

American Academy of Religion – Southeast Region
March 6–8, 2026 | Furman University | Greenville, SC
Proposal Deadline: October 1, 2025

Theme: Shifting Identities and Fractured Communities

Greenville rose to prominence as a medium sized textile manufacturing city, prosperous into the late 20th century. After two decades of economic decline, the 21st century has seen tremendous growth in population, cultural diversity, and economic opportunity. Underneath the "New South" glitter, however, there are still the wounds of racism and class oppression as well as the cultural gravity of religious fundamentalism --- a situation evidenced throughout the South. Fractures created by these cultural shifts have become even more visible and consequential in recent years and months. This is a time in which the academic study of religion should take into account its physical and social location in this region, and consider how our subject matter, and the ways in which we study it, might help us understand and adapt to the shifting ground under our feet.

We encourage papers that consider how religion is constructed or activated in local, regional, political or social contexts, how identities shift over time and in new contexts, as well how religious studies might confront the growing fractures within our communities.

Please send section paper proposals directly to Leah.Robinson@williamwoods.edu

To avoid confusion about program units please include the name of the unit that you are submitting and “CFP” in the subject line.

For consideration, please submit a paper title and 300-word abstract to the above email. Only one proposal will be considered by each applicant, but you may indicate first and second choice for possible units.

Graduate Student Award

Graduate students who wish to be considered for this award should submit a paper of no more than 12 pages to RELSERegion@gmail.com, no later than January 15, 2026. Please include Graduate Student Award in the subject line of the email.

Undergraduate Student Award All undergraduate papers emailed to RELSERegion@gmail.com by the December 15, 2025 deadline are eligible for the undergraduate award. See full instructions below.

Africana Religions Group

Section Co Chairs: Joseph Hellweg (jhellweg@fsu.edu) and Lenny Lowe (lowelj@cofc.edu)

1. “Mobility as a Religious Journey in the Black Atlantic: Reconstructing Identity, Space, and Community”

In a world marked by constant movement across and within national borders, individuals and communities often turn to religion as a means of navigating the challenges of separation, transition, and reintegration. As Calvo-Quiros (2022) illustrates in *Undocumented Saints*, religion itself is mobile—it travels with migrants. Yet, in this process, religion is not static; it is reshaped through personal and collective narratives, spatial reconfigurations, evolving aesthetics, and changing relationships with both the environment and other communities. This panel invites papers that examine how religion shapes—and is reshaped by—various forms of migration within and across Africa and its global diasporas. We welcome explorations of religious experience across multiple dimensions: emotional, mental, physical, relational, ritual, imaginative, and that of everyday life.

2. “Conflicted Worlds, and Worlds in Conflict, in Africana Religions”

During the last several decades, religious communities across Africa and the Black Atlantic world have undergone significant transformations marked by conflict, tension, and debate. In recent times, deepening controversies, theological arguments, and communal schisms are reshaping how Africana religions are practiced, interpreted, and lived. We call for papers that explore such tensions, tracing how shifting identities fracture religious communities and reconfigure belonging, authority, and tradition. How do religious actors respond to internal disputes and external pressures? What roles do historical memory, gender, generational dynamics, race, class, and sexuality play in these transitions? We invite critical engagement with these questions through historical, ethnographic, and theoretical lenses.

3. “Hybrid Identities, Partible Communities: Diversity as Resource and Challenge in Africana Cosmologies”

Over the past fifty years, scholars have highlighted the hybrid identities that prevail in Africana religious contexts, especially in the Americas (Fernández Olmos, Paravisini-Gebert & Murphy 2022). In Africa too, religious aesthetics reflect diverse influences, even in the most remote locales (Adjepong 2021; Amselle 1998; Piot 1999). This panel will document, compare, and contrast such amalgams as resources for, and challenges to, world-building. We invite presenters to explore how identities of religious practitioners reflect (a) disparate dimensions of Indigenous communities, (b) intersections between Indigenous and world religions, or (c) confluences of world religions in Africa and the Black Atlantic. Origin stories, ritual performances, ethical and theological discourses, and all dimensions of embodiment, kinship, personhood, and socioeconomic organization offer just some of the themes to examine.

4. Open call for papers that investigate shifting identities and fractured communities in Africana religions in other ways—

Feel free to propose papers on themes other than those indicated above. We would hope either to integrate your concerns into the panels listed here by modifying those panels to fit your interests, or to create a new panel to include as many viable papers as we receive.

ASOR Member-Sponsored Session: Field Reports and Related Scholarship

Section Co-Chairs: Shane Thompson (sthompson@ncwc.edu) and Rachel Nabulsi (rachel.nabulsi@point.edu)

The ASOR Member-Sponsored session on field reports and related scholarship invites paper proposals centered on field reports and related work from recent archaeological digs (within the past 5 years) and located within the broad area of the Mediterranean, Levant, and Near East. This session welcomes not only field reports but also reports on laboratory analysis of dig finds, and conclusions drawn from work done in earlier years. Reports on preparatory work – surveys and planning – for upcoming digs are also welcome!

All proposals must be submitted through Leah.Robinson@williamwoods.edu and sent to the group Co-Chairs: Shane Thompson (sthompson@ncwc.edu) and Rachel Nabulsi (rachel.nabulsi@point.edu) Please include in the title “RELSE2026 Proposal | ASOR Member-Sponsored Session.”

ASOR Member-Sponsored Session: Shifting Identities and the Archaeology of the Ancient World.

Section Co-Chairs: Shane Thompson (sthompson@ncwc.edu) and Rachel Nabulsi (rachel.nabulsi@point.edu)

In accordance with the governing conference theme of "Shifting Identities", this ASOR Member-Sponsored session invites proposals related to identification of identity and community within the field of Archaeology of the Ancient World. Suggested areas of focus may include cultural and technological shifts in the ancient world, discussions surrounding the conservation and repatriation of artifacts, and differing approaches to dig methodology, past and present. Broadly related proposals are also welcome.

All proposals must be submitted through Leah.Robinson@williamwoods.edu and sent to the group Co-Chairs: Shane Thompson (sthompson@ncwc.edu) and Rachel Nabulsi (rachel.nabulsi@point.edu) Please include in the title “RELSE2026 Proposal | ASOR Member-Sponsored Session.”

The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha Section

The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha Section Chair, Kathy Barrett Dawson (dawsonka15@ecu.edu) and Pseudepigrapha Section Co-Chair Joshua Spoelstra (jspoelstra@piedmont.edu)

The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha Section focuses on the New Testament Apocrypha as well as the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. For the 2026 Southeastern Regional Meeting, we invite proposals for the following sessions:

1. In keeping with the conference theme, Shifting Identities and Fractured Communities, this section invites papers that explore how identities have been formed especially as it relates to the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha; for the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha are canonical in some faith traditions while deuterocanonical in others. Issues that may be addressed include (among others): the so-called criteria for canonicity; the composition and convictions of reading communities who deem texts as canonical or deuterocanonical; the profitability of the noncanonical corpora for biblical studies and textual interpretation; the multivocal nature of persons, themes, religious praxes, etc. across the spectrum of texts canonical, deuterocanonical, and noncanonical;

2. Open call: We welcome papers on any topic related to Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. Interdisciplinary studies and investigations utilizing various methodological perspectives are encouraged, as well as thematic and linguistic examinations of Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphal texts;

3. For our joint-session with the New Testament Section, we invite proposals that explore one or each of the following: a) the ways in which Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphical texts might be understood as a dialogue with New Testament texts and/or b) explorations into the "fractures" and "shifting identities" within scholarship (past or present) concerning the prioritization of canonical texts for configuring our ideas about identity and community within Judaism and early Christianity in antiquity, and what role non-canonical texts ought to play within that configuration; and

4. For our joint session with the Dead Sea Scrolls Section, we encourage submissions on either the Septuagint and the Dead Sea Scrolls or the Dead Sea Scrolls and the OT or NT Apocrypha or other Intertestamental or Early Christian writings.

For questions regarding the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha Section, contact the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha Section Chair, Kathy Barrett Dawson (dawsonka15@ecu.edu) or the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha Section Co-Chair Joshua Spoelstra (jspoelstra@piedmont.edu).

Black Culture and the Study of Religion

Section Chair: Eric Adewuyi Mason (mason@ifa.university)

The Black Culture and the Study of Religion section invites proposals for papers exploring the theme:

“Spiritual Uprisings: African American Liberation and Resistance to Oppression”

We seek papers that explore how African American and African diasporic religious traditions—across history and into the present—have served as sources of liberation, resistance, and resilience in the face of racial, economic, gendered, and structural oppression. Within the Southern context, where the legacies of slavery, Jim Crow, and economic dislocation intersect with contemporary cultural and demographic shifts, we are particularly interested in how Black religious thought and practice confront and transform the fractures of community and identity.

Proposals may address questions such as:

- How do African diasporic religious actors challenge systemic injustice through theological frameworks, spiritual practice, or cultural production?
- In what ways have African diasporic religious and spiritual traditions—whether communal, individual, ancestral, or ritual-based—served as sites of resistance, refuge, or renewal?
- How does Black spirituality shape political consciousness, social protest, or healing work?
- What role do memory, narrative, and ritual play in sustaining movements for liberation?

Topics might include (but are not limited to):

- Black liberation theology and its contemporary resonances
- Womanist, Afrocentric, or diasporic interpretations of resistance
- African American religious responses to police violence, mass incarceration, or voter suppression
- Faith and freedom in the Black Radical Tradition
- Religious dimensions of the Civil Rights, Black Power, or BLM movements
- Local or regional case studies in Southern Black religious activism
- Cultural resistance through liturgy, preaching, song, and sacred art
- Decolonial rituals, ancestral remembrance, and African religio-cultural systems

We welcome critical, historical, and interdisciplinary approaches drawing from religious studies, Africana studies, theology, ethics, history, political theory, anthropology, and cultural criticism.

Proposals that engage the distinct cultural and geographic context of the American South are especially encouraged.

Submission Guidelines:

- Proposals should be **300–500 words**, clearly outlining the paper's thesis, method, and relevance to both the section and conference themes.
- Include a working title and a **brief bio (max 100 words)**.

Constructive Theologies

Section Co-Chairs: Ian Curran (Icurran@ggc.edu) and Royce Anderson (toroyce@gmail.com)

The Constructive Theologies section invites proposals for papers, from any faith tradition, in the following areas:

1. Constructive theological discussions that deal with the conference theme of "Shifting Identities and Fractured Communities." Looking at the current social, cultural, economic, and political situation in the American southeast, what theological perspectives might contribute to an understanding of those factors that create, perpetuate, or help heal the fractures pervading our society? What are the positive and negative effects of shifts in population demographics, economic opportunity, and cultural identities? What theological approaches might support reconciliation in the face of socio-economic, racial, and religious polarization? How might those in the academic study of religion and constructive theology help us understand and respond to this shifting ground?
2. Proposals that address figures and themes within the broader field of political theology. These might include reflections on major historical texts in political theology (e.g. Augustine's *City of God*), contemporary political-theological movements (e.g. liberationist, feminist, queer, postliberal, and public theologies), theological engagements with political philosophy, or particular theological issues (e.g. the church and the political, the kingdom or reign of God, peace and violence, oppression and marginalization, liberalism and democracy, authoritarianism, creation and eco-theology, history, eschatology, and the migration of the theological into secular political forms). Proposals that draw on the resources of political theology to explore the contemporary political situation in the United States are especially encouraged.
3. Open call for papers in constructive, systematic, and doctrinal theology.

Questions about the Constructive Theologies section and its call for papers should be directed to Ian Curran (icurran@ggc.edu) or Royce Anderson (toroyce@gmail.com)

Dead Sea Scrolls

Section Co-Chairs: Matthew Goff (mgoff@fsu.edu) and Carmen Palmer (cpalmer4@stetson.edu)

For the forthcoming conference at Furman University, the Dead Sea Scrolls section invites papers on the following topics:

1. The first session is a co-sponsored session with Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, that encourages submissions on either the Septuagint and the Dead Sea Scrolls, or, the Septuagint and the OT or NT Apocrypha or other Intertestamental or Early Christian writings.
2. The second session invites papers that explore the nature, organization, and or beliefs of the Dead Sea sect. We welcome in particular papers that engage, in keeping our conference theme (Shifting Identities and Fractured Communities), new scholarship that reassesses traditional views of the Dead Sea sect.
3. Finally, the section welcomes other papers that address any aspect of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Qumran site.

Ethics, Religion, and Society

Section Co-Chairs: Sally Holt (sally.holt@belmont.edu) and Mike Stoltzfus (mstoltzfus@ggc.edu)

Proposals on all topics will be considered but we are especially seeking papers related to the 2025 conference theme of “Shifting Identities and Fractured Communities.”

1. Shifting Identities Related to Ethics, Reproductive and Gender Regulation, and Religious Practices
2. Shifting Identities and Interreligious Dialogue including Multiple Religious Identities within Families, Parenting, and Marriages
3. Fractured Communities regarding Ethics, Censorship, and Freedom from Religion in Education and politics
4. Shifting Identities in the Growing Distinction between Being Religious and Being Spiritual Including the role of Ethical/Spiritual Practices in Health, Healing, and Addiction Recovery
5. Any topics relevant to Ethics, Religion, and Society will be Considered.

Direct any questions to Sally Holt, Belmont University (sally.holt@belmont.edu) and Michael Stoltzfus, Georgia Gwinnett College (mstoltzfus@ggc.edu).

HB/OT Session: Cultural, Religious, and Political Identity

Section Co-Chairs: Shane Thompson (sthompson@ncwc.edu) and Rachel Nabulsi (rachel.nabulsi@point.edu)

In accordance with the governing conference theme of "Shifting Identities", the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament study group are accepting proposals for a session related to the expression of identity within the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible and the ancient Near Eastern world. Special emphasis is encouraged on how biblical and ancient Near Eastern texts reflect identity at important junctures of culture, religion, and politics. For example: rural versus urban identity and values in the cultural sphere, local versus centralized power structures in the political realm, and monotheism versus syncretism in religious life.

Another important element here is identity over time. How does the understanding of scripture shift with the changes wrought by the passage of centuries? Presentations are expected to discuss implications for understanding the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, particularly in its ancient Near Eastern context.

All proposals must be submitted to Leah.Robinson@williamwoods.edu and sent to the group Co-Chairs: Shane Thompson (sthompson@ncwc.edu) and Rachel Nabulsi (rachel.nabulsi@point.edu). Please include in the title "RELSE 2026 Proposal | Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

HB/OT Session: "Shifting Identities" in Old Testament/Hebrew Bible Studies

Section Co-Chairs: Shane Thompson (sthompson@ncwc.edu) and Rachel Nabulsi (rachel.nabulsi@point.edu)

In accordance with the governing conference theme of "Shifting Identities", the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament study group are accepting proposals for a session that will focus upon issues of identity and community within the OT/HB. Proposals for this session may address all aspects surrounding these issues in the field, including but not limited to cultural and religious identity within the biblical text, how approaches to scholarship are shaped by religious or secular identity of scholars, and how textual versus archaeological or historical emphasis constructs identity.

All proposals must be to Leah.Robinson@williamwoods.edu and sent to the group Co-Chairs: Shane Thompson (sthompson@ncwc.edu) and Rachel Nabulsi (rachel.nabulsi@point.edu) Please include in the title "RELSE2026 Proposal | Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

History of Christianity

Section Co-Chairs: Philip Tite (vtt4gs@virginia.edu), Jerry Kou (jk23k@fsu.edu), Dan Mills (s.dan.mills@gmail.com) and Jessica Ontek (jontek@fsu.edu)

1. “Open Session: Conflicting and Shifting Identities in the History of Christianity”

Christianity has weathered numerous fractures and schisms. From the first Ecumenical Councils, the split of the early church into East and West, the Protestant Reformation, and the more recent fractures shaping the American religious landscape, Christianity has survived intellectual, theological, and identitarian turbulence, while continually being transformed by these challenges. Perhaps it is precisely because of these fractures that Christianity has been so impactful. Through these fractures the identity of the Christian has shifted ethnically, socially, intellectually, and geopolitically.

This Open Session for the History of Christianity Section invites papers on the topic of fractures and shifting and conflicting identities within and beyond Christianity. We welcome proposals on a wide range of topics where the activation and performance of identity arise from inter-group and intra-group interactions. Papers are invited on any period or regional context in the history of Christianity that engage fractured communities and the resultant shifting identities. Papers might address inter-faith and intra-faith conversations within Christianity, conversions to or from Christianity, persecution and Christianity, diasporic Christianity, the “performance” of Christianity for political ends, the suppression of Christian belief, Christian hegemony, or other topics that consider Christian identity in the context of fractures, schisms, or paradigm shifts.

2. “Roundtable: Historians of Christianity within Fractured Communities”

Christianity in North America since its inception has developed alongside political controversy in the context of changing identities within Christianity and conversations from without, and these changes frequently have come alongside social, cultural, political, and intellectual ruptures and fractures. Current challenges facing higher education necessitate reflection on how historians of Christianity – and religious studies more broadly – respond to the fractures and ruptures transforming education and research in the humanities.

The History of Christianity section of the American Academy of Religion-South East invites proposals for a roundtable session that addresses the teaching, research, and public scholarship of religious studies and how the field of religious studies—specifically the history of Christianity in both teaching and research—engages current challenges in such settings as the classroom, public policy debates, public scholarship, and challenges currently facing the profession.

This roundtable will consist of five or six participants. While one or two panelists will be invited, we are eager to invite other participants to join this roundtable. Panelists will pre-circulate their papers and provide a 15-minute overview of their project, and the rest of the roundtable will consist of discussion among the panelists and attendees.

3. Joint Session:

Fractures and Sacred Texts: Interpretating the Bible in the American South

The Bible has historically played a significant role in shaping the social and cultural contours of the American south. The reception of biblical texts – including the Bible as a cultural icon or artifact – highlights the polyvalence of the Bible within moments of cultural transformation, especially when arising from fractures evoked by cultural shifts within various and often competing religious and social identities.

This Joint Session – sponsored by the New Testament, the Hebrew Bible, and the History of Christianity Sections – invites papers on the various uses of the Bible arising from moments of social transformations in the American south. We welcome papers that explore the significance of sacred texts within the religious landscape of the American south, the reception of biblical texts within historical moments of shifting social conditions to address political, social, moral and cultural debates, and the various ways that the biblical texts have been creatively used through diverse media (technologies, material culture, entertainment) and within or between different groups. Papers are welcome on any historical period including current uses of the Bible that attempt to shape especially Jewish and Christian religious identities within the American south.

Islamic Studies Section

Chair: John Miller (johnmill@unc.edu)

In recognition of AAR Southeast's 2026 theme of "Shifting Identities and Fractured Communities," the Islam Section seeks papers that engage with any of the following three broad problematics within the discipline of Islamic studies: **(1) Tradition**, **(2) Periodization**, and **(3) Division**:

1. Stability, Dynamism, and Tradition:

How have Muslim actors or thinkers sought either to *catalyze* or, alternatively, to *resist* historically conditioned changes within a certain tradition of Islamic thought or practice? Put differently, how have Muslims conceived of the *reflexiveness* of Muslim traditions and institutions to emergent circumstances as either a good to embrace or a peril to navigate.

Examples:

(a) Muslim discussions on the promise/peril of leveraging novel instrumentalities (historical or contemporary), *e.g.*, generative AI, industrialization, artistic/architectural techniques, writing and textuality, military technologies, etc.

(b) Enthusiastic adaptation (or critiques thereof) by Muslims of the fruits of cross-cultural contact and exchange, *e.g.*, Greek philosophical methods, Sassanian bureaucratic offices, the assumptions/categories of colonial actors, loanwords, translated texts and intertexts, vernacularization, etc.

2. Chronology, Eras, and Historical Periodization:

How can historical and anthropological scholarship problematize prevailing periodizations of Islamic history or sites of purported rupture and transformation?

Examples:

Interventions could include analyses of assumed divisions between “classical vs. post-classical” philosophy/law/etc., “modern vs. pre-modern” political structures, “golden age(s),” “decline(s),” notions of pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial, constructions of Salafist, revivalist, or “puritan” movements.

3. Branches, Schisms, Sub-Traditions

How can attention to historical embeddedness or geographic location illuminate how Muslims have inaugurated “new” forms of thought or religious expression?

In such undertakings—formation of communities, movements, initiatives, or spaces for discourse—how have the architects of these ventures strategically articulated their relationship to “others” or rivals in their particular milieus.

Addendum:

The Islam Section co-chairs will also consider papers that do not neatly fall within the above framework but nonetheless examine shifts and fractures within Muslim communities and their relation to historical context.

Please reach out to John Miller (johnlmil@unc.edu) with any inquiries.

Method & Theory in the Study of Religion

Chair: Vaia Touna (vaia.touna@ua.edu)

The Method & Theory section invites proposals for two open sessions—submissions must concern either (i) a methodological issue (i.e., problem or proposal) in the history of the field or in current scholarly work in the study of religion or (ii) examine a topic of theoretical interest, whether understanding theory as critique (as in literary theory or critical theory) or an explanatory framework aiming to identify religion’s causes or function. Book review panels (i.e., author meets critics), focusing on current works examining either (i) or (ii) above, are also possible. Questions can be sent to Vaia Touna, University of Alabama (vaia.touna@ua.edu).

New Testament

Section Co-Chairs: Zach Eberhart (zechariah.eberhart@point.edu) and Scott Ryan (sryan@claflin.edu)

Considering this year’s theme of “Shifting Identities and Fractured Communities,” the New Testament (NT) group issues the following call for papers in five sessions: one session for papers specifically related to the conference theme of “Shifting Identities and Fractured Communities,” two open sessions for papers in any area of NT studies, and two joint-sessions—one with the

Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha unit, and another with Hebrew Bible AND History of Christianity sections. We encourage proposals from underrepresented scholars and graduate students.

1. For our session devoted to the conference theme, papers addressing aspects of “shifting identities” and “fractured communities” in the study of the NT will be given careful consideration. Possible topics include but are not limited to the following: early Christological/theological developments as community formation; Judaism/ Hellenism/ Hellenistic Judaism/ Christianity as a matrix of “shifting identities” and “fractured communities”; conflicting and changing identities of figures and communities in NT texts; shifting cultures and economies in the ancient world of the NT; methodological fractures within and multidisciplinary identities among modern scholarly communities; the role of social and geographical location in the hermeneutical process; questions of Christian identity that arise while teaching the NT in a modern context; and other areas of shifting identities and/or fracturing of Early Christian communities (broadly defined) within NT studies.

2. For our two open sessions, we invite paper proposals related to any area of NT Studies.

3. For our joint-session with Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha:

We invite proposals that explore one or each of the following: 1) the ways in which Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphical texts might be understood as a dialogue with New Testament texts and/or 2) explorations into the “fractures” and “shifting identities” within scholarship (past or present) concerning the prioritization of canonical texts for configuring our ideas about identity and community within Judaism and early Christianity in antiquity, and what role non-canonical texts ought to play within that configuration.

4. For our joint-session with History of Christianity and Hebrew Bible:

The Bible has historically played a significant role in shaping the social and cultural contours of the American south. The reception of biblical texts – including the Bible as a cultural icon or artifact – highlights the polyvalence of the Bible within moments of cultural transformation, especially when arising from fractures evoked by cultural shifts within various and often competing religious and social identities.

This joint session invites papers on the various uses of the Bible arising from moments of social transformations in the American south. We welcome papers that explore the significance of sacred texts within the religious landscape of the American south, the reception of biblical texts within historical moments of shifting social conditions to address political, social, moral and cultural debates, and the various ways that the biblical texts have been creatively used through diverse media (technologies, material culture, entertainment) and within or between different groups. Papers are welcome on any historical period including current uses of the Bible that attempt to shape especially Jewish and Christian religious identities within the American south. For questions regarding these sessions, please contact the NT Section co-chairs: Zach Eberhart (zechariah.eberhart@point.edu) and Scott Ryan (sryan@claflin.edu).

Philosophy of Religion

Chair: Nathaniel Holmes (nholmesjr@yahoo.com/ nholmes@fmuniv.edu).

The Philosophy of Religion section seeks proposals that reflect the 2025 conference theme of “*Shifting Identities and Fractured Communities*.” We are especially seeking papers related to the Conference Theme:

1. Philosophy of Religion and Social Transformations; The role of religion in shaping individual and collective identities, and social norms; Philosophy of Religion and Social Epistemology
2. The Role of Alterity in Identity Formation: Western & Eastern Traditions; Buddhist or Confucian approaches to Identity
3. Religious Identities: Multiple Religious Identities, Religious Conversion, or Religious Hybridity
4. Artificial Intelligence, Ethics, Human Life and Identity
5. Any proposals in the area of Philosophy of Religion (including new directions or neglected topics in Philosophy of Religion and/or specific philosophers, theologians, or social and political figures whose ideas contribute to or impact the study of religion.)

Direct questions regarding the Philosophy of Religion section to Nathaniel Holmes (nholmesjr@yahoo.com/nholmes@fmuniv.edu).

Religion and Nature

Section Chairs: Mark Wood (mdwood@vcu.edu) and Jefferson Calico (jefferson.calico@ucumberlands.edu)

1. Open Call: The Religion and Nature section invites *proposals that address the intersection of religion and nature* and the ways that religious traditions mediate and impact the relationship between humans and the more-than-human world. *All proposals will be considered.* We encourage you to submit proposals that addresses any aspect of the theoretical and practical relationship between religious traditions and nature.
2. Shifting Identities/Fractured Communities: Our 2026 theme highlights the contemporary disruptions impacting communities around the world. Religious communities, theologies, and spiritualities are also shifting and fracturing in response to the accelerating climate crisis, political challenges to environmentalism, liminal experiences such as deep underwater exploration and space flight, and generational changes in spirituality. We encourage papers addressing any issues of shifting religious identities and fractured religious communities in relation to nature. This might include climate refugees; the spiritualities of climate protests & protestors; the effects of war; emerging Gen Z interreligious and earth-based spiritualities; or

even the religious roots of the Christian Nationalist anti-Land Ethic. Also consider religious attempts to mend, heal, or reconnect the fractured world.

3. *The Overstory* Book Panel: Winner of the 2019 Pulitzer Prize in Fiction, *The Overstory* has been called “a sweeping, impassioned work of activism and resistance that is also a stunning evocation of—and paean to—the natural world.” We invite proposals for short papers (5-10 minute presentations) that reflect on specific aspects of nature, religion, and nature spirituality in *The Overstory*.

Contact Religion and Nature Chairs Mark Wood (mdwood@vcu.edu) and Jefferson Calico (Jefferson.calico@ucumberlands.edu) with any questions about the call.

Religion, Culture, and the Arts

Section Chair: Jeanine Viau (jeanine.viau@ucf.edu)

1. Scholarship, including religious studies, is undergoing a creative turn. More than just prioritizing creative works as source materials, this turn is characterized by shifts to creative practices and techniques as methods for research and teaching. Take for example the Wabash Center’s recent creative writing roundtable or the emergence of creative submissions sections in religious studies journals and other scholarly publications defined by mixed-genre approaches such as Duke’s *liquid blackness*. There are also our colleagues’ social media feeds featuring fiber arts cohorts, reflexivity collages, zine making, and “bibliographic altars” (Cvetkovich and Wilkerson 2016). We invite proposals that demonstrate and/or study these shifts. What epistemic fractures are apparent or possible through these mediums? And, recognizing these techniques have always been used, and especially how they assist marginalized and counter-memories to emerge across worlds, we also encourage proposals that examine how creative movements, turns, or methods upset religious knowledge systems or practices in the past.

2. For a possible joint session with the Religions in America section, we invite proposals that examine practices of curation, which may include approaches to museum collections, art exhibitions, assembling course materials, archival initiatives, and altar making, to name a few possibilities. How do curatorial methods, commitments, and decisions disclose, shift or fracture definitions of America, religion, or both? How do curators of American religious experience determine which objects, people, or events belong in the display? What is at stake in acts of acquisition, placement, and annotation?

3. Open call – We welcome proposals on any topic related to Religion, Culture, and the Arts.

A warm thank you to Amina Shumake who is stepping down as co-chair of this section. We thank her for her work and commitment to the subject area!

We encourage early career scholars and graduate students to submit papers and participate in these sessions. Please contact Jeanine Viau (jeanine.viau@ucf.edu) with any questions.

Religions in America

Section Chairs: Jacob Barrett (jacbar@unc.edu) and Mackenzie Oglesby (mco268@unc.edu).

Religions in America accepts submissions from all papers or complete panel proposals related to Religions in America broadly conceived. Interdisciplinary submissions both within and beyond the typical scope of Religious Studies are welcome and encouraged. All papers pertaining to Religions in America broadly conceived will be considered. We are especially interested in scholarship that considers:

1. Religions in America outside of the continental US: we are particularly interested in papers that expand our understanding of “religion” in “America” and push us to think beyond US-centric frameworks
2. Movement, Migration, Diaspora, Displacement: how has the (voluntary or involuntary) movement of people shifted religions in America and influenced their places of origin, destination, and the places in between?
3. Studying Religions *in* America: as the field faces shifts and fractures under current political and social pressures (department closures, attacks on academic freedom, censorship, the rise of anti-intellectualism, etc.), what does it mean to study Religions *in* America today? We invite papers that engage these issues retrospectively and/or think towards new possibilities and imaginaries.
4. Shifts and Fractures in Scholarly Approaches to Religions in America: what methods, theoretical frameworks, and/or objects of study are helping move the subfield forward during this time of transition in the field at large? We are especially interested in interdisciplinary work and new/innovative methodologies.
5. The Glitter of the South: In *Cruising Utopia*, José Esteban Muñoz suggests that glitter symbolizes a queer futurity, representing both the ephemeral nature of queer experience and the persistent traces left behind in heteronormative spaces. Drawing on this idea, we invite papers on queer communities in the American South (past or present), how they construct futurities under oppressive conditions of religious fundamentalism and political persecution, and how shifting gender and sexual identities reshape religion in the American South. **Co-sponsorship with the Religion in the American South section.**
6. For a possible joint session with the Religion, Culture, and the Arts, we invite proposals that examine practices of curation, which may include approaches to museum collections, art exhibitions, assembling course materials, archival initiatives, and altar making, to name a few possibilities. How do curatorial methods, commitments, and decisions disclose, shift or fracture definitions of America, religion, or both? How do curators of American religious experience determine which objects, people, or events belong in the display? What is at stake in acts of acquisition, placement, and annotation?

Papers in all areas related to Religions in America will be considered.

Religion in the American South

Section Chair: Leah Robinson Leah.Robinson@williamwoods.edu

Religion in the American South accepts submissions from all papers related to Religion in the American South largely speaking. Papers related to the theme of the conference are of special interest. They are as follows:

1. Towns that are considered the “New South.” What makes them fit into this category? What are we trying to say when we use the phrase “New South”?
2. “There is something about the water down there.” Works of literature, music or art that are distinctive to the American South. Specifically works of literature, music or art that serve/served as a means of resistance against oppression in all its forms.
3. Religion in the American South and politics have always been closely intertwined. The section welcomes papers on Religion in the American South as a means of political expression.
4. The section welcomes ethnographic and autoethnographic qualitative studies in relation to religion in the American South in all its forms.
5. The Glitter of the South: In *Cruising Utopia*, José Esteban Muñoz suggests that glitter symbolizes a queer futurity, representing both the ephemeral nature of queer experience and the persistent traces left behind in heteronormative spaces. Drawing on this idea, we invite papers on queer communities in the American South (past or present), how they construct futurities under oppressive conditions of religious fundamentalism and political persecution, and how shifting gender and sexual identities reshape religion in the American South. **Co-sponsorship with the Religion in America Section.**

Religions of Asia

Section Co-chairs: Abraham Thomas Abraham_Thomas@pba.edu and Laura Ahrens James ls.ahrens@ufl.edu

The Religions of Asia panel seeks papers construed broadly along the lines of the SE AAR 2026 theme, *Shifting Identities and Fractured Communities*, including but not limited to the following sub-topics:

1. Diaspora, displacement, and the remapping of religious identity in light of shifting sociopolitical landscapes, i.e., how Asian diasporic communities reconstruct or negotiate religious identities in the context of racialization, cultural marginalization, or generational shifts.
2. Religion, race, and class in Asian contexts, i.e., How do Asian religious traditions contribute to or resist caste, class, or ethnonationalist hierarchies?

3. Embodiment, ritual, and sacred space in changing communities, i.e., how rituals, bodily practices, and sacred spaces are reconfigured in communities marked by migration, trauma, or transformation, and how practices like pilgrimage, fasting, or meditation reshape fractured communal memory.

Secularism, Religious Freedom, and Global Politics

Section Co-Chairs: Finbarr Curtis (fcurtis@georgiasouthern.edu) and Spencer Kunz (smkunz@fsu.edu)

The Secularism, Religious Freedom, and Global Politics section invites proposals on religious freedom within secular institutions across the globe.

1. How are religious identities being defined through legislation/executive order? For example, how does something like the “Eradicating Anti-Christian Bias” act (Feb. 6, 2025) restructure the boundaries of faith and state, or redefine what it means to be “Christian”?

2. Should we characterize national/global religion as fractured? To what extent do we see competing religio-political ideologies—is there a meaningful “religious left” to accompany the religious right? Can we achieve a richer understanding of the contemporary religious moment by parsing it through a lens other than religion and politics (e.g., a religious proletariat, religion along ethnic lines, religion and attitudes about gender/sex)?

3. How is religion at play in contemporary rhetoric and regulation concerning sex and sexuality?

4. All papers related to secularism, religious freedom, and global politics.

5. All papers related to the conference theme of “shifting communities and fractured identities.”

For questions, please contact Finbarr Curtis (fcurtis@georgiasouthern.edu) or Spencer Kunz (smkunz@fsu.edu)

Teaching and Learning Religion

Section Co-chairs Jodie Lyon (lyon@uga.edu) and Carole Barnsley (cbarnsley@transy.edu).

The Teaching and Learning Religion section critically examines pedagogical theory and practice. This year we are accepting proposals for:

1. Complicating and Complicated Identities in the Classroom. This is a call for a roundtable discussion. Looking for a range of proposals to share in this discussion - assignments, syllabi, guides for navigating the classroom, and/or papers on identities in the classroom.
2. Open Call for papers on pedagogy and teaching. We will accept whole panel proposals and individual papers.

For more information on the Teaching and Learning section, contact co-chairs Jodie Lyon (lyon@uga.edu) and Carole Barnsley (cbarnsley@transy.edu).

Undergraduate Papers Section

Chair: Nathaniel Holmes (nholmesjr@yahoo.com)

Undergraduate students at institutions in the Southeast Region are invited to submit papers for the Undergraduate Sessions, sponsored by AAR-SE and Biblical Studies Members. Open to all topics, the sessions will be composed of the papers considered the best submissions by an interdisciplinary committee. Students should submit completed papers that reflect original student research of an appropriate length for presentation (approximately 12 double-spaced pages). No paper over 14 double-spaced pages, regular size font, will be considered; footnotes should be converted to endnotes to ensure proper length; one submission per student. Undergraduate students can only submit papers for presentation in the undergraduate sessions; their papers will not be considered for other sections. On a cover page, please include contact information for the student and a faculty sponsor who has reviewed the submission. Proposals will not be accepted after December 15, 2025 and should be emailed to RELSERegion@gmail.com as a PDF attachment. All undergraduate papers are automatically considered for the Undergraduate Paper Prize. Please include "Undergraduate Paper Section" in your subject line.

Questions may be directed to Nathaniel Holmes at RELSERegion@gmail.com.