

# LAURA S. GRILLO

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## EDUCATION:

- Ph.D. THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO**  
History of Religions – Distinction, 1995  
Dissertation: *Divination in the Religious Systems of West Africa*
- M.Div. UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**  
Hebrew Bible & Ecumenical Theology – Distinction, 1986  
Thesis: *The Festival of Yams: An Exegesis of a West African Ritual*
- A. B. BROWN UNIVERSITY**  
Religious Studies & Psychology, 1978

## HONORS & AWARDS:

- 2013 HARVARD DIVINITY SCHOOL – Research Fellow
- 2007, '06, '05 THE VIRGINIA CENTER FOR THE CREATIVE ARTS  
Three separate Writers' Residency Fellowships for Creative Non-fiction (Memoir)
- 2007, '04, '03 THE RAGDALE FOUNDATION  
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 – Travel & Research Grant
- 1997 WEST AFRICAN RESEARCH ASSOCIATION – Travel & Research Grant
- 1996 AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION – Travel & Research Grant
- 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 award for promise of  
international contribution to Ecumenical Theology

**EMPLOYMENT**

- 2016 – Pres.      AFFILIATED FACULTY, Georgetown University  
 Department of Theology
- Consultant to Director of the Graduate Studies Program
  - Graduate Tutorial teaching
- 
- 2003 – 2016      PROFESSOR & RESEARCH COORDINATOR  
 Pacifica Graduate Institute (Carpinteria, CA)  
 Mythological Studies Program
- Master’s and Doctoral teaching in comparative religions & cultural anthropology, methodological approaches, and dissertation formulation
  - *Dissertation Research Coordinator* – Oversight of Policy and Doctoral Research
  - *Institutional Assessment and Accreditation Steering Committee*
    - Lead Author of 4 successful Accreditation Reports
      - *Capacity and Preparatory Review Report* (2008)
      - *Educational Effectiveness Review Report* (2009)
      - *Interim Report* (2012)
      - *Substantive Change Application* to WASC for Clinical PsyD Program
  - Other Administrative Service:
    - *Projects Associate* – Assisted Chancellor on special initiatives (2013-15)
    - *Comprehensive Faculty Assessment & Compensation Policy* (2010-12)
    - Faculty Senate Secretary (2007-2009)
    - Chair, Faculty Senate Faculty Well-Being Committee (2011-13; 2016)
- 
- 2000 - 2003      SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT  
 The University of Chicago
- Speech Writing, Correspondence, and Special Projects Management
  - Member of President’s Cabinet – strategic planning & problem solving
  - Supervision of Student Ombudsman
- 
- 1998 - 1999      VISITING ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES  
 The College of Wooster (Wooster, Ohio)
- Taught 6 courses in Comparative Religion and Religion & Literature
- 
- 1995 - 1997      ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF RELIGION  
 Millsaps College (Jackson, MS)
- Taught 6 courses per year in Religious Studies and Liberal Arts Core
  - Departmental Search Committee

**Employment during PhD work:**

- 1993 – 1995      EDITORIAL ASSISTANT  
 American Journal of Education (The University of Chicago)
- 
- 1990 - 1991      ADJUNCT PROFESSOR OF HISTORY OF RELIGIONS  
 Boston University School of Theology
- Graduate teaching for M.Div. and Th.D. students

- 1988 - 1989 RESEARCH ASSISTANT, The Fundamentalism Project (Martin Marty)  
 American Academy of Arts and Sciences (The University of Chicago)
- Assisted in Project design and organization, conference planning
  - *Fundamentalism Observed – contributing editor* (1991)

**Employment prior to PhD:**

- 1987 TEACHER OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE  
 International School of Abidjan (Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire)
- 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 NEWSLETTER  
 National Council of Churches of Christ, USA / Office of Human Rights (NYC)
- Targeted issues for international intervention efforts
- 1978 - 1980 TEACHER OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE  
 College Chateaubriand (Dabou, Côte d'Ivoire)

**PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP**

- 2018 – Pres. STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBER – Women’s Caucus  
 African Studies Association
- 2015 – Pres. EDITORIAL BOARD – *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
- 2006 – Pres. EDITORIAL BOARD – *Religion Compass Journal* (Wiley-Blackwell Press)
- 2012 – Pres. STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBER – AAR African Diaspora Group
- 2010 – 2011 PROGRAM SUBCOMMITTEE – American Academy of Religion (**AAR**)
- Advises Executive Director on program structure and policies
- 2005 – 2012 CO-CHAIR & STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBER – AAR African Religions Group
- Provide leadership and planning for sessions at annual meeting
  - Author of Yearly Reports and two 5-Year Self-Evaluation Reports
- 2000 - 2001 STEERING COMMITTEE – AAR Comparative Study of Religions Group

- 1998 - 2000 STEERING COMMITTEE – AAR Ritual Studies Group  
 1998 - 2000 EVALUATION PANELIST – National Endowment for the Humanities  
*Fellowships and Summer Stipends Program*

## **PUBLICATIONS**

### **Books:**

- An Intimate Rebuke: Female Genital Power in Ritual and Politics in West Africa* – Duke University Press, (November, 2018).  
*Religions in Contemporary Africa: An Introduction*, a textbook co-authored with Adriaan van Klinken and Hassan J. Ndzovu. (Routledge Press; under contract).

### **Book Chapters:**

- “Total Impact: Being Changed by Divination in West Africa” in *Religion: Super Religion*. Ed. Jeffrey J. Kripal. Macmillan Interdisciplinary Handbooks: Religion series. Farmington Hills, MI: Macmillan, 2017.
- “Signs, Doors and Games: Divination’s Dynamic Visual Canon.” In *Ifá Divination, Knowledge, Power, and Performance*. Eds. Jacob K. Olupona and Rowland Abiodun. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016.
- “African Rituals.” In *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to African Religions*, Ed. Elias Kifon Bongmba. Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishers, 2012: 112-126.
- “‘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.
- “Memoir as Method: Exploring Divination as Reflexivity.” In *Divination: Perspectives for a New Millennium*, ed. Patrick Curry. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2010.
- “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  
 [NB: Publisher error; please see [Academia.edu](http://Academia.edu) for the complete work including notes and bibliography.]
- “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 Lampeter, UK: Edwin Mellen Press, 2006. 377-386.
- “Trajectories in African Ethics.” In *The Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics*, ed. William Schweiker, Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishers, 2005. 438-447.
- “The Diversity and Vitality of Primal Religions.” In *Religions of the World* Third Edition, ed. Niels C. Nielsen, Jr., New York: St. Martin's Press. 1993. 21-45.

### **Peer Reviewed Articles and Essays:**

- Les Mères au rond-point: retrouver l’identité et son fondement dans la morale” (“Mothers at the round-about: Recollecting Identity on Moral Grounds”) Proceedings of the Tenth

International Conference on Mande studies, August 2-6, 2017, Grand-Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire (2017).

"At the Mythological center of the World, a Unique Pedagogical Initiative Launches in Nigeria" co-authored with Samantha Lakin. The Huffington Post (August 3, 2017).

[https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/at-the-mythological-center-of-the-world-a-unique-pedagogical\\_us\\_5982df82e4b0396a95c874e4](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/at-the-mythological-center-of-the-world-a-unique-pedagogical_us_5982df82e4b0396a95c874e4)

"Papa at the Window," an excerpt from memoir *Ask for the Road*. In *Luna Review*, April 2016. <http://lunareview.com/wordpress/2016/03/30/papa-at-the-window/>

"Ironic Reversals: Gender, Power and Sacrality in Ile-Ife," *Journal of Africana Religions* 2, 4 (2014): 465-477.

"Catachresis in Côte d'Ivoire: Female Genital Power in Religious Ritual and Political Resistance" *Religion And Gender* 3, 2 (May 7, 2013): 188-206.

<http://www.religionandgender.org/index.php/rg/article/view/8329>.

"Female Genital Power in Ritual & Politics: Violation & Deployment" *Cultural Anthropology*, Hot Spot Forum. May 14, 2012. <http://culanth.org/fieldsights/196-female-genital-power-in-ritual-and-politics-violation-and-deployment-in-southern-cote-d-ivoire>

"The Urgency of Widening the Discourse of Philosophy of Religion: A Discussion of A *Primal Perspective on the Philosophy of Religion* by Arvind Sharma" *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 79, 4 (2012): 803-813.

"Divination: Epistemology, Agency and the Construction of Identity in Contemporary West Africa," *Religion Compass*, Blackwell Press 3, 6 (2009): 921-934.

"African Religions." In *Merriam-Webster's Encyclopedia of World Religions*. Editor, Wendy Doniger, Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc, 2006.

"Dieterlen, Germaine." In *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, ed. Lindsay Jones. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005. 2349-2351.

"Griaule, Marcel." In *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, ed. Lindsay Jones. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005. 3700-3701.

"Dogon: religionsgeschichtlich." In *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, vierte Auflage* Tübingen, Germany: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) 2000.

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

"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*. ed. Serinity Young, New York: Macmillan Press, 1999. 6-12.

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

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

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

"African Traditional Religions." In Microsoft's CD ROM *Encarta Encyclopedia*. 1997.

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

### **Reviews:**

"*Faith in the Time of AIDS: Religion, Biopolitics and Modernity in South Africa* by Marian Bucharadt. *Religious Studies Review*. In Press.

"City of 201 Gods: Ilé-Ifé in Time, Space, and the Imagination by Jacob K. Olúpòṅà." *Nova Religio: the Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 17, 1 (August 2013): 109-111.

"Along an African Border: Angolan Refugees and Their Divination Baskets by Sónia Silva." *History of Religions* The University of Chicago Press 52, 4 (May 2013): 414-417.

"Time and Sacrifice in the Aztec Cosmos by Kay A. Read" *Journal of Ritual Studies* 13, 2 (1999): 75-76.

"Seven Theories of Religion by Daniel L. Pals," *History of Religions* 37, 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, 1 (1996): 146-148.

"Yoruba Ritual: Performers, Play, Agency by Margaret T. Drewal," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 8, 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, 2 (1994): 286-288.

"Nkpiti: La Rancune et le Prophète by Marc Augé and J-P Colleyn," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 22, 2 (1992): 181-183.

"Religion in Calabar: The Religious Life of a Nigerian Town by Rosalind Hackett," *Journal of Religion* 71, 2 (1991): 313-314.

### **Book Translations:**

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

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

### **PRESENTATIONS**

"Religion in the African Public Sphere – Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, Dec 7-8, 2018

"Engendering morality in Africa: Subversive recollection of the subjugated matriarchive" Conference of the International Association for the study of Religion and Gender (IARG), Ghent, Belgium, November 2018.

"Energizing the Matriarchive: The Rite of FGP as Infrapolitical Rage and Moral Force" Africa Studies Association, Atlanta, GA, November 2018.

"Spectacular Recollections: Women's naked protest in West Africa" Colloquium Speaker, African, African American and Diaspora Studies, UNC-Chapel Hill, December 5, 2018.

"Spectacular Recollections: Women's naked protest against African State Amnesia" University of North Florida, Jacksonville, October 30, 2017.

- "Academic Research in the Digital Age: Shaping questions through research design"  
Invited full-day presentation, Institute for Advanced Studies in Ife Summer Institute,  
Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, July 31, 2017.
- "Les Mères au rond-point: retrouver l'identité et son fondement dans la morale" ("Mothers at  
the round-about: Recollecting Identity on Moral Grounds") – Mande Studies  
Association (MANSA), Université de Grand-Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire, August 4, 2017.
- "Memory, Memorialization, Morality: Female Genital Power in Ritual & Politics in Côte  
d'Ivoire" – *American Academy of Religion*, Atlanta, GA, November 22, 2015.
- "Christianity, Sexuality and Gender in African History" – Invited Lecture, Harvard Divinity  
School, April 9, 2013.
- "Hallowed Howls & Sacred Sounds" Presider and Respondent - *African and Diasporic  
Religious Studies Association (ADRSA) Conference on Spiritual Soundscapes*, Harvard  
University, April 3-4, 2015.
- "Gender and Change in Ile-Ife: A Response to Jacob Olupona's *City of 201 Gods*" Public  
Lecture, *Center for the Study of World Religions*, Harvard University, April 11, 2013.
- "A Study of Female Genital Power in West Africa – Visual Argument, Methodological  
Considerations." *Center for the Study of World Religions*, Harvard University, March  
13, 2013.
- "Catachresis in Côte d'Ivoire." Invited paper, *Conference and Workshop on "Religion, Gender  
and Postcoloniality"* – SOAS University of London, UK, December 18, 2012.
- "Response to *African Traditions in The Study of Religion in Africa – Part II*," *American Academy of  
Religion*, Chicago, IL, November 16, 2012.
- "Mircea Eliade and the study of History of Religions in the USA." International Seminar, *Romanian  
Academy in Cluj-Napoca*, Romania, April 2, 2012.
- "The Deployment of Female Genital Power as an Act of Civil Society in Côte d'Ivoire." *Workshop of  
the Luce Project on Religion in Global Civil Society at UCSB, A Focus on The Middle East  
and Africa* – Orfalea Center for Global and International Studies, Santa Barbara, January 22,  
2012.
- "Female Genital Power in Côte d'Ivoire: Violation & Deployment." *Salon*, a private forum for public  
lectures and discussion - Santa Barbara, January 8, 2012.
- "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." *XVth 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.

**SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION:**

- Funding Proposal for *the Institute for Advanced Studies* (IAS), Ile-Ife, Nigeria, 2017
- Journal article evaluation. *Religion*, 2018
- Book manuscript evaluation. Routledge Press, 2015.
- Book manuscript evaluation. University of Alabama Press, 2013.
- Journal article evaluation. *The Journal of Religion*, 2011.
- Journal article evaluation. *African Studies Review*, 2010.
- Journal article evaluation. *The Journal of Religion*, 2007.
- Proposal Evaluation Panelist, *National Endowment for the Humanities* 1998-2000

**PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS:**

- American Academy of Religion
- American Anthropological Association
- African Studies Association
- African and Diasporic Religious Studies Association
- International Association of Religion and Gender
- National Women's Studies Association
- Mende Studies Association (MANSA)



**COURSES DESIGNED AND TAUGHT:**

**Graduate:**

African and African Diaspora Traditions  
Methodological Approaches and Contemporary Issues in Religious Studies  
Ritual and the Embodied Imagination (residential and online delivery)  
Myths and Social Imaginaries in the Global Era  
Research Strategies  
Dissertation Formulation  
Divination, Synchronicity & the Uncanny  
Tricksters, Witches and Women: Myth, Gender and Power in Africa

**Undergraduate:**

Comparative Religious Ethics: East, West and South  
Religions East and West: The Body  
Introduction to Religious Studies: Theory and Method  
The Construction of Religion and the Encounter of Cultures  
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  
Saints & Sinners: The religious journey in film and literature  
Religious Autobiography & Biography

**LANGUAGES**

French (Fluent)  
Italian (Competent)  
Adioukrou (Working knowledge)  
German & Biblical Hebrew (Formal Study)