Dr. Rachel Wagner
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Education

Ph.D 2003	University of Iowa. Religious Studies.
M.A. **1993**	Wake Forest University. Theology and Literature.
B.A. 1992	Hendrix College, Conway, Arkansas. Humanities: Religion and Literature. Cum Laude.

Employment History

2021-present	Professor of Religious Studies, Ithaca College.
2011-2021	Associate Professor of Religious Studies, Ithaca College.
2012 (Fall)	Fellow, Center for Religion and Media, New York University (on sabbatical).
2006-2011	Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, Ithaca College.
2004-2006	Hundere Teaching Fellow of Religion & Culture, Oregon State University.
2002-2004	Visiting Assistant Professor of Religion, Southwestern University.
2001-2002	Instructor, Hendrix College. Conway, Arkansas. 2001-2002.
2000	Instructor, Cornell College. Cornell, Iowa. 2000.

Publications

Books   *Godwired: Religion, Ritual and Virtual Reality*. In the *Media, Religion and Culture Series*. Series eds. Stewart Hoover, David Morgan, and Jolyon Mitchell. Routledge, 2012.

Cowboy Apocalypse: Religion, Media, Guns (under contract; NYU Press)

Articles

- "#Abortion: The Religious Right Meets TikTok." *Canopy Forum.* 2021.
- "Under His Eye:" *The Handmaid's Tale* as Trauma Cosplay [Submitted to *The Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*].
- "A Sense of Presence: Mediating an American Apocalypse." *Religions*. Special Issue on the "New Visibility of Religion" 2021.
- "Souvenirs of the Apocalypse: Guns as Authenticating Props." *CrossCurrents*. Special issue on cinema and public life. Fall 2020.
- "Screening Belief: *The Life of Pi*, Computer Generated Imagery, and Religious Imagination." *Religions* [Open Access Theology Journal] (MDPI, 2016).
- "Current Key Perspectives in Video Gaming and Religion: Theses by Rachel Wagner." *Gamevironments: Games, Religion, and Stuff*. Universität Bremen and University of Helsinki. Vol. #3, 2015. 37-49. <http://www.gamevironments.org>
- "Gaming Religionworlds: Why Religious Studies Should Pay Attention to Religion in Gaming." Heidi A. Campbell, Rachel Wagner, Shanny Luft, Rabia Gregory, Gregory Price Grieve and Xenia Zeiler. *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. September, 2016. 661-664.
- "Video Games and Religion." *Oxford Handbooks Online in Religion*. Oxford University Press. September 2015.
- "Gaming Religion? Teaching Religious Studies with Videogames." *Transformations: The Journal of Inclusive Scholarship and Pedagogy*. Vol. XXV, No. 1. Spring/Summer 2014. 101-111.
- "This Is Not a Game: Video Games, Sacred Spaces, and Ritual Violence." *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies* 15 (Spring 2014).
- "Facing Forward, Looking Back: Religion and Film Studies in the Last Decade." *Journal of Religion and Film*. Volume 17. Issue 1. April 2013. 49-60.
- "God in the Game: Cosmopolitanism and Religious Conflict in Video Games." *Journal of the American*

Academy of Religion (Oxford University Press). January 2013.

- o "First Person Shooter Religion: Algorithmic Culture and Interreligious Encounter." *CrossCurrents Magazine.* June 2012: 181-203.
- o "Xbox Apocalypse: Video Games and Revelatory Literature." *Society of Biblical Literature Forum*. December 2009.
- o "Bewitching the Box Office: *Harry Potter* and Religious Controversy." *Journal of Religion and Film*, Vol. 7, No. 2, October 2003.
- o "Wake Up! Gnosticism and Buddhism in *The Matrix*," *Journal of Religion and Film*. Vol. 5, No. 2, October 2002. Co-authored with Frances Flannery-Dailey.

Book Chapters/Contributions to Anthologies

- o "Hammering Heaven: The Materializing of Apocalypse in Blake's Illuminated Works." In *Biblical Wisdom: Then and Now*. Routledge Press. Festschrift for Kenneth J. Kuntz. Ed. Frances Flannery and Nicolae Roddy (2021).
- o "Video- and Internet Games." *Routledge Companion to Religion and Popular Culture*. Ed. John Lyden and Eric Michael Mazur. (Routledge, 2018).
- o "Montage, Metaphor, and Homage to *The Twilight Zone*: The Christian Performance of Belief in New Media." In *God and Popular Culture: A Behind-the-Scenes Look at the Entertainment Industry's Most Influential Figure*. Stephen Butler Murray and Aimee Upjohn Light, eds. Praeger (ABC-CLIO), 2015.
- o "Buddhist Apps: Skillful Means or Dharma Dilution?" *Buddhism, the Internet, and Digital Media: The Pixel in the Lotus.* Ed. Greg Grieve and Daniel Veidlinger. With Ithaca College student Christopher Accardo (Routledge, 2015).
- o "Gaming the End Times." *Media, Religion and Culture: An Introduction*, by Jeffrey Mahan (with contributors) (Routledge, 2014)
- o "Broken Body, Virtual Body: Cyberfeminism and the Changing Goddess." Ed. by Rosemary Radford Reuther and Gina Messina-Dysert. With Ithaca College student Sarah Scott. *Feminism and Religion in the 21st Century* (Routledge, 2014).
- o "The Importance of Playing in Earnest." In *Playing with Religion in Digital Games*, eds. Greg Grieve and Heidi Campbell (University of Indiana Press, 2014).
- o "Alt + Home: Digital Homecomings." In *Resisting the Place of Belonging: Uncanny Homecomings in Religion, Narrative and Art*. Ed. Dan Boscaljon (Ashgate Press, 2013). 87-102.
- o "You Are What You Install: Religious Authority and Identity in Mobile Apps." In *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*. Ed. Heidi Campbell. (Routledge, 2012). 199-206.
- o "Religion and Video Games: Shooting Aliens in Cathedrals," in *Understanding Religion and Popular Culture*. Ed. Dan Clanton and Terry Clark (Routledge, 2012).
- o "*Halo* Apocalypse" in *Halo and Philosophy*. Ed. Luke Cuddy, With Ithaca College students Tyler DeHaven and Chris Hendrickson. Open Court Press, 2011. 101-124.
- o "The Play Is the Thing: From *Bible Fights* to *Passions of the Christ*." In *Halos and Avatars: Playing Games with God,* ed. Craig Detweiler, Westminster John Knox Press, 2010. 47-62.
- o "Our Lady of Persistent Liminality: Virtual Church, Cyberspace, and *Second Life*." In *God in the Details*, ed. Eric Michael Mazur and Kate McCarthy, 2nd ed., Routledge Press, 2010. 271-290.
- o "The Scholar's Code: Postmodernism, Biblical Interpretation, and *The Da Vinci Code*," in *The Da Vinci Code in the Academy*, ed. Bradley Bowers. Cambridge Scholar's Publishing, 2007. 31-47.
- o "Hokey Religions and Ancient Weapons: The Force of Spirituality in *Star Wars*," co-authored with Jonathan Bowen, in *Finding the Force of the* Star Wars *Franchise*, ed. Matthew Kapell and John Shelton Lawrence. Peter Lang Press, 2006. 75-94.
- o "Wake Up! Worlds of Illusion in Gnosticism, Buddhism, and the *Matrix* Project." With Frances Flannery-Dailey; in *Philosophers Explore the Matrix*, ed. Christopher Grau. Oxford University Press, 2005. 258-288.
- o "Stopping Bullets: Constructions of Bliss and Problems of Violence," co-authored with Frances Flannery-Dailey, in *Jacking-in to The Matrix Franchise: Cultural Reception and Interpretation*; ed. William Doty and Matthew Kapell, Continuum Press, 2004. 97-114.

Presentations

- "Propping Trauma: Material Mediation in Post-Apocalyptic Storytelling." American Academy of Religion Meeting. San Antonio, November 2021.
- "Cowboy Apocalypse: Transmediating the End." Religion and Popular Culture Unit. American Academy of Religion Meeting. San Diego, November 2019.
  "*The Testaments*: *The Handmaid's Tale* as Emerging Transmedia." Religion and Popular Culture Group. American Academy of Religion Meeting. San Diego, November 2019.
- "The Cowboy Apocalypse: 13 Ways of Looking at a Gun." Plenary Speaker. Play and Protest: Biannual Conference of the Theology, Religion, and Popular Culture Group. The Theology, Religion, and Popular Culture Network. Kent, University of Kent. Canterbury, UK. July 2019.
- "The Cowboy Apocalypse: Transmediating the End." The Study of Apocalyptic and Millenarian Movements: Critical and Interdisciplinary Approaches. University of Bedfordshire, Bedford, UK. June 2019.
- "The Cowboy Apocalypse: 13 Ways of Looking at a Gun." Robert Ryan Lecture. Ithaca College. April 11, 2019.
- "Manufacturing Belief: *Doomsday Preppers* and New Apocalypticism." Religion and Popular Culture Group. American Academy of Religion National Meeting. November 17, 2018. Denver, Colorado.
- "Excommunication: Material Apocalypticism and The End of Mediation" International Society for Media, Religion and Culture: Conference on Media, Religion, and Public Scholarship. University of Colorado. Boulder, CO. August 9, 2018.
- "Blessed Be the Fruit: Mediated Adaptations of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*." International Conference on Religion & Film. The University of Toronto. May 4, 2018.
- "Pixels and Pistols: Religion, Media, and New Apocalypticism." Religion in Cyberspace Conference. Brno, Czech Republic. Faculty of Law, Masaryk University in Brno. November 25, 2017. Also presented November 20, 2017 at Charles University in Prague, the New Media Studies program.
- "'Hammering Heaven': The Materializing of Apocalypse in Blake's Illuminated Works." International Society for Religion, Literature, and Culture. Glasgow, Scotland. September 9, 2016. To be published in Festschrift for Kenneth Kuntz in 2020.
- Panelist: "Lost and Found: Medieval Religious History through Mobile and Table-Top Gaming." The Middle Ages in the Modern World Conference. June 30, 2017.
- "'Carrying the Fire': Post-Apocalyptic Imagination in Cormac McCarthy's Novel *The Road* and its Filmic Adaptation." "The Place of Religion in Film" Conference. Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York. March 31, 2017.
- "Destroying the Destroyers: Manly Mythmaking in Post-Apocalyptic Media." Media, Gender, and Religion Conference. University of Colorado, Boulder. January 7-10, 2016.
- Panel: "Crafting the Study of Religion and Video Games: A Roundtable Discussion of Key Perspectives."
- Video Gaming and Religion Seminar. American Academy of Religion, November 19-24, 2015.
- Panel: Thinking about Religion, Media, and Culture with Henry Jenkins. With Sarah McFarland Taylor, Sean McCloud, Gary Laderman, and Rachel Wagner. Henry Jenkins, responding. Religion and Popular
- Culture Group; Religion, Film, and Visual Culture Group; and Religion, Media, and Culture Group (triple session). American Academy of Religion National Meeting. San Diego, California. November 2014.
- "Lessons from Playing with Religion in Digital Games." Panelist. Moderator: Heidi Campbell, Associate Professor of Communication at Texas A & M. International Society for Media, Religion and Culture Bi-Annual Meeting. Kent, United Kingdom. August 4-6, 2014.
- "Gaming the Apocalypse." International Society for Media, Religion and Culture Bi-Annual Meeting. Kent, United Kingdom. August 4-6, 2014.
- "Screening Belief: The Life of Pi, Computer Generated Imagery, and Visual Imagination." 2014 International Conference on Religion and Film. Sponsored by the Journal of Religion and Film and Religious Studies at the University of Nebraska. April 10-12, 2014.
- "God, Games, and Guns: The New Apocalypticism." "Media and Religion: The Global View." Digital Religion Conference Series. Center for Media, Religion, and Culture. University of Colorado, Boulder. January 9-12, 2014.
- "The Importance of Playing in Earnest." Reflections on Playing with Religion in Digital Gaming. Religion, Media, and Culture Group. American Academy of Religion National Meeting. Baltimore, Maryland. November 2013.
- "It's Still Alive! The Afterlife of Frankenstein in New Media Storytelling." Arts, Film, Literature, Media, Popular Culture, Visual Culture, and Religion Cluster, theme of "the Gothic." American Academy of Religion National Meeting. Baltimore, Maryland. November 2013.
- "An Ode to Film." Respondent to Panel: "Facing Forward, Looking Back: Religion and Film Studies in the

Last Decade." American Academy of Religion National Meeting. Chicago. November 2012.

- o "Shooter Theology: Video Games and 'Us Versus Them' Religion." Media, Religion and Culture Conference 2012. Anadolu University. Eskisehir, Turkey. July 8-12, 2012.
- o "Shooter Religion: Changing the Rules of Interreligious Encounter." Religion in the Digital Age: Media, Performance and "Spectacular Activism." 4th Annual Conference for the Mediating Religion Network. NYU Center for Religion and Media. New York, NY. June 24-26, 2012.
- o "First Person Shooter Religion: Algorithmic Culture and Interreligious Encounter." Center for Media, Religion and Culture, International Digital Religion Conference. Boulder, Colorado. January 2012.
- o "Finding Meaning in the Space Between: Transmedia and Religion." Panel Chair. American Academy of Religion National Meeting. Religion and Popular Culture Group. San Francisco. November 2011.
- o "In Other Worlds: Immersive Technology and the Hunger for the Real." Religion, Film and Visual Culture Group. American Academy of Religion National Meeting. Atlanta. October 2010.
- o "The Other Right Here: New Media and the Dilution of the Transcendent." 2010 International Society for Religion, Literature and Culture Conference. University of Oxford, UK. September 2010.
- o "Me, Myself and iPod: Hybrid, Wired and Plural Selves." Seventh International Conference on Media, Religion and Culture. Toronto. August 2010.
- o "What You Play Is What you Do? 'Procedural Evil' and Video Game Violence." Conference on Religion, Literature, and the Arts. Iowa City, Iowa. April 2010.
- o "The Stories We Play: Video Games in the Religious Studies Classroom" Panel Theme: "Teaching Conversations." Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning and Teaching Religion Section. American Academy of Religion National Meeting. Montreal, Canada. November 2009.
- o "What Is This Ritual-Game-Story Thing?" Theme: "Exploring Ritual in Contemporary Media and Culture." Religion, Media and Culture Group and Ritual Studies Group. Moderator: Stewart Hoover. American Academy of Religion National Meeting. Montreal, Canada. November 2009.
- o "XBox Apocalypse: Video Games, Interactivity, and Revelatory Literature." Panel Theme: "Evil and Theodicy in the Bible and Popular Culture." Society of Biblical Literature National Meeting. Boston. November 2008.
- o "Getting a Second Religion: Ritual as Belief in a Virtual World." Panel Theme: "Just Gaming? Virtual Worlds and Religious Studies." Religion and Popular Culture Group. American Academy of Religion National Meeting. Chicago. November 2008.
- o "The Play Is the Thing: Interactivity in Retellings of the Passion Story." Fourteenth Conference of the International Society for Religion, Literature and Culture. Aarhus, Denmark. October 2008.
- o "Constructing Religious Identities through Popular Culture." Religion and Popular Culture Group. American Academy of Religion National Meeting. November 2008.
- o "God and the Gun: Religion, Virtual Reality, and Violence." Mid-Atlantic Region, Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature. New Brunswick, NJ. March 2008.
- o "*SecondLife*, Afterlife: Virtual Reality, Ritual, and Religious Experience Online." With Kim Gregson and Austra Zubkovs. Popular Culture Association Annual National Conference. Boston. April 2007.
- o "Sacred Spaces in Virtual Reality: The Role of Religion in Building Community in *SecondLife*." With Kim Gregson and Austra Zubkovs. Popular Culture Association Annual National Conference. Boston. April 2007.
- o "Digital War: Violence, Video Games, and Sacred Space," Thirteenth Conference of the International Society for Religion, Literature and Culture. Stirling, Scotland, UK. October 2006.
- o "Digital War: Islam, Violence, and Video Games," International Society for Phenomenology and Media Annual Meeting. Cannon Beach, Oregon. May 2005.
- o "Islam and Popular Media: Iconic Power and Injustice." Society for Ethics Across the Curriculum Conference. Corvallis, Oregon. October 2004.
- o "Bewitching the Box Office: Harry Potter and Religious Controversy," American Academy of Religion National Meeting. Toronto. November 2002.

Popular Writing

"Handmaid's Tale Inoculates Viewers from Responsibility for Real Atrocities." *Anarres Project.* November 18, 2019.

"Inclusion Isn't a Free-for-all for Bigotry: Exclusionary Feminisms and the Alt-Right." *Anarres Project*. January 15, 2019.

"The Wall is a Symbol of Isolation and Racism." *Anarres Project*. January 8, 2019.

Guest Post: "Popular Religion and Participatory Culture Conversation (Round Two)" Alice Marwick and Rachel Wagner." *Confessions of an Aca-Fan*. Blog of Henry Jenkins. September 12, 2018.

"Why Was Suspicion over 'The Boy Who Came Back from Heaven' Ignored For Years?" *Religion Dispatches*. January 16, 2015.

"Pope Tweeted into Retirement." *Religion Dispatches*. February 13, 2013.

"Mediating Our Dead." The Revealer. December 14, 2012. [http://therevealer.org/]

"Escape from Manhattan: Tech, Tragedy and Storytelling in Sandy's Wake." *Religion Dispatches*. November 2, 2012.

"Photo of a Dying Man: All the Wrong Reasons." Religion Dispatches. December 7, 2012.

"Bootstrapping My Way Into the Ivory Tower." *Careers Column*. Chronicle of Higher Education. November 8, 2011. Re-published in "Best of Careers" in January print edition, 2012.

"Will a Video Game Make Sense of Qaddafi's Death?" *Religion Dispatches*. October 23, 2011.

"What's the Value of Videogames? Addiction, Recreation, and Re-creation." *Jesus, Jazz, Buddhism*. Oct. 16, 2011.

"Dreaming Cyborg Dreams." *Religion Dispatches*. February 13, 2009.

"Sacred Texting: When Religious Writ Gets Wired." *Religion Dispatches*. October 23, 2008.

"'Ways of Truth-Telling:' Reporting on Religion in the Wired World." *Spotlight on Teaching*. Religious Studies News, American Academy of Religion National Newsletter. May 2007.

Honors and Awards

- o Robert Ryan Professor of the Humanities, Ithaca College. 2016-2019.
- o Digital Humanities High Performance Computing Collaboratory (DHHPC). NEH competitive program. University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign and University of South Carolina, Columbia. Summer 2012.
- o North American Delegate, International Ecumenical Peace Convention, World Council of Churches. Kingston, Jamaica. May 2011.
- o Coolidge Scholar, The Association for Religion and Intellectual Life, New York City, Summer 2010.
- o Fellow, Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion, sponsored by the Lilly Foundation, 2008-09.
- o Hundere Fellow in Religion and Culture, Oregon State University, 2004-06.
- o United States Presidential Scholar, 1988.

Professional Service

- o Peer Reviewer, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*.
- o Peer Reviewer, *Journal of Religion and Film*.
- o Peer Reviewer, *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*.
- o Co-Chair, *Religion, Film, and Visual Culture Group*, American Academy of Religion, 2009-2014.
- o Steering Committee Member. Video Gaming and Religion Seminar, 2014-2019.
- o Steering Committee Member, Religion, Media, and Culture Group, American Academy of Religion, 2018-present.
- o Collaborating Scholar, MAGIC Center, Rochester Institute of Technology, Religion, Culture and Policy Initiative, MAGIC Center [Media, Arts, Games, Interaction, Creativity].
- o Editorial Board, *Journal of Religion and Film*, 2005-present.
- o Editorial Board, *Journal of Religion, Media, and Digital Culture*, 2013-present.
- o Editorial Board, *gamevironments*, 2015 – present.

References

- o **Dr. Angela Zito.** Associate Professor of Anthropology and Religious Studies at New York University. Co-

Director of the Center for Religion and Media. Director of Religious Studies. (212) 992-9656. angelazito@nyu.edu. Angela served as my supervisor for a sabbatical year at NYU in 2012, and she is a leader in the field of religion and media. <https://as.nyu.edu/content/nyu-as/as/faculty/angela-zito.html> We have known each other many years and she has seen my scholarship develop.

- o **Dr. Gregory Grieve.** Professor and Head of the Department of Religious Studies, University of North Carolina at Greensboro. He specializes in religion and media. We have known each other for many years and have collaborated on projects as we have both moved to become leaders in our field. (336) 334-5762. <https://rel.uncg.edu/faculty/grieve/>

- o **Dr. Craig Duncan.** Professor of Philosophy at Ithaca College and Chair of the Department. (607) 274-3580. Craig has known me since my arrival on campus in 2006.