

LAURA S. GRILLO

1436 Carnation Place
Carpinteria, CA 93013
Tel & Fax: (805) 566-0786
lgrillo@pacifica.edu

EDUCATION: Ph.D. 1995 **THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO**
History of Religions – Qualifying Examinations with Distinction
Dissertation: “Divination in the Religious Systems of West Africa”

HARVARD UNIVERSITY – Exchange Scholar, 1990-91

M.Div. 1986 **UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**
Hebrew Bible & Ecumenical Theology – Graduated with Distinction
Thesis: “The Festival of Yams: An Exegesis of a West African Ritual”

A. B. 1978 **BROWN UNIVERSITY**
Religious Studies & Psychology (double major)

HONORS & AWARDS:

- 2007, '06, '05 *The Virginia Center for the Creative Arts* – Awarded three separate Writers' Residency Fellowships for Creative Non-fiction (Memoir)
- 2007, '03, '04 *The Ragdale Foundation* – Awarded three separate Writers' Residency Fellowships for Creative Non-fiction (Memoir)
- 1999 - 2000 *James S. Coleman Center for African Studies, UCLA* – Post-Doctoral Research Associate
- 1997 - 1998 *Institute for the Advanced Study of Religion, The University of Chicago*, Senior Fellow
- 1997 *National Endowment for the Humanities* – Grant Recipient for travel & research
- 1997 *West African Research Association* – Grant Recipient for travel & research
- 1996 *American Academy of Religion* – Grant Recipient for travel & research
- 1993 *Charlotte Newcombe Dissertation Fellowship* – Finalist
- 1993 *American Association of University Women Dissertation Fellowship* – Alternate
- 1992 - 1993 *Institute for the Advanced Study of Religion, The University of Chicago* – Junior Fellow
- 1989 - 1990 *Charles M. Ross Trust* – Grant awarded for promise of international contribution in the teaching of Religious Studies
- 1987 - 1988 *Joseph M. Kitagawa Scholar, The University of Chicago* – Award in History of Religions
- 1980 - 1984 *Charles M. Ross Trust* – Three-time recipient of grant awarded for promise of international contribution in Ecumenics, Union Theological Seminary

EMPLOYMENT:

- 2003 – Pres. **CORE FACULTY, MYTHOLOGICAL STUDIES PROGRAM**
Pacifica Graduate Institute (Carpinteria, CA)
- Teaching doctoral-level courses in comparative religions & cultural anthropology
 - Department and Institutional Service including:
 - Departmental Dissertation Coordinator
 - Chair for 12-18 Dissertation Committees per year
 - WASC Steering Committee, Institutional Evaluation and Accreditation
 - APA Steering Committee, Institutional Accreditation and Licensing
 - Secretary of the Faculty Senate
 - Co-Editor, Academic Newsletter
 - Faculty Merit Review Committee
 - Curriculum Committee
- 2002 - 2003 **ADJUNCT PROFESSOR, MYTHOLOGICAL STUDIES PROGRAM**
Pacifica Graduate Institute (Carpinteria, CA)
- Taught 3 graduate courses in Theory & Method and Comparative Religions

- 2000 - 2003 SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT
The University of Chicago (Chicago, IL)
 • Speech Writing and Special Projects management; President's Cabinet
- 1998 - 1999 VISITING ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES
The College of Wooster (Wooster, Ohio)
 • Taught 6 courses in Comparative Religion and Religion & Literature
- 1998 ADJUNCT PROFESSOR OF HISTORY OF RELIGIONS
Barat College (Lake Forest, IL) – “African Traditional Religions”
- 1995 - 1997 ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF RELIGION [Tenure Track]
Millsaps College (Jackson, MS)
 • Taught 6 courses per year in Religious Studies and Liberal Arts Core Curriculum
 - Departmental Search Committee
 - Publications Committee
- 1993 – 1995 EDITORIAL ASSISTANT
American Journal of Education (University of Chicago)
 • Managed receipt and review of manuscripts, correspondence and journal production
- 1990 - 1991 ADJUNCT PROFESSOR OF HISTORY OF RELIGIONS
Boston University School of Theology (Boston, MA)
 • Taught graduate seminar on African Religions for M.Div. and Th.D. students
- 1988 - 1989 RESEARCH ASSISTANT, The Fundamentalism Project (The University of Chicago)
American Academy of Arts and Sciences
 • Assisted in Project design and organization, conference planning, editing
Fundamentalism Observed (1991)
- 1987 TEACHER OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE
International School of Abidjan (Abidjan, Ivory Coast)
- 1983 - 1984 COORDINATOR & INSTRUCTOR OF COMPUTER EDUCATION
International School of Kenya (Nairobi, Kenya)
 • Designed curriculum and taught for grades K-8; Adult and In-Service Faculty courses
 • Earned Classroom Teacher Supervisor Certificate through University of South Carolina
- 1982 - 1983 CONSULTANT FOR PROGRAM AND DEVELOPMENT
All Africa Conference of Churches (Nairobi, Kenya)
 • Developed objectives and strategies for programs for *Youth, Women & Development*
 • Represented AACC to member churches and evaluated activities for funding agencies
 • Organized international conferences
- 1981 - 1982 ASSISTANT TO DIRECTOR & EDITOR OF INTERNATIONAL NEWSLETTER
National Council of Churches of Christ, USA / Office of Human Rights (NYC)
 • Targeted issues for international intervention efforts; editor of Newsletter.
- 1978 - 1980 TEACHER OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE
College Chateaubriand (Dabou, Ivory Coast)

RELATED EXPERIENCE:

- 2006 – Pres. EDITORIAL BOARD – Blackwell Press
Religion Compass Journal
- 2005 – Pres. CO-CHAIR & STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBER – African Religions Group
American Academy of Religion
 • Evaluate proposals & organize panels for sessions at annual meeting
 • Author of Yearly Reports and the 5-Year Self-Evaluation Report
- 2000 - 2001 STEERING COMMITTEE – Comparative Study of Religions Group
American Academy of Religion
- 1998 - 2000 STEERING COMMITTEE – Ritual Studies Group
American Academy of Religion
- 1998 - 2000 EVALUATION PANELIST – Fellowships and Summer Stipends Program
National Endowment for the Humanities

- 1996 SUMMER TEACHING WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT
Associated Colleges of the South – selected representative of Millsaps College
- 1988 - 1989 CO-COORDINATOR – History of Religions Club
University of Chicago
- 1986 - 1987 ORGANIZING COMMITTEE – **Africa Peace Tour**
(Educational speaking tour organized in conjunction with American Friends Service Committee, Oxfam Int'l, Maryknoll Mission, The Washington Office on Africa)
- 1985 ADVISORY BOARD – Women's Center
Union Theological Seminary
- 1976 - 1981 **World Student Christian Federation, Geneva, Switzerland**
(An ecumenical organization associated with the World Council of Churches)
– CO-CONVENOR OF US COMMITTEE
– REGIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
– US DELEGATE TO INTER-REGIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY, Sri Lanka
– INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
- 1976 - 1978 BOARD OF DIRECTORS – **University Christian Movement of New England**

PUBLICATIONS:

- “Contested Powers and Power Contests: Sex and Power in Ritual and Politics in Post-Civil War Côte d’Ivoire.” In *Festschrift for Jacob K. Olupona* (forthcoming).
- “‘When you make sacrifice, no one is a stranger’: Divination, sacrifice and identity among translocals in the West African urban diaspora,” In *Religion Crossing Boundaries: Transnational Dynamics in African and the New African Diasporic Religions*. Ed. A. Adogame and J. Spickard. Religion and Social Order series, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2010.
- “Divination: Epistemology, Agency and the Construction of Identity in Contemporary West Africa,” *Religion Compass*, Blackwell Press , 3/6 (2009): 921–934.
- “Signs, Doors and Games: Divination’s Dynamic Visual Canon.” In *Proceedings from Sacred Knowledge, Sacred Power and Performance: Ifa Divination in West Africa and the African Diaspora, an International Conference at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, March 13-16, 2008*. (in press).
- “Memoir as Method: Exploring Divination as Reflexivity.” In *Proceedings from Divination and Dialogue, an International Conference at the University of Kent, Canterbury, England, October 5-7, 2007*, ed. Patrick Curry. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing Co. (in press).
- “A Thought Experiment Reconsidered: On A Primal Perspective on the Philosophy of Religion,” *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. (under review).
- Ask for the Road: A Memoir*. (under review).
- “Rambu Solo’: The Toraja Cult of the Dead and Embodied Imagination.” In *Varieties of Mythic Experience: Essays on Religion, Psyche and Culture*, eds. Dennis Patrick Slattery and Glen Slater, 101-133. Einsiedeln: Daimon Verlag. 2008.
- “Research on Divination: The Innovation and Adaptation of Traditional Religions in Response to the Contingencies of Contemporary Urban West Africa.” In *The Histories, Languages and cultures of West Africa: Interdisciplinary Essays*, eds. Akua Sarr, Edris Makward, Amadou T. Fofana, and C. Frederick, 377-386. Lampeter, UK: Edwin Mellen Press, 2006.
- “Dieterlen, Germaine.” In *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd Edition, ed. Lindsay Jones, 2349-2351. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005.
- “Griaule, Marcel.” In *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd Edition, ed. Lindsay Jones, 3700-3701. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005.
- “Trajectories in African Ethics.” In *The Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics*, ed. William Schweiker, 438-447. Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishers, 2005.
- “Dogon: religionsgeschichtlich.” In *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, vierte Auflage* J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) Tübingen, Germany, 2000.

“Fulbe.” In *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, vierte Auflage* J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) Tübingen, Germany, 2000.

Translator, with Robert E. Smith. *Encyclopedia of Ritual Symbolics. Vol. 1&2* ed., Hermann Hochegger. Institute of Anthropological Research (Ceeba) Bandundu: R.D. Congo. Vols 1 & 2, 2000, 2001.

“African Religions.” In *Encyclopedia Britannica online*. Chicago, IL: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc. 1999.

“Religion and Art in Africa.” In *Encyclopedia Britannica online* Chicago, IL: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc. 1999.

“Divination in Contemporary Urban West Africa,” *Religious Studies News* AAR 13/3 (1998).

“African Religions.” In *Encyclopedia of Women and World Religion*, 6-12. New York: Macmillan Press, 1999.

“The Body in Microhistorical Societies.” In *Encyclopedia of Women and World Religion*, ed. Serinity Young, 95-97. New York: Macmillan Press, 1999.

“Circle.” In *Encyclopedia of Women and World Religion*, ed. Serinity Young, 179-180. New York: Macmillan Press, 1999.

“Purification.” In *Encyclopedia of Women and World Religion*, ed. Serinity Young, 117-119. New York: Macmillan Press, 1999.

“African Traditional Religions.” In Microsoft’s CD ROM *Encarta Encyclopedia*. 1997.

“The Diversity and Vitality of Primal Religions.” In *Religions of the World* Third Edition, ed. Niels C. Nielsen, Jr., 21-45. New York: St. Martin’s Press. 1993.

“Dogon Divination as an Ethic of Nature,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 20 (1992): 309-330.

Translator, *Ritual Masks: Deceptions and Revelations* by Henry Pernet. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1992.

BOOK REVIEWS:

Time and Sacrifice in the Aztec Cosmos by Kay A. Read, *Journal of Ritual Studies* 13, no. 2 (1999):75-76.

Seven Theories of Religion by Daniel L. Pals, *History of Religions* 37, no. 1 (1997):90-93.

Weaving the Threads of Life: The Khita Gyn-Eco-Logical Healing Cult among the Yaka by René Devisch, *Journal of Ritual Studies* 10 no.1 (1996): 146-148.

Yoruba Ritual: Performers, Play, Agency by Margaret T. Drewal, *Journal of Ritual Studies* 8, no.2 (1994):151-153.

Shamanic Healing and Ritual Drama: Health and Medicine in Native North American Religious Traditions by Åke Hultkrantz, *Journal of Religion* 74, no.2 (1994): 286-288.

Nkpiti: La Rancune et le Prophète by Marc Augé and J-P Colleyn, *Journal of Religion in Africa* 22, no.2 (1992): 181-183.

Religion in Calabar: The Religious Life of a Nigerian Town by Rosalind Hackett, *Journal of Religion* 71, no.2 (1991): 313-314.

PRESENTATIONS:

“Contested Powers and Power Contests: Sex and Power in Ritual and Politics in Post-Civil War Côte d’Ivoire.” *American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting* – Montréal, Canada, November 2009

“Divination as a Dynamic Visual Canon.” *Sacred Knowledge, Sacred Power and Performance: Ifa Divination in West Africa and the African Diaspora*, an International Conference Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, March, 2008.

“A Thought Experiment Reconsidered: ‘A Primal Perspective on the Philosophy of Religion’ by Arvind Sharma.” *American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting* – San Diego, CA, November 2007

“Memoir as Method: A Reading from ‘Ask for the Road,’” and “Response to Phillip Peek.” *Divination and Dialogue* – University of Kent, Canterbury, England, October 2007

“The Creative Process: Memoir as Literary and Academic Pursuit.” Sweet Briar College, Amherst, VA, November 25, 2006

“Divination, Destiny & Soul-Making.” The Jung Institute, Los Angeles, CA, February 3, 2006

“Ethics in the Cast of Divination.” University of California, Davis, CA, May 2005

“Walking with Spirits: Divination in Contemporary Urban West Africa.” Claremont School of Theology, Claremont, CA, March 2000.

African Traditional Religions, Respondent. *American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting*, Boston, MA, 1999

“Casting for Meaning: Divination in Contemporary Urban West Africa.” *American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting*, Orlando, FL, 1998.

“Intentionality and Self-Understanding in Ritual: Presider” *American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting* Orlando, FL, 1998.

“Innovation and adaptation of ‘traditional’ religions.” *First International Symposium: West Africa and the Global Challenge*, Dakar, Senegal, 1997.

“Yoruba religion in ‘Death & the King’s Horseman.’” DePaul University, Chicago, IL, May, 1996

“West African Divination as Play of a Visual Canon.” Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT, February, 1996

“Dynamics of Divination.” *American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting*, Chicago, IL, 1994.

“Divination, Identity, and the Transmission of Culture.” *Midwest American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting*, Valparaiso, IN, 1994.

“Dogon Divination as an Ethic of Nature.” *XVIth Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions*, Rome, Italy, 1991.

“Rethinking Resistance in African Religions.” *American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting*, New Orleans, LA, 1990.

COURSES DESIGNED AND TAUGHT:

African and African Diaspora Traditions (Graduate)

Religious Studies Approaches (Graduate)

Ritual (Graduate and Graduate online delivery)

Special Topics: Postmodern Philosophy (Graduate)

Philosophy of Religion: From Epistemology to Embodied Knowledge (Graduate)

Comparative Religious Ethics (Graduate and Undergraduate)

Gendered Religion: Women’s Bodies, Social Bodies, Rhetoric and Power

Introduction to Religious Studies: Theory and Method

Religions East and West: “The Body”

African Religions

Vodou, Santería, Candomblé: Three Religions of the African Diaspora

Ritual Masks of the World: Religious Meaning and Social Function

The Myth and Ritual Process

The Construction of Religion and the Encounter of Cultures

Saints & Sinners: The religious journey in film and literature

Religious Autobiography & Biography

LANGUAGES:

French (Fluent)

Italian (Working knowledge);

German, Biblical Hebrew, Adioukrou (Language study)

RESIDENCE AND TRAVEL ABROAD:

AFRICA: Côte d’Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Senegal, Togo, Morocco

AMERICAS: Canada, Mexico

ASIA: India, Sri Lanka

EUROPE: Austria, Czech Republic, England, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Monaco, Switzerland