

intellectual and academic elite, many of whom actively worked to influence the development of these practices and how they were received by the broader public (e.g., William James).

*Socially*, these practices are as entangled as any other mode of cultural production. She not only points to the many different contexts in which spiritual practices such as yoga, Reiki hands-on energy healing, astrology, meditation, visualization, and belief in reincarnation, are found in contemporary culture (e.g., medicine, arts, entertainment), but explains how she herself was drawn into the interpretive webs of the metaphysicals she studies. Even as she works to maintain a degree of scholarly objectivity, Bender's interests in popular films are insistently taken as evidence of her own past-life histories. In light of these dynamics—that is, how easily and frequently metaphysical practices and practitioners become entangled with other social phenomena—theorizing the spiritual in atomistic terms (as inherently individualistic) seems disconnected from the reality on the ground.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book, which is beautifully written, utterly lucid, nicely argued, and would be useful for the full range of academic readers, un-

dergrads, grads, and advanced scholars. (Indeed, it is not difficult to see why this book won the 2010 American Publishers Awards for Professional & Scholarly Excellence in Theology/Religious Studies, as well as the 2011 Distinguished Book Award for the American Sociological Association Section on Religion.) Perhaps most of all, I was struck by its implications for theorizing the spiritual/religious/secular relationship. For, if spiritual practices appear easily and often within presumably secular spaces (e.g., university health center, food co-op, doctor's office, popular film), this prompts us to think once more about how wide the gulf separating these domains actually is. The same question arises with respect to spirituality and institutional religion: perhaps the Baptist church and the metaphysical bookstore have more in common than was formerly suspected. Importantly Bender does more than merely re-raising these longstanding questions: she offers the metaphor of *entanglement* as an interpretive frame that might help us to further explore such queries in new and interesting ways.

Kenny Paul Smith  
Graduate Division of Religion, Emory University

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## Field Notes

### News and Announcements in the Discipline

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**The *Bulletin* welcomes announcements, including call for papers, conference announcements, grant competitions, news items, and other informative updates on happenings in the discipline. Such announcements (like those below) will first appear on the *Bulletin's* blog for timely distribution with occasional inclusion in issues of the *Bulletin*. Please email all announcements to the editors. Our editorial staff will also be watching for interesting items to include in this section of the *Bulletin*.**

#### **Deadline Reminder: Call for Papers – “Religion and the Politics of Humor”**

The call-for-papers deadline is fast approaching on the topic “Religion and the Politics of Humor” – *The Bulletin for the Study of Religion* is accepting submis-

sions for a special issue on humor and religion. Articles engaging any aspect of the theme are welcome, especially the politics of parody, but including general studies of religious parodies, the presence of humor on the Internet (e.g., video clips, web comics, etc), and cultural analyses of the use of humor in various religious traditions (including comparative analysis but also specific area studies). Articles engaging theoretical and methodological issues in the study of humor and religion are especially desired. Queries should be sent to the editors, Craig Martin (cmartin@stac.edu) and Philip L. Tite (philip.tite@mail.mcgill.ca). Online submissions and guidelines: <http://www.equinoxpub.com/bulletin/> Deadline for submissions: July 1, 2012.

## Ph.D. Scholarships at the University Of Newcastle in Religion and Political Life

More information: <http://timothywstanley.com/blog/ripl-phd-scholarships.html>

The new Religion in Political Life (RiPL) Research Program at the University of Newcastle (Australia) earmarks Ph.D. funding for at least two students in this growing area of international academic concern. RiPL's main focus areas or streams investigate the interactions between religion in: 1) democratic authority; 2) political radicalism; 3) gender; and, 4) post-colonial legacies.

If you are an Australian student who has achieved a first class honors degree and would like to pursue further Ph.D. research in Religion in Political Life, then please do consider applying. The Australian Postgraduate Awards (APA) are for three years and include a \$5k topup beyond the normal \$22,860 p.a. award (tax free living allowance).

International students with a high quality Master of Arts degree performance and demonstrations of research excellence through a thesis and, ideally, at least one peer reviewed publication, are strongly encouraged to apply. Postgraduate funding integrates two schemes, the University of Newcastle International Postgraduate Research Scholarships (UNIPRS) and the University of Newcastle Research Scholarship Central (UNRSC). The UNIPRS scholar-

ship provides tuition fees and the UNRSC is a living allowance scholarship, which is \$22,860 p.a. (tax free).

All University of Newcastle PhD students are also provided with a laptop computer as well as a \$5k research expenditure budget for conference travel, essential research materials, etc.

**Application process:** Students should follow the normal application procedures for entry into the University of Newcastle PhD degree. Application materials for domestic as well as international students can be found at the following URL: <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/students/research-higher-degree/scholarships/>.

*Very important:* The only difference in application procedure for students interested in Religion and Political Life research, is that they must *indicate clearly* how their research aligns with the RiPL research program within their application's research proposal. Students must also choose one of the RiPL researchers as their primary supervisor. This will then flag the application for special review.

**Closing dates:** International applicants – 31 August 2012. Domestic applicants – 31 October 2012

Applications will be accepted by email to [research-scholarships@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:research-scholarships@newcastle.edu.au) or fax to 61 2 4921 6908 up until midnight of the closing date. Originals of applications, transcripts etc. submitted in this way must be also be posted to the University as soon as possible.

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## Announcement: Reed M. N. Weep Retirement

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Many readers were no doubt disappointed upon seeing that the Reed M. N. Weep column did not appear in the last issue of the *Bulletin*. Weep has given the editors permission to officially announce that, following some "really really mean student course evaluations," he recently retired from academia in order to pursue a career as a professional mime. Future columns can be found on YouTube (look for username "CMNWeep") and will consist exclusively of hip thrusts, wild gyrations, and related moves of the sort banned by the little town in *Footloose*. Internet trolls and YouTube commenters suggest he is not actually a very good mime, but—like matters within the field of religious studies—these are subjective judgments, matters of faith not reason.

Weep reported that his university threw him a sur-

prisingly joyous retirement party, which was well-attended by graduate students from other disciplines who heard that there would be free food. Also in attendance were his dean and provost, who were overheard mumbling something about "getting the sand out of the Vaseline." Weep's department chair gave a memorable toast, praising Weep's service to the department and the field, and thanking Weep for his "discretion," whatever that means.

In any case, the editors will miss Weep, as we'll now have a more difficult time doing what Weep did best—fulfilling our word count for each issue. We wish him well in his latest endeavor, and find ourselves in agreement with the YouTube commenter who put it well: "Yo dawg them some dam fine moovs."