

# Garry G. Sparks

Associate Professor of Religious Studies

George Mason University  
Department of Religious Studies  
4400 University Drive, 3F1  
Fairfax, Virginia 22030-4422  
email: gsparks@gmu.edu  
vox: (001) 703-993-1979  
fax: (001) 703-993-1297

---

## Academic Employment

---

2019-present *Associate Professor of Religious Studies*, George Mason University  
2014-2019 *Assistant Professor of Religious Studies*, George Mason University  
2012-2014 *Assistant Professor of Humanities (Global Study of Christianity)*, University of Louisville  
2011-2012 *Visiting Assistant Professor in the Humanities and Theology*, Valparaiso University  
2009-2010 *Instructor*, The University of Chicago, The College

---

## Education

---

2011 Ph.D. *with distinction*, The University of Chicago – Theology and Religious Studies  
2004 M.Div., The University of Chicago – Theology and Religious Studies  
1996 M.A., University of Texas at Austin – Latin American Studies (Anthropology, History)  
1993 B.A., Austin College, Sherman, Texas – Philosophy and Spanish  
1990-1991 Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain

---

## Teaching Interests and Courses

---

Primary: Mesoamerican Studies (Religions, (Ethno)Histories, Cultures)  
Hemispheric (Global) Study of Christianities  
Modern Christianities (1500-present)  
Histories of Christian Thought (Religious, Ethical, Philosophical)

Secondary: Latin American Studies (Religions)  
Native American Religious Movements (North and South America)  
Theories of Religion  
Comparative Religions, History of Religions

courses: Introduction to Religious Studies  
Text and Contexts I & II (year-long intensive for first-year honors students)  
Religion and Literature: Native Mesoamerica  
Religion and Film  
Native American Religions in Northern America  
Spiritual Autobiography: Construals of Self and Religion  
Introductory Survey of Christian Thought: Antecedents to Present  
Introduction to Catholicism: A Christianity and Cultures  
Mendicants and Mesoamericans in the Sixteenth Century  
Modern Christian Thought and Critics: From the Enlightenment to L.A. Gangs  
Religion and Revolution in Latin America: Liberation Theology (1968-1987)

## Academic Publications

---

### Books

- Rewriting Maya Religion: Domingo de Vico, K'iche' Intellectuals, and the Theologia Indorum* (University Press of Colorado, 2019).
- The Americas' First Theologies: Early Sources of Post-Contact Indigenous Religion*. With Frauke Sachse and Sergio Romero. (Oxford University Press, 2017).

### Journal Articles (peer reviewed)

- "Maya Moral and Ritual Discourse: The Dialogical Groundings for Consuetudinary Law." *Journal of Religious Ethics* 46, no. 1 (March 2018): 88-123.
- "How 'Bout Them Sapotes: Mendicant Translations and Maya Corrections in Early Indigenous Theologies." *CR: The New Centennial Review* 16, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 213-244.
- "Primeros folios, folios primeros: Una breve aclaración acerca de la *Theologia Indorum* y su relación intertextual con el Popol Wuj." *Voces: Revista semestral del Instituto de Lingüística e Interculturalidad* 9, no. 2 (July-December 2014): 91-142.
- "The Use of Mayan Scripture in the Americas' First Christian Theology." *Numen (International Review for the History of Religions)* 61, no. 4 (August 2014): 396-429.
- "Constructing Hyperlocal Theologies: Ethnohistorical Contextualization of Indian Theology and *jTatik* Samuel's Legacy." *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* 19, no. 1 (November 2013): 33-53.
- "Fill in the Middle Ground: Intertextuality and Interreligious Dialogue in 16<sup>th</sup>-Century Guatemala." *Journal of Inter-Religious Dialogue* 5, no. 2 (February 2011).

### Chapter Contributions

- "Mendicants and Mesoamericans." *Encyclopedia of Global Middle Ages* (Bloomsbury/Arc-Humanities Press, forthcoming 2021).
- "Books and/as Idols: Affective Discourse in Early Colonial Dominican and Maya Writings." *The Transatlantic Bartolomé de las Casas: Lascasian Heritage, Indigenous Cultures, Scholastic Thought, and Historical Reception*. Edited by Rady Roldán-Figueroa and David Thomas Orique (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, under review).
- "Modes of Interpretation of Indigenous Religious Ethics (of the Americas)." *The Encyclopedia of Religious Ethics*. Edited by William Schweiker, Maria Antonaccio, Elizabeth Bucar, and David Clairmont. (5,600 words; Wiley-Blackwell, forthcoming 2021)
- "Proemio." *La Theologia Indorum en BnF Manuscrit Américain 10 por Fray Domingo de Vico, tomo I: Paleografía y traducción K'iche'-español*. Edited by Saqijix Candelaria López Ixcoy. Guatemala City: Instituto de Investigación y Proyección sobre Diversidad Sociocultural e Interculturalidad, Universidad Rafael Landívar, 2017, ix-xxxi.
- "A Sixteenth-Century Priest's Fieldnotes among Highland Maya: Proto-*Theologia* as *Vade mecum*." With Frauke Sachse. *Words and Worlds Turned Around: Indigenous Christianities in Latin America*. Edited by David Tavárez. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2017, 102-123.
- "Nuevas campañas de extirpación de idolatría." *Movimientos sociales y teología en América Latina*. La Paz, Bolivia: Instituto Superior Ecueménico Andino de Teología, 2010, 116-123.
- "Rumbo a una nueva Teología de la Liberación." *Movimientos sociales y teología en América Latina*. La Paz, Bolivia: Instituto Superior Ecueménico Andino de Teología, 2010, 209-212.

## Academic Publications, continued

---

### Book Reviews (invited)

Mondloch, James and Robert Carmack, *Popol Wuj: Nueva traducción y comentarios* (Guatemala: Publicaciones Mesoamericanas, 2018) in *Latin American Antiquity* 30, no. 2 (May 2019): 456-457.

MacKenzie, C. James, *Indigenous Bodies Maya Minds: Religion and Modernity in a Transnational K'iche' Community* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2016) in *Ethnohistory* 65, no. 2 (April 2018): 332-333.

Prieto, Andres I., *Missionary Scientists: Jesuit Science in the Spanish South America, 1570-1810*. Vanderbilt (Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press, 2011) in *History of Religions* 53, no. 1 (August 2013): 107-110.

Westhelle, Vítor, *After Heresy: Colonial Practices and Post-Colonial Theologies* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2010) in *The Journal of Religion* 91, no. 1 (January 2012): 141-143.

Molesky-Poz, Jean, *Contemporary Maya Spirituality: The Ancient Ways are Not Lost* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006) in *The Journal of Religion* 87, no. 4 (October 2007): 663-664.

### Current Projects

*Pastoral Fieldnotes: Edition and Commentary of a Sixteenth-century Missionary Handbook from the Maya Highlands*, with Frauke Sachse.  
(book project; contract pending; joint publication with University Press of Colorado and Library of Congress Press, subvention from the Jay I. Kislak Foundation; critical transcription complete; scanning of the manuscript, commentary and translation in process)

*The Theologia Indorum, Volume I: Critical English Translation, K'iche' Transcription, and Analysis*, with Frauke Sachse, Saqijix Candelaria López Ixcoy, and Sergio Romero.  
(book project; funded by a 2016-2019 NEH Scholarly Translations Grant; transcription complete; translation and commentary in process <https://theologia.chnm.org/>)

*La Theologia Indorum, Volumen I: Traducción y transcripción crítica* with Frauke Sachse, Saqijix Candelaria López Ixcoy, and Sergio Romero.  
(book project; funded by a 2016-2019 NEH Scholarly Translations Grant; transcription complete; translation and commentary in process <https://theologia.chnm.org/>)

## Academic Presentations

---

- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| 2021/01 | “Shifts in Semantic Souls, Transmigration of Meanings: From a Mendicant toward a Maya Theory of Translation”<br>panel: “Translation: Temporality, Spatiality, and Materiality”<br>Modern Language Association, Toronto, Canada (online session due to COVID-19)                      |
| 2020/08 | “Manuscritos del siglo XVI: <i>Theologia Indorum</i> ”<br>V Semana Científica, Universidad Rafael Landívar, Guatemala  |
| 2019/07 | “Idoling Around with God(s) in Guatemala: Tracing Las Casas’s Theological Legacy among Highland Maya”<br>panel: “Las Casas and Amerindian Cultures / Las Casas y las Culturas Amerindias”<br>II International Conference on Bartolomé de las Casas, Providence College, Rhode Island |
| 2019/03 | “The (Re)Development of Mayan Languages and Literature”<br>invited lecture: National Foreign Language Week Celebration<br>Morgan State University, Baltimore, Maryland   |

## Academic Presentations, continued

---

- 2018/10 "Rewriting Maya Religion: An Ethnohistory of Christianities"  
keynote lecture and colloquium, Departments of Religious Studies & Latin American Studies  
University of Texas at Austin
- 2018/07 "Chaoskampf K'iche'lense: Batalla entre dioses mayas y cristiano en los textos en  
idiomas mayas por dominicos y K'iche' Maya en el siglo XVI"  
panel: "Dios(es) y diablos: La traducción de conceptos cristianos e indígenas en textos religiosos  
de las Américas"  
56<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Americanists, biennial meeting 2018, Salamanca, Spain
- 2018/06 "Books and/as Idols: Discourse of Affectivity in Early Colonial Missionary and Native  
Mesoamerican Writings 2.0"  
panel: "Expanding the Geography of Emotions History"  
Emotions History Conference, George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia
- 2018/03 "Early Theological and 'Idolatrous' Production in the Americas"  
workshop paper/talk: Religion in the Americas Workshop  
Department of Religion, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey
- 2018/02 "Books and/as Idols: Discourse of Affectivity in Early Colonial Missionary and Native  
Mesoamerican Writings 1.0"  
session: Early Modern Global History Seminar Series, Georgetown University
- 2017/10 "Maya Mapping Missionaries: Geo-theological Scope through K'iche'an Land Deeds"  
panel: "Histories of Space and Hierarchy: Indigenous Socio-Political Boundaries in Colonial  
Highland Guatemala"  
American Society for Ethnohistory (ASE) annual meeting 2017, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
- 2017/10 "Tracing Traditional Maya Moral Discourse in Contemporary Customary Law"  
meeting: Association of Disciples Theological Discussion (ADTD)  
Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, Indiana
- 2017/09 "Translating God(s): Intertextuality between Missionary and Maya Literature"  
invited lecture, Department of Comparative Literature  
University of Massachusetts Amherst
- 2017/03 "Religiously Appropriating Indios: 20th- and 16th-Century Theological Production  
from and by... well, 'Indios'"  
symposium: "Mestizaje, Hybridity, and Cultural Entanglements in Colonial Latin America"  
Meso-America Panel, Hispanic Division of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
- 2017/01 "From Proto-*Theologia* to K'iche'an *Títulos*: Dialogical Tracings of Maya Catholicism"  
panel "Native Religions in Colonial Latin America: A Comparative Symposium"  
American Historical Association (AHA) annual meeting 2017, Denver, Colorado
- 2016/11 "Sixteenth-Century Dominicans' Fieldnotes among the Maya: Kislak Ms 1015"  
panel: "Christian Visions and Memories of Conversion and Difference"  
American Academy of Religion (AAR) annual meeting 2016, San Antonio, Texas
- 2016/03 "From Hispano-Catholicism to Maya Catholicism: A Reception Ethnohistory  
of a Christianity"  
panel: "Possessing Religious Indigeneity: Translation, Conversion, and Reception  
of Religious Identity in and by Indigenous America"  
Mid-Atlantic Region of the American Academy of Religion (MAR-AAR)  
annual meeting 2016, New Brunswick, New Jersey
- 2014/10 "How 'Bout Them Sapotes? Mendicant Translations and Maya Corrections in  
Early Indigenous Theologies"  
symposium: "Translation and the Global Humanities"  
University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky

## Academic Presentations, continued

---

- 2014/10 "Maya and Mendicant Religious Meta-Discourse: Recreating Transmission/ Reception History of Hispano-Catholicism of the 1500s"  
panel: "Reappraising the Use of Indigenous Language Documents in the Reconstruction of K'iche' Ethnohistory"  
American Society for Ethnohistory (ASE) annual meeting 2014, Indianapolis, Indiana
- 2014/10 "The Use of the *Theologia Indorum* in the Popol Wuj: A Maya Response"  
meeting: Association of Disciples Theological Discussion (ADTD)  
Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, Indiana
- 2014/06 "Primeros folios, folios primeros: Una breve aclaración acerca de la *Theologia Indorum* su relación intertextual con el Popol Wuj,"  
conference: "El concepto del tiempo en el Popol Wuj"  
Universidad Rafael Landívar, Guatemala City, Guatemala
- 2014/02 "Maya Moral & Ritual Discourse: Dialogical Groundings for Consuetudinary Law"  
conference: "Moral Voices of Latin America"  
Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona
- 2013/11 "Beyond Mere Maya Resistance: Use of Mendicant and Pre-Hispanic Ritual Discourse in Sixteenth-Century Mesoamerican Documents"  
panel "Mesoamerican/Indigenous Religion and Ritual in Precolonial/Colonial Periods"  
American Academy of Religion (AAR) annual meeting 2013, Baltimore, Maryland
- 2013/02 "The Use of Maya 'Scripture' in the Americas' First Theology,"  
invited lecture "The Medieval and Renaissance Workshop (Med/Ren)"  
University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky
- 2012/11 "Constructing Hyperlocal Theologies: Ethnohistorical Contextualization of 'Indian Theology' and *jTatik* Samuel's Legacy,"  
panel: "Indigenous Theologies, Autochthonous Churches, and Political Missions: Honoring the Pastoral Legacy of the Late Bishop Samuel Ruiz García of Chiapas"  
American Academy of Religion (AAR) annual meeting 2012, Chicago, Illinois
- 2012/07 "Religious Translation, Dialogical Encounters in the Americas' First Theologies"  
panel: "Maya Languages and Histories"  
54<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Americanists (ICA), Vienna, Austria
- 2010/10 "Interreligious Theology: Present and Past"  
invited lecture W.E. Garrison Theology Colloquium  
Eureka College, Eureka, Illinois
- 2009/11 "Fill in the Middle Ground: Intertextual Dialogue in Guatemala"  
panel: "Revisiting Middle Grounds: Early Christian Encounters with Religious Others"  
American Academy of Religion (AAR) annual meeting 2009, Montréal, Canada
- 2009/11 "European and Indigenous Encounters in Colonial America"  
History Channel Seminar Series program (one-day seminar)  
Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois
- 2009/08 "Teología de la liberación en el siglo XXI"  
conference: "Movimientos sociales y teología en América Latina"  
Instituto Superior Ecueménico Andino de Teología (ISEAT), La Paz, Bolivia
- 2009/08 "Nuevas campañas de extirpación de idolatría,"  
conference: "Movimientos sociales y teología en América Latina"  
Instituto Superior Ecueménico Andino de Teología (ISEAT), La Paz, Bolivia
- 2009/04 "*Theologia Indorum*: K'iche', Theological Ethnology, and Americas' First Theology"  
Sharpe-Hoover Lectures Conference: "Culturing Theologies, Theologizing Cultures"  
The Martin Marty Center of the Divinity School, The University of Chicago
- 2009/01 "Mission in a Globalizing World"  
panel chair; conference: "Resisting Mission: Redefining Engagement"  
The Martin Marty Center of the Divinity School, The University of Chicago

## Academic Presentations, continued

---

2004/10 "Maya Spirituality/Christian Faith: A Typology of Interreligious Dialogue"  
panel: "Christianity as Social Broker: Religious Mediation in Central America"  
Latin American Scholars Association (LASA), 2004 annual meeting, Las Vegas, Nevada

## Conferences Organized

---

2009/11 "Revisiting Middle Grounds: Early Christian Encounters with Religious Others"  
Comparative Theology Group, panel session  
American Academy of Religion (AAR) annual meeting 2009, Montreal, Canada

2009/04 Sharpe-Hoover Conference: "Culturing Theologies, Theologizing Cultures"  
The Martin Marty Center of the Divinity School, The University of Chicago, Illinois

2009/01 Lilly Conference: "Resisting Mission: Redefining Engagement"  
The Martin Marty Center of the Divinity School, The University of Chicago, Illinois

## Fellowships and Awards

---

2020 American Academy of Religion, Collaborative International Research Grant

2017 provost nomination as applicant for Virginia "Rising Star" Outstanding Faculty Award

2016 provost letter of recognition for outstanding teaching in a Mason Core course

2016-2019 NEH Scholarly Translations Grant

2016 Mathy Junior Faculty Research Award in the Arts and Humanities

2016 NEH Summer Research Grant

2014 Richard & Constance Lewis Fellowship in Latin Am. & Iberian Studies (awarded)

2010-2011 Mellon Humanities Dissertation Fellowship, The University of Chicago

2009-2010 Martin Marty Center Dissertation Fellowship, The University of Chicago

2008-2009 Alma Wilson Teaching Lectureship Fellowship, The University of Chicago

2008-2010 Edward Scribner Ames Scholarship of High Achievement in Educational Studies

2008 & 2009 Provost's Summer Fellowship, The University of Chicago

2008 Latin American Studies Tinker Field Research Grant, The University of Chicago

2008 Doolittle-Harrison Research Fellowship, The University of Chicago

Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship (FLAS), U.S. Dept. of Education

2005-2006 - for K'iche' Maya language and culture study

summer 2005 - for Kaqchikel Maya language and culture study

1994-1995 - for Portuguese (Luso-Brazilian) language study

2004-2006 Divinity School Doctoral Studies Scholarship, The University of Chicago

2004 Norman Perrin Memorial Prize, The University of Chicago

## Professional Affiliations

---

American Academy of Religion (AAR)  
Latin American Scholars Association (LASA)  
American Society for Ethnohistory (ASE)  
Guatemala Scholars Network (GSN)  
Pre-Columbian Society of Washington, D.C. (PCSWDC)  
Association of Disciples for Theological Discussion (ADTD)

## Languages

---

Spanish	(fluent)
K'iche' Maya	(advanced)
Kaqchikel Maya	(intermediate)
Portuguese	(reading; Luso-Brazilian, intermediate speaking)
French	(reading)
Biblical Hebrew	(reading)

## Academic Service and Professional Experience

---

2020-present	<i>Member</i> , Curriculum Committee, College of Humanities & Social Sciences (CHSS)
2020-present	<i>Co-facilitator</i> , Religious Studies Reading Group, Center for Humanities Research
2020-2021	<i>Member</i> , Department Chair Search Committee, Religious Studies Dept.
2020-2021	<i>Member</i> , Advisory Committee, Kislak Collection Exhibition, Library of Congress
2020	<i>Reviewer</i> , manuscript submission for Oxford University Press
2020	<i>Reviewer</i> , manuscript submission for University Press of Colorado
2020	<i>Member</i> , CHSS Evaluation Committee for 2021 NEH Summer Stipend Applications
2019-present	<i>Director of Undergraduate Programs</i> for the Religious Studies Dept.
2019-present	<i>Chair</i> , Annual Faculty Evaluation Committee, Religious Studies Dept.
2019-present	<i>Member</i> , Advisory Committee, <a href="#">The Maya Book Project</a> (nonprofit)
2019-2020	<i>Member</i> , Post-Doc Search Committee, Religious Studies Dept.
2019	<i>Member</i> , CHSS Evaluation Committee for 2020 NEH Summer Stipend Applications
2019	<i>Member</i> , NEH Grant Applications Review Panel
Spring 2019	<i>Member</i> , New CHSS Building Installation Art Committee
Spring 2019	<i>Member</i> , Selection Committee, CHSS Dean's Undergraduate Challenge Awards
2018-2020	<i>Member</i> , Faculty Grievance Committee, College of Humanities & Social Sciences
2017-2019	<i>Member</i> , Academic Performance Review Committee, Religious Studies Dept.
Fall 2017	<i>Member</i> , Standing Committee for Mason Core Courses, College of Humanities & Social Sciences (off for research leave beginning in Spring 2018)
Fall 2017	<i>Member</i> , Mason Core Committee and Office of Undergraduate Education's Assessment for Western Civilization/World History Core Courses
Fall 2017	<i>Contributor</i> , Mason Core Committee and Office of Undergraduate Education's Assessment for Global Understanding Core Courses
2017	<i>Reviewer</i> , manuscript submission for <i>Religion Compass</i> (John Wiley & Sons, Inc.)
2016-2017	<i>Member</i> , Department Chair Search Committee, Religious Studies Dept.
2016-2017	<i>Member</i> , Faculty Search Committee (Buddhist Philosophy and Ethics)
2016-present	<i>Member</i> , Editorial Board, <i>International Journal of Latin American Religions</i>
2015	<i>Reviewer</i> , manuscript submission for DeGruyter Publishing House
2015	<i>Reviewer</i> , manuscript submission for the journal <i>Ethnohistory</i> (Duke University Press)

## **Additional Professional Experience and Service, continued**

---

- 2015-2019 *Member*, Annual Faculty Evaluation Committee, Religious Studies Dept.
- 2015-2017 *Member*, Faculty Grievance Committee, College of Humanities & Social Sciences
- 2015-2016 *Co-chair*, Religion of the Americas Section, Mid-Atlantic Region of the AAR
- 2014-present *Member*, Alumni Council, The University of Chicago Divinity School
- 2011-2016 *Consultant and editor* on *Margarito's Forest / El bosque de don Margarito / Ri K'iche'laj rech tat Margarito* by Andy Carter (a modern Maya children's illustrated story published in K'iche', Spanish, and English)
- 2008-2009 *Teaching Assistant*, The College at the University of Chicago
- courses: K'iche' Mayan Language I, II, & III (Prof. Robin Shoaps)  
Latin American Civilization II: Colonial Period (Prof. Mauricio Tenorio)  
Humanities Core: Reading Culture (Prof. Melissa Adams)  
Summer K'iche' Course in Guatemala (Profs. Rusty Barrett, Sergio Romero, Robin Shoaps)
- 2007-2009 *Lab Manager and Research Assistant* (Prof. Robin Shoaps, Linguistic Anthropology)  
The Karen Landahl Center for Linguistics Research, University of Chicago
- 1998-2001 *International Staff*, Guatemalan Cultural Action (ACG)  
Guatemala and Chiapas, Mexico
- 1996-1997 *Program Assistant*, The Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C.
- 1997 *Research Intern*, The National Security Archives, Gelman Library,  
George Washington University, Washington, D.C.
- 1996 *Research Intern*, Human Rights Documentation Exchange, Austin, Texas