

**MICHELLE M. LELWICA**

*Religion Department, Concordia College  
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Moorhead, MN 56560  
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**EDUCATION**

**HARVARD DIVINITY SCHOOL**

Th.D., 1996. Area of concentration: Religion, Gender and Culture

**HARVARD DIVINITY SCHOOL**

M.T.S., 1989. Area of concentration: Christianity and Culture

**COLLEGE OF ST. BENEDICT**

B.A., 1986. Major: Humanities; Minor: Theology

**TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, Concordia College, Moorhead, MN, Religion Department (2001-present), teaching the following courses:

“Women in Religious History”  
“Catholicism”  
“Christianity and Religious Diversity”  
“God the Question and the Quest”  
“Engaged Buddhism and Mindfulness Practice” (Critical Inquiry Seminar)  
“Religion in the Context of Personal and Social Transformation” (Critical Inquiry Seminar)  
“American Religions”  
“Introduction to Women’s Studies”  
“Religion and the Body”  
“Understanding Religion”  
“Religion and Popular Culture”

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, Saint Mary's College of California, Religious Studies Department, (1996-2001), teaching the following courses:

"Women in the Christian Tradition"  
“Women and the Body”  
"Liberation Theology and Social Issues"  
"19th and 20th Century Thought" (Great Books Seminar)  
"Greek Thought" (Great Books Seminar)  
"Introduction to Christianity"  
"History of the Body in Western Thought & Culture"  
"Introduction to Aikido and the Role of the Body in Spiritual Practice"

TUTORIAL INSTRUCTOR, Harvard University (1995-1996)

TEACHING FELLOW, Harvard University and Harvard Divinity School (1991-1996)

**ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE**

CHAIR OF THE RELIGION DEPARTMENT, Concordia College, Moorhead, MN (2011-2014)

CO-DIRECTOR OF WOMEN'S STUDIES, Concordia College, Moorhead, MN (2002-2005)

DIRECTOR OF WOMEN'S STUDIES, Saint Mary's College of California (1999–2001)

### **GENERAL AREAS OF TEACHING COMPETENCE**

Women and Religion

Catholicism

Religion and Culture; Religion and Social Issues

Religion and the Body

Historical Theology

Introduction to Christianity and Religious Diversity

Liberation, Feminist, and Postcolonial Theologies

### **PUBLICATIONS (in chronological order)**

“The Religion of Thinness: Analysis of a Cultural Religion,” in *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis* Volume 23: *Religion and the Body*, edited by Tor Ahlbäck and Björn Dahla and published by the Donner Institute for Research in Religious and Cultural History, Abo, Finland (Spring 2011).

“Embodied Contemplative Learning: Aikido as a Case Study,” in *Meditation in the Classroom: Contemplative Pedagogy in Religious Studies*, edited by Fran Grace and Judith Simmer-Brown (SUNY Press, forthcoming)

“‘It’s Not Just about Me’: BREWing the Concordia Curriculum by Cultivating Wisdom and Compassion,” in *Making BREW Matter: A Curriculum for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, edited by Dawn Duncan and Gregg Muilenberg (Concordia College, Moorhead, MN: 2010), 8-19.

“Concordia’s Upper Division Religion Requirement: Fostering Intellectual Exploration, Self-Knowledge, and Responsible Engagement in the World through Embodied/Engaged Pedagogy,” in *Making BREW Matter: A Curriculum for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, edited by Dawn Duncan and Gregg Muilenberg (Concordia College, Moorhead, MN: 2010), 100-116.

*The Religion of Thinness: Satisfying the Spiritual Hungers beneath Women’s Obsession with Food and Weight.* (Gürze Books, 2010)

“Spreading the Religion of Thinness from California to Calcutta: A Postcolonial Feminist Analysis,” in *The Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 25:1 (April 2009): 19-42.

“Embodying Learning: Post-Cartesian Pedagogies and the Academic Study of Religion,” in *Teaching Theology and Religion* 12:2 (April 2009): 123-136.

“Religious Diversity: Challenges and Opportunities in the College Classroom,” in *Diversity and Democracy*, a publication of the Association of American Colleges and Universities 1:11 (Winter, 2008), 7-9.

“Redefining Womanhood(?): Gender, Power, and the ‘Religion of Thinness,’” in *Anthropology of Food Journal* (Spring 2006), 1-31.

“The Violence of ‘Perfection’: Power, Images, and the Female Body in American Popular Culture,” in *The Subjective Eye: Essays in Culture, Religion, and Gender*, eds. Richard Valantasis and Janet Carlson (Edwin Mellin, 2006) 221-234..

*Starving for Salvation: The Spiritual Dimensions of Eating Problems among American Girls and Women.* (Oxford University Press, 1999).

“Losing Their Way to Salvation: Women, Weight-Loss, and the Salvation Myth of Culture Lite,” in *Religion and Popular Culture in America*, eds. Bruce Forbes and Jeffery Mahan, (University of California Press, 1999).

"Liberating Learning and Deepening Understanding: Reflections on Feminist Pedagogy -- as a Student, as a Teacher," in the *Journal of the Center for Women and Religion*, Volume 17 (Winter 1999).

"Fulfilling Femininity and Transcending the Flesh: Traditional Religious Beliefs and Gender Ideals in Popular Women's Magazines," in *Journal of Religion and Society*, an online journal published by the Center for the Study of Religion and Society at Creighton University, Volume 1 (Summer 1999).

"From Superstition, to Enlightenment, to the Race for Pure Consciousness: Anti-Religious Currents in Popular and Academic Feminist Discourse." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, Volume 14, no. 3 (Fall, 1998).

"Nudity." *Encyclopedia of Women and World Religions*, edited by Serenity Young. Macmillan Publishing (1998).

## CONFERENCE PAPERS

"Feminist Theological Perspectives on the Religion of Thinness," Keynote Lectures for the Helen Barrett Montgomery Conference at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School, Colgate, NY (*forthcoming*: November 2012)

"The Benefits of Embodied Contemplative Learning: Aikido as A Case Study," paper presented at the Heart of Higher Education Conference in Amherst, MA April 2009.

"From California to Calcutta: Spreading the White-Western Devotion to Female Thinness -- A Feminist Postcolonial Analysis," with Emma Hoglund and Jenna McNallie (Concordia student co-researchers), a paper presented at the annual American Academy of Religion Conference in San Diego, CA November 2007.

"Embodying Learning: Post-Cartesian Pedagogy and the Academic Study of Religion," paper presented at the annual American Academy of Religion conference in Washington, D.C. November 2006.

"The Spiritual Dimensions of Eating and Body Image Conflicts in the Clinical Setting," paper co-presented with Cissy Brady-Rogers at the Thirteenth Annual Renfrew Center Foundation Conference: "The Changing Face of Eating Disorders: Feminist Perspectives," Philadelphia, PA, November 2003.

"Leg-lifts, Calories, and Other Spiritual Matters: Third Wave Feminism and an American Religion of the Body," paper presented at the annual American Academy of Religion conference in Denver, CO, November 2001.

"Too Busy to Breathe: Negotiating the Boundaries between Life and Work," paper presented at the national teleconference "Women's Lives, Women's Voices, Women's Solutions: Shaping a National Agenda for Women in Higher Education," Minneapolis, MN, March 2000.

"Facing Food: Denial of Health and Spirituality," paper presented as part of the Keynote Panel of the "Soul 2 Soul II: Women, Spirituality, and Health" conference, sponsored by the Center for Women & Religion, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, CA, October 2000.

"Fulfilling Femininity and Transcending the Flesh: Traditional Religious Beliefs and Gender Ideal in Popular Women's Magazines." Paper presented at the annual American Academy of Religion Conference, Orlando, FL, November 1999.

"Losing Their Way to Salvation: Women, Weight-loss, and the Soteriology of 'Culture Lite.'" Paper presented at the international "After the Body" conference, Manchester, England, June 1998.

"Models of and for Womanhood: Popular Iconography of Femininity." Paper presented at the Upper Midwest regional American Academy of Religion conference in St. Paul, MN, April 1998.

"From Superstition, to Enlightenment, to the Race for Pure Consciousness: Anti-Religious Currents in Popular and Academic Feminist Discourse," paper presented at the annual American Academy of Religion conference in Philadelphia, PA, November 1995.

"The Good, the True, the Beautiful Female Body: The Politics of Representation in Media Culture's 'Model' Women," paper presented at the annual American Academy of Religion conference, Washington DC, November, 1993.

**PUBLIC INTERVIEWS** (Related to the publication of *The Religion of Thinness*)

Online Interview with Ellen Schuman, Founder of “A Weigh Out,” an on-line community for people recovering from Binge Eating Disorders <http://www.aweighout.com/membership-circle/seminars> (Jun 14, 2011)

*PsycheCentral* interview with Mararita Tartakovsky, MS. *Q & A on Weightless*. “Michelle Lelwica on How the Pursuit of Thinness Has Become a Religion”(a three parts interview) June 2010  
<http://blogs.psychcentral.com/weightless/2010/07/michelle-lelwica-on-how-the-pursuit-of-thinness-has-become-a-religion/>

*PsycheCentral* interview with Mararita Tartakovsky, MS. *Q & A on Weightless* “How Mindfulness Can Boost Your Body Image: Q & A with Michelle Lelwica”(a three parts interview) October 2010  
<http://blogs.psychcentral.com/weightless/2010/10/how-mindfulness-can-boost-your-body-image-qa-with-michelle-lelwica/>

*Mercurial* interview with Amanda Bloom (editor of Greater Danbury’s new, arts, and entertainment) December 2010 [http://www.themercurial.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=435:a-model-religion&catid=21:news&Itemid=33](http://www.themercurial.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=435:a-model-religion&catid=21:news&Itemid=33)

“Hope and Healing,” with John Shorb, [<http://www.hopeandhealing.org/>] (October 2009). This interview was featured on the front of *Hope and Healing* newsletter: [http://hopeandhealing.org/contentPage.aspx?resource\\_id=395](http://hopeandhealing.org/contentPage.aspx?resource_id=395) (January 2010)

“Strategies for Living,” with David McMaillian, [<http://www.strategiesforliving.com/>] (November 2009)

“The Women’s File,” with Emily Schievert [[http://www.zoominfo.com/people/Scheivert\\_Emily\\_486105011.aspx](http://www.zoominfo.com/people/Scheivert_Emily_486105011.aspx)] (November 2009)

“Interfaith Voices,” with Laura Kwerel, [<http://www.interfaithradio.org/>] (November 2009)

“Voice America,” with Kathryn Zox [<http://www.modavox.com/voiceamerica/vshow.aspx?sid=1444>] (November 2009)

CNN Radio with Pat St. Claire [[http://www.cnn.com/CNN/anchors\\_reporters/st.claire.pat.html](http://www.cnn.com/CNN/anchors_reporters/st.claire.pat.html)] (December 2009)

KDKA Amplify (Catholic) Radio with Fr. Ron Lengwin [[http://radiotime.com/program/p\\_28042/Amplify.aspx](http://radiotime.com/program/p_28042/Amplify.aspx)] (December 2009)

**SHORT WEB ARTICLES** (Related to the publication of *The Religion of Thinness*)

“Religion of Thin,” *Science and Religion Today* (November 12, 2009)  
<http://www.scienceandreligiontoday.com/2009/11/12/religion-of-thin/#more-5912>

“Thinness and Salvation,” *Washington Post*: (October 30, 2009)  
[http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/guestvoices/2009/11/the\\_religion\\_of\\_thinness.html?hpid=talkbox1](http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/guestvoices/2009/11/the_religion_of_thinness.html?hpid=talkbox1)

“Images of God and Body Image,” in the Public Square Forum of *Patheos* (January 2010)  
<http://www.patheos.com/Public-Square.html>

Blogs for Psychology Today (ongoing) <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/bloggers/michelle-lelwica>

Blogs for the Huffington Post (ongoing) [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michelle-lelwica/beware-the-new-years-fals\\_b\\_428740.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michelle-lelwica/beware-the-new-years-fals_b_428740.html)

**INVITED LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, TELECONFERENCES, AND PANEL PARTICIPATION**

“Bridging the Epistemic, Eudemonic and Civic Development of Students,” facilitated discussion for this session at the Bringing Theory to Practice 2<sup>nd</sup> National Bridging Conference, Washington DC (January 2012)

“The Most Important Day of Your Life,” Sermon delivered to ELCA pastors at First Call Theological Education Day, Concordia College, Moorhead, MN (January 2013).

“Challenging the Religion of Thinness: Resources from the Christian Tradition,” invited public lecture delivered at Saint Mary’s College of California, Moraga, CA (November, 2011).

“Peace on Earth—Starting from Within,” invited public lecture delivered at the first annual Fargo-Moorhead Yoga Festival, September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2011.

““Where Are You Going?”: The Promise of Contemplative Learning for Keeping the Humanities Alive and Relevant,” a “Response” to Martha Nussbaum’s book *Not for Profit*, delivered to Concordia faculty and administrators at the “Fall Opening Workshop” (August 2011)

MentorCONNECT Teleconference on eating disorders. See <http://religionofthinness.eventbrite.com/> December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2010

“Why Dieting is a Losing Battle: Toward a More Holistic Approach to Health,” Lecture sponsored by the San Diego Chapter of the International Association of Eating Disorders Professionals, San Diego, CA (February 2011). A version of this lecture will also be presented to students, faculty, and staff at Iowa State University in Ames, IO (February, 2011)

“Challenging the Religion of Thinness,” Concordia College’s Religion 100 Enrichment Lecture, delivered November 4<sup>th</sup> 2010 at Concordia College, Moorhead, MN

“Pastoral Issues in Women’s Troubled Relationship to Food and Their Bodies,” Workshop for Pastors to Pastors group at Concordia College in Moorhead, MN (November, 2010).

“The Benefits of Mindfulness Practice in Higher Education,” session presented during the Faith, Reason, and World Affairs Symposium at Concordia College, Moorhead, MN (September 2010)

“The Religion of Thinness: An Analysis of A Cultural Devotion,” keynote lecture given at The Religion and the Body Symposium in Turku, Finland (June 2010)

“Relinquishing the Crusade for Thinness and Practicing Peace with Your Body,” lecture to be given at the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks, ND (March, 2010).

“Beyond the Religion of Thinness: Identifying and Nourishing the Spiritual Hungers behind Women’s Obsession with Food and Weight,” workshop presented at the Annual Renfrew Conference, Philadelphia, PA in November 2009 and at the International Association of Eating Disorders Professionals in Tampa, FL (March 2010).

“Mindfulness Practice as a Resource for Cultivating Students’ Sense of Persona. and Social Responsibility,” workshop presented with Amer Ahmed at the Core Commitments Summer Institute in Portland, OR (July 2008).

“Religion and Homosexuality,” Panel sponsored by students at Concordia College in Moorhead, MN, held at Concordia College (November 2007).

“Religious Diversity: Challenges and Opportunities,” workshop facilitated at the Core Commitments Summer Institute at the University of Burlington, VT (August 2007).

“Embodying Learning,” panel participant for the Bringing Theory to Practice National Working Conference, held in conjunction with the Association of American Colleges and Universities Annual Meeting, New Orleans, LA (January 2007).

“Challenging the Religion of Thinness,” lecture presented at Morningside College, Sioux City, IO (October 2006).

“Indulge and Refrain: The Logic of Capitalism in the Religion of Thinness,” lecture presented at the College of St. Benedict, St. Joseph, MN (March 2006).

“Deconstructing the Myth of Thinness: Cultural Critique as Spiritual Practice,” lecture given as part of the “Girl Culture Lecture Series” at the Heritage Hjemkomst Interpretive Center in Moorhead, MN (January 2006).

“Health is a Feminist Issue,” panel participant at the Women in Action Conference at North Dakota State University, Fargo, ND (October 2005)

“Reproductive Rights,” panel participant at North Dakota State University during Women’s History Week (March 2004).

“Third Wave Feminism,” panel participant for the Women in Action Conference at Minnesota State University -- Moorhead, MN (September 2003).

“Challenging the Religion of Thinness: What Christians Can Learn from the Jewish Tradition,” Lecture presented at the Jay Phillips Center for Jewish-Christian Relations, College of St. Benedict (October 2002).

“Postmodern Spirituality and the Faith of College Students.” Lecture presented to the Sisters of Mount St. Benedict, Crookston, MN (October 2002).

“The Power of Knowledge: Women’s Studies as An Intellectual Path and A Spiritual Journey.” Lecture presented in honor of Women’s History Month, St. Mary’s College of California (March 2002).

“The Spirituality of the Body.” Lecture presented at Princeton Theological Forum for Youth Ministry, Princeton University, NJ (May 2001).

“The Ritualization of the Female Body: Women’s Weight-Loss Practices” Lecture presented at Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, CA (March 2001).

“Secular Icons of Womanhood: A Critique of Media Images of Women,” Lecture presented to the Lamorinda chapter of NOW (National Organization of Women). Dublin, CA (February 2001).

“Body-Hatred as A Spiritual Crisis and Social Disease,” Paper presented to students, faculty, and staff at the College of Saint Benedict, St. Joseph, MN (February 2001).

“Women’s Health, Women’s Power,” Plenary Panel Discussion at Mills College Conference on Women’s Health, Oakland, CA (October 2000).

## **AWARDS AND HONORS**

BRINGING THEORY TO PRACTICE SUPPLEMENTAL GRANT, Bringing Theory to Practice is an independent project in partnership with AAC&U and funded by the Charles Engelhard Foundation (2009)

CENTENNIAL RESEARCH GRANT, Concordia College (2007)

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNA AWARD, College of Saint Benedict (2006)

BRINGING THEORY TO PRACTICE START-UP GRANT, Bringing Theory to Practice is an independent project in partnership with AAC&U and funded by the Charles Engelhard Foundation (2005-2007)

FACULTY APPRECIATION AWARD, voted on by seniors of Saint Mary's College (1998)

HARVARD DISSERTATION SERIES (declined), Harvard Divinity School (1997)

DEAN'S DISSERTATION FELLOWSHIP, Harvard Divinity School (1993-1994)

TEACHING CERTIFICATE OF DISTINCTION, Harvard University (1992)

DISTINCTION ON GENERAL EXAMS, Harvard Divinity School (1992)

MAGNA CUM LAUDE, College of St. Benedict (1986)

## **ACADEMIC SERVICE, COMMITTEE WORK, COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES**

CONCORDIA RELIGION DEPARTMENT CHAIR (2011-2013)

CONCORDIA FACULTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (2009-2012)

CONCORDIA STRATEGIC BUDGET PLANNING COMMITTEE (2009-2011)

CONCORDIA SUSTAINABILITY TASK FORCE—(Food Working Group 2008-2009; Co-Chair 2009-2011)

CONCORDIA SUSTAINABILITY COORDINATOR SEARCH COMMITTEE (2011)

CONCORDIA FACULTY SENATE, Concordia College (2004-present)

CONCORDIA FACULTY MENTOR FOR NEW STUDENTS, Concordia College (2002-2011)

CONCORDIA WOMEN'S STUDIES COMMITTEE, Concordia College (2001-present, Co-Director 2002-2005)

PEER REVIEWER for Oxford University Press and for the journal *Eating Disorders: Journal of Prevention and Treatment* (2010-2011)

CONCORDIA CURRICULUM COMMITTEE, Concordia College (2007-2008)

CONCORDIA CORE COMMITMENTS LEADERSHIP TEAM (2007-2009)

CONCORDIA FACULTY EVALUATION COMMITTEES (2003, 2005 [chair], 2006 [chair], 2007 [chair]; 2009; 2010 [chair])

INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY PANEL for *Inside Anorexia: Bringing Together the Stories of Sufferers, Parents, and Research*, by Christine Halse, Anne Honey, and Desiree Boughtwood (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, forthcoming 2008)

CONCORDIA PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE (2005-2007; Chair 2006-2007)

CONCORDIA PROFESSIONAL GROWTH COMMITTEE, Concordia College (2003-2006, Chair 2005-2006)

RELIGION AND POPULAR CULTURE STEERING COMMITTEE, American Academy of Religion (2001-2005)

COBBER KIDS PARENT BOARD, Concordia College (2004-2006)

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE MEMBER for Ph.D. candidates at the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California (2000-2004 and 1997-2000)

FACULTY LIAISON for the Aikido Club (2001-present) and for the Women of Color Organization, Concordia College (2003-present)

COMMUNIVERSITY INSTRUCTOR, Concordia College (February 2003)

MEMBER OF NORTHWIND AIKIKAI, Fargo, ND (2001-present); member of Berkeley Aikikai, Berkeley, CA (1996-2001); member of Valley Aikido, Northampton, MA (1994-1996)

THEOLOGIAN IN RESIDENCE for the Princeton Forum on Youth Ministry, Princeton, NJ (May 2001)

WOMEN'S STUDIES ADVISORY BOARD, Saint Mary's College (1997-2001)

FACULTY REPRESENTATIVE TO THE AFFIRMATIVE ACTION COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE, Saint Mary's College (1998-2000)

COMMITTEE ON FACULTY WORK LOAD, Saint Mary's College (1998-1999)

DIVERSITY TASK FORCE, Saint Mary's College (1996-1999)

ADVISORY BOARD FOR THE CENTER FOR WOMEN AND RELIGION, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, CA (1998-1999)

MASTERS IN LIBERAL STUDIES CURRICULUM COMMITTEE, Saint Mary's College (1997-1998)

INVST PROGRAM AFFILIATE (International and National Volunteer Service Training -- a program focusing on service learning), Saint Mary's College (1997-1998)

PEER REVIEWER, *Studies in Religion / Sciences Religieuses* (1998); and *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* (1993-1995)

WOMEN'S STUDIES RESOURCE ADVISOR, Harvard Divinity School (1993-1995)

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT, for Dr. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1992-1994)

RESEARCH ASSISTANT for Dr. Ann Braude (1992-1993) and Dr. Mary Steedly (1993-1994)

## **LANGUAGES**

Studied French at L'Institute Catholique, Paris, France (1986-1987).

Studied German at Academie für Fremdsprachen in Berlin, Germany (Summer 1990).

High-passed all language requirements (French, German, Latin) for the Doctorate of Theology at Harvard Divinity School.

**REFERENCES:** available upon request