Impressions of Claremont

by Richard L. Bushman
Howard W. Hunter Chair of Mormon Studies, Claremont Graduate University

Claudia and I came to Claremont primarily for adventure, and we have not been disappointed. For all the heavy lifting in researching and writing, preparing classes, and criticizing students’ work, there is a strong element of play. It is fun to talk about imponderable questions like the nature of religion. It is entertaining to work through the religious deliberations of people long since dead. What is more exhilarating than a seminar discussion that takes off?

We like the feel of the buildings and the campus. The dappling of sunshine and shade playing on the walls gives everything a cool, inviting demeanor. Our office is light and airy, the way we would like our teaching to be. We like the students, everyone with a story and a sharply etched personality. All are striving for something just out of reach but desirable.

Our only regret is that our adventure costs the students so much. It takes a miracle everyday to pay the huge cost of tuition and support not just one life, but in many cases two or more. There is something positively medieval about the asceticism attached to the study of religion at Claremont.

I hope that the combination of learning and hardship will form us into a band of brothers and sisters. Learning in the Latter-day Saint tradition is meant to be fraternal. We pledge ourselves to each other as well as to our studies. We teach one another out of the best books.

Claudia and I feel privileged to be part of this grand enterprise, and our association with this collection of striving scholars is the part we like most of all.
The Year Ahead

The response to last year’s Mormon Studies lecture and conference series has encouraged the program to line up another group of eminent speakers. No single theme has dictated the selection; the governing principle has been to get the best we could find. —R. BUSHMAN

SEPTEMBER 24
Daniel Walker Howe
"Joseph Smith’s America"

Daniel Howe is author of the Pulitzer Prize winning history, What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848, and Professor of History Emeritus at UCLA. He was Rhodes Professor of American History at Oxford University from 1992 to 2002. Howe was born in Ogden, Utah, and knows Mormons well.

OCTOBER 22
Father Alexei Smith and Robert L. Millet
Catholic–Dialogue on Priesthood and Sacraments

Father Alexei Smith, the priest in charge of interfaith dialogue for the Los Angeles diocese will represent Catholicism, and representatives of the LDS community will speak for Mormonism. There will be an informal afternoon conversation and a formal lecture and response in the evening.

NOVEMBER 12
Harry S. Stout
"Joseph Smith and Jonathan Edwards"

Harry S. Stout is Professor of History, Religious Studies, and American Studies at Yale University and Jonathan Edwards Professor of American Christianity, Yale Divinity School. He is general editor of the Jonathan Edwards Papers and a member of the National Advisory Board for the Joseph Smith Papers. He is uniquely qualified to compare these two giants of American religious history.

FEBRUARY 18
Grant Hardy
"Reading the Book of Mormon"

Grant Hardy, Associate Professor of History at the University of North Carolina Asheville, is best known to Mormons for The Book of Mormon: A Reader’s Edition, but he soon will be better known for his structural analysis of the Book of Mormon coming out with Oxford University Press next year. Hardy explains how the three major historians in the book, Nephi, Mormon, and Moroni constructed their narratives differently, making each of these writers a distinctive presence in the book.

MARCH 18
Daniel C. Peterson
"The State of the Debate over the Book of Mormon"

Daniel Peterson, Professor of Islamic Studies and Arabic at Brigham Young University, is best known in the academic world as an expert on Islam. As editor of the FARMS Review of Books for many years, however, he is well informed on the controversies surrounding the historicity of the Book of Mormon. In his talk, he will report on the debate as it stands right now.

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APRIL 15

Martha Bradley Evans
“The Fundamentalists Today”

Martha Evans, Professor of Architecture at the University of Utah, also directs the Honors Program. She has written on the Utah controversy over the ERA and a joint biography of four Mormon women entitled *Four Zinas: A Story of Mothers and Daughters on the Mormon Frontier*. She gained insight into Fundamentalist polygamous communities doing research for her book *Kidnapped from that Land: The Government Raids on the Short Creek Polygamists*.

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MAY 21–22

Association of Mormon Scholars in the Humanities

*The Family and Human Relationships in History, Literature, Art, and Philosophy Conference*

The Association is now soliciting papers for the conference. Every story, it is said, is a family story. Yet in stressing the freedom and self-sufficiency of the individual, modern culture de-emphasizes the degree to which people are born in dependency, of specific parents, and develop in and through relationships with others, most closely in the family. By considering the family, family history, and human relationships, this conference will invite inquiry into changes in the culture of the family over time, inquiries into family memory, depictions of the family and the individual in art and literature, and philosophical investigations of the role of family, friends, and mentors in personal development.

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The lectures are given on Thursdays at 8 P.M. in the Mudd Auditorium, Claremont School of Theology, and are free and open to the public.

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*Women’s Oral History*

The Howard W. Hunter Program for Mormon Studies announces an ongoing oral history project to begin this fall. Women in three areas, Claremont, Pasadena, and Newport Beach will begin interviews to flesh out the “lived history” of LDS women in the 20th century primarily in Southern California, to document and categorize experiences otherwise unrecorded. Work will begin in those three areas to locate candidates for interviews, to transcribe, edit, and index the interviews, and to work toward a conceptualization of Mormon women’s experience. The project will be undertaken in connection with the class “Mormon Women in the Twentieth Century” REL 313 to be offered in the school of religion this fall. Nominations for people to be interviewed and offers to become involved in the program, from students or from the community, will be welcomed. Write Dr. Claudia Bushman at the School of Religion, 831 N. Dartmouth Avenue, Claremont, California, or at claudia.bushman@benikana.com.

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*Q&A WITH VISITING SCHOLARS*

Under the sponsorship of CMSSA, each lecturer in this year’s series meets with graduate students for informal discussions about current issues in the field and useful strategies in pursuing a career in scholarship. CMSSA members and other graduate students are invited to attend these discussions which are usually held a couple of hours before the evening lecture. For more information on these student events, visit the student association’s website at [http://rsc.cgu.edu/cmssa](http://rsc.cgu.edu/cmssa) or sign up with the CMSSA mailing list by emailing mormonstudies@gmail.com.
On Mormon Studies at Claremont

BY Karen Torjesen
Former Dean of the School of Religion, Claremont Graduate University

Mormon Studies at Claremont is a significant contributor to religious pluralism at Claremont. For years we have outstanding Mormon students in Philosophy of Religion, Theology, History of Christianity, Biblical Studies, and more recently Women’s Studies in Religion. They mastered their fields of study, contributed interesting research, and went on to teaching positions across the country, but their presence had little impact on the study of religion, nor did their perspective as Mormons generate new questions, nor did their classmates learn much from them about the fascinating history and complex of practices of Mormonism. Now that has changed. It reminds me of the process of developing women’s studies at Claremont. For many years women students were working on the side to learn what they could about women’s issues. Their perspectives required a new way of looking at things, different questions, even different epistemologies, but there was no space for these in the way the study of religion was constituted. When women’s studies courses and programs were introduced an inevitable transformation began to take place. When women scholars of religion were invited to have a voice, to raise their own questions, the study of religion began to change. New content lead to new methodologies, new methodologies lead to new epistemologies. Mormon Studies at Claremont will do something similar for the study of Christianity and will help us rethink the categories of what constitutes a religion. Religious pluralism will mean that we (all of us) will all be impacted, our field of vision will become larger and our understanding of religion more complex.

“Mormon Studies at Claremont will … help us rethink the categories of what constitutes a religion.”

Past Events

The School of Religion at CGU has sponsored events in Mormon Studies since 2000. The following outline lists conferences, lectures, and courses which have comprised the Mormon Studies program at CGU since its inception.

COURSES

Richard Bushman

The Mormon Theological Tradition
FALL 2008

The Mormon Experience: Sociological Perspectives (with Armand Mauss)
SPR 2009

Claudia Bushman

Mormonism Through the Eyes of Women
FALL 2008

Women’s Religious Autobiographies
SPR 2009

Armand Mauss

Mormons in the History of the American West
SPR 2005

Mormons in Sociological Perspective
SPR 2006

Mormons in the History of the American West
SPR 2007

The Mormon Experience: Sociological Perspectives (with Richard Bushman)
SPR 2009

Brian Birch

Mormonism and Christian Theology
SPR 2008

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CONFERENCES

Positioning Mormonism in Religious Studies and American History

   OCTOBER 2004

Featured professors Philip Barlow, Kathryn Daynes, Kathleen Flake, Terryl Givens, and Grant Underwood.

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Joseph Smith and the Prophetic Tradition: A Comparative Inquiry

   OCTOBER 2005

Featured professors Richard Bushman, Robert Millet, and Robert Rees.

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“May These Principles Be Established”: Mormonism in the Political Arena

   MARCH 2008

Biennial conference of the Claremont Mormon Studies Student Association.

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Mormonism through the Eyes of Women: Envisioning New Spaces for Theology and Practice

   MARCH 2009

Conference sponsored by the Claremont Mormon Studies Student Association which featured speakers Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Claudia Bushman, Margaret Toscano, and other graduate students. Visit http://ccdl.libraries.claremont.edu/collection.php?alias=/cmss for full conference video and papers.

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Parallels and Convergences: Mormon Thought and Engineering Vision

   MARCH 2009

Co-sponsored with the Mormon Scholars Foundation and JPL. Terryl Givens gave the keynote lecture.

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Upon All Nations: Religious Pluralism

   MAY 2009

Society for Mormon Philosophy and Theology conference.

LECTURES

Richard Bushman
Was Joseph Smith an American Prophet?  
   FEB 2003

Jan Shipps
Are Mormons Christian?  
   OCT 2003

Armand Mauss
The Most Segregated Hour: Race and Religion in the American West  
   FEB 2004

Daniel Peterson & Hamid Mavani
A Mormon–Muslim Conversation  
   OCT 2007

Truman Madsen
Philosophy and Mormonism  
   FEB 2008

Richard E. Turley, Jr.
LDS Response to the Mountain Meadows Tragedy  
   MAR 2008

Mark Paredes
Mirrors and Windows: Facing Religious Stereotypes and Prejudice  
   APR 2008

Ronald Walker
Brigham Young: New Approaches  
   SEP 2008

Richard Mouv & Robert Millet
Evangelical Views of Joseph Smith  
   OCT 2008

Marlin K. Jensen
The Role of the Church Historian  
   NOV 2008

D. Michael Quinn
The Ambiguous History of Us–Versus–Them in Early Mormon Experience  
   NOV 2008

David Hall
Through a Different Glass: Reconsidering the Puritans and their Legacies in American Religious History With Reflections on Mormonism  
   NOV 2008

Karen Torjesen (Brown Bag Lecture)
Mormonism and Early Christianity  
   FEB 2009

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich
Reading Nineteenth-century Mormon Diaries  
   MAR 2009

Anselm Min (Brown Bag Lecture)
Are Works for the Dead Efficacious?  
   MAR 2009

Grant Underwood
The Genesis of Mormon Scripture; Revising Joseph Smith’s Revelations  
   APR 2009
In the Lifeboat with a Tiger

BY David Golding
President of the Claremont Mormon Studies Student Association

Professor Bushman once asked how I was holding up in the sometimes tumultuous world of graduate studies in religion. Like many of my fellow classmates, I have encountered in religious studies historical facts, theories, interpretations, and criticisms that seem unsettling and abrasive, especially at first. How one resolves or reacts to the tensions that such academic inquiries produce can have significant consequences on one’s life.

I had just finished Yann Martel’s *Life of Pi* (Orlando: Harcourt, 2001), which tells the story of a young man from India who embraces three religions: Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam. This young man finds himself, at one point, lost somewhere in the middle of the Pacific Ocean and trapped in a lifeboat with a 450-pound Bengal tiger for a companion. This character must struggle to survive by not only fighting through his mental and spiritual tensions, but against the ferocious appetite of this daunting animal.

I told Professor Bushman that I felt at times like Pi, except that empirical observations that challenge my prior thinking intimidate me rather than a tiger. But, like Pi, in many ways this tiger keeps me alive and provides meaning in its own way. Unlike Pi, I have never felt like I wrestle with the tiger alone.

Even before I committed to study at CGU, Richard Livingston introduced me to the Claremont Mormon Studies Student Association. Since then, I have had the opportunity to engage in rigorous debate with fellow Latter-day Saints of wildly different opinions and persuasions. CMSSA provides a forum for not only Latter-day Saint graduate students but for anyone interested in Mormon studies, and my interactions with non-LDS students have also enhanced my appreciation for communities beyond my own. I have no doubt that without this forum for personal and professional dialogue, I would have more acutely felt that I face the study of religion by myself.

I’m grateful that students before me had the foresight to care for each other in personal and professional ways. Often, I’m most challenged intellectually by my peers in CMSSA. Not only do I feel prepared to confront the challenges this course of study brings by my membership in CMSSA, but I notice my professional abilities as a scholar-in-training improve. I encourage my fellow students to get involved and to take advantage of our ongoing conversation on Mormonism and religious studies.