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The content of the Journal shall be academic discourse which promotes and illuminates community dialogue. Appropriate topics of submissions include but are not limited to the secular critique of religion, inter religious dialogue, the interpretation of sacred texts, the interaction of religion and society, the validation of ethical discernment, and issues of race, gender, and class.

Student Editors

Eleanor Swensson and Kimberly Humphrey

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And a special thank you to
Sandra Mead, Academic Administrative Assistant
for all that she does to make this publication possible

About the Contributors

Kimberly Humphrey is currently a junior. She is a double major in Religion and English.

Eleanor Swensson is currently a senior. She is a double major in English and Religion.

Olivia Cox is currently a sophomore. She is a double major in Religion and Sociology/Anthropology.

Olivia DePreter graduated in May of 2010.

Bror Welander is currently a senior. He is a Religion Major.

Note from the Editors

Over the past semester, we, the editors of the 2011 Denison Journal of Religion, have spent a great deal of time discussing, selecting and proofing the essays printed in the following pages. While the process was by no means an easy one, we jumped the hurdles of missed deadlines, lost attachments and differing opinions in hope that the end product would be well worth the work. It was therefore with great relief and joy that we sent this issue to the printer at long last. We believe the resulting publication accurately reflects not only this department's dedication to scholarly excellence but also the type of diverse and provocative theological thinking we value. In short, it was worth the wait.

The essay by Kimberly Humphrey grounds itself in the harsh realities of the poverty stricken cities of Guatemala where traditional hierarchical theology has caused great harm to the people. Humphrey, then, points to the liberation theology of Gustavo as a promising catalyst for much needed justice and liberation. Centered on the book of Genesis, Eleanor Swensson's work offers an alternative reading of Abraham as not only the first patriarch of the people Israel but also the first example of a prophet in the Old Testament. By tracing Abraham's ever evolving relationship with Yahweh, Swensson identifies central tenants of prophetic ministry and powerful faith. Stepping outside of the Judeo-Christian tradition, Olivia Cox's study details the relationship between female power and the Classical and Vedic forms of Hinduism. In this piece she examines the social implications of the periods' understandings of female power and articulates the religious and social roles of women during the two periods. More broadly, Cox's essay is a commentary on how religious constructions and understandings affect the daily social lives of its practitioners. Olivia DePreter's piece presents another feminist perspective of religious tradition by focusing on the biblical characters of Sarah and Rebekah as examples of strong, active women in the book of Genesis. In this piece, DePreter closely examines the text, highlighting specific events that demonstrate these women's subversion of the patriarchal order. The journal's final paper by Bror Welander takes on a critical perspective of religious study through modernity and the Axial Age in relation to religious understanding and social norms. Welander acknowledges the precarious nature of modernity and impresses upon the reader the importance of finding a commonality upon which humanity can rely.

Each of these essays provides thoughtful critique and analysis of issues that are applicable to modern experience. Further, we believe each piece also shows promising work towards solutions for the theological and social problems they discuss.

We hope that you enjoy this year's Denison Journal of Religion.

Grace and peace,

Eleanor Swensson, Senior Editor

Kimberly Humphrey, Junior Editor