

Thomas G. Walsh
December 31, 2024



December 31, Volume II, Number 19



This year marks the historic 50th Anniversary of HJI's founding. As we begin this new year, 2025, we offer our deepest gratitude and appreciation to our Founders, Rev. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, and to the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification. We also extend our very warmest and best wishes to our students, alumni, colleagues and friends in hopes of a most productive, healthy, and rewarding 2025.



HJI Staff and Faculty Holiday Luncheon

Staff and faculty had a joyful and meaningful time connecting with one another on campus during a holiday luncheon, held on December 19.

[Read More](#)



December Student Life Events Report

The Office of Student Life at HJI was excited to host two new events this December, concluding the Fall 2024 semester with a bang.

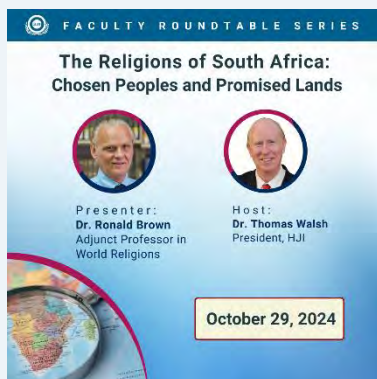
[Read More](#)



Unification Theology and the Christian Tradition

Dr. Theodore Shimmyo has done extensive research on theological teachings that are essential to not only Unificationism but to the wider Christian tradition as well.

[Read More](#)



The Religions of South Africa: Chosen People and Promised Lands

Dr. Ronald Brown lived for extended periods of time in various countries around the world, and experienced most world religions firsthand.

[Read More](#)



STUDENT *Spotlight*



Sancha Samara Ogden Christian
MA in Peace Studies

The support of the professors at HJ International Graduate School for Peace and Public Leadership has been instrumental in helping me successfully navigate my graduate studies.

[Read More](#)

For more information about HJI, email admissions@hji.edu

To apply to HJI [click here](#)

STAY CONNECTED



[Website](#)



[Facebook](#)



[YouTube](#)



[LinkedIn](#)



[Instagram](#)

HJI Staff and Faculty Holiday Luncheon



Staff and faculty had a joyful and meaningful time connecting with one another on campus during a holiday luncheon, held on December 19.

Steven Boyd, Dean of Enrollment Management and Student Life, gave warm welcoming remarks. An invocation was given by Dr. Thomas Ward, Professor of Peace and Development. After singing a holiday song, a reading on the birth of Jesus was followed by comments and sharing of various religious perspectives from faculty members, Dr. Andrew Wilson, Professor of Scriptural Studies, Dr. Michael Mickler, Distinguished Professor of Historical Studies, Dr. Jacob David, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Ministerial Studies and Homiletics, and Dr. Drissa Kone, Director of the Doctor of Ministry Program Associate Professor of Ministry and Conflict Resolution. Dr. Thomas Walsh gave the President's remarks in appreciation to the staff and faculty for their dedicated service to the mission of HJI. Afterwards, a video which highlighted HJI events and accomplishments in 2024 was shared, and all enjoyed a catered buffet luncheon. One of the highlights was a song written and performed by Ute Delaney, Senior Advisor for Institutional Research, which sparked joy and laughter throughout the room. The gathering concluded with a fun twist on a gift exchange. It was a wonderful celebration as HJI drew near the close of the Fall term, looking ahead to the holiday season and new year.

HJI looks forward to the new year, 2025, which marks the 50th anniversary of the founding of the institution.

December Student Life Events Report



Written by Associate Dean Mika Deshotel

The Office of Student Life at HJI was excited to host two new events this December, concluding the Fall 2024 semester with a bang. Spotlight on Student Research, highlighting the dissertation project and findings of Ron Pappalardo, was held on December 7th at 11AM EST via Zoom. The Spotlight on Student Research series was created for the purpose of providing students with an opportunity for connection with other students at HJI, as well as for networking with students in a similar area of study. The series also seeks to highlight great work being done at HJI, which can inspire excellence and energize leadership within our students' diverse areas of influence. HJI's Open Mic Night was another first of its kind, held virtually on December 17th at 8PM EST. The evening event was meant to serve as a celebration for a fruitful semester, as well as a chance to reflect and decompress from a busy year.

The Spotlight event featuring Ron Pappalardo, welcomed 42 participants who were eager to learn more about Ron's dissertation work entitled, "The God Effect: Long-term Influences of Elicited Mystic Experiences." Ron was preparing for his doctoral defense, so he began with a presentation of his research and conclusions using a slideshow specially prepared for the dissertation committee. It is well known that Ron has been leading workshops on divine mystical experiences for some time, and his findings revealed how impactful they have been for participants. In his surveying, Ron found that over 90% of participants felt their mystical experience initiated subsequent experiences that have carried them forward ever since. Ron's work also revealed that mystical experiences can be explicit and unique to the receiver; he reinforced this finding with testimonials of God's unique and personal revelation to participants. After Ron's formal presentation, he invited participants on the call into a guided meditation followed by volunteer sharing of their experiences if they felt inspired to do so. Ron also addressed specific questions related to his project and findings. As of this writing, it was confirmed that Ron Pappalardo did well during his dissertation defense and will be receiving his doctoral degree this semester. Congratulations to Ron for his impressive work and diligence in supporting individuals of all walks of faith towards a real, authentic relationship with God.

The Open Mic night event turned out to be an intimate and cozy gathering. It concluded with the singing of Christmas carols and well wishes offered from participants, including some children who joined in on the fun. HJI students, Shawna Lewis, Athanasius Catalan, and Melanie Chaudhary graced us with song, with a group poll, sharing and scavenger hunt featured intermittently between performances. Shawna Lewis is in her first year at HJI, and even though she was unable to join our event live, she composed a combination piece reflecting on her time at HJI and her growth journey this year. Since her piece was HJI- specific, we wanted to give everyone a chance to enjoy it by listening [HERE](#). We hope to offer another Open Mic event to kick off the Spring semester, as well as host more of our student leaders as part of our Spotlight series. Be on the lookout for those events, as well as those hosted by the Graduate Student Council in the coming months.



HJ International
GRADUATE SCHOOL for
PEACE AND PUBLIC LEADERSHIP

Campus:
4 West 43rd Street
New York, NY 10036
Phone: (212) 563-6647



[Journal of Unification Studies](#)

[Subscribe to the HJI Newsletter](#)

[Faculty and Staff Directory](#)

[HJI Catalog](#)

Copyright © 1974 – 2023 HJ International Graduate School for Peace and Public Leadership

Unification Theology and the Christian Tradition



FACULTY ROUNDTABLE SERIES

Unification Theology and the Christian Tradition



Presenter:
Dr. Theodore Shimmyo
President Emeritus;
Adjunct Professor of Theology



Host:
Dr. Thomas Walsh
President



**Thursday, November 21
at 7pm ET**

On November 21, a Faculty Roundtable featured [Dr. Theodore Shimmyo](#), HJI President Emeritus and Adjunct Professor of Theology, entitled "Unification Theology and the Christian Tradition." The event was hosted by Dr. Thomas Walsh, President. Steven Boyd, Dean of Enrollment Management and Student Life, gave welcoming and closing remarks.

Dr. Shimmyo has done extensive research on theological teachings that are essential to not only Unificationism but to the wider Christian tradition as well; for example, the Doctrine of God, the Trinity, the Fall, Christology, Salvation, Providential History, and the Providence of True Parents. Dr. Shimmyo will soon publish, with HJI Press, a book entitled *Unification Theology and the Christian Tradition*. This webinar provided an opportunity for all of us to get a preview of the content of Dr. Shimmyo's forthcoming publication.

Dr. Shimmyo shared that "much of traditional Christian theology has not been able to confidently talk about complete unity between God and creation. God, considered to be a perfect and infinite God, is quite distant from and unmoved by the imperfect and finite world of creation. Therefore many unsolvable difficult theological issues have arisen in Christian theology. By contrast, Unification theology has a conceptuality of complete unity between God and creation." It is on that basis that Dr. Shimmyo believes Unification theology is able to provide solutions to address difficult issues. An important view he shares is that, "while providing solutions however, Unification theology appreciatively deals with Christian theologies' accomplishments."

The presentation was followed by an informative Q&A session.

[You can watch the recording here.](#)

Please be on the lookout for future Faculty Roundtable events.



The Religions of South Africa: Chosen People and Promised Lands



FACULTY ROUNDTABLE SERIES

The Religions of South Africa: Chosen Peoples and Promised Lands

Presenter:
Dr. Ronald Brown
Adjunct Professor in
World Religions

Host:
Dr. Thomas Walsh
President, HJI

Tuesday, October 29 at 7pm ET

On October 29, a Faculty Roundtable was held with [Dr. Ronald Brown](#), Adjunct Professor in World Religions, entitled "The Religions of South Africa: Chosen People and Promised Lands." The event was hosted by Dr. Thomas Walsh, President. Mika Deshotel, Associate Dean of Student Life, gave welcoming and closing remarks.

Dr. Brown lived for extended periods of time in various countries around the world, and experienced most world religions firsthand. As recently as July and August of 2024, he spent time in South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Namibia.

Dr. Brown shared his expertise on the religious landscape in South Africa, following the collapse of Apartheid. He discussed the effects of the Apartheid on society and religions. He presented on the evolution of chosen peoples and promised lands, which is central to the identity and various races in South Africa, as well as Jesus and his approach to chosen people and promised lands. "The idea that has really inspired the Africans and most of the religions in South Africa is the idea that certain people are chosen and they are given a promised land. [...] This is a common pattern in the study of world religions." Furthermore, Dr. Brown examined *Nederlands Hervormde Kerk* in South Africa, the emergence of African Zionist churches, and the spread of African Zionist churches. This religion "has become the prevailing religious identity of Southern Africa, which makes it very different from other places in Africa."

The presentation was followed by a stimulating Q&A session.

[You can watch the recording here.](#)

Please be on the lookout for future Faculty Roundtable events.



Student Spotlight – Sancha Samara Ogden Christian



What inspired you to apply to HJI and your program? What do you most appreciate about being a student at HJI?

I was inspired to apply and attend HJI after seeing several people in my network graduate from HJI and the Peace Studies program. I was impressed with the level of professionalism and awareness of these graduates. They went on to take leadership roles in non-profit organizations. I wanted to elevate my own leadership in the world. I most appreciate the culture of learning and the desire to pursue personal development and growth at HJI.

Share about the benefits of your online learning experience

Some of the benefits I have experienced include flexibility and convenience. I can access coursework and lectures at any time, allowing me to learn at my own pace and fit my education around other commitments like work or family.

I have also experienced improved time management and self-discipline. Learning online requires that I manage my own time effectively, promoting better self-discipline and organization, which has translated into skills useful in the workplace and my personal life.

The online learning experience has also allowed for collaboration and networking opportunities. There have been several discussion groups and virtual collaborations, allowing students to connect with peers and instructors from diverse backgrounds.

Is there any other highlight or aspect of your study at HJI that you would like to share?

The support of the professors at HJ International Graduate School for Peace and Public Leadership has been instrumental in helping me successfully navigate my graduate studies. Their flexibility and understanding of the demands of a busy schedule have allowed me to balance coursework alongside other commitments. The professors not only provide thoughtful guidance and feedback but also bring a wealth of expertise in their respective fields. This depth of knowledge has enriched my learning experience, offering me both practical insights and theoretical frameworks that are crucial for my academic and professional development. Their dedication to student success has truly made a significant impact on my journey.

What do you enjoy in your free time?

Going on hikes with my husband and daughter and our dog, Marlow.



HJ International
GRADUATE SCHOOL for
PEACE AND PUBLIC LEADERSHIP

Campus:
4 West 43rd Street
New York, NY 10036
Phone: (212) 563-6647



[Journal of Unification Studies](#)

[Subscribe to the HJI Newsletter](#)

[Faculty and Staff Directory](#)

[HJI Catalog](#)

Copyright © 1974 - 2023 HJ International Graduate School for Peace and Public Leadership
