Now with the first weeks of the semester behind us I wanted to take stock of some things to be grateful for as we begin another academic year. Perhaps most noticeably, we have a new building complete with fresh air and sleek hallway benches! We also have one of our own colleagues on the new building committee, who will advocate for improvements and additions to make the space even nicer and efficient. Come visit us in the Humanities Building (HUB), situated between Hughes and Jepson.

As many of you already know, our major continues to grow (now up to 19 students) as does our department. This year sees the addition of three new colleagues who will be teaching in the WC area of the core and the emergence of a new Catholic Studies program housed within our department. On the horizon lies what will soon be a fully vetted and approved majors and minors curriculum that promises to nurture continued growth and enhance our already central role in embodying the University mission. Thank you, everyone!
Faculty Spotlight
Welcome New Religious Studies Faculty!

Dr. Richard Callahan grew up in coastal Massachusetts, just south of Boston. He holds a MA in Folklore and FolkLife from Western Kentucky University and finally an MA and PhD in Religious Studies from University of California, Santa Barbara. He recently moved to Spokane from Columbia, Missouri, where he was a faculty member at the University of Missouri. Dr. Callahan’s interests are rooted in the study of religion in the Americas but have turned outward from that location to explore global networks of exchange and their intersections with localized and indigenous cultures and religions. Within that larger geographic area, his interests focus on cultures of work, popular culture, and religion in everyday life. His first book was about religious formations and responses to the development of industrial coal mining in eastern Kentucky. His current research focuses on the 19th century American whaling industry, in particular their extended voyages in the Pacific and thinking about religion in the spaces of the ocean during that time period.

This semester he is teaching Native American Religions. Looking forward he hopes to develop and teach courses on religion and globalization as well as religion and water in global comparative perspective, since water is increasingly becoming a topic of worldwide concern. In his free time, Dr. Callahan likes to go kayaking on the local rivers and lakes as well as camp with his family all over the Pacific Northwest.

Coming from Northern Illinois, Matt Wilson is an Anthropologist of Religion who specializes in Comparative Religion. He completed a BA in Religious Studies at Carroll College in Southern Wisconsin, an MA in Islamic Societies and Cultures from the School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London), an MA in the History of Religions from the University of Chicago, and is nearly finished with his PhD in Religion and Culture from the University of California, Santa Barbara. Matt’s PhD dissertation is an ethnography of religious pluralism titled “Pious Polemics: Muslim and Christian theological debate on the streets of London,” and is based on several years of anthropological fieldwork with Muslim and Christian public evangelists in London, England. His decision to pursue Religious Studies comes from an enjoyment of the existential questions inherent in the subject matter – what are my values and where do they come from? What am I willing to stand for… and why? Religious Studies continues to introduce him to multiple attempts across history and cultures to approach questions like these with fresh, honest, and very human eyes.

After moving here with his family in 2017, Matt has embraced the outdoor lifestyle through backpacking, fly fishing, getting lost in the woods, and foraging for wild foods. This semester he is teaching Islamic Civilization and hopes to teach courses on comparative topics in the future. Matt is excited to delve into World and Comparative Religions here at GU, and believes that the honest, open, and curious nature of his students will foster the ability to welcome difference.

Daniel Azim Pschaida hails from San Diego, California and taught for two years in the Flagstaff mountains at Northern Arizona University, before relocating in 2017 to the Northwest with his wife Tiara. He is excited to be working with such dedicated students at Gonzaga’s gorgeous campus. Passionate about both education and promoting interfaith awareness and mutual appreciation, he majored in child development and then went into Religious Studies in graduate school, earning a master’s from the University of Iowa, and a PhD from the University of California at Riverside in 2015. His academic work is at the nexus of Islamic Studies and Religion in America, researching Islam in the United States. His dissertation was an ethnographic study of young Muslim college students in the Pacific West and their discourse on the relationship between faith and citizenship, racial and religious diversity, and issues of gender and sexuality. He is currently teaching two sections of Islamic Civilization with Gonzaga this semester, and two sections of Introduction to Religion with Eastern WA University.

Dr. Pschaida hopes to get a chance to teach a course on religious and philosophical themes of Harry Potter or perhaps on religious movements of peace and violence. He has volunteered, worked, or studied in Mapuche-land in Chile, Macau, China, and Amman, Jordan. When not working, you can find him hiking, playing basketball, soccer, tennis, or racquetball, or Geeking out with a SciFi or Fantasy novel. Still new to the area and looking for friends, do not hesitate to say Hi.

Student Spotlight
Isabel Gregorio ’19

Senior Religious Studies major and Catholic Studies minor, Isabel Gregorio, is another exemplary student in the program. She was born in the Philippines and moved to Kirkland, WA when she was only ten years old. Outside of her major she is currently working on getting her certification in Elementary Education and Teaching English as a Second Language. Throughout her time at Gonzaga, she has been involved in a variety of organizations: Housing and Residence Life, Resident Assistant; Residence Hall Association, President; International Honors Society for Language Learner and educator will give her the opportunity to provide high quality education to those who need it most. When reflecting on her experience at Gonzaga and as a Religious Studies major, Isabel believes her Jesuit education has shaped her into a woman with and for others as she chooses to serve the underrepresented and under resourced population. We wish Isabel good luck and cannot wait to see what the future holds for her!