

***Curriculum Vitae***  
**Benjamin E. Zeller**  
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*(updated 1 February 2026)*

**Contact Information**

Department of Religion  
Lake Forest College  
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**Education**

University of North Carolina; Chapel Hill, North Carolina  
The Graduate School – Ph.D., Religious Studies, 2007.

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 Appointment**

Irvin L. & Fern D. Young Presidential Professor of Religion, Dept. of Religion, Lake Forest College.  
and Chair of Religion, Fall 2025 – present.  
Associate Dean of the Faculty and Director of the Office of Faculty Development, Lake Forest College,  
Summer 2026 – present.

**Previous Appointments**

Professor, Dept. of Religion, Lake Forest College. Fall 2022 – Spring 2025.  
and Chair of Islamic World Studies, July 2020 – Spring 2023.  
Associate Professor, Dept. of Religion, Lake Forest College. Fall 2016 – Spring 2022.  
Assistant Professor, Dept. of Religion, Lake Forest College. Fall 2012 – Spring 2016.  
Assistant Professor, Dept. of Religious Studies, Brevard College. Fall 2007 – Spring 2012.  
and Director of Honors Program, May 2010 – Spring 2012.  
and Coordinator of Religious Studies Program, Fall 2009 – Spring 2012.  
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.

**Monographs**

*Heaven's Gate: America's UFO Religion*. New York: New York University Press, 2014.  
Also translated and published by Carlos Pla as *La Puerta del Cielo: Religión OVNI de los Estados Unidos de América*. Granada: Aurora Dorada, 2019.  
*Prophets and Prottons: New Religious Movements and Science in Late Twentieth-Century America*. New York: New York University Press, 2010.

**Anthologies**

*The Bloomsbury Handbook of New Religious Movements*, with George D. Chryssides. Bloomsbury.  
Under contract, 2026 expected publication.

*The Bloomsbury Handbook of Religion and Food*, with Yudit Greenberg. London: Bloomsbury, 2026.  
*Religion, Attire, and Adornment in North America*, with Marie W. Dallam. Columbia University Press, 2023.

*Handbook of UFO Religions*. Brill, 2021.

*Religion, Food, and Eating in North America*, with Marie W. Dallam, Reid L. Neilson, and Nora L. Rubel. Columbia University Press, 2014.

*The Bloomsbury Companion to New Religious Movements*, with George D. Chryssides. Bloomsbury Press, 2014.

### **Multimedia**

*Heaven's Gate*. Podcast, 2017. Consulting Producer.

*Sacred Spaces in 360°*. Website, 2016-19. Creator. <http://digitalchicagohistory.org/exhibits/show/digital-chicago-churches/>

*Chicago's Shifting Synagogue Landscape*. Creator. 2017-2018. Author.  
<http://digitalchicagohistory.org/exhibits/show/synagogue/about>

### **Major Fellowships and Grants**

Project Director, HUMAN (Humanities Understanding of the Machine-Assisted Nexus), Mellon Foundation Grant to Lake Forest College, 2024 – present.

Academic Leadership Fellow, Associated Colleges of the Midwest and the Mellon Foundation, 2025 – 2027.

Fulbright Scholar Fellowship, Åbo Akademi University. Turku, Finland, Summer – Fall 2012.

Fellow, Salzburg Global Seminar. “Public and Private Cultural Exchange-Based Diplomacy: New Models for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.” (Session 490.) Salzburg, Austria, April 2012.

Wabash Summer Fellowship for Pre-Tenure Religion Faculty at Colleges and Universities. Summer 2009.

### **Major Awards**

Bird Award for Intellectual Contribution, Lake Forest College, 2021.

Communal Studies Association, Best Book Award, *Heaven's Gate: America's UFO Religion*, 2015.

William L. Dunn Award for Outstanding Teaching and Scholarly Promise, Lake Forest College, 2014.

United Methodist Church Award for Exemplary Teaching, Brevard College, 2010-2011.

### **Journal Articles**

“The Ahmadi Religion of Peace and Light: An Islamic Millennial New Religious Movement,” *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* vol. 29, no. 1, August 2025.

“‘Cookies to Serve God’s Glory’: The St Roger Abbey Organic French Patisserie as Religious and Secular Site,” *Journal of Contemporary Religion* vol 38, no. 3, Fall 2023.

“‘American Wise Men Discover the Secret of Religion’: Religious Content in the Civilization Computer Game Series,” *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* vol. 34 no. 1, Spring 2022.

“New Religious Movement Responses to COVID: Frame Alignment Strategies and Social Context,” *Approaching Religion* vol 11, no. 2, November 2021.

“(Dis)Enchanted Ufology: The Boundaries of Science and Religion in MUFON, the Mutual UFO Network,” *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* vol. 25, no. 2, November 2021.

“‘Food (Not) from a Truck’: Teaching Religion, Nature, and Food,” *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology* vol. 25, no. 1, March 2021.

“The Fraternité Notre Dame: From Emergence in Fréhou to Sojourn in Chicago,” *Numen: International Review for the History of Religions* vol. 67, no. 2-3, April 2020.

“New Religious Movements: A Bibliographic Introduction,” *Theological Librarianship* vol 22, no. 1, April 2020.

- “Altar Call of Cthulhu: Religion and Millennialism in H.P. Lovecraft’s Cthulhu Mythos,” *Religions* vol. 11, no. 1, December 2019.
- “‘Make your own Religion’: The Fictive Religion Assignment as Educational Game,” *Teaching Theology and Religion* vol 21, October 2018.
- “Religion as Embodied Taste: Using Food to Rethink Religion,” *Body and Religion* vol. 1, no. 1, Summer 2017.
- “One Foot in Helsinki, One Foot in Mayapur: ISKCON Finland as a Glocal European Religion,” *Journal of Religion in Europe* vol. 9, no. 1, Spring 2016.
- “Totem and Taboo in the Grocery Store: Quasi-Religious Foodways in North America,” *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis* vol. 26, April 2015.
- “‘But Aren’t Cults Bad?’: Active Learning, Productive Chaos, and Teaching New Religious Movements,” *Teaching Theology and Religion* vol 18, no. 2, April 2015.
- “At the Nexus of Science and Religion: UFO Religions,” *Religion Compass*, vol. 5, no. 11, November 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.
- “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

- “Being Human, Being Alien: Religion among UFO Contactees and Starseeds,” forthcoming in *UFOs Here and Now: 21st Century Perspectives*, edited by William Dewan, Alison Fields, and Daniel Wojcik. Syracuse University Press.
- “When the Cosmic is Within: Outer Space and Alternative Spirituality,” forthcoming in *Cosmic Horizons: Religion and Space Exploration*, edited by M.J. Rubenstein. Columbia University Press.
- “Tasting: Networks of Foods, Peoples, and Religions,” in *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Religion and Food*, edited by Yudit Greenberg and Benjamin E. Zeller. Bloomsbury, 2026.
- “Religion in Star Trek: From Killing God to the Klingon Gothic,” in *Handbook of Contemporary Religion, Film and Television*, edited by Carole Cusack and Venetia Robertson. Brill, 2026.
- “Thirsty Monks, Big Bad Baptists, and Bold Messiahs: Marketing Beer with Religion,” in *Holy Waters: An Interdisciplinary Examination of Religion and Alcohol*, edited by Ryan Lemasters and Stephen Covell. Routledge, 2024.
- “Outer Space Religions,” in *Religion and Outer Space*, edited by Eric Michael Mazur and Sarah McFarland Taylor. Taylor & Francis, 2023.
- “Teaching Religion and Science,” in *Teaching Critical Religious Studies: Pedagogy and Critique in the Classroom*, edited by Jenna Gray-Hildenbrand, Beverley McGuire, and Hussein Rashid. Bloomsbury, 2022.
- “Cult,” in *Contested Concepts in the Study of Religion*, edited by George D. Chryssides and Amy R. Whitehead. Bloomsbury, 2022.
- “Food,” in *Bloomsbury Handbook to Studying Christians*, edited by Stephen E. Gregg and George D. Chryssides. Bloomsbury, 2019.
- “Food and Health,” in *The Routledge History of the 20th Century United States*, edited by Jerald Podair and Darren Dochuk. Routledge, 2018.

- “The ‘Going Clear’ Documentary: A Matter of Framing,” in *Handbook of Scientology*, edited by James R. Lewis and Kjersti Hellesøy. Brill, 2017.
- “Writing and Researching New Religious Movements: A View from the American Academy,” in *The “Cult Wars” in Historical Perspective*, edited by Eugene V. Gallagher. INFORM, 2016.
- “Food & Cooking,” in *The Routledge Companion to Religion & Popular Culture*, edited by John C. Lyden and Eric M. Mazur. Routledge, 2015.
- “Quasi-religious American Foodways: The Cases of Vegetarianism and Locavorism,” in *Religion, Food, and Eating in North America*, edited by Benjamin E. Zeller, Marie W. Dallam, Reid L. Neilson, and Nora L. Rubel. Columbia University Press, 2014.
- “Heaven’s Gate, Science Fiction Religions, and Popular American Culture,” in *Handbook of Hyper-Real Religions*, edited by Adam Possamai. Brill, 2012.
- “Food Practices, Culture, and Social Dynamics in the Hare Krishna Movement,” in *Handbook of New Religions and Cultural Production*, edited by Carole M. Cusack and Alex Norman. Brill, 2012.
- “Scaling Heaven’s Gate: Individualism and Salvation in Heaven’s Gate,” in *Heaven’s Gate*, edited by George D. Chryssides. Ashgate Press, 2011. [Reprint of journal article.]
- “The Euphemization of Violence: The Case of Heaven’s Gate,” in *Violence and New Religious Movements*, edited by James R. Lewis. 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. 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. McFarland Press, 2009.

### Encyclopedia and Reference Articles

- “What happened with the “Away Team” of Heaven’s Gate?” Forthcoming in *Religion in Five Minutes*. Edited by Lukas K. Pokorny and Franz Winter. Equinox.
- “What do new religious movements say about UFOs and ETs?” Forthcoming in *Religion in Five Minutes*. Edited by Lukas K. Pokorny and Franz Winter. Equinox.
- “What role should scholars play as advocates of new religious movements?” Forthcoming in *Religion in Five Minutes*. Edited by Lukas K. Pokorny and Franz Winter. Equinox.
- “Cults and New Religious Movements in the late 20th century United States,” forthcoming in *The American Yawp*, second edition. Edited by Joseph Locke and Ben Wright. Stanford University Press.
- “Science and Religion,” *Sage Encyclopaedia of Sociology of Religion*. Edited by Adam Possamai and Anthony J. Blasi. Sage Publishing, 2020.
- “Heaven’s Gate,” *Sage Encyclopaedia of Sociology of Religion*. Edited by Adam Possamai and Anthony J. Blasi. Sage Publishing, 2020.
- “Post-Secular Society.” *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social Theory*. Edited by Bryan S. Turner. John Wiley & Sons, 2017.
- “Heaven’s Gate.” *End of Days: An Encyclopedia of the Apocalypse in World Religions*. Edited by Wendell Johnson. ABC-CLIO, 2017.
- “Food: Christianity.” *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*. Edited by Dale C. Allison, Jr., et. al. De Gruyter, 2015.
- “Food Preparation, Cooking and Ritual in Judaism.” *Encyclopedia of Food and Agricultural Ethics*. Edited by Paul B. Thompson and David M. Kaplan. Springer, 2014.
- “Hare Krishna Movement.” The World Religions & Spirituality Project. Edited by David G. Bromley, 2013. <http://www.has.vcu.edu/wrs/profiles/ISKCON.htm>, 2013.
- “Religion.” *Encyclopedia of Food and Drink in America* (Second Edition). Edited by Andrew F. Smith. Oxford University Press, 2012.
- “Colonies, Communal Societies, and Utopias in the 19th and 20th Centuries.” *Cultural Encyclopedia of Vegetarianism*. Edited by Margaret Puskar-Pasewicz. Greenwood Publishing, 2010.
- “Association of American Muslim Scientists and Engineers.” *Encyclopedia of Muslim-American History*.

- Edited by Edward E. Curtis IV. Facts on File, 2010.
- “Islamic Medical Association of North America.” *Encyclopedia of Muslim-American History*. Edited by Edward E. Curtis IV. 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>.

### **Invited Panels and Seminars**

- Panelist, Ahmadi Religion of Peace and Light Research Visit and Symposium, March 2024.
- Respondent, Newberry Religion and Culture in the Americas Seminar, Newberry Library, 2023.
- Leader, Craft of Teaching Workshop, Teaching Religion and Film, University of Chicago Divinity School, 2019.
- Respondent, The Young Adults and Religion in a Global Perspective (YARG) research project conference, Åbo Akademi University, 2018.
- Participant, Beyond Disenchantment: Science, Technology, and New Religious Movements, Williams College Oakley Center for Humanities and Social Sciences, 2018.
- Scholar, Summer Institute on Objects, Places, and the Digital Humanities, National Humanities Center. Funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, 2017-2018.
- Participant, Colloquy on Writing the Scholarship of Teaching, The Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion, 2017-2018.
- Invited Speaker, McLester Colloquia, University of North Carolina, February 2017.
- Panelist, “Demystifying the Teaching Philosophy: A Workshop,” Society for Biblical Literature, November 2016.
- Panelist, “Food, Religion, and Politics: A Conversation on Contemporary Issues in the U.S.,” The John C. Danforth Center on Religion and Politics, Washington University St. Louis, April 2014.
- Respondent and Commentator, Post-Secular Culture and a Changing Religious Landscape in Finland Winter 2012 Seminar, Turku, Finland, December 2012.
- Panelist, University of Turku American Studies Seminar, “Presidential Elections in the United States,” Turku, Finland, November 2012.
- Panelist, Aboagora Symposium, “Between Arts and Sciences,” Turku, Finland, August 2012.
- Participant, The Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion, “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, “Workshop on Teaching and Learning for Pre-Tenure Religion Faculty at Colleges and Universities.” 2008 –2009.
- Participant, Salzburg Global Seminar, Mellon Fellowship Community Initiative. “Colleges and Universities as Sites of Global Citizenship.” (ISP 22 & ISP 29.) Salzburg, Austria, January 2008 and January 2009.

### **Invited Lectures**

- Princeton Theological Seminary, “Thinking about Method in the Study of Religion and Food,” Faith and Food Workshop, October 2025.
- Middle Tennessee State University, “Why UFO Religions Matter,” Religious Studies Colloquium, February 2025.
- University of Graz, “New Religious Movements and Violence,” January 2025.
- Religion and Astrobiology in Culture and Society (RACS Network), “The Study of UFO Religions: State of the Field,” St Mary’s University, UK, June 2022.
- University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma, Bradford Ableson Lecture on Religion and Religious Reconciliation, “New Religious Movements and Religious Radicalism in America,” February 2022.
- University of Turku and Åbo Akademi University Research Seminar, “Cookies to Serve God’s Glory”:

- The St. Roger Abbey Organic French Patisserie as Sacred and Secular Site,” Turku (Åbo), Finland, December 2018.
- University of Rochester, “Religious Suicide and the Puzzle of Heaven’s Gate,” Rochester, N.Y., March 2016.
- Colgate College, “Millennialism, UFOs, and UFO Religion,” Hamilton, N.Y., April, 2015.
- The Donner Symposium on Religion and Food, Donner Institute, “Totem and Taboo in the Grocery Store,” Åbo, Finland, June 2014.
- Finnish Society for the Study of Religion, Annual Fall Meeting, “Innovation in Research,” Hanko, Finland, November 2012.
- Foundation for European Progressive Studies and Kalevi Sorsa Foundation, 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Research and Policy Day, “Religion & Politics in the 2012 Presidential Election,” Helsinki, Finland, November 2012.
- University of Tromsø, Institute of History and Religious Studies, “Framing the Study of Religion & Science: The View from Contemporary Physics,” Tromsø, Norway, October 2012.
- Högskolan Dalarna [University of Dalarna], Department of Religious Studies, “Contemporary Diasporic Judaism,” Falun, Sweden, September 2012.
- Högskolan Dalarna [University of Dalarna], Department of Religious Studies, “The Religious Origins of Heaven’s Gate. America’s UFO Religion,” Falun, Sweden, September 2012.

### **Selected Conference Presentations**

- “Religion and Alcohol: The Case of American Beer,” Religion and Food and Religion and Drugs Units of the American Academy of Religion (AAR), Annual Meeting, November 2024.
- “The Dis/embodied Female Body in Post-Christian American Spirituality: The Case of Unicult,” (De)Constructing Gender Politics in Contemporary Christian Discourse Conference, July 2024.
- “‘I am a Brainwasher’: Unicult and the Rhetoric of Cult Brainwashing,” Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion (AAR), November 2023.
- “To Infinity, but Not Beyond? Unicult’s (Trans)Humanist New Religion,” International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture Conference, February 2023.
- “Trappist Beer, Intellectual Property, Branding, and Religion,” Law, Religion, and Culture Unit of the American Academy of Religion, Annual Meeting, November 2022.
- “An Initial Content Analysis of Unicult,” Centro Studi sulle Nuove Religioni (CESNUR) Annual Conference, Quebec City, June 2022.
- “Religion, Beer, and Marketing,” Holy Waters: An Interdisciplinary Examination of Religion and Alcohol, Western Michigan University, March 2022.
- “Virtual Reality Digitalisation of Sacred Spaces: Balancing Preservation, Academic, and User Needs,” Unlocking Sacred Landscapes II: Digital Humanities and Ritual Space, Unlocking Sacred Landscapes Research Network, Rethymno, Crete, October 2018.
- “Sacred Spaces in 360°,” Annual Meeting of the Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations, July 2018.
- “The Digital Futures of Religious Studies,” Panelist, Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion (AAR), November 2016.
- “Altar Call of Cthulhu: Religion in H.P. Lovecraft’s Cthulhu Mythos,” Annual Meeting of the AAR, November 2015.
- “60 Years of Religious Decline? An Interdisciplinary Conversation,” American Society of Church History, January 2015.
- “Writing and Researching New Religious Movements: A View from the American Academy,” Informational Network on Religious Movements (INFORM) International Conference, February 2014.
- “One Foot in Helsinki, One Foot in Mayapur: ISKCON Finland as a Glocal European Religion,” Annual Meeting of the AAR, November 2013.
- “Quasi-religious American Foodways: The Cases of Vegetarianism and Locavorism,” Annual Meeting of the 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**

- President, Association for the Academic Study of New Religions, 2014-present; Vice President, 2013-2014.
- Co-General Editor, *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*, 2013-present.
- Series Editor, Brill Handbooks on Contemporary Religion, Brill Press, 2019-present
- Board Member and Secretary, International Society for the Study of New Religions, 2013-present.
- Steering Committee Member, Religion and Food Group, AAR annual meeting program unit, 2015-2025, and Chair, 2019-2025.
- Steering Committee Member, Teaching Religion Unit, AAR annual meeting program unit, 2021-2024.
- Steering Committee Member, Religion, Attire, and Adornment in North America Seminar AAR annual meeting program unit, 2017-2021.
- Editorial Board, *Wabash Journal on Teaching* (formerly, *Teaching Theology & Religion*), 2018-2021.
- Guest Editor, “Religion and Food in Global and Historical Perspective,” *Religions* vol. 10 no. 1, 2019, [https://www.mdpi.com/journal/religions/special\\_issues/food](https://www.mdpi.com/journal/religions/special_issues/food).
- Scholarly Advisory Board Member, Religion in North Carolina Digital Collection, 2011-2018.
- Friends of Fulbright Finland, Alumni Council Member, 2016-2018.
- Steering Committee Member, New Religious Movements Group, AAR annual meeting program unit, 2006-2012, 2014-2017.
- Book Review Editor, *International Journal for the Study of New Religions*, 2012-2013.
- Guest Editor, “New Religions and Science,” *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*, vol. 14, no. 4, May 2011.
- Chair, Religion, Food, and Eating in North America Seminar, AAR annual meeting program unit, 2007-2012.
- Co-Convener, “The State of the Subfield: a Senior/Junior Scholar Roundtable,” New Religious

Movements Group Methods Meeting, Annual Meeting of the AAR, November 2006.  
 Co-Convener, “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.

### **Selected Book Reviews and Review Essays**

- “Criticizing Science: Stephen Jay Gould and the Struggle for American Democracy,” Myrna Perez, *British Journal for the History of Science*, [forthcoming](#).
- “Ideas of Possession: Interdisciplinary and Transcultural Perspectives,” edited by Nicole M. Bauer and J. Andrew Doole, *Nova Religio* 29, no. 3, February 2026.
- “Think to New Worlds: The Cultural History of Charles Fort and His Followers,” Joshua Blu Buhs. *Nova Religio* 28 no 2, May 2025.
- “Hare Krishna in the Twenty-First Century,” Angela R. Burt, *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 32 no. 2, July 2024.
- “In & Out of This World: Material and Extraterrestrial Bodies in the Nation of Islam,” Stephen C. Finley, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 91, no. 1, March 2023.
- “Astrotopia: The Dangerous Religion of the Corporate Space Race,” Mary-Jane Rubenstein, *Material Religion* 19 no. 3, Fall 2023.
- “Feasting and Fasting: The History and Ethics of Jewish Food,” Aaron S. Gross, Jody Myers, and Jordan D. Rosenblum, eds, *The Journal of Jewish Identities* 15, no. 2, July 2022.
- “American Cosmic: UFOs, Religion, and Technology,” D. W. Pasulka, and “Intimate Alien: The Hidden Story of the UFO,” David J. Halperin, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 89 no. 1, March 2021.
- “A Historical Introduction to the Study of New Religious Movements,” W. Michael Ashcraft, in *Fieldwork in Religion* 15.1-2, November 2020.
- “Surge of Piety: Norman Vincent Peale and the Remaking of American Religious Life,” Christopher Lane, *History: Review of New Books* 45 no. 6, September 2017.
- “Religion in the Kitchen: Cooking, Talking, and the Making of Black Atlantic Traditions,” Elizabeth Pérez. *Material Religion* 13 no. 1, February 2017.
- “UFOs, Conspiracy Theories and the New Age: Millennial Conspiracism,” David G. Robertson. *Reading Religion*, September 2016.
- “Religion in Science Fiction: The Evolution of an Idea and the Extinction of a Genre,” Steven Hrotic. *Nova Religio* 20, no. 1, August 2016.
- “Religious Experience: North and South,” edited by René Gothóni. *International Journal for the Study of New Religions* 6, no. 2, Winter 2016.
- “The Art of Living Foundation: Spirituality and Wellbeing in the Global Context,” Stephen Jacobs. *Fieldwork in Religion* 10 no. 2, 2015.
- “Sacred Suicide,” James R. Lewis and Carole M. Cusack. *Journal of Religious History* 39, no. 3, Fall 2015.
- “Radiance from Halcyon: A Utopian Experiment in Religion and Science,” Paul Eli Ivey. *Nova Religio* 18, no. 4, May 2015.
- “The Amish, *The Amish*, and the Study of Alternative Religiosity in America.” Review essay, in *Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies* 2, no. 2, 2014.
- “The Church of Scientology: A History of a New Religion,” Hugh Urban. *History of Religions* 53, no. 1, August 2013.
- “Between Pulpit and Pew: The Supernatural World in Mormon History and Folklore,” W. Paul Reeve and Michael Scott Van Wagenen. *Nova Religio* 16, no. 3, February 2013.
- “Invented Religions: Imagination, Fiction, and Faith,” Carole M. Cusack. *Nova Religio* 16, no. 1, August 2012.
- “Understanding Jonestown and the Peoples Temple,” Rebecca Moore. *Nova Religio* 15, no. 4, May 2012.
- “E.T. Culture: Anthropology in Outerspaces,” edited by Debbora Battaglia. *Nova Religio* 15, no. 3,

February 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.

### **Peer Reviewer**

Fulbright Commission

National Endowment for the Humanities

Oxford University Press

Bloomsbury Press

Columbia University Press

New York University Press

Routledge Press

*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*

*Teaching Theology and Religion*

*Religion & American Culture*

*Material Religion*

*Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*

*Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*

*International Journal for the Study of New Religions*

*Utopian Studies*

*Culture Unbound*

*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*

### **Competitive Faculty Development Grants and Teaching Fellowships**

“Religious Studies, Classroom Technology, and Digital Humanities,” Associated Colleges of the Midwest FaCE Grant, Fall 2015.

“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.

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.

**Selected Public Scholarship (Lectures, Articles, Blogs, etc.)**

Panelist, “Religion & New Religious Movements and Contemporary Crises,” Religion &, Center for the Study of Religion & American Culture, October 2025.

Lecture, “The Fraternalite Notre Dame,” North Shore Authors Series, North Shore Unitarian Church, Spring 2022.

Public talk, ChiCon8, Chicago WorldCon Academic Program, “Teaching Science Fiction and Religion,” Chicago, September 2022.

Lecture, “Virtual Tour of Sacred Spaces and NGO Missions,” The Rooftops Conference Chicago 2020, Loyola University School of Law, February 2020.

Public commentary, “The Cult of Trump? What ‘Cult Rhetoric’ Actually Reveals,” October 2019, *Religion & Politics*, <https://religionandpolitics.org/2019/10/29/the-cult-of-trump-what-cult-rhetoric-actually-reveals/>.

Public commentary, “#Takeaknee: Race and Religious Violence at the Heart of Trump Attacks on Kaepernick/NFL,” September 2017, *Religion Dispatches*, <http://religiondispatches.org/takeaknee-race-and-religious-violence-at-the-heart-of-trump-attacks-on-kaepernicknfl/>

Academic commentary, “What the Heaven’s Gate suicides say about American culture,” March 2017, *The Conversation*, <https://theconversation.com/what-the-heavens-gate-suicides-say-about-american-culture-74343>

Public commentary, “Why Kaepernick’s Refusal to Stand is an Act of Religious Dissent,” August, 2016, *Religion Dispatches*, <http://religiondispatches.org/why-kaepernicks-refusal-to-stand-was-an-act-of-religious-dissent/>

Guest, “First Impressions,” *Marginalia: A Los Angeles Review of Books Channel*, April 2015, <http://marginalia.lareviewofbooks.org/first-impressions-33-benjamin-zeller-and-marie-dallam/>

Guest Blogger, “Religiosity? What’s in God’s name is that?,” Religious News Service, February 2015, <http://tobingrant.religionnews.com/2015/02/24/religiosity-whats-gods-name/>

Guest Editor, “Teaching New and Alternative Religious Movements,” *Religious Studies News*, January 2015, <http://rsn.aarweb.org/spotlight-on/teaching/new-alternative-religions/guest-editors-introduction>

“Anatomy of a mass suicide: The dark, twisted story behind a UFO death cult,” Salon.com, November 2014, [http://www.salon.com/2014/11/15/anatomy\\_of\\_a\\_mass\\_suicide\\_the\\_dark\\_twisted\\_story\\_behind\\_a\\_ufo\\_death\\_cult/](http://www.salon.com/2014/11/15/anatomy_of_a_mass_suicide_the_dark_twisted_story_behind_a_ufo_death_cult/) [Book excerpt.]

“Keeping the lights on for Heaven’s Gate,” NYU Press’s “From the Square” Blog, September 26, 2014. <http://www.fromthesquare.org/?p=6742>

Expert, “‘Unmosqued’ Examines Muslim Variant Of Unchurched Youth,” NPR’s Morning Edition, May 23, 2014, <http://www.npr.org/blogs/codeswitch/2014/05/23/314867358/unmosqued-examines-muslim-variant-of-unchurched-youth>

“New Religious Studies: Then, Now And Tomorrow – A Guest Blog Post by Benjamin Zeller,” *Researching New Religious Movements on the Internet*, March 2014, <http://bvlsingler.wordpress.com/2014/03/04/new-religious-studies-then-now-and-tomorrow-a-guest-blog-by-benjamin-zeller/>

“Double Helix,” *freq.enci.es*, The Immanent Frame and Killing the Buddha, January 2012, <http://freq.uenci.es/2012/01/04/double-helix/>. [URL defunct]

“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.

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.
- “‘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.
- “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, Faculty Personal and Policies Committee, Lake Forest College, Fall 2023 – Spring 2025.  
Member, Fall 2022 – Spring 2025.
- Chair, Search Committee for Krebs Provost and Dean of the Faculty, 2022-2023.
- Co-Author, Lake Forest College 4-Year Assurance Review, Higher Learning Commission Accreditation Process, 2021-2022.
- Chair, Intercultural Advisory Group, Lake Forest College, Fall 2021 – Spring 2023.  
Member, Fall 2020 – Spring 2023.
- Senior Associate, Office for Faculty Development, Fall 2019 – Spring 2022.
- Member, American Studies Committee, Lake Forest College, Fall 2013 – present.
- Member, Faculty Diversity and Recruitment Subcommittee, Fall 2019 – Spring 2021.
- Chair, Director of Library Search Committee, Fall 2019.
- Member, Curricular Policies Committee, Lake Forest College, Fall 2015 – Spring 2018,  
and Chair, Fall 2016 – Spring 2018.
- Member, Fulbright Campus Committee, Lake Forest College, Fall 2013 – Spring 2016.
- Member, Assessment (Sub)-Committee, Lake Forest College, Fall 2014 – Spring 2017.
- Member, Assessment (Sub)-Committee, Lake Forest College, Fall 2014 – Spring 2017.
- Member, Development and Alumni Relations Committee Trustee Committee, Lake Forest College, Fall 2014 – Spring 2015.
- Member, Honors Fellows/Richter Scholars Committee, Lake Forest College, Fall 2013 – Spring 2014.
- Chair, Honors Advisory Council, Brevard College Summer 2010 – Spring 2012.
- Member, Master Planning Board, Brevard College, Fall 2007 – Spring 2012.
- Member, Environmental Issues Committee, Brevard College, Fall 2007 – Spring 2011.
- Chair, Sustainability Roundtable, Brevard College, Spring 2008 – Spring 2009.

### **Teaching Awards**

- Outstanding Humanities Faculty Member Award, Brevard College, 2011-2012.
- Outstanding Humanities Faculty Member Award, Brevard College, 2010-2011.
- Outstanding Humanities Faculty Member Award, Brevard College, 2009-2010.
- Outstanding Humanities Faculty Member Award, Brevard College, 2007-2008.
- William J. Peck Student Teacher Award, University of North Carolina, Department of Religious Studies, 2005.

### **Memberships**

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

