

2023-24 Chester Ronning Centre Annual Report



AUGUST 2024



Land Acknowledgment

The University of Alberta respectfully acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 6 territory, a traditional gathering place for diverse Indigenous peoples including the Cree, Blackfoot, Métis, Nakota Sioux, Iroquois, Dene, Ojibway/ Saulteaux/Anishinaabe, Inuit, and many others whose histories, languages, and cultures continue to influence our vibrant community.

Contents

Note from the Director 3
Advisory Committee
International Fellows Program 6
Programming Highlights 8-14
Programming Details 15
Publications, Presentations, and Projects
Finances
Support the Centre 19

Note from the Director



"Our collective dedication and the continued support of our community, the Chester Ronning Centre will continue to thrive"

Reflecting on the past academic season, I want to express my gratitude for another rewarding year as Director of the Chester Ronning Centre for the Study of Religion and Public Life.

Once again, I have had the opportunity to meet with many individuals and organizations in our community, both religious and secular, to strengthen our mission of promoting understanding and dialogue between different faith traditions.

I would like to express my gratitude to the dedicated team of the Chester Ronning Centre. Their hard work, enthusiasm, and commitment ensured that our programming was accessible to all members of our community, regardless of location or background.

I would also like to thank the members of our advisory board, who have provided valuable guidance and support. Their expertise and insights have helped shape the direction of the Centre and ensured that our initiatives are relevant and impactful.

To our community partners, I am deeply grateful for your collaboration and engagement. Your willingness to come together, share perspectives, and work towards common goals has been inspiring. It is through these partnerships that we have been able to create a platform for meaningful interactions.

Last, I want to express my appreciation to our community. Your active participation, thoughtful questions, and open-mindedness have made our discussions engaging and enlightening. It is your enthusiasm and support that keep us motivated! I am confident that with our collective dedication and the continued support of our community, the Chester Ronning Centre will continue to thrive.

Thank you all once again, and I look forward to another year of stimulating and energizing events.

Advisory Committee

The Chester Ronning Centre operates with the support of an active advisory committee. The committee's mandate is to support the work of the Centre and its Director, provide advice and community feedback, and assist in fundraising. Appointments are for a threeyear term, renewable. Members are invited by the Dean of the Faculty in consultation with the Director of the Centre.



Ian Wilson, PhD – Augustana Faculty (Ethics and Global Studies) – Wilson is scholar of religion, specializing in the Hebrew Bible and the histories and cultures of ancient Israel and Judah, and of West Asia more broadly. At Augustana, he teaches courses on the contemporary religions of the world, theories of religion, biblical studies, the ancient West Asian context and related topics. He also serve as associate editor for the Journal of Hebrew Scriptures.



Geoffrey Dipple, PhD – Augustana Faculty (Ethics and Global Studies) – Dr. Dipple teaches a broad range of courses covering European and world history. His research focuses on the history of the Protestant Reformation, especially in the German-speaking lands of central Europe. Most recently his work has concentrated on the history of the so-called Reformation Radicals, including Anabaptists and Spiritualists. His publications include: Antifraternalism and Anticlericalism in the German Reformation: Johann Eberlin von Günzburg and the Campaign against the Friars (1996), "Just as in the time of the apostles": Uses of History in the Radical Reformation (2005), The Fifteen Confederates of Johann Eberlin von Günzburg (2014), and co-editor with Kat Hill, New Directions in the Radical Reformation: Thinking Outside the Cages (2023).



Paul L. Gareau, PhD – Faculty of Native Studies – Dr. Gareau is Métis and French-Canadian from Bellevue near Batoche Saskatchewan, Canada. He is an assistant professor in the Faculty of Native Studies and past Research Fellow for the Rupertsland Centre for Métis Research at the University of Alberta. His research is grounded in critical theory and methodology relating to the social, political, and cultural impacts of religion on identity formation. His academic publications and community research projects explore the Métis experiences of religion and Métis peoplehood, the influence of Catholicism on early and late modern identity, the legacy of colonial discourses on Indigenous and ethnocultural minorities, and the experiences of rural spaces. His research focuses on the Métis, Indigenous religiosity, youth, gender, la Francophonie, and rural Canada.



Hany Shaltout – Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry – Dr. Shaltout, an Assistant Professor in Psychiatry, is a second-generation psychiatrist who tries to follow in the footsteps of his father Dr. Taher Shaltout, a world-renowned psychiatrist, educator and advocate for mental health in Egypt and the Middle East. Dr. Shaltout's care for the community has continued in his new home here in Camrose, Alberta where he has worked together with key community members that include St. Mary's Hospital, AHS Addictions and Mental Health Clinic, the PCN, Camrose City police and Augustana to expand the mental health services at home and provide world class holistic care to our community.



Gail Stolee is a graduate of the University of Alberta in Arts, Education and Library Science. She worked for the Edmonton Public School Board, Camrose Lutheran College where she was also a member of the Board of Regents, and Augustana University College. Her community involvements include Rotary, Sahakarini (a local international development NGO), the Nordlys Film and Arts Festival, and Messiah Lutheran Church. Gail has been an active participant in the programs of the Chester Ronning Centre since its inception. She has a strong commitment to lifelong learning and service, and to making best research and thinking accessible to the general public. She also especially loves being a grandma, travelling, and reading.



Nakita Valerio is a Vanier Scholar completing doctoral studies in Religious Studies at the University of Alberta, specializing in Muslim women's religious leadership and Qur'anic literacy in Morocco. With a background in Islamic-Jewish Moroccan history, she serves as an academic strategist/mentor to graduate students in the social sciences and humanities. Previously, she served as the Research Director at the Institute for Religious and Socio-Political Studies for three years where she also completed a research fellowship on Albertan religious organizations for the Ronning Center. She is the current Editor of the Religious and Socio-Political Studies Journal and founded The Nusaibah Collective, a Muslim women's study group. Nakita is also engaged as a student of traditional Islamic sciences. She advises the Chester Ronning Center and sponsors the Fatima Al-Fihri Graduate Award in African Islamic Studies. Additionally, she holds various roles within the UAlberta community, including as an advisor to the Ronning Center and she serves as the secretary of the Canadian Association for the Study of Islam and Muslims (CASIM). Nakita is also the co-founder of a primary school in rural Morocco.



Rev. Markus Wilhelm – Rev. Wilhelm attended Camrose Lutheran College, has studied in Germany and served Lutheran congregations in British Columbia and in Calgary, Edmonton, and Sherwood Park, Alberta.

2023-24 CHESTER RONNING CENTRE ANNUAL REPORT

INTERNATIONAL FELLOWS PROGRAM

The Centre employs a Postdoctoral Fellow to contribute to its International Fellows Program. The Fellow's primary task is to help organize a conference and to work toward publishing and disseminating research that emerges from the conference. In addition, the Postdoc works closely with the Centre's staff to organize public lectures, workshops, student discussion forums, and/or similar events that connect and engage interested persons from various arenas in the public sphere.

POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW

Shelisa Klassen, PhD

Shelisa Klassen is a historian of immigration and settler colonialism in Canada. Her work primarily addresses the way that ideas about nation, identity, and ethnicity were discussed in nineteenth century newspapers in Manitoba. In addition to organizing a conference about religion and settler colonialism in the Canadian prairie, she is working on her manuscript based on her doctoral dissertation, which examines the role of newspapers in establishing and maintaining settler colonialism, through the example of 1870's Manitoba. Newspapers attempted to build community between settlers at the outposts of empire and those in metropolitan centers, and in predominately Indigenous societies like Winnipeg in the 1870's, newspapers focused on addressing settler anxieties about their own sovereignty and connection to empire, while downplaying the violence and dispossession involved in establishing settler sovereignty.

Shelisa received her doctoral degree from the University of Manitoba in 2023 and her work has been published in the Journal of Mennonite Studies and the Prairie History Journal. She has also spoken at a number of community events in Winnipeg and southern Manitoba, engaging various settler communities with the early history of her province. Shelisa looks forward to engaging in dialogue about settler colonialism and religion during her time at the Ronning Centre.



Programming Highlights



SHAUN BOOTHE'S UNAUTHORIZED BIOGRAPHY SERIES

In honour of Black History Month, we were excited to present Shaun Boothe's Unauthorized Biography Series, an engaging and educational experience celebrating diverse narratives and histories. This event was co-presented with the Jeanne & Peter Lougheed Performaing Arts Centre. We hosted a matinee session aimed at Grades 5-9 as well as an evening performance. The feedback we received was exceptional.

The Unauthorized Biography Series is a critically acclaimed musical project that celebrates the world's greatest cultural icons through biographical raps songs repackaging history through hip-hop.



ON THE RIVER

On The River is a video ballad, presented by Ground Zero Productions, about the town of Fort McKay. The town is a community of Cree, Dene and Métis peoples a half hour's drive north of Ft. McMurray, in the midst of major oil sands sites. It has experienced tremendous changes in the past 65 years. On The River reflects on these changes through song and video, telling this story through the lens of the life of former chief, Dorothy McDonald. The video ballad is a live performance that combines new songs from Asani and Maria Dunn with video interviews from people who knew Dorothy.

We had a talk-back after the performance that included Dayle Hyde and Rod Hyde, Dorthy's daughter and husband, with Maria Dunn, Debbie Houle, Sarah Pocklington, and Sherryl Sewepagaham. They shared the beginnings of their relationship and partnership with Maria and Asani and the power of putting Dorthy's and Fort McKay's story to music.



RELIGION & WAR IN UKRAINE

In the fall, we discussed Religion and War in Ukraine with three professors from U of A. Heather Coleman, John-Paul Himka, and David R. Marples led us through the complexities and context of church and politics in the region. The evening also featured student projects from Advisory Board member Geoffrey Dipple's class, "Religion, Radicals, and Conflict."

Lunch & Learn

WHAT IS RELIGIOUS RADICALISM?



GEOFFREY DIPPLE

What is Religious Radicalism? And what does it have to do with the Protestant Reformation?

Religion remains a powerful, and sometimes radical, force in today's world. But what is religious radicalism? And what characteristics make one a religious radical?

In this Lunch & Learn, Geoff Dipple explored the "Radical Reformation" in 16th century Europe, explaining how scholars of the Protestant Reformation defined religious radicalism. In the process, he will question how we think about radicalism today and suggest how the past may continue to be relevant.

GENDER, RACE, AND RESPECTABILITY IN 1870S MANITOBA NEWSPAPERS



SHELISA KLASSEN

Manitoba in the 1870s was undoubtedly an Indigenous space, and white settlers in the new province struggled with their understanding of life in Manitoba often differed from Euro-Canadian norms. These settler anxieties were expressed in the English-language newspapers through concerns about the lack of white women and children, and therefore a lack of "civilization" or "respectability." In the name of attracting "respectable white women" to the prairie, violence against Indigenous women and men was justified or encouraged in these newspapers, often by appealing to Christian sentiments.

In this Lunch & Learn, postdoctoral fellow Shelisa Klassen talked about her research into these newspapers, as well as from a settler colonial analysis of gender, race and religion. The presence, or absence, of white women was a tool used in local newspapers to enforce religious and societal conformity to Euro-Canadian norms and expectations. And yet, the newspapers also reveal the complexities and contradictions when individuals spoke out against this rhetoric.

Critical Indigenous Theory in the Study of Religion

Together with the Faculty of Native Studies and supported by SSHRC and KIAS, Paul Gareau and Joseph Wiebe held a workshop titled "Critical Indigenous Theory in the Study of Religion". We invited scholars from Canada and the US to talk about what it means to be a good relative as scholars of religion. Along with six research assistants we spent three days at the University and Métis Crossing.

Highlights included jigging and music, storytelling wearing capotes around the fire, visiting bison, sharing circle with one another, and so much laughter!

Special thanks to Willow White, Justin Tetrault, and Craig Wentland for helping with the research assistant orientation and training; Métis Knowledge Keeper Celina Loyer for offering opening prayer and visiting with us; Dr. Shalene Wuttunee-Jobin, at the Faculty of Native Studies, kicking off the workshop with a keynote lecture setting the stage for Indigenous studies in Canada; Kirsten Lindquist who led us through an Indigenous Campus walk through the North Campus.

Between these amazing people right here in our community and the amazing scholars who joined us we are excited to expand on our time spent together fostering these new relationships.



CITSR FUNDING







FACULTY OF NATIVE STUDIES $SSHRC \equiv CRSH$





Religion & Ecology Class Trip



In April, Joe took his Religion and Ecology students on a nature immersion experience in California. Partnering with Kim Carfore at the University of San Francisco, the group camped under the redwoods in Samuel P. Taylor State Park in Lagunitas and next to the ocean in Coast Camp in Point Reyes National Seashore.

Under the guidance of Carfore, students developed their ecological perception and nature awareness. Students learned about the natural and cultural history of the area through hands-on learning methods to connect course readings to practical skills such as plant identification, tracking, and fire making. Highlights included hiking among sequoias, reading together by firelight, guided meditation on the shore, and learning multiple ways to make fire from scratch.

Edmonton Interfaith Housing Plenary Gathering



Two of the Ronning Centre's mandates are to foster inter-religious and interfaith dialogue and to bring thoughtful religious perspectives on current issues. We were honoured to be asked to be a part of Edmonton Interfaith Housing Societies Plenary Gathering.

Lewis Cardinal was our guest speaker and gave a moving talk titled, "A Vision of Home. More than a Place to Sleep: Life, Love and Relationship". Lewis has dedicated his life's work to creating and maintaining connections and relationships that cross-cultural divides. His long track record of public service currently includes; Board Member of Theatre Network Society, Vice-Chair of the Documentary Organization of Canada-Alberta, Chair of the Global Indigenous Dialogue of Initiatives of Change, and Trustee for the Parliament of the World's Religions.

Here is a post-event comment from Kevin Guenther Trautwein, Community Animator, for Edmonton Interfaith Housing Society. "It was so encouraging to see the support in Edmonton and the surrounding areas. It's clear that our religious and spiritual communities care about finding practical solutions rooted in a larger vision of home. We believe that everyone deserves a place to shelter that is safe, accessible, dignified, and affordable. A place where we can take off our shoes, sleep, and get cleaned up. A place to rest without fear or worry. Lewis Cardinal also reminded us that home is more than a place to sleep: it's a place to come together and be connected. A place for life, love, and relationship. A place for resting and gathering, for ceremony and celebration. This land where Edmonton exists has always been that kind of home." "It's clear that our religious and spiritual communities care about finding practical solutions rooted in a larger vision of home."

Kevin Guenther Trautwein

Philosopher's Café Series

We have been meeting monthly, where founding director David Goa opens up our conversation reflecting on an appointed theme.

David Goa focuses on deepening the capacity of the faithful to think through the gifts of the Christian tradition: the spiritual life, the theological traditions, and our responsibility to the public world. Four themes are at the centre of his concern: the Incarnation, the Trinity, the spiritual life as a journey toward wholeness, and the meaning of Ecclesia in service to the life of the world. A deeper understanding of these revelatory gifts, and the depth of the tradition of understanding through which they emerge, will enlarge and strengthen the capacity of the faithful in their personal lives, engage with the life of the church in the world, and discern how the faithful may engage the public square about the most important issues of our time.



David Goa, Founding Director Chester Ronning Centre

Monthly Topics

"In Memoriam: Thinking About Those Near By"

"The Last Hold of Colonialism": Thinking in the Midst of War

"Gaza and Israel: Origins of Conflict and Canadian Policy"

"The Doctrine of Discovery": Colonialism & Indigeneity, State & Church

Natality: Thinking about Birth-Giving

MAID: What has Unfolded and Why?

"The Love of One's Own": Cultivating Canadian Culture?

"Star Spangled Christians:" Evangelicals in an Age of Extremism

"The Conservative Genius"

"The Liberal Genius"

"The Progressive Genius"

Programming Details

Distinguished Visiting Fellows Events

Supported by the Distinguished Visiting Fellows Endowment

Philosopher's Café Series Recurring Monthly (October-August) In Person Average Attendees: 25

Religion & War in Ukraine October 24, 2023 In Person Attendees: 85

Shaun Boothe: Unauthorized Biography Series January 29, 2024 In Person Attendees: 555

On The River March 15, 2024 In Person Attendees: 223

Edmonton Interfaith Housing Plenary Gathering

Guest Speaker: Lewis Cardinal April 18, 2024 In Person Attendees: 70

Critical Indigenous Theory in the Study of Religion

May 27-31, 2024 In Person Attendees: 20

16 Total Events



Publications, Presentations & Projects

Joseph R. Wiebe

Wiebe, J., & Thackeray, S. (2024). "The Mennonite case for counter-sovereignty through Indigenous assimilation: Settler colonialism, self-determination and relation to place in religious identity." *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses*, 53(1), 113-133. https://doi.org/10.1177/00084298231165443

"Eating for a Human Economy: Food Politics and Pleasures in Wendell Berry's Fiction," Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment (2023) https://doi.org/10.1093/isle/isad079

Geoffrey Dipple

book chapter: "Para-academic Theology: Theology of the 'Uneducated,'" in Kenneth Appold and Nelson Minnich, eds., *Cambridge History of Reformation Era Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023): 123-33.

Conference presentation: "'Like Industrious Little Bees': Anabaptism and Utopianism, the first 100 Years," presented at the Sixteenth Century Studies conference, Baltimore, MD, October 2023.

public presentation: "What is Religious Radicalism?" presented at Augustana Lunch and Learn, Nov. 7, 2023.

Public presentation: "What's in a Name: Anti-Judaism and Anti-Semitism?" presented at the Dianne and Irving Kipnes Holocaust Education Symposium, Edmonton, AB, May 13 and 14, 2024.

lan Wilson

2024 Coauthored with Ehud Ben Zvi, "Hosea the 'Historical Prophet' of the Eighth Century BCE, Hosea the Remembered Prophet of Yehudite Literati, and the Book of Hosea." Pp. 54–64 in *The Oxford Handbook of Hosea*, ed. Brad E. Kelle. New York: Oxford University Press.

2023 "Ezekiel as a Written Text: Archiving Visions, Remembering Futures." Pp. 166–186 in *The Oxford Handbook of Ezekiel*, ed. Corrine Carvalho. New York: Oxford University Press.

2023* "Remembering Prophecy: Historical Summaries in the Archival Bodies of Prophetic Literature." Papers that engage Aubrey Buster, *Remembering the Story of Israel: Historical Summaries and Memory Formation in Second Temple Judaism* (Cambridge University Press, 2022). Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting: Social Sciences and the Interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures program unit. San Antonio, Texas. November 18–21.

Paul Gareau

Gareau, Paul L. 2023a. "A Better Home on Native Land: Reflections on the Question of Home and Being Good Relations." *Canadian Jewish Studies/Études Juives Canadiennes* 36 (255–60).

----. 2023b. "Making Kin: Indigenous Relationality in Promoting Public and Political Knowledge about Religion." *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses*, December, 1–6. https://doi.org/10.1177/00084298231212209.

Gareau, Paul L., and Molly Swain. 2024. "Indigenous Knowledges." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*, edited by John Barton, 1–24. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press. 10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.ORE_REL-01178.R1.

Koffman, David S., and Paul L. Gareau. 2023. "Jews and Métis in Canada: Ethnic Mobility and the Politics of Counting." In *The Ever-Dying People? Canada's Jews in Comparative Perspective*, edited by Randal F. Schnoor and Robert Brym, 214–29. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

LeBlanc, Jeanine, and Paul L. Gareau. 2023. "Our 'Spiritual' Relations: Challenging Settler Colonial Possessiveness of Indigenous Spirituality/Religion." Edited by Géraldine Mossière and Marie-Nathalie LeBlanc. *Anthropologica* 65 (1): 1–28.

Lugosi-Schimpf, Nicole, and Paul L. Gareau. 2024. "Meaningful Modes of Resistance: Resurgent-Based Decolonization through Online Education." In *Contestation and Compromise: Reading Against Multiple Colonialities, Race, and Caste in the University,* edited by Shaista Aziz Patel, Alexander Da Costa, and Paulina R. Johnson, 432. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press.

Nakita Valerio

Project. Graduate Research Assistant. Critical Indigenous Theory in the Study of Religion. Faculty of Native Studies and Chester Ronning Center Workshop. May-June 2024.

Project. Co-Primary Investigator. "Islamic Knowledge Networks in a North American City" with Profs. Joseph Hill and Michael Frishkopf. University of Alberta.

Project. Primary Investigator. "Rituals of Remembering: Narrativizing Qur'anic Memorization Among Muslim Huffaz in Edmonton, Canada." Ethics No. Pro00138900.

Book Chapter. "Canadian Muslim Approaches to Combatting Islamophobia: The Way Forward" in *Secularism, Race, and the Politics of Islamophobia*. Sharmin Sadeequee ed. University of Alberta Press: Edmonton, 2025. https://ualbertapress.ca/9781772127928/secularism-race-and-the-politics-of-islamophobia/

Conference Presentation. "Remembering the Departure of Moroccan Jews." History, Classics, and Religion Graduate Students Association (HCRGSA) Annual Conference. University of Alberta, Edmonton. February 2024.

Conference Presentation. " Remembering the Departure of Moroccan Jews." Canadian Association for the Study of Islam and Muslims (CASIM) Biennial Conference, St. Mary's University, Halifax. May 2024.

Conference Presentation. "Canadian Muslim Approaches to Combatting Islamophobia." Canadian Ethnic Studies Association Biennial Conference. University of Alberta, Edmonton. November 2024.

Finances as of 2024 Fiscal Year-End

CURRENT FUNDS	
Centre Annual Fund	\$433
Spirit of the Land Program & Conference Funds	\$3928
International Fellows Fund Supported by the Wendy Cassidy Memorial Foundation	\$154,558
ENDOWMENT BALANCES (MARKET VALUE)	
Distinguished Visiting Fellows Endowment	\$1,099,284
	\$1,099,284 \$165,779



Support the Centre

The Chester Ronning Centre Annual Fund

The Annual Fund supports the day-to-day work of the Centre. The Annual Fund allows the Centre to maintain its full schedule of speakers and programming, organize Community Service-Learning student projects, as well as provide online access to publications and audio recordings of events.

The Daniel Yang Endowment

This endowment supports the annual Rev Dr & Mrs Hsi Shao Yang Internship with the Centre, with preference given to a student with East Asian ancestry. Students work directly with the Centre's staff on research projects and program development to expand their knowledge and understanding of the complex themes explored by the Centre.

The Hendrickson Memorial Endowment

This endowment supports the Centre's annual lecture series. Lectures are given by outstanding scholars, who come from within and outside the academy, whose thought and action engage the demanding issues facing our world. The endowment was founded by the family of Magda and George Hendrickson back in 1969. The Hendrickson family has nurtured Augustana and studied with its various teachers and professors for more than 90 years.

The Distinguished Visiting Fellows (DVF) Endowment

This endowment allows the Centre to bring prominent scholars of religion and public intellectuals to Augustana such as Edward Snowden, Chris Hedges, Naomi Tutu, Sarah Hurwitz, Kate Bowler, Elaine Pagels, G. Willow Wilson. While in Camrose, DVFs deliver a series of lectures, engage with students, participate in the Centre's activities and work on individual projects. The DVF endowment was founded by alumni Jim and Sonja Hendrickson. The two served 25 years on the Board of Regents at Augustana (then known as Camrose Lutheran College) prior to its merger with the University of Alberta. Gifts to this fund support an integral part of the Centre's work.

The International Fellows Program

This endowment aims to connect the work of public intellectuals with the Augustana community, media and non-academics (policy makers, clergy, etc.) on local, national and global levels. The program brings nationally and internationally recognized intellectuals to campus every other year for a conference. The program benefits from the work of a Postdoctoral Fellow, whose primary task is to help organize the International Fellows conference and to work towards publishing research that results from the conference. The program is supported in part by a significant long-term grant from the Wendy Cassady Memorial Fund. Wendy Cassady was Chester Ronning's daughter-in-law and an ardent supporter of the arts and faith-based social justice causes.

Your contributions help ensure our programming remains robust and what you've come to expect from a centre at one of Canada's finest universities.

WE'D LOVE TO

Stay Connected

The best way to participate in the life of the Ronning Centre is to attend events and engage with us and visiting speakers as part of the conversation. If you have suggestions for topics or themes that the Centre might address, please contact us.





Chester Ronning Centre, Augustana Campus 4901 46 Avenue Camrose, Alberta, Canada

ualberta.ca/chester-ronning-centre augcrc@ualberta.ca