



**Boston University** Frederick S. Pardee School of Global Studies  
Institute on Culture, Religion & World Affairs: CURA

## CURA Fellows 2022-2023



### **Dr. Taylor C. Boas, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science**

Taylor Boas is Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Political Science at Boston University. He is author of *Evangelicals and Electoral Politics in Latin America: A Kingdom of This World* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2023). His current research project looks at the role of religion in support for authoritarian populism among Brazilian migrants to the United States.



### **Nicole Correrri, PhD Student, Graduate Program in Religion, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences**

Nicole is a fifth-year Ph.D. student in the Islamic Studies specialization under the direction of Professor Kecia Ali. Her areas of interest include Shi'a Islam, Gender Studies, Feminist Theory, Digital Religion, and Ritual Studies. Her particular focus area is on gender construction in contemporary online English language Shi'a religious discourse. Nicole is also a research assistant for the Database of Africana Religious Experiences in the US under the direction of Professor Margarita Guillory. She has also completed her Graduate Certificate in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies through BU. In the Summer of 2019, she completed the Islamic Studies and Arabic Summer Institute at the American University in Cairo, as well as served as a Fellow in the Communities Engaging with Difference and Religion program in Indonesia. Nicole received her M.A. in Islamic Studies from Hartford Seminary in 2018.



**Mr. Abhishek Prabhakar John, PhD Student, School of Theology**

Abhishek John is a second-year Ph.D. student and a research assistant at the Center for Global Christianity and Mission, School of Theology, Boston University. His research interests are at the intersection of World Christianity, the History of Christianity, and Christian Mission in Asia, particularly in South Asia, Religious Conversion, and Ecumenism. For his master's research, he investigated the impact of anti-conversion laws in India and was involved in advocacy for freedom of religion with the World Evangelical Alliance at the United Nations. His advanced master's thesis at the University of Geneva studied the relationship between the World Council of Churches and the World Evangelical Alliance.



**Ms. Maria Koutsouris, PhD Student, History, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences**

Maria Koutsouris is a third-year Ph.D. student in BU's history department. She received her BA in History and German from the University of Vermont and a MA in Theological Studies from Boston College. Her interests include the performance and textuality of magic, the institutionalization of early modern Catholic reforms, and the epistemological uncertainties of Renaissance scholars. Koutsouris' main focus is on how ecclesiastical handbooks and magical texts share fundamental theological, magical, and scientific assumptions regarding the nature and working of the cosmos. Koutsouris is interested in exploring the construction of divisions between these genres and the role of ecclesiastical regulation regarding their ritual enactment and adaptation.



**Jeremy Menchik, Associate Professor, School of Global Studies**

Jeremy Menchik is Associate Professor in the School of Global Studies at Boston University, and Faculty Affiliate in Political Science and Religious Studies. His first book, *Islam and Democracy in Indonesia: Tolerance without Liberalism* (Cambridge University Press, 2016) received the award for the best book on religion and international relations from the International Studies Association. His research has appeared in the academic journals *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, *Comparative Politics*, *International Studies Review*, *Asian Studies Review* and elsewhere, as well as in the *New York Review of Books* and *The New York Times*. His second book manuscript is tentatively titled *The Missionary Impulse in World Politics*.



**Rev. Christopher P Ney, PhD Candidate, Practical Theology, School of Theology, Fellowship of Reconciliations**

Christopher Ney is a candidate for the PhD in Practical Theology at the BU School of Theology. His dissertation focuses on an ecumenical partnership between the United Church of Christ and the Pentecostal Church of Chile. His research interests include religious communities and social change, ethnography and theology, and cross-cultural encounter. His focus on church and society, including human rights and poverty, have been shaped by many years of engagement with social movements and religious communities in Latin America. He is an ordained minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) with standing in the United Church of Christ. Currently, he serves on the National Council of Fellowship of Reconciliation, the oldest interfaith peace organization in the United States.



**Mr. Gabriel Noah Paxton, PhD Candidate, Boston University**

Gabriel Paxton is a fourth-year Ph.D. student in the Religion in Philosophy, Politics, and Society area of specialization at Boston University. He graduated Summa Cum Laude from Winthrop University with a B.A. in Political Science and earned his M.A. with distinction from Central European University in Nationalism Studies. His research interests include religious nationalism, American evangelicalism, and the study of religion in American progressive and left-wing political movements. Currently, his research looks at how denominationalism impacted the development of left-liberal Christian organizations in Canada and the United States during the early 20th century. Gabriel currently holds an adjunct position in the Political Science and Philosophy & Religion departments at Winthrop University, where he teaches courses on American government and religion in the public sphere. Aside from his studies, Gabriel has also worked on numerous political campaigns in both the United States and Canada. In his spare time, he enjoys golfing, hiking, and travelling.



**Mr. Jacob F. Tischer, PhD Candidate, Anthropology**

Jacob is a PhD candidate in sociocultural anthropology at Boston University. Based on sixteen months of fieldwork in Taiwan, his research project engages the dynamics of cultural transmission and innovation in traditional popular religion. Jacob has published articles on Mazu pilgrimages (in *Review of Religion and Chinese Society*) as well as the political role of humor in Taiwan's official pandemic communication (in *East Asian Journal of Popular Culture*).





**Ms. Xiaodi Wu, Masters Student, School of Theology and Danielsen Institute**

Xiaodi Wu is a Master of Divinity student at the School of Theology and a Research Fellow at the Danielsen Institute. Her research interests lie at the intersection of psychology and philosophical theology, emphasizing cross-cultural comparative analysis. Her current research project explores spiritually integrated therapeutic interventions for immigrant populations. At the Danielsen Institute's Research Center, Xiaodi is involved in a five-year research project titled "Positive Psychology and Formation-Based Flourishing among Spiritual Leaders and Therapists," funded by the Peale Foundation and led by Dr. Steven J. Sandage. Before joining BU, Xiaodi received her Master of Science degree in International Business and a Bachelor of Business Administration specializing in Finance.



**Mr. YIDI Wu, Doctoral Student, Department of Religion**

Yidi is a second-year doctoral student in the Religion in Philosophy, Politics, and Society specialization under the direction of Prof. Michael Zank. His areas of interest include medieval Islamic and Jewish thought, theological and philosophical roots of modernity, political theology, and Jewish intellectual history, focusing on the thought of Leo Strauss. Yidi has a BA in Classics from the Renmin University of China, an MA in Classics from the University of Arizona, and an MA in Political Science at Boston College. He likes hiking, kayaking, and searching for second-hand books in his spare time.



**Mr. Aizaz Younas, PhD Student, Anthropology,  
Graduate School of Arts and Science**

Aizaz Younas is a third-year PhD student studying socio-cultural Anthropology at Boston University. He Received his BSc degree in Economics with a minor in Socio-Cultural Anthropology from LUMS University. Originally from Pakistan, Aizaz's research focuses on the shrine culture in contemporary Lahore. Focusing broadly on the historical shrines of Shah Hussain, Ali Hajweri, and Mian Mir in Lahore, Aizaz is interested in exploring why young people, across all classes, are visiting the shrines? What is that they seek in the shrine? Is the visit entirely dictated by religious believes, or are there more complex non-religious factors also at play?