

Goddess Studies scholars claim their place in U. S. Academia

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Goddess Studies has a place at the table of Academia - finally!

Roy Tate

My sincere and heartfelt thanks to the women who contributed not only the words of the article below, but the incredible effort necessary to make this story a reality. Immense gratitude to Laura Truxler, Nane Jordan and Helen Hye Sook Hwang, for their time to detail this story for readers everywhere.

Scholars and students who study goddesses are now guaranteed an academic venue within the American Academy of Religion (AAR) wherein their work can be introduced, discussed and publicized. But this was not always the case. Until this year, scholars specializing in Goddess Studies found their research not only marginalized but in some cases invisible. However, as of this year, after four years of diligence and tenacity on the part of a number of dedicated women, goddess scholars now have a place at the table

Specifically, the venue is an academic conference called AAR/WR, otherwise known as the American Academy of Religion/WESCOR (Western Commission for the Study of Religion). (<http://www.sjsu.edu/wecor/>).

AAR/WR is the Western branch of the American Academy of Religion (<http://www.aarweb.org/>), an organization that manufactures best-branded scholars through its infrastructures of official and unofficial meetings concerning publication, employment and recognition in the field of religion. In short it is the place where new and cutting edge scholarship is given a chance to be known and discussed by scholars of excellence from around the world. And now there is a working group within AAR/WESCOR that focuses on goddess. Under such circumstances, the official instatement of Goddess Studies in the AAR is a historical watershed providing scholarship on goddesses with a duly housed place in mainstream academia.

But the journey was not without many bumps in the road.

Dissertations on goddesses and women's spirituality often shared the same fate finding themselves outside the so-called world religions. With both desperation and joy in acknowledging the much needed opening of this field for study, women scholars such as Arisika Razak, Nane Jordan, Helen Hye Sook Hwang, Annette Williams and Laura Truxler took matters into their capable hands and after four years they were successful in having a Goddess Studies section approved within AAR/WR, changing the status quo for goddess scholars. They endured some humiliation and inconvenience to accomplish this and those of us dedicated to studying about goddesses and having that herstory see the light of day for students coming forward in the future owe these women, and many more, a debt of gratitude. Particularly, the work that Helen Hye Sook Hwang and Nane Jordan have done over the past several years to make this section possible must not be forgotten. Due to their tireless efforts Goddess Studies was formed and scholars who reside outside of the western region are not welcome to submit their papers and participate in this conference as well.

Here are the summaries of their efforts for four years:

- * 2007 they held an impromptu meeting of about 18 women scholars at GTU, Berkeley CA.
- * 2008 they held on pre-conference session and two Goddess Studies sessions at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena CA.

* 2009 they held two Goddess Studies sessions at Santa Clara University, Santa Clara CA.

* 2010 they held two Goddess Studies sessions at Arizona State University, Tempe AZ. This was the first time that Goddess Studies was an officially recognized session. Prior to this their participation was on a probation status.

***For the first three years, they were able to convene seven meetings all together some of which were published in an online journal, Trivia: Voices of Feminism [<http://www.triviavoices.net/archives/issue9/index.html>].

Thanks also goes to others instrumental in helping this Goddess Section be realized, including those who participated in past sessions: Courtney Bruntz, Eleni Dedes, Mary Louise Store, Loleta Collins, Mara Lynn Keller, Dorothea Kahena Vaile, Patricia Monaghan, Miranda Shaw, Karen Tate, Tim Ward, Marguerite Rigoglioso, Max Dashu, Susan Carter, Louise Pare, Inhui Lee, Betty Meador, Annie Lapham, Judy Grahn and Dianne Jenett and others on the Goddess Scholars list and those whose names I cannot list here.

Moving Forward....

If you have not already heard, next year's AAR/WR conference will most likely be held at Whittier College in Orange County, CA March 26-28, 2011.

The call for papers for the 2011 conference will be written and sent out early next Fall. Please be on the look out Please consider submitting a paper to the Goddess Studies section or another appropriate section that intersects with your work or area of academic interest, such as Women and Religion, Womanist/Pan-African, Latino/a and Latin American Religion, Indigenous Studies, Queer Studies and many other sections.

This conference, smaller and more intimate than that national conference, tends to be a supportive venue to share your work with a broader audience, receive feedback, and network with colleagues.

What an exciting time for all of us interested in Goddess Studies

Co-chair duties of Goddess Studies will be henceforth be carried out by Annette Williams, PhD Philosophy and Religion, Women's Spirituality, California Institute of Integral Studies. Annette can be contacted at alynwms@hotmail.com. Laura Truxler, Ph Dc, Philosophy and Religion, Women's Spirituality, California Institute of Integral Studies and Adjunct Lecturer in Philosophy

and Religion and Integrative Studies Across Cultures at Holy Names University will serve as the other co-chair and can be contacted at lauratruxler@gmail.com.

For more information about AAR/WR, please check out:

<http://regions.aarweb.org/Western/index.php>

For more information about the national AAR, please check out:

<http://www.aarweb.org/>

Again, my thanks to the original contributing writers of this column, Helen Hye Sook Hwang, Laura Truxler and Nane Jordan for their above story. We all owe them and others mentioned in this article a long term debt of gratitude. No more having our noses pressed against the candy store window!

<http://www.examiner.com/article/goddess-studies-scholars-claim-their-place-u-s-academia>