

## LAURA AMMON

Department of Philosophy and Religion  
Appalachian State University  
ammonll@appstate.edu

### EDUCATION

2006 Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, Ph.D. Religion  
1999 The University of Chicago Divinity School, Chicago, M.A. Religion  
1987 Webster University, St. Louis, B.A. Music

### PROFESSIONAL APPOINTMENTS

2024-Present: Professor of Religion, Appalachian State University, Boone, NC  
2015-2024: Associate Professor of Religion, Appalachian State University, Boone, NC  
2010-2014: Assistant Professor of Religion and Faculty Fellow, Appalachian State University  
2007-2010: Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, University of North Florida, Jacksonville, FL

### ADMINISTRATIVE APPOINTMENTS

2021-Present: Director, Watauga Residential College Program, Appalachian State University

### PUBLICATIONS

#### Books

*Religion in Sixteenth-Century Mexico: A Guide to Aztec and Catholic Beliefs and Practices.* Co-author Cheryl Claassen. Cambridge University Press (2022).

*Work Useful to Religion and the Humanities: A History of the Development of the Comparative Method in Religion from Bartolomé de Las Casas to Edward Burnett Tylor.* Pickwick Studies in the History of Religion, 1. Eugene: Pickwick Publications (2012).

#### Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles and Book Chapters

“‘No Greater nor More Arduous Step’: Lactantius, Las Casas and Continuity in Christian Rhetoric about Conversion” in Rady Roldán-Figueroa, Th.D. and David Thomas, Orique, O.P., Ph.D., Eds., *The Transatlantic Bartolomé de las Casas: Lascasian Heritage, Indigenous Cultures, Scholastic Thought, and Historical Reception*, Brill. 2022.

“The Classroom is a Public Space: Occupying Learning Outcomes to Foster Public-Facing Pedagogy” with co-authors Sandie Gravett, Ann Burlein, Amanda Mbuvi, and Joseph Witt. *The Wabash Center Journal on Teaching*. Vol. 3, No. 2 (2022).

“Always Contextualize: Historical Approaches, Decoloniality and the Study of Religion in Latin America” Herling Bradley L. (Section Editor), In *Bloomsbury Religion in North America*. London: Bloomsbury, 2021. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781350898806.008>.

“Is Alexa My Neighbor: Religious Future of Home Artificial Intelligence Devices.” Co-author Randall Reed. *Journal of Posthuman Studies: Philosophy, Technology, Media*. Vol. 3, No. 2, (2019).

“Futurism and the Study of Religion.” Anthony B. Pinn, ed. Religion: Just Religion. Macmillan Interdisciplinary Handbooks: Religion series. Farmington Hills, MI: Macmillan Reference USA. 2016.

“Where We Have Gone Before: Star Trek Into and Out of Darkness.” *Implicit Religion*, Vol. 17, No. 4, (2014).

“The Examined Life: Religious Studies and the Cultivation of Self-Reflection.” *Religious Studies News Spotlight on Teaching*, Eds. Stephanie Gray, Ellen Posman, and Reid B. Locklin. Distinctive and not Disposable: Religious Studies and American Higher Education in the 21st Century, edited by Joanne Robinson. American Academy of Religion: Atlanta, GA. (May 2012).

“Jose de Acosta and Bernardino de Sahagún and the Sixteenth-Century Theology of Sacrifice in New Spain.” *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, Vol. 12. No. 2 (2011).

“Graduate Women’s Studies: An Assessment After Two Decades,” with co-authors Jean Schroedel, Karen Torjesen, Pamela Zeiser, and Charles Turner. *Women’s Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 28, (1999).

### **Editor Review Essays and Encyclopedia Articles**

“The Reckoning of Religious Studies and Colonialism.” Canopy Forum, March 19, 2021.  
<https://canopyforum.org/2021/03/19/the-reckoning-of-religious-studies-and-colonialism/>

“Living the Star Trek Future: Nichelle Nichols and the Implicit Religion of Star Trek: The Original Series.” Paul Booth and Isabella Menichiello, eds. Time Lords & Tribbles, Winchesters & Muggles: The DePaul Pop Culture Conference a Five-Year Retrospective. DePaul Pop Culture series No. 1. (2017).

“Hucksterism and Religious Scandals,” “The Sanctuary Movement,” “Sister Helen Prejean,” “Native American Religious Freedom”. Battlegrounds: Religion, Daniel Smith-Christopher, ed. Greenwood Publishing Group, Westport, CT., (2009).

“Liberation Theology.” Co-author Randall Reed. Battlegrounds: Religion, Daniel Smith-Christopher, ed. Greenwood Publishing Group, Westport, CT., (2009).

### **Journal Editor**

"This and Other Worlds: Religion and Science Fiction" A special issue of *Religions* (ISSN 2077-1444).  
[https://www.mdpi.com/journal/religions/special\\_issues/rsf](https://www.mdpi.com/journal/religions/special_issues/rsf) (2020)

### **Media**

Published web source. Podcast Discussion of The Forbidden Body: Sex, Horror, and the Religious Imagination by Douglas Cowan. John Morehead, Brandon Grafius, James McGrath, with Douglas Cowan.  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X2uT2\\_7V5DM&ab\\_channel=JohnMorehead](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X2uT2_7V5DM&ab_channel=JohnMorehead) (August 27, 2022).

Published Panel Discussion. *Climate Change and the Election*. Appalachian State University Podcast: Across the Disciplines. Karl Campbell, Jacqui Ignatova, Susan Mills, Brian McHarg, Season 1, Episode 4. “The Environment.” <https://open.spotify.com/episode/1TVb13XHqF5vDIUCDt0rTC> (October 2020).

Published Panel Discussion. Appalachian State University Television: Religion in Life. Brown, Carole, Rupp, Richard, & Ostwalt, Conrad. Season 2, Episode 2. "Pope Francis' Visit to the United States."

Published Panel Discussion. Appalachian State University Television: Religion in Life. Ellis, Tom & Ostwalt, Conrad. Season 1, Episode 5. "Religion and Violence."

### **Manuscripts in Preparation**

"Cults as Religious Foundation: An Object-Oriented Practices Approach to Aztec-Catholic Contact" peer review proposal accepted to the Fourteenth International Conference on Religion & Spirituality in Society, May 2024, Madrid, Spain.

"Religious Studies and Decolonization: Reckoning Religious Studies and Colonialism" follow up to "The Reckoning of Religious Studies and Colonialism." in Canopy Forum.

### **HONORS, AWARDS, AND FELLOWSHIPS**

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| 2024      | Nominee, NC Board of Governors Outstanding Teaching Award   |
| 2023      | Harvey R. Durham Outstanding Freshman Advocate Award  |
| 2022      | Nominee, Wayne D. Duncan Faculty Enrichment and Teaching Fellowship                                       |
| 2021      | Nominee, Richard N. Henson Outstanding Advising Award   |
| 2020      | Nominee, App State Transfer Champion Award  |
| 2019      | Nominee, App State Transfer Champion Award  |
| 2018      | Service-Learning Faculty Fellow   |
| 2017      | Nominee, NC Board of Governors Outstanding Teaching Award   |
| 2017      | Nominee, ASU College of Arts and Sciences Outstanding Undergraduate Adviser                               |
| 2016      | Nominee, ASU College of Arts and Sciences Outstanding Undergraduate Adviser                               |
| 2014      | Nominee, ASU College of Arts and Sciences Outstanding Undergraduate Adviser                               |
| 2013      | College of Arts and Sciences Academy of Outstanding Teachers  |
| 2012      | Nominee, Appalachian Global Leadership Award  |
| 2012      | Nominee, ASU College of Arts and Sciences Outstanding Undergraduate Teacher                               |
| 2012      | Nominee, ASU College of Arts and Sciences Outstanding Undergraduate Adviser                               |
| 2011      | Cultures and Languages Across the Curriculum, Faculty Fellow  |
| 2011-12   | Wabash Center Teaching and Learning Workshop for Pre-Tenure Religion Faculty in Colleges and Universities |
| 2009      | Nominee, UNF College of Arts and Sciences Outstanding Undergraduate Teacher Award                         |
| 2005      | Wabash Study of Outstanding Teachers of Introductory Theology and Religion Participant                    |
| 1999-2001 | Facilitator, Lilly-Luce Teaching Workshop Western Region  |

### **GRANTS**

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| 2024    | Oied International Travel Award (\$1400)   |
| 2024    | High Country Humanities Travel Fund Grant (\$1200)   |
| 2022    | Participant, AAR Regional Grant, B.A. to M.A. Pipeline in the Southeast Region   |
| 2020-21 | Invited member of Luce Public Facing Pedagogy Grant  |
| 2019    | Blue Ridge National Heritage Foundation grant with Nancy Love and Cary Fraser (unfunded)   |
| 2019    | NEH Proposal: From Sovereignty to Colonialism to Citizenship – Exploring the Native American/American Indian Experience with Nancy Love and Cary Fraser (unfunded) |

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| 2013    | External Scholars Grant award for Dr. Karen Jo Torjesen                                     |
| 2013    | General Education Senior Assessment Focus Group   |
| 2012    | Wabash Center Summer Research Fellowship  |
| 2012    | Shared Learning Outcomes Development Grant  |
| 2012    | External Scholars Grant award for Dr. Ann Taves   |
| 2010    | University of North Florida Summer Faculty Research Grant                                   |
| 2008    | University of North Florida Transformative Learning Opportunity International Faculty Grant |
| 2002    | Graduate Student Participant, Engaging Islam, an NEH Focus Grant                            |
| 2000-01 | Technology Manager, Phillips Foundation Technology Grant at Whittier College                |

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| 2021    | Digital Literacies Book Group: Data Feminism              |
| 2020-21 | CAE: Revision Faculty Learning Community                  |
| 2020    | CAE: Virtual Writing Retreat                              |
| 2019    | CAE: Mid-career Writing Retreat                           |
| 2018    | Service Learning Faculty Fellow                           |
| 2018-19 | CAE: Women Leading Learning for Change Learning Community |
| 2016    | Sustained Dialog on Race and Allyship                     |

## **DELIVERED PAPERS**

### **Papers Presented**

Cults as Religious Foundation: An Object-Oriented Practices Approach to Aztec-Catholic Contact. Fourteenth International Conference on Religion & Spirituality in Society, May 2024, Madrid, Spain.

It Takes a Village to Run a Residential College: Cooperative Leadership in the Return From Covid, with co-author Holly Ambler, Residential College Society 10 for 10 Anniversary Presentations, Zoom, September 2023.

From Different Heights: The Religious Function of Landscapes in the Spanish Conquest of Mexico. Sixteenth Century Studies Conference. St. Louis MO October 2019.

Pagans and Apocalypse: Las Casas uses of Lactantius in Understanding Indigenous Religious Practices. "Las Casas and Amerindian Cultures / Las Casas y las Culturas Amerindias" II International Conference on Bartolomé de las Casas, Providence College, RI July 2019.

Divine Peaks: Mountains in Mexico and Spain. International Mountain Studies Symposium, Boone, NC. March 2019.

On the Road with Odin and Eliade: Teaching Religious Studies with Neil Gaiman's *American Gods*. American Academy of Religion, Denver CO, November 2018.

These are the ways the world ends: Comparing the Apocalypses of Christopher Columbus and Bartolomé de Las Casas. Sixteenth Century Studies Conference, Albuquerque, NM, November 2018.

- Three Scenes from the Conquest of Mexico. Philosophy and Religion Department Colloquium. September 2018.
- Mary in Spain and Across the Atlantic: The Transmigration of Devotion. Sixteenth Century Studies Conference, Milwaukee, WI. October, 2017.
- Star Trek and the Soteriological Promise of Modernity. American Academy of Religion. San Antonio, November 2016.
- Antiquity, Sacrifice, and Comparative Theology in Acosta and Sahagun. Sixteenth Century Studies Conference, Bruges, Belgium, August 2016.
- Nichelle Nichols and the Implicit Religion of Star Trek: The Original Series, DePaul 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of Star Trek. Chicago, May 2016.
- Robots, Cyborgs, and Gods: Religion and the Future. Appalachian State Philosophy and Religion Lecture Series. April 2016.
- Mythology and the 'Modern' World: Star Trek and Star Wars. Appalachian State University Pop Culture Mini-Conference. March 2016.
- Canon, Science Fiction, and the Challenge of 'Writing Genre'. Study of Religion as an Analytic Discipline. Atlanta, GA. November 2015.
- Pope Francis, *Laudato Si* & Public Education. Religion and Public Life Conference. Appalachian State University, September 2015.
- Invited presentation: *Appalachia and The South in the National Imaginary: An Exploration of Essays from Cambridge Companion to Religious Studies* at UNC Charlotte's 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Loy H. Witherspoon Lecture in Religious Studies, March 2014.
- "The Comparison of Religious Sacrifice in Joseph Lafitau's *Moeurs Des Sauvages Ameriquians*." Past to Present Seminar. University of North Florida. April 2010.
- Re-thinking the Enlightenment: Comparisons of Religious Sacrifice in the Context of Early Modern Coloniality. Southeastern Regional Council for the Study of Religion. March 2010.
- Jose de Acosta and Bernardino de Sahagún and the Sixteenth-century Theology of Sacrifice in New Spain. Rocky Mountain Council for Latin American Studies, Santa Fe, NM. March 2009.
- Savage religion can frequently explain doctrines and rites of civilized religion*: Edward B. Tylor's Comparative Study of Religion. Western Region American Academy of Religion, March 2007.
- Paper presentation: Surfacing Submerged Texts in the Study of Religion: Exploring E. B. Tylor's Use of Missionary Documents. American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, November 2004.

Paper presentation: *Take account of persons, places, times and other circumstances*: An Examination of the work of Joseph Lafitau, Jesuit Chronicler in the New World. Western Region American Academy of Religion, March 2001.

Paper presentation: *An Essentially Bad Woman*: Marie Laveau and Representations of Race, Religion and Gender. Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association, August 1997.

### **Discussant**

“Revivals, Loss, and the Challenge of Meaning-Making: Mike Flanagan's Midnight Mass,” American Academy of Religion, Denver CO, November 2022.

“The Plagues God Sends Them”: Race, Religion, and Disease in the New World. Panel presentation, “Are We All in This Together? What the History of Plagues Can Teach Us about Pandemics.” Appalachian State Zoom, October 2020.

Building A “Public-Focused” Future for Non-Sectarian Undergraduate Religious Studies Programs. Virtual American Academy of Religion December 2020.

Exploratory Session: Public-Focused Religious Studies. Virtual American Academy of Religion December 2020.

Global Studies: Reformation(s) 1517-2017: A Roundtable Discussion. November 2017.

Shadows of Diverse Disciplines: Reflections on Solar Eclipses – Interdisciplinary Panel Discussion. Appalachian State University Solar Eclipse Events. Boone, NC. July 2017.

Global Studies Panel Discussion Global Trumpism: What is it and how do we talk about it? “The failed promises of modernity: Trump, Social Mistrust, and the Refugee Crisis.” Boone, NC. November 2016.

“Call of Rudolf Otto: A Response to Cthulhu’s Many Tentacles” at the American Academy of Religion, Atlanta GA. November 2015.

"Seen and Unseen: Revelation through Science Fiction" at the American Academy of Religion, Baltimore, MD. November 2013.

Prisons, Plates, and the Constitution. Southeast Commission for the Study of Religion. Greenville, SC. March 2013.

Panel discussion of Ann Taves’ Religious Experience Reconsidered. Southeast Commission for the Study of Religion. March 2012.

The Future of the New Method and Theory Section: A Roundtable Discussion, Southeast Region American Academy of Religion Panel, Greensboro, NC. March 2009.

Cross-disciplinary collaborative teaching: challenges and successes in co-teaching courses in “Religion and \_\_\_\_\_.” AAR Special Topics Forum on Teaching and Learning. American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, November 2004.

Ritual and Community, Claremont Early Modern Studies Symposium, March 2000.

Book discussion: The Burden of the Flesh: Fasting and Sexuality in Early Christianity by Teresa Shaw. Borders Series on Spirituality and Feminism, October 1998.

### **Panels Organized**

“Cyborgs and Subjectivity: Impacts of Apocalypse on The Self,” American Academy of Religion, Denver CO, November 2022.

“The World at Risk: Science-fictionality, Religion and Catastrophe,” American Academy of Religion, Denver CO, November 2022.

“Revivals, Loss, and the Challenge of Meaning-Making: Mike Flanagan's Midnight Mass,” American Academy of Religion, Denver CO, November 2022.

“Confronting Anxious Possibilities in Science Fiction,” American Academy of Religion, San Antonio TX, November 2021.

“Alternative Ontologies and Queering Religion,” American Academy of Religion, Virtual Meeting, December 2020.

"Mythos, Morality and Made up Worlds: Science Fiction and Religion,” American Academy of Religion, Denver CO, November 2018.

Religious Minorities in (New) Appalachia: The Challenges of Diversity, Appalachian Studies Conference, Huntington, WV. March 2014.

Method and Theory in the Study of Religion Joint Session with Religion and America, Southeast Commission for the Study of Religion, Atlanta, GA. March 2014.

Religious Diversity in Appalachia. Appalachian Studies Conference. Boone, NC. March 2013.

Theorizing the Culture Wars. Southeast Commission for the Study of Religion. Greenville, SC. March 2013.

Liberation Theology in Latin America. Twelfth Annual Northeast Florida Student Philosophy Conference, Jacksonville, FL. February 2009.

Coal, Copper, and Culture: Companies and Museums in Appalachia. Appalachian Studies Conference. Boone, NC. March 2013.

Religion, Science and Theory, Southeast Commission for the Study of Religion Panel, Louisville, KY. March 2011.

### **Public Talks**

When Montezuma Met Cortés - The Melding of Aztec religion and Spanish Catholicism. Boone Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, July 2022.

From Spain to New Spain: Moors, Conversos, Catholics, and Indian. High Country Lifelong Learners Group. With co-author Cheryl Claassen. Boone, NC, September 2016.

Women, Transhumanism and the History of the Future. Secular Appalachian Students Society. Boone, NC. November 2015.

### **Book Reviews**

Joseph D. Witt, Religion and Resistance in Appalachia: Faith and the Fight Against Mountaintop Removal Coal Mining. Journal of Religion, Nature and Culture. Vol. 13 No. 2 (2019).

Florence C. Hsia, Sojourners in a Strange Land: Jesuits and Their Scientific Missions in Late Imperial China. Terrae Incognitae. Dr. Marguerite Ragnow, ed. Vol. 43. No 2 (September 2011).

Clare Pettitt, Dr Livingstone, I presume ? Missionaries, journalists, explorers and empire. Terrae Incognitae. Dr. Marguerite Ragnow, ed. Vol. 41 (2009).

Christopher Black and Pamela Gravestock eds., Early Modern Confraternities in Europe and the Americas: International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives. Itinerario. Frans Paul van der Putten, ed. Vol. 32:1 (2008).

Jorge-Magasich Airola and Jean Marc de Beer, America Magica: When Renaissance Europe Thought it had Conquered Paradise. Itinerario. Hendrik E. Niemeijer, ed. Vol. 31:1 (2007).

Amy E. Den Ouden, Beyond Conquest: Native Peoples and the Struggle for History in New England and Jenny Hale Pulsipher, Subjects unto the Same King: Indians, English, and the Contest for Authority in Colonial New England. Itinerario. Hendrik E. Niemeijer, ed. Vol. 30:3 (2006).

### **DEPARTMENTAL, UNIVERSITY AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICE**

- Faculty Senate Governance Committee, 2024-25
- Faculty Senator at-Large, 2023-2025
- AAR Religion and Science Fiction Steering Committee, 2024-2027
- Co-Chair, GWS Assistant Professor Search Committee, 2023
- Residential College Society Executive Board Member 2022-present
- Affiliate Faculty, Center for Judaic, Holocaust and Peace Studies, Fall 2021-present
- Philosophy and Religion Islamic Studies Search Committee, 2018
- Co-Chair AAR Science Fiction and Religion Group, 2017-2022
- Gen Ed Council Historical Designation FCC, Fall 2016-present



- President, Appalachian State University Chapter of American Association of University Professors, 2019-2022
- Las Americas Gen Ed Theme Coordinator, 2019-2021
- ACCESS Scholars Program Selection Committee, January 2017-2019
- CAS Scholarship Selection Committee, January 2016-2018
- Consultation Co-Chair: Southeast Commission for the Study of Religion, Method and Theory in Religion, 2008-2015
- TransACTION Faculty Advisor, Fall 2014-2020
- Philosophy and Religion Honors Coordinator, Fall 2014-2021
- Humanities Council, Fall 2014-2019
- Office of Student Research Advisory Board, Fall 2014-2017
- Wilson Scholars Selection Committee, January 2015-January 2016
- Philosophy and Religion Biblical Studies Search Committee, Spring 2015
- Steering Committee, AAR Science Fiction and Religion Group, 2014-2016
- Philosophy and Religion Asian Studies Search Committee, Fall 2014
- Philosophy and Religion Department Chair Search Committee, Fall 2013
- Dean's Advisory Council, Fall 2013-Spring 2016
- Member, Exploratory Committee for Philosophy and Religion Department Option to Separate, Fall 2012
- Internship Advisory Board, Fall 2011-Spring 2014
- LGBTQ Task Force, Spring 2011-Spring 2015
- Multicultural Student Center Advisory Board, Spring 2011-Spring 2013
- AAR-Southeast At Large Constituency Representative to the Southeast Commission for the Study of Religion Executive Committee, 2010-2014

## **LANGUAGES**

French, German, Spanish

## **PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS**

Residential College Society (RCS)

American Academy of Religion (AAR)

Sixteenth Century Studies Society (SCSS)

Association of American University Professors (AAUP)