



**NEW FACULTY
ASSOCIATE**
JONATHAN CALVILLO



**CHINESE CHRISTIAN
POSTERS**
PICTURING SALVATION



**RECENT
PUBLICATIONS**
NEW TITLES

CGCM NEWS

Center for Global Christianity & Mission



Urbanization and Immigration

In the Fall of 2016, Jonathan Calvillo joined the faculty of the Boston University School of Theology. His research overlaps with and expands the interests of the CGCM. His research assistant, Jeremy Hegi, took time to interview the new associate of the CGCM.

“What makes religion in the city different?”

JH: What have you taught at BU this year?

JC: I've taught three courses so far. Last Fall I taught Ethnographic Research Methods, and I am currently teaching Religion in the Urban Landscape, and Sociology of Immigration and Religion. Ethnographic Research Methods was geared toward helping students design and conduct research projects within particular social contexts of their choice. All students were required to engage in field research. Religion in the Urban Landscape is a course designed to get students to address the question, "What makes religion in the city different?" The course revolves around sociological studies of various faith traditions along with site visits to various faith communities around the city. An underlying theme that I encourage students to engage with is that of lived religion; this pushes students to look beyond formally sanctioned aspects of religious traditions and into the day to day spiritual practices that people employ to make sense of life in the city. Finally, Sociology of Immigration and Religion emphasizes the role of faith in the experience of immigrants. The course examines the migration journey and the process of settlement in the U.S., through the lens of faith, along with the advocacy of religious institutions for immigrants.

JH: Immigration has been a hot topic on the news, usually related to the Middle East or restrictions in the United States. How does your work as a sociologist highlight the ways faith affects an immigrant's journey to and settlement in a new context?

JC: For many immigrants, faith is an indispensable dimension of the migration experience. Faith is present in the decision or need to move, in the journey of relocation, and in the process of resettlement within the receiving context. In the course I teach on immigration and religion, one of the questions I ask students is whether or not they agree with what's referred to as the theologizing thesis. This thesis argues that the migration experience makes immigrants more zealous in their faith. The counter argument is that migration is an alienating experience which drives immigrants away from faith practices and faith communities. What I propose to my students is that for those that are already committed to faith, the migration experience tends to strengthen this faith, as their sense of divine protection and divine provision is heightened in light of salient needs. Likewise, many find faith along the way in response to the alienation they experience. Faith communities provide for the needs of some individuals that feel marginalized, and the "theologizing" that takes place is connected to the "refuge, resources, and respect" embodied in communities of faith, as delineated by Charles Hirschman. We do have to acknowledge, however, that many immigrants arrive in the U.S. without a formal faith affiliation and do not have a conversion experience but rather join the ranks of the religious nones.

The current debates about immigration, in my opinion, relate to questions of who deserves to belong to U.S. society. I like to frame the conversation in terms of citizenship. Faith communities...
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More New Faculty Associates



Top to Bottom: Linda Heywood,
Eugenio Menegon, John
Thornton, Rady Roldan-
Figueroa, Nimi Wariboko



Preach Christ, Reform China - Missionary Ephemera Collection, RG 221, Special Collections, Yale Divinity Library



Deliver us from the Evil One - Boston University School of Theology Archives

Chinese Christian Posters: Oppositional Art

In 1926, the Chinese Nationalists bulldozed their way to power, rumbling north to Beijing behind a phalanx of pamphleteers. In Hankou, the Religious Tract Society watched jealously as the Party, “using *our* means and improving upon them,” brought the revolution to pass. Propaganda, the General Secretary of the Religious Tract Society concluded, had established the new masters of the Middle Kingdom. Could it not also help to establish the Kingdom of God?

Between 1927 and 1949 millions of Christian posters entered the Chinese market. Copied onto the cheapest paper and put up with starch and brooms, the bright-colored posters briefly attracted attention before they dissolved in the rain, or were covered by a more current notice. Yet these “silent preachers” diligently portrayed a Christian vision of China’s national salvation. Hanging in tearooms, shop windows, on city gates, or at local temples, Christian prints were innovations in mass-produced art. They were aesthetically appealing, symbolically rich, multivalent in their messages, yet easily apprehended.

Christian propaganda posters intentionally aimed to topple China’s other ideological systems. Some

images were explicitly produced to replace ancestral tablets; others were crafted as substitute blessings to hang on door posts. A number competed directly with Nationalist and Communist propaganda, offering an alternative vision of what national salvation looked like for China.

The Communists swept to power in 1949, and in victory swept away their rivals. Communist posters have received extensive scholarly attention, but they are only the winner’s tale.

The Center for Global Christianity and Mission is recovering the forgotten and overlooked Christian materials that stood alongside, challenged, co-opted, and even subverted the Communist messages. Working with materials donated from Andover Newton Theological Seminary, Columbia University, the Graduate Theological Union, Harvard University, Smith College, Stanford University, Wheaton College, the World Gospel Mission, and Yale University the CGCM is building a digital archive that will showcase and interpret more than 300 posters. It is an opportunity to understand how Chinese Christians competed aggressively for the soul of China in the first half of the twentieth century.

Recent Publications by CGCM Affiliates

Stephen Offut, et al.

Advocating for Justice: An Evangelical Vision for Transforming Systems and Structures (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016).

Extending beyond relief and development into advocacy, this book provides a theological rationale and strategies for changing systems of poverty.

Rady Roldan-Figueroa, “Martín de Roa, SJ (1559-1637) and the Consolidation of Catholic Literary Culture in Spain,” *European History Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (2015): 5-33.

Winner of the 2016 Harold J. Grim Prize for the best article on the Reformation as a fundamentally religious phenomenon.

Gerald H. Anderson, “A New Missionary Age,” in *Contemporary Mission Theology*, edited by Robert Gallagher and Paul Hertig (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2017).

Addresses the missiological issues of the 21st century, particularly in light of demographic and cultural changes.

Kapya Kaoma, “From Missio Dei to Missio Creatoris Dei,” in *Eco-Theology, Climate Justice, and Food Security*, edited by Dietrich Werner and Elisabeth Jeglitzka (Geneva: Globethics, 2016).

Christ, as Creator and Ecological Ancestor, opens new ways to address human responsibility for the earth.

Interview with Jonathan Calvillo (continued)

here have an important role to play as they provide opportunities by which immigrants enact local forms of citizenship, whether immigrants have legal status or not. Indeed, devotional practices, I would argue, can be types of citizenship practices as they build the life of local communities and provide for the needs of others. In that way, as immigrants grow in their faith, they may also feel empowered to make claims about the legitimacy of their citizenship. Faith in this sense provides a grounds for local belonging.

JH: How do contemporary immigration patterns intersect with and change the landscapes of Global Christianity?

JC: We’ve heard much about how the center of Christianity is shifting from the West to the East and the South. Immigration is contributing to increasingly intricate transnational Christian networks. The diffusion of global Christian movements is largely influenced by immigration. Pentecostalism is perhaps the best example of this. Pentecostal growth is precipitated both by immigrants who arrive in a new place professing Christian faith and by immigrants who have a conversion experience in their host context. The fluidity of social networks that immigrants establish allows Christian movements like Pentecostalism to spread across newly established ties. Enthusiastic converts may also be energized to share their experience with contacts in the homeland.

The audience that immigrant congregations target is sometimes more complex than some people expect. Increasingly, immigrants are pouring resources into building faith movements and institutions in their receiving contexts that reach beyond the boundaries of nationality and ethnicity. We see for example, Korean immigrant churches founding Korean American churches which rapidly become multi-ethnic ministries. Congregational transitions are not new, but some immigrant churches are demonstrating a very focused intentionality in wanting to reach out beyond traditional ethnic and national boundaries.

Finally, I want to highlight the prominence of the second generation, the children of immigrants. I myself am second generation Mexican American. My parents were both born in Mexico and came to the States when they were young adults. They met at church, in the U.S., actually. So second generation children may be born into churches that cater to immigrants, as I experienced, but socio-culturally they are also influenced by their peers and context. The second generation is an important demographic to consider when we think about religious innovation and religious change.

JH: Thank you! We are excited that you are at BU, and can help us understand important dimensions of World Christianity.