

MATTHEW ICHIHASHI POTTS, PH.D.
Plummer Professor of Christian Morals
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Academic Appointments

Harvard University, Faculty of Divinity	
Plummer Professor of Christian Morals	2021 – present
Associate Professor of Religion and Literature and of Ministry Studies	2017 – 2021
Assistant Professor of Ministry Studies	2013 – 2017

Pastoral Ministry

Pusey Minister, The Memorial Church of Harvard University	2021-present
Affiliated Minister, The Memorial Church of Harvard University	2013-2021
Priest-in-residence, St. Barnabas Memorial Church, Falmouth, MA	2013-2019
Assistant rector, St. Barnabas Memorial Church, Falmouth, MA	2011-2013
Curate, St. Barnabas Memorial Church, Falmouth, MA	2009-2011
Priest associate, Church of Our Saviour, Brookline, MA	2008-2009
Seminarian, St. Peter's Church, Cambridge, MA	2005-2008

Education

Ph.D., Harvard University The Study of Religion	2013
M.Div., Harvard University	2008
B.A., University of Notre Dame English <i>cum laude</i>	1999

Publications and presentations:

Books

Forgiveness: An Alternative Account (Yale University Press, 2022).

Cormac McCarthy and the Signs of Sacrament: Literature, Theology, and the Moral of Stories (Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).

Articles in peer-reviewed journals

“Christ, Identity, and Empire in *Silence*.” *The Journal of Religion* 101, no. 2 (April 2021), 183-204.

“Forgiveness of Self, Divine Forgiveness, and Subsequent Health and Well-being in Mid-Life: An Outcome-Wide Longitudinal Approach.” Co-authored with Katelyn N.G. Long, Ying Chen, and Tyler J. VanderWeele. *Frontiers in Psychology* 11, article 1337 (July 9, 2020).

“Mourning for forgiveness.” *Theology* 122, no. 3 (May 2019), 180-187.

“‘The world will be made whole’: Love, Loss, and the Sacramental Imagination in Marilynne Robinson’s *Housekeeping*.” *Christianity and Literature* 66, no. 3 (June 2017), 482-499.

“‘Ragged Biblical Forms’: Misogyny, Materiality, and Identity in *Suttree*.” In *Religion and Literature* 47, no. 2 (Summer 2015), 65-86.

“‘There is no god and we are his prophets’: Cormac McCarthy and Christian faith.” *Christianity and Literature* 63 no. 4 (Summer 2014), 489-501.

“Preaching in the Subjunctive: Towards a Ritual Homiletics.” *Practical Matters Journal* 7 (Spring 2014), 27-45.

Book chapters

“Demons and Dominion: Possessions and Dispossession in Toni Morrison’s *A Mercy*.” In *Goodness and the Literary Imagination*, by Toni Morrison, ed. David Carrasco, Stephanie Paulsell, and Mara Willard, 138-152. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2019.

“‘A landscape of the damned’: The Devil, Damnation, and Nothingness in *Outer Dark*.” In *The Hermeneutics of Hell*, ed. Gregor Thuswaldner and Dan Russ, 305-318. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017.

“Imagination.” In *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and Religion*, ed. Susan Felch, 103-115. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

“Giving an account of God: Possibilities for a sacramental presence in preaching.” In *Preaching and the Theological Imagination*, ed. Zachary Giuliano and Cameron Partridge, 45-58. New York: Peter Lang, 2015.

Reviews and other published essays

“Today, Tomorrow, and the Next Day.” In the *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* (Spring/Summer 2022).

Review of Devin Jacobsen, *Breath Like the Wind at Dawn* (Montclair, NJ: Sagging Meniscus Press, 2020) in *The Carolina Quarterly* 71 no. 1 (Fall 2021), 94-7.

Review of Nick Ripatrazone, *Longing for an Absent God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2020) in *American Catholic Studies* 132 no. 1 (Spring 2021), 90-1.

“Preface.” In *Love First*, by Colette Potts. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 2018.

“The Politics of Preaching.” In the *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* (Winter/Spring 2018).

Review of Cynthia Wallace, *Of Women Borne: A Literary Ethics of Suffering* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016) in *American Literary History Online Review* (2017).

“Narrative Wounds and Livable Fictions.” In the *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* (Winter/Spring 2015).

Review of Amy Hungerford, *Postmodern Belief: American Literature and Religion since 1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), in *Christianity and Literature* 62 no. 3 (September 2013), 634-638.

Presentations at conferences, in media, and other public events

“Vanishing Returns: A response to Terry Eagleton.” Presented at the seminar “Reading the Return,” University of Lancaster, UK (May 19, 2022).

“Reading Julian of Norwich in Apocalyptic Times.” Presented at the Rev. Robert J. Randall Conference, Providence College, Providence, RI (April 2, 2022).

“Using podcasts to build foundational relationships between students.” *Into Practice*. Retrieved from <https://perma.cc/J9VF-4TFV>. (February 7, 2022).

“White Supremacy in the Study and Practice of Ministry.” Convener and moderator of a faculty panel, Harvard Divinity School (September 2, 2020).

“Forgiveness: A Conversation with Martha Minow.” Presented at the HDS Dean’s Leadership Forum, Harvard Divinity School (May 1, 2020).

“Christ, Identity, and Empire in Shusaku Endo’s *Silence*.” Presented at the panel, “Religion, War, and the Empire in Arts and Literature: The Asia-Pacific” at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, San Diego, CA (November 25, 2019).

“Wondering at grief.” Presented at the public event “Requiem for a Rhino,” hosted by the Harvard Museum of Natural History (May 7, 2018).

“Response to *Albatross*.” Presented at public screening of the film *Albatross*, co-hosted by the Harvard Mahindra Center for the Humanities and the Harvard University Center for the Environment (February 6, 2018).

“Apocalyptic grief.” Presented at the inaugural panel of the Center for the Study of World Religions for 2017-18, “Barren Landscapes and Open Spaces,” Harvard Divinity School (September 13, 2017).

“Responding to the election.” Presented at the panel “Cultivating Community Across Divides in the US: Relationship Building as a Spiritual Practice,” sponsored by the Harvard Divinity School Colloquium on Religions and the Practice of Peace (November 10, 2016).

“The sight of memory: Rankine, Morrison, Certeau.” Presented at the panel “Mystery, Memory, and Time” at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, San Antonio, TX (November 19, 2016).

“The imagination of sacrifice: Toni Morrison and Christian memory.” Keynote lecture presented at the Literatures and Linguistics Undergraduate Colloquium at Gordon College, Hamilton, MA (April 2, 2016).

“What is God doing here? A response to Poul Andersen.” Presented at the workshop, “Sacramental Presences: Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, and Daoist perspectives,” Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Divinity School (March 5, 2016).

“Remaking American monsters: race and religion in Cormac McCarthy’s fiction.” Presented at the panel “Between: Liminality as Creative (Re)Source in American Religion, Literature, and Art” at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, Atlanta, GA (November 23, 2015).

“‘A landscape of the damned’: The devil, damnation, and nothingness in Cormac McCarthy’s *Outer Dark*.” Presented at the conference “The Hermeneutics of Hell,” Gordon College, Hamilton, MA (November 8, 2014).

“Suffering stories: Witness and sacrifice in Russell Banks’ *The Sweet Hereafter*.” Presented at the workshop “The Sacrifice of Children on the Altar of Capitalism: Bearing Witness in the Writings of Russell Banks” (November 5, 2014).

“Reading a stranger: The road to Emmaus and the work of theology.” Presented at the panel, “A Celebration of the Humble Sublime,” at the Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Divinity School (May 5, 2014).

“‘There is no god and we are his prophets’: Cormac McCarthy and Christian faith.” Presented at the panel “Has Fiction Lost Its Faith?” at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, Baltimore, MD (November 24, 2013).

“Presence and re-presentation: Some thoughts on sacramental realism.” Presented at the panel “Ronald Thiemann: In Memoriam,” at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, Baltimore, MD (November 23, 2013).

“Ties that bind: A response to N.T. Wright.” Presented at the public forum “Paul and the Faithfulness of God,” Cambridge, MA, Harvard Divinity School (November 15, 2013).

“Giving an account of God: Possibilities for a sacramental presence in preaching.” Presented at the 2012 New England Anglican Studies Conference, Cambridge, MA (April 21, 2012).

“Sharing words and wafers: Signs and sacraments as hosts in Derrida and McCarthy.” Presented at the conference “The Hospitable Text: New Approaches to Religion and Literature,” University of Notre Dame, London, UK (July 15, 2011).

Conference organization and planning

Convened the conference “The Problem with God,” an international meeting of the Conference on Christianity and Literature, Harvard Divinity School (March 2019).

Co-convened (with Michelle Sanchez) the conference “Christianity, Race, and Mass Incarceration,” Harvard Divinity School, with co-sponsorship from the Religions and the Practice of Peace Initiative of Harvard Divinity School and the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice at Harvard Law School (October 2017).

Co-convened (with Francis Clooney) the workshop “Sacramental Presences: Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, and Daoist Perspectives,” Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Divinity School (March 2016).

Fellowships, Grants, and Honors

First Book Grant for Minority Scholars, Louisville Institute, 2018-19

Faculty project grant, Harvard Divinity School, 2016-17

Selected as commencement speaker by Harvard Divinity School class of 2015

Williams Fellowship, Harvard Divinity School, 2005-2008

Graduate Minority Fellowship, University of Notre Dame Graduate School, 2004-2005

Courses Taught

Apocalyptic Grief (Spring 2022)

Introduction to Ministry Studies (Fall 2015, Fall 2016, Fall 2017, Fall 2019, Fall 2020, Fall 2021)

The Sacramental Imagination (Spring 2014, Spring 2018, Spring 2020)

Julian of Norwich (Spring 2020)

Love and Loss (Fall 2016, Fall 2020)

The Politics of Preaching (Spring 2020)

Forgiveness (Spring 2017, Spring 2020)

The History of the Study of Religion (Fall 2019)
Apocalyptic Grief, Radical Joy (Spring 2018)
Pastoral Preaching (Fall 2017)
Religion and Contemporary Fiction (Spring 2017)
The Death of Jesus (Fall 2015)
Christianity and Contemporary American Literature (Spring 2015)
Sacrifice and Atonement (Spring 2015)
Forgiveness, Ritual, and Reconciliation (Fall 2014)
Preaching in Public (Fall 2014)
Sign, Symbol, Sacrament (Spring 2014)
The Word of God: Narrative theory and Christian theology (Fall 2013)
Introduction to Christian Preaching (Fall 2013)
Estrangement and Enchantment: Critical Theory, Aesthetics, and the Quotidian (Junior tutorial, Spring 2013)

Professional Service

Reviewed books for publication on behalf of
Baylor University Press (2020)
Routledge (2019)
Bloomsbury Academic (2017)

Reviewed articles for publication in:

Literature and Theology (2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022)
Christian Scholars Review (2020)
Religion and Literature (2019, 2021)
Christianity and Literature (four articles since 2017)
The Cormac McCarthy Journal (2017)

External tenure reviewer for
University of Lancaster, United Kingdom (2022)

External thesis reviewer for
St. Andrew's University, United Kingdom (2022)
The University of Queensland, Australia (2019)

Executive Committee, Harvard Board of Chaplains (2021-present)
University Board of Religious, Ethical, and Spiritual Life (2021-present)
University Committee on Religion (2021-present)
Grants Committee, The Memorial Church of Harvard University (2021-present)
Master of Divinity Committee, Harvard Divinity School (2013-2020, 2021-present)
Admissions Committee, Harvard Divinity School (2013-2015, 2017, 2020-present)
Center for the Study of World Religions Advisory Committee (2019-present)
Andover Theological Library Advisory Committee (2020-present)
University Committee, Hearing Pool (2021-present)

Presenter, “What is one thing you tried that worked really well?” Teaching Innovations Gallery, Vice Provost for Advances in Learning (2020)
Editorial Board, *Literature and Theology* (2019-present)
Faculty Affiliate, Human Flourishing Program, Harvard Institute for Quantitative Social Science (2019-present)
Committee on the Study of Religion, Faculty of Arts and Sciences (2019-2021)
Doctoral Subcommittee on the Study of the Religion (2019-2021)
Harvard Divinity School Faculty Council (2019-2021)
Steering Committee, Arts, Literature, and Religion Unit, American Academy of Religion (2018-2021)
Board of Directors, the Conference on Christianity and Literature (2018-2021)
University Rights and Responsibilities Committee (2014-2015, 2020-2021)
Yehan Numata Senior Lecturer Reappointment Review Committee (2020-2021)
Harvard Divinity School Sexual Misconduct Review Board (2015-2018, 2020-2021)
Faculty Director, Harvard Divinity School Executive and Continuing Education (2019-2020)
Religions, Violence, and Peace Faculty Search Committee (2016-2018)
Board of Trustees, Episcopal Chaplaincy at Harvard (2016-2018)
Editorial Assistant, *Harvard Theological Review* (2011-2012)
Consulting Theological Reviewer, Standing Commission on Liturgy of the Episcopal Church (2011)
Board of Freshman Advisers, Harvard College (2006-2008)
Freshman Proctor, Harvard College (2006-2008)
Editorial Assistant, *Religion and Literature* (2004-2005)

Military Service

United States Navy
Main Propulsion Division Officer, USS Vincennes, Yokosuka, Japan (2000-2001)
Training Officer, USS Vincennes, Yokosuka, Japan (2000-2001)
Student, Surface Warfare Officer School, Newport, RI (1999-2000)