

January 9, 2006

THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**ALABAMA**  
ARTS & SCIENCES

Dear Majors and Minors,

It's hard to believe it, but, the Fall semester is indeed behind us and we're poised on the brink of the Spring 2006 semester. I know that many of you have been staying up late and sleeping in even later during the break (but then again, some of you likely do that all semester long); so, you're likely a little groggy there now, and hardly eager to drag yourselves out of bed for those early morning classes that await you this week. So, to help motivate you to come by Manly Hall, I thought I'd write my annual Spring letter to let you know what to expect this semester.

Many of you will recall Prof. **Schaeffer**, who, this past summer, left for a new job at the University of Virginia (he returns in March to present a public lecture in the Department). You may not know that, during the past Fall semester, Professors **Jacobs**, **Murphy**, and myself served on a search committee, looking for a scholar to hire in his place. Our national search brought in forty-two applications and we narrowed it down to four candidates who we are bringing to campus later this month and early in February. Traditionally, applicants for the position of professor visit campus for a full-day interview, which usually includes teaching a sample class, presenting their research to the faculty, meeting with the Dean's representative, and touring campus facilities. An element of the search process that we include is a chance for our students to meet with each candidate and then to provide feedback for the faculty. So please keep your eyes peeled for flyers around the Department, later this month, announcing when each applicant will be on campus and when they're scheduled to meet with students in the Department lounge. I really do want your input into this process.

If you're not yet familiar with it, we have one of the most active lecture series on campus, the Religion *in* Culture lecture series. All of these lectures, which last about an hour each and are often followed by a small reception, are held on the main floor of Gorgas Library. Although this lecture series often features the work done by colleagues on our campus, we also host visiting scholars whose research, in our opinion, deserves to be brought to the attention of the university community. Visit our "Events" page to learn more details; I encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity to see what other people are doing when they study religion.

Studying Religion *in* Culture



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A particularly good piece of news that we learned last semester, and which will soon be finalized, is that Professor **Maha Marouan**, who has already taught some of you, is to be hired full-time this coming Fall. (She defends her dissertation, in Britain, early this semester so, when you see her, wish her luck!) Should the above-mentioned search for a scholar of Asian religions work out, then we anticipate having two new, full-time colleagues on the faculty as of the coming August—no small accomplishment for a Department of our size. We are especially appreciative of the Dean of Arts & Sciences and the Provost for their confidence in our work; both replacement positions and new positions are often hard to come by, so the fact that a small Department such as ours

