

JEFF S. WILSON

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Employment

Visiting Assistant Professor of Instruction in Religious Studies

The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX 2022-2023

Education

Ph.D., Religious Studies

The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX 2016-2022

Advisors: Joel P. Brereton and Donald R. Davis, Jr.

Committee Members: Arti Dhand, Oliver Freiberger, and A. Azfar Moin

Dissertation Title:

“Aśvatthāman in the *Mahābhārata*: Narrative, Cosmology, and Counter-Normativity”

In this dissertation, I show that by persistently challenging and disrupting the normative worldviews presented by the text of the Sanskrit Mahābhārata, the character Aśvatthāman serves as a kind of walking category error that must be confronted, refuted, and excluded from the world of the text so that the normative order can prevail. Thus, when the heroic prince Arjuna finally triumphs over Aśvatthāman in Book X, Aśvatthāman’s defeat and exile allows the Pāṇḍavas to symbolically unify and rehabilitate the fractured conceptual world of the epic. The dissertation makes this argument over the course of five chapters, which explain how interlocking motifs—such as militant Brahmins, anger and desire, death, destruction, and devotion, and fierce debates on the normative concept of dharma—combine to produce the narrative arc of a character who effectively dramatizes key concerns about normativity, cosmology, and the interpretation of the text itself.

M.A., Religious Studies, University of Texas, Austin, TX 2016-2018

M.A., Asian Studies, University of Texas, Austin, TX 2014-2016

Title of Master’s Report: “Cursing Kṛṣṇa: Gender, Theodicy, and Time in the *Mahābhārata*.”

M.A., Religion, University of Chicago Divinity School, Chicago, IL 2012-2014

B.A., Religious Studies and English with Creative Writing emphasis (double major),
Whittier College, Whittier, CA 2008-2012

Fellowships and Awards

University of Texas Graduate School Dissertation Writing Fellowship (Spring 2022)
University of Texas Religious Studies Teaching Development Award (Fall 2020)
Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship (2016-2017, 2018-2019)
American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS) Language Fellowship (Summer 2015)
Richard and Janis Lariviere Fellowship in South Asian Studies (2015)
Daniel T. Geron Fellowship (2014)
Jacob & Frances Sanger Mossiker Fellowship in South Asian Studies (2014)

Peer-Reviewed Journal Article

“Dramatizing Ontology in *18 Days*: Grant Morrison’s *Mahābhārata* and the Battle to Save Eternity!” for *The International Journal of Comic Art* (Fall/Winter 2021).

Articles in Progress

“*Kāmakrodha*: Desire and Anger in the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata*”

“The *Mahābhārata* Multiverse: Postmodern Interpretive Strategies and Sanskrit Epic”

Conference Presentations

“On the Field of *Dharma*, the Field of Hypertime: The *Mahābhārata* and Its Ontological Dominant” to be presented at the Religion and Science Fiction Unit of the AAR Annual Meeting, American Academy of Religion (AAR), San Antonio, TX, November 21st, 2021.

“Rice Pudding and Slit Throats: Myths of Mother India as Political Thealogy,”¹ presented at the Texas Asia Conference, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, September 14th, 2019.

“Reckoning Time: Apocalyptic Brahmins in the *Mahābhārata*,” presented at The Annual Conference on South Asia, University of Wisconsin at Madison, Madison, WI, October 13th, 2018.

“A Goddess Between Blood and Bouquet: Sacred Geography and *The Man from Chinnamasta*,” presented at the Conference on South Asian Religions, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, October 9th, 2015.

¹ Kindly note that “thealogy” is not a typo. The word is a neologism that refers to the discourse surrounding goddesses and the divine feminine.

“Fine-Tuning Sita: Translation, Sideshadowing, and the Ethics of Human Embrace,” presented at the Texas Asia Conference, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, October 3rd, 2015.

Teaching Experience

Instructor of Record

Goddesses in World Religions and Cultures, Religious Studies, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, Spring 2023.

History of the Hindu Religious Traditions, Religious Studies, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, Fall 2020.

Introduction to Buddhism, Religious Studies, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, Fall 2022.

Introduction to the Study of Religion, Religious Studies, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, Fall 2019, 2022, and Spring 2023.

Teaching Assistant

Theory and Method in the Study of Religion

Introduction to the Study of Religion, Religious Studies, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, Spring 2017 and 2018.

Introduction to Interreligious Dynamics, Religious Studies, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, Spring 2021.

Science, Magic, and Religion, Religious Studies/Anthropology, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, Spring 2020.

General Courses in the History of Religions

Introduction to Buddhism, Religious Studies/Asian Studies, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, Spring 2016.

Pre-Modern World History, History/Classics, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, Fall 2017.

Literature of the Bible, Religious Studies/English, Whittier College, Whittier, CA, Spring 2012.

Special Topics in Religion and Culture

Religion and Outer Space, Undergraduate Studies, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, Fall 2021.

The End of the World as We Know It, Undergraduate Studies, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, Spring 2021.

Biomedicine, Ethics, and Culture, Religious Studies/Anthropology, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, Fall 2018.

Research Interests

Sovereignty, cosmology, and narrative structure in the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata*; Hindu nationalism and political theology; comparative discourses of the divine feminine; religion and science fiction.

Teaching Interests

Hinduism
Buddhism
Religions of Asia
Theories of Religion
Religion and Science Fiction

Workshops

Teaching Preparation Series: Student Well-Being, April 2019.
Inclusive Classrooms Leadership Certificate Seminar, May 2022.

Service

TX Votes Silver Civic Champion: University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, Fall 2020.

Graduate Student Faculty Representative: Department of Religious Studies, University of Texas, Austin, TX, Spring 2020.

Editorial Collective Member: Sagar: A South Asia Research Journal, South Asia Institute, University of Texas, Austin, TX, 2017-2019.

Chief Editor: Sagar: A South Asia Research Journal, South Asia Institute, University of Texas, Austin, TX, 2014-2016.

Languages

Sanskrit (advanced reading knowledge)

Hindi (advanced reading and speaking knowledge)

Basic reading knowledge of French, Spanish, German, and various dialects of ancient Greek

Professional Associations

American Academy of Religion (AAR)

American Oriental Society (AOS)

Association for Asian Studies (AAS)

References

Dr. Joel P. Brereton, Professor Emeritus, Department of Asian Studies, The University of Texas at Austin, 512-475-6024, jpb@austin.utexas.edu

Dr. Donald R. Davis, Jr., Professor and Chair, Department of Asian Studies
The University of Texas at Austin, 512-471-5811, drdj@austin.utexas.edu

Dr. Oliver Freiberger, Professor, Department of Asian Studies/Department of Religious Studies, The University of Texas at Austin, 512-471-8239, of@austin.utexas.edu

Dr. A. Azfar Moin, Professor and Chair, Department of Religious Studies,
The University of Texas at Austin, 512 232-7224, amoin@utexas.edu