

## COURTNEY APPLEWHITE

Department of Religious Studies  
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### EDUCATION

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**University of California, Santa Barbara**, Santa Barbara, CA

MA in Religious Studies

December 2019

PhD in Religious Studies

expected Spring 2023

Areas of Concentration: Death practices and bereavement, North American religions, secularism and secular people, ecology and religion, spirituality and the spiritual but not religious

**Rice University**, Houston, TX

BA in Religious Studies and Cognitive Sciences, *Cum Laude*

2014

### AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

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- Walter H. Capps Memorial Award for Academic Achievement in the Study of Religion and Public Life, UCSB 2020
- Multidisciplinary Research on the Coronavirus and its Impacts Grant [\$2,000], UCSB 2020
- Society for the Scientific Study of Religion Student Travel Grant [\$570] 2020
- Mellon Foundation Engaging Humanities Fellowship, UCSB 2019
- Regents Fellowship Award, UCSB 2017
- Distinction in Research and Creative Work, Rice University 2014
- Saba Prize, Department of Religious Studies, Rice University 2014

### RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

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**University of California, Santa Barbara**, Santa Barbara, CA

*Associate Researcher*, "Eco-Funerals in the United States"

Feb 2021 – present

- Conducted seven semi-structured interviews within death industry, state legislature
- Attended and participated in seven "Death Cafe's," two informational panels on alternative disposition, two panels on bereavement during COVID, and two committee hearings
- Completed discourse analysis on "eco-death" websites
- Examined legislative documents and proceedings from Washington, California, Oregon

**Templeton Foundation**, University of California, Santa Barbara

*Graduate Student Researcher*, "Meaning of Religion"

Oct 2019 – present

- Conducted nine interviews via Zoom and phone for interview schedule calibration
- Researched and wrote three literature reviews about spirituality, secularism, and death
- Created content and coordinated social media platforms to promote survey and research
- Collaborated with quantitative researchers to calibrate religion-specific survey questions

**University of California, Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, CA**

*Associate Researcher, "Virtual Death and Grief Practices During COVID-19"* June – Nov 2020

- Presented at the Multidisciplinary Research on the Coronavirus and its Impacts (MRCI) Symposium on behalf of the Meaning-Making collaborative subgroup
- Funded by the Multidisciplinary Research on the Coronavirus and its Impacts Grant
- Interviewed death leaders conducting online memorials or facilitating grief during COVID
- Observed 17 sites of online memorialization
- Attended two Zoom webinars on grief, death, and dying during COVID

**University of California, Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, CA**

Jan – Dec 2019

*Associate Researcher, "Institutionalized Individuality: Death Practices and Afterlife Beliefs in Unity Church, Unitarian Universalism, and Spiritualism in Santa Barbara"*

- Conducted field investigation at three field sites over a period of eight months
- Designed and conducted 15 semi-structured interviews of leadership and lay members
- Analyzed historical documents from the local congregations

**SERVICE**

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UCSB Religious Studies Department Social Media Coordinator

Sep 2018 – present

- Generate original content for the departmental Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts
- Answer questions and mediate interactions on social media accounts
- Create schedule for posts and news alerts

UCSB Religious Studies Department Graduate Liaison

Sep 2018 – June 2019

- Organized professionalization workshop for graduate students
- Liaised between graduate students and faculty regarding concerns
- Spearheaded social events for graduate student support
- Attended faculty meetings

**RELEVANT WORK EXPERIENCE**

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**Mellon Foundation Engaging Humanities Program, Santa Barbara, CA**

*Mentor*  
present

Sep 2019 –

- Provided academic support and tools to 18 first-year students majoring in humanities
- Organized professional development workshops specific to humanities majors
  - Topics included: Finding jobs and careers, post-graduate education, finding research positions and internships, finding opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Mentored students individually to create goals and systems for academic success

**Reading Religion, A Publication of the American Academy of Religion, online**

*Copy editor and content contributor*  
2018

June 2018 – Sep

- Created questionnaire for and conducted two author interviews by phone or Skype
- Authored two review essays: "Death and Dying" and "New Religious Movements"
- Reviewed *Death, Ritual, and Belief* by Douglas Davies
- Copy-edited 169 book reviews for publication on the website

## Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences, Houston, TX

*Forensic Death Investigator II*

June 2015 – Aug 2017

- Conducted interviews with family and law enforcement for reporting cause of death
- Responded to 233 death scenes to document, recover, and identify human remains
- Conducted online research to aid in identification of the deceased and the next-of-kin
- Prepared and submitted 1,000+ reports following death investigations
- Communicated with families regarding procedures

## CONFERENCES

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“Ritual Without the Ritual? Secular People at Birth, Death, and In-Between,”

Accepted for The Nonreligion and Secularity Research Network (NSRN) Annual Conference, Online, 16-18 June 2021

“Believing and the Disposal of Bodies After Death,”

Accepted for Credition: An Interdisciplinary Challenge, Hannover-Herrenhausen, Germany, 20-22 October 2021

“From Tomb to Zoom: Creating New Spaces to Memorialize the Dead,”

Accepted for the Death, Dying, and Beyond Unit at the American Academy of Religion (AAR) Annual Conference, San Antonio, TX, Nov 20-23 2021.

“Institutionalized Individuality: Death and Meaning-Making in Liberal Religious Traditions,”

Accepted for presentation at the 2020 Society for the Scientific Study of Religion Annual Meeting (cancelled due to COVID-19 pandemic)

## PUBLICATIONS

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Applewhite, Courtney. “Unitarian Universalism,” *The Database of Religious History*, University of British Columbia, August 17, 2020. <https://religiondatabase.org/browse/967/#/>

Applewhite, Courtney. “New Books about Death and Dying, 2015-2018,” *Reading Religion*, August 31, 2018. <http://readingreligion.org/blogs/new-books-about-death-and-dying-2015-2018>

Applewhite, Courtney. “New Books in New Religious Movements, 2015-2018,” *Reading Religion*, October 3, 2018. <http://readingreligion.org/blogs/new-books-new-religious-movements-2015-2018>

Applewhite, Courtney. Review of *Death, Ritual, and Belief: The Rhetoric of Funerary Rites* by Douglas Davies, *Reading Religion*, April 27, 2018. <http://readingreligion.org/books/death-ritual-and-belief>

Drake, Stacy A, Ni Zhang, Courtney Applewhite, Katherine Fowler, and John B. Holcomb.

2017. "A social media program to increase adolescent seat belt use." *Public Health Nursing* 34, Issue 5: 500-504. <https://doi.org/10.1111/phn.12342>

Lau, K.M. and J.W. Muir. 2015. *Finding Your U: Navigating the College Admission Process*. Houston: Bright Sky Press. Courtney Applewhite, Editor.

## TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS

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RGST 35: Religion and Politics, Professor Joe Blankholm	Fall 2018
RGST 12: Religious Approaches to Death, Professor David White	Winter 2019
RG ST 71: Introduction to Asian American Religions, Professor Rudy Busto	Spring 2019

## SKILLS

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- Languages:
  - Spanish: Professional working proficiency (speaking, reading, writing)
  - French: Limited working proficiency (translation); basic (speaking, reading, writing)
- Computing: Social media management (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest), Zotero, NVivo, WordPress, Obsidian MD

## OTHER WORK EXPERIENCE

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### **Varsity Tutors LLC**, online

*Academic Tutor*

Nov 2012 – March 2021

- Worked with students individually or in small groups to increase comprehension
- Honed students' academic skills, improved performance, and developed organization
- Researched subject-specific teaching applications
- Evaluated standardized test-taking strategies
- Received positive feedback and score increases from majority of clients

### **Bright Sky Press**, Houston, TX

*Publishing Assistant*

May 2014 – June 2015

- Conducted author interviews for website features
- Edited manuscripts for content and style, grammar
- Drafted first company policies and procedures
- Generated 100+ invoices for customers using QuickBooks software
- Managed intern program and manuscript submissions
- Researched direct sales market to expand book availability

## INTERESTS AND HOBBIES

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Rugby (USA Rugby Level II Coach, Santa Barbara Mermaids Coach and on-field Captain 2019-2020, MVP 2018-2019, attended USA Rugby National Recruitment Camp), baking (catered two weddings, three birthday parties), gardening, trail running, cat training