

Curriculum Vitae
Benjamin E. Zeller

Contact Information

Division of Humanities
Brevard College
1 Brevard College Drive
Brevard, NC 28712

Phone: (828) 884-8143
Email: zellerbe@brevard.edu
Website: <http://www.nrms.net>

Education

University of North Carolina; Chapel Hill, North Carolina
The Graduate School – Ph.D., Religious Studies, 2007. Dissertation: “Storming the Gates of the Temple of Science: Religion and Science in Three New Religious Movements”

Harvard University; Cambridge, Massachusetts
Harvard Divinity School – Masters of Theological Studies, 2002.

University of Rochester; Rochester, New York
College of Arts and Sciences – Bachelor of Arts, Religious Studies, 1999, Cum Laude, with Honor, with Highest Distinction.

Current Appointments

Assistant Professor, Dept. of Religious Studies, Brevard College. Fall 2007 – Present.
Major Coordinator, Religious and Philosophy, Brevard College. Fall 2009 – Present.
Director of Honors Program, Brevard College, May 2010 – Present.

Past Appointments

Instructor, Dept. of Religion, Temple University. Fall 2005 – Spring 2007.
Instructor, Dept. of Communication Studies, University of North Carolina. Spring 2005.
Teaching Assistant, Dept. of Religious Studies, University of North Carolina. Fall 2002 – Spring 2005.
Teaching Fellow, Committee on the Study of Religion, Harvard University. Spring 2002 – Spring 2003.

Monograph

Prophets and Prottons: New Religious Movements and Science in Late Twentieth-Century America. New York: New York University Press, 2010. This book considers how three new religions in mid and late twentieth-century America constructed understandings of science and its relation to religion, and how these efforts reflected wider cultural positions on religion and science issues.

Anthology

Religion, Food, and Eating in North America. Lead editor, with Marie W. Dallam, Reid Neilson, and Nora Rubel. Forthcoming from Columbia University Press in late 2012. This anthology brings together a collection of essays by a diverse group of scholars that analyses how, what, and why religious individuals in the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean eat. The chapters cohere around the shared theme of the embeddedness of food and eating practices within religion, and the embeddedness of religion within culture.

Journal Articles

“At the Nexus of Science and Religion: UFO Religions,” *Religion Compass*, vol. 5, no. 11, Nov 2011.
“American Postwar ‘Big Religion’: Reconceptualizing Twentieth-Century American Religion Using Big Science as a Model,” *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture*, vol. 80, no. 2, June 2011.
“Science as Social Identity Marker: The Case of Early Unificationism in America,” *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*, vol. 14, no. 4, May 2011.
“New Religious Movements and Science,” *Nova Religio*, vol. 14, no. 4, May 2011.

- “Religion and Science in America,” *Religion Compass*, vol. 5, no. 4, April 2011.
- “Extraterrestrial Biblical Hermeneutics and the Making of Heaven’s Gate,” *Nova Religio*, vol. 14, no. 2, November 2010.
- “‘We Learned So Much When You Weren’t There!’: Reflections on the Interteach Method and the Acephalous Classroom,” *Teaching Theology & Religion*, vol. 13, no. 3, July 2010.
- “Scaling Heaven’s Gate: Individualism and Salvation in a New Religious Movement,” *Nova Religio*, vol. 10, no. 2, November 2006.
- “‘We’re the Other Catholic Church’: Feminism in a Radical Catholic Renewal Community,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, vol. 19, no. 2, Fall 2003.

Book Chapters

- “Food Practices, Culture, and Social Dynamics in the Hare Krishna Movement,” in *Handbook of New Religions and Cultural Production*, edited by Cole M. Cusack and Alex Norman. Forthcoming from Brill in 2012.
- “Heaven’s Gate, Science Fiction Religions, and Popular American Culture,” in *Handbook of Hyper-Real Religions*, edited by Adam Possamai. Forthcoming from Brill in 2012.
- “Individualism and Salvation in Heaven’s Gate,” in *Heaven’s Gate*, edited by George D. Chrissides. London: Ashgate Press, 2011.
- “The Euphemization of Violence: The Case of Heaven’s Gate,” in *Violence and New Religious Movements*, edited by James R. Lewis. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- “Inverted Orientalism, Vedic Science, and the Modern World: Bhaktivedanta and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness,” in *Handbook Of Religion And The Authority Of Science*, edited by James R. Lewis. Leiden: Brill, 2010.
- “Apocalyptic Thought in UFO Religions,” in *End of Days: Understanding the Apocalypse from Antiquity to Modernity*, edited by Karolyn Kinane and Michael A. Ryan. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland Press, 2009.

Encyclopedia and Reference Articles

- “Judaism.” *Encyclopedia of Food and Agricultural Ethics*. Edited by Paul Thomas. New York: Springer, Forthcoming in 2012.
- “Religion and Food.” *Encyclopedia of Food and Drink in America* (Second Edition). Edited by Andrew F. Smith. New York: Oxford University Press, Forthcoming in 2012.
- “Colonies, Communal Societies, and Utopias in the 19th and 20th Centuries.” *Cultural Encyclopedia of Vegetarianism*. Edited by Margaret Puskar-Pasewicz. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing, 2010.
- “Association of American Muslim Scientists and Engineers.” *Encyclopedia of Muslim-American History*. Edited by Edward E. Curtis IV. New York: Facts on File, 2010.
- “Islamic Medical Association of North America.” *Encyclopedia of Muslim-American History*. Edited by Edward E. Curtis IV. New York: Facts on File, 2010.
- “The Hare Krishna Movement (ISKCON).” Edited by Jacob N. Kinnard and Kathleen A. Mulhern. Englewood, Co: Patheos, 2010. [http://www.patheos.com/Library/ISKCON-\(Hare-Krishna\).html](http://www.patheos.com/Library/ISKCON-(Hare-Krishna).html)
- “The New Age.” Patheos Library. Edited by Jacob N. Kinnard and Kathleen A. Mulhern. Englewood, Co: Patheos, 2009. <http://www.patheos.com/Library/New-Age.html>.

Editorial Work

- Guest Editor, “New Religions and Science,” *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*, vol. 14, no. 4, forthcoming in May 2011.

Selected Book Reviews and Review Essays

- Invented Religions: Imagination, Fiction, and Faith*, Carole M. Cusack. *Nova Religio*, Forthcoming in 2012.
- Understanding Jonestown and the Peoples Temple*, Rebecca Moore. *Nova Religio*, Forthcoming in 2012.
- E.T. Culture: Anthropology in Outerspaces*, edited by Debora Battaglia. *Nova Religio*, Forthcoming in 2012.
- “Religions And Science Beyond Belief: Comments On Taner Edis’s *Science And Nonbelief*,” *Bulletin for the Study of Religion* 40, no. 4 (November 2011).

God-Fearing and Free: A Spiritual History of America's Cold War, Jason W. Stevens. *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture* 80, no. 3 (September 2011).
Spirituality and the Occult: From the Renaissance to the Modern Age, B.J. Gibbons. *Alternative Spirituality and Religion Review* 2, no. 1 (May 2011).
A Republic of Mind & Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion, Catherine Albanese. *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 32, no. 3 (Fall 2010).
"Heaven's Gate: A Literature Review and Bibliographic Essay." *Alternative Spirituality and Religion Review* 1, no. 1 (August 2009).
New Religious Movements, Elijah Siegler. *Nova Religio* 12, no. 4 (May 2009).
Alien Worlds: Social and Religious Dimensions of Extraterrestrial Contact, edited by Diana G. Tumminia. *Nova Religio* 12, no. 3 (Feb 2009).
"Two Recent Historical Treatments of Jewish Foodways: A Review Essay." *Food, Culture, and Society* 12, no. 1 (March 2009).
New Religions: A Guide, edited by Christopher Partridge. *Nova Religio* 11, no. 1 (Aug 2007).

Invited Workshops and Seminars

Participant, Salzburg Global Seminar. "Public and Private Cultural Exchange-Based Diplomacy: New Models for the 21st Century." Salzburg, Austria, April 2012.
Participant, The Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion, Funded by The Lilly Endowment. "Writing the Scholarship of Teaching in Theology and Religion." 2011-2012.
Faculty Facilitator, Teaching and Learning Institute, Appalachian College Association. June 2011.
Participant, The Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion, Funded by The Lilly Endowment. "Workshop on Teaching and Learning for Pre-Tenure Religion Faculty at Colleges and Universities." 2008 –2009.
Fellow, Salzburg Global Seminar, Mellon Fellowship Community Initiative. "Colleges and Universities as Sites of Global Citizenship." Salzburg, Austria, January 2008 and January 2009.

Competitive Faculty Development Grants and Teaching Fellowships

"Pedagogies for Engaged and Actively-Learning Students in Religious Studies," The Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion, Fall 2011.
Appalachian College Association, Faculty Grant for Undergraduate Research, Summer 2008 – Spring 2009.
Library of Congress / Adventure of the American Mind, Course Development Grant, Fall 2007 – Summer 2008.

Competitive Research Grants and Fellowships

Wabash Summer Fellowship for Pre-Tenure Religion Faculty at Colleges and Universities, Summer 2009.
Perry Research Grant, Dept. of Religious Studies of the Univ. of North Carolina, Spring 2006.
Smith Graduate Research Grant, The Graduate School of Univ. of North Carolina, Fall 2005.
"Mapping the South Asian Religious Community in North-Central North Carolina," The Pluralism Project, Summer 2004.
"Changes at New Goloka Temple," The Pluralism Project, Summer 2003.

Teaching Awards

United Methodist Church Award for Exemplary Teaching, Brevard College, 2010-2011.
Outstanding Humanities Faculty Member Award, Brevard College, Student Government Award, 2010-2011.
Outstanding Humanities Faculty Member Award, Brevard College, Student Government Award, 2009-2010.
Outstanding Humanities Faculty Member Award, Brevard College, Student Government Award, 2007-2008.
William J. Peck Student Teacher Award, University of North Carolina, Department of Religious Studies, 2005.

Selected Conference Presentations

- “Quasi-religious American Foodways: The Cases of Vegetarianism and Locavorism,” Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion (AAR), November 2011.
- “Contemporary Unbelief and the Crusade against Pseudoscience,” The Heritage of Western Humanism, Skepticism, and Freethought Conference, San Diego State University, September 2011.
- “New Religious Currents in America: A Case Study in the Southeast,” Centro Studi sulle Nuove Religioni (CESNUR) 2011 International Conference, June 2011.
- “Beyond Belief: Comments on Taner Edis’s Science and Nonbelief,” Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Commission for the Study of Religion (SECSOR), March 2011.
- “Antinomianism, Utopianism, and the Struggle for Community: The Case of the American Hare Krishna Movement,” Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association, January 2011.
- “Science and Religion Beyond Scopes: When Physicists See the Light,” Annual Meeting of the AAR, November 2010.
- “Implicit Comparisons: The Unification Church on Science and Religion,” Annual Meeting of the AAR, November 2008.
- “Fifteen Years After Waco: The Study of New Religious Movements at a Crossroads,” Annual Meeting of SECSOR, April 2008.
- “Oiling the Wheels of Progress: Henry Steel Olcott and the Construction of Scientific Buddhism,” Annual Meeting of the AAR, November 2005.
- “Parish of the People: The Emergence and Development of Spiritus Christi Church,” Annual Meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (SSSR), November 2005.
- “The God in the Geo-dome: Ethnic and Spatial Dynamics at an ISKCON Temple,” Annual Meeting of the AAR, November 2004.
- “Gatekeepers of (Ir)religion: The Scientific Religion of Heaven’s Gate,” Annual Meeting of the AAR, November 2003.
- “New Goloka: An ISKCON Community in Movement,” Conference on Religious Pluralism in North America, sponsored by the Pluralism Project, November 2003.
- “Scaling Heaven’s Gate: Individualism and Salvation in a New Religious Movement,” Annual Meeting of the SSSR, October 2003.
- “Two Jewish Responses to Pluralism and Globalization,” AAR New England Maritimes Regional Conference, April 2001.

Selected Professional Activities

- Book Review Editor, *International Journal for the Study of New Religions*, 2012-present.
- Scholarly Advisory Board Member, Religion in North Carolina Digital Collection, 2011-present.
- Board Member, Institute for the Study of American Religion, 2010-present.
- Chair, Religion, Food, and Eating in North America Seminar, American Academy of Religion (AAR) annual meeting program unit, 2007-present.
- Steering Committee Member, New Religious Movements Group, AAR annual meeting program unit, 2006-present.
- Co-Convenor, “The State of the Subfield: a Senior/Junior Scholar Roundtable,” New Religious Movements Group Methods Meeting, Annual Meeting of the AAR, November 2006.
- Co-Convenor, “Historical Perspectives and Current Issues in the Study of New Religious Movements: A Senior/Junior Scholar Roundtable,” New Religious Movements Group Methods Meeting, Annual Meeting of the AAR, November 2005.

Peer Reviewer

- International Journal for the Study of New Religions*
- Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*
- Teaching Theology and Religion*
- Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture*
- Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture*
- Food, Culture & Society: An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*
- Religion Compass*

Selected Courses Taught

- “Religion and Science,” Brevard College.
- “New Religious Movements,” Brevard College.
- “Introduction to World Religions,” Brevard College.
- “Religion in Contemporary America,” Brevard College.
- “Hinduism and Buddhism,” Brevard College.
- “Religion & Science Fiction,” Brevard College.
- “Religion and Food in America,” Brevard College.
- “Religion and Society,” Temple University.
- “Introduction to Western Religions: Western Religions in America,” Temple University.
- “Introduction to World Religions: World Religions in America,” Temple University.
- “Oral Communications,” Univ. of North Carolina.

Selected Public Scholarship (Lectures, Articles, etc.)

- “Double Helix,” *freq.enci.es*, The Immanent Frame and Killing the Buddha, January 2012, <http://freq.uenci.es/2012/01/04/double-helix/>.
- “Steve Jobs and the Cult of Apple,” *Sightings*, Martin Marty Center at the University of Chicago Divinity School, October 2011.
- “From the National Council of Churches to Rick Perry’s National Day of Prayer: Big Religion and Big Government Today,” History News Network, Guest Columnist, September 2011.
- “Three Physicists on Religion: When Scientists See the Light,” *Global Spiral*, vol. 11, no. 1, Spring 2011, <http://www.metanexus.net/magazine/tabid/68/id/11001/Default.aspx>.
- Expert Panelist, “Examining Cult Culture,” *The State of Things*, WUNC (NPR), March 2011.
- “The Bricolage Religion of LOST and American Religious Culture,” *Sightings*, Martin Marty Center at the University of Chicago Divinity School, July 2010.
- “What is Islam?,” St. Philip’s Episcopal Church of Brevard, April 2010.
- “New Religions and Science,” Highland Books, Brevard, April 2010.
- “New Religious Movements,” St. Philip’s Episcopal Church of Brevard, February 2009.
- “What is Religion?,” First United Methodist Adult Forum, Brevard, October 2008.
- “Religion and Politics: What is Religion?,” Brevard College, April 2008.
- “Light of Asia and Light of the World: American Encounters with Asian Religions,” First United Methodist Church of Brevard, March 2008.
- “Hinduism and Buddhism in America,” St. Philip’s Episcopal Church of Brevard, March 2008.
- “What is a New Religious Movement?” Princeton University, May 2007.
- “The Hare Krishna Movement,” Univ. of North Carolina, October 2005.
- “Eschatology and Cosmology in New Religions,” Univ. of Rochester, November 1999.

Selected Institutional Service

- Chair, Honors Advisory Council, Summer 2010 – Present.
- Member, Master Planning Board, Brevard College, Fall 2007 – Present.
- Member, Environmental Issues Committee, Brevard College, Fall 2007 – Spring 2011.
- Chair, Sustainability Roundtable, Brevard College, Spring 2008 – Spring 2009.

Memberships

- American Academy of Religion, American Society of Church History, International Society for the Study of New Religions.