articles are not available online currently, and perhaps never will be. Also, I am not certain I agree with a 24/7 library in terms of physical space or a place to go for assistance; at least, I do not see it as an absolute necessity.

Is there anything else you wish to add?

Both in Houston and in Jackson, I relied on a bicycle and public transportation. When I moved to Orlando last August, I quickly realized I must have a car!

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Interview Conducted by Richard Harrison, University Libraries.

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