

viaticum

ASBURY UNIVERSITY JOURNAL
OF RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP

VOL.
ONE
NOV.
2011

Making Music with Mathematical Ideas

Dr. Duk Lee presents study on ancient practice
of expressing musical intervals through numbers

▸ Beyond the Boundaries

Methodologies of the history
of Christianity in the visual arts

▸ A New Perspective

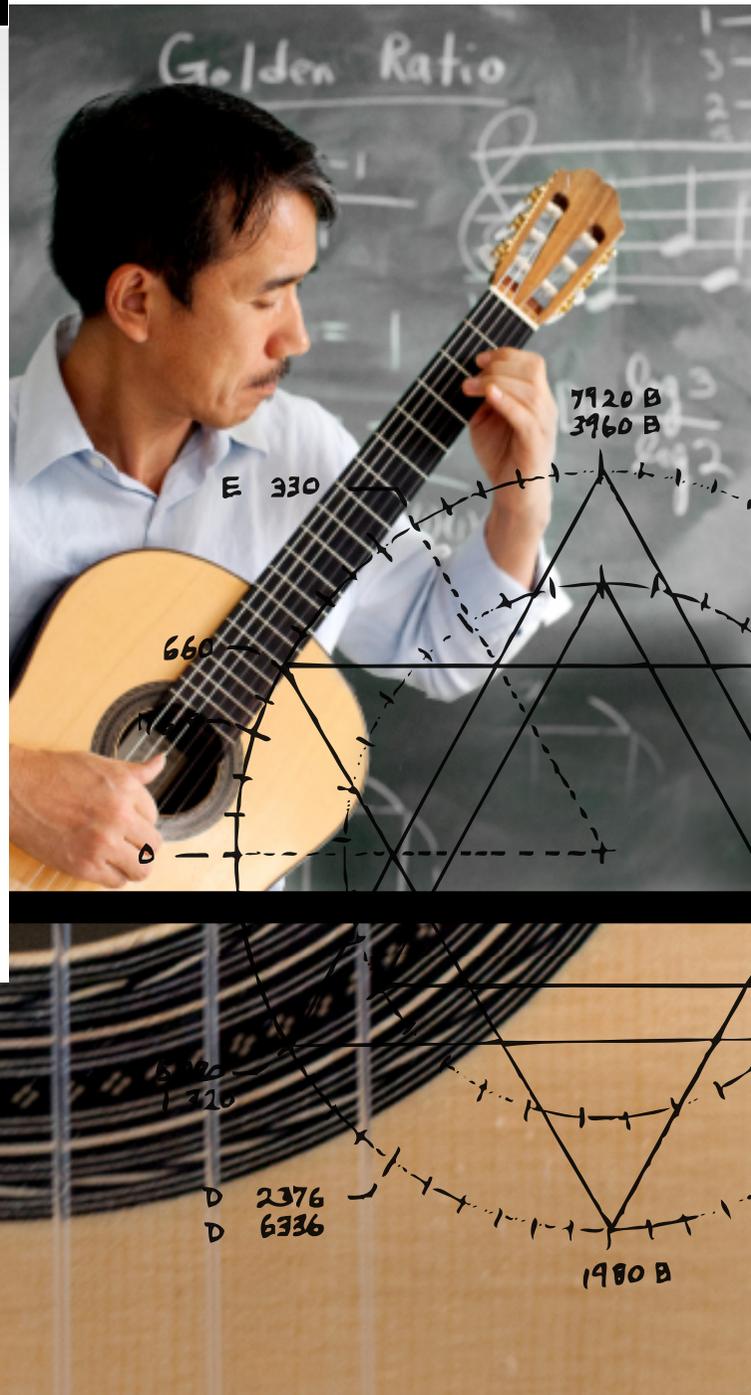
Analyzing a less-studied aspect
of American evangelicalism

▸ Saturated Phenomena

Intersections of philosophy,
literature and religious experience

▸ Also Featured...

- Tea time with Dr. Bruce Branan:
Antioxidant study brews in lab
- Catching the Research Spirit:
Students face Psych work head on
- Eye on the Asbury Archive:
Materials from Missionary Pioneers



viaticum

ASBURY UNIVERSITY JOURNAL
OF RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP

VOL.
ONE
NOV.
2011

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Asbury University, as a Christian Liberal Arts University in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition, is to equip men and women, through a commitment to academic excellence and spiritual vitality, for a lifetime of learning, leadership and service to the professions, society, the family and the Church, thereby preparing them to engage their cultures and advance the cause of Christ around the world. ▀

PUBLISHER: Asbury University

Office of the Provost

EDITOR: Brad Johnson

Director of Marketing and Communications

DESIGNER: Kyle J. Schroeder

PHOTOGRAPHY: Zach Wilson '11

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS:

Rebekah Daniels, Megan Jones '12,
Kenton Sena '12

If you're interested in learning more about Asbury University or would like more information about any of the features or research in this issue of *Viaticum*, please write to: Office of Public Relations, Asbury University, One Macklem Drive, Wilmore, KY 40390-1198. Or, please also feel free to call (800) 888-1818, ext. 2175 or e-mail us at bjohnson@asbury.edu. For general information about the University, please visit www.asbury.edu

vī-'a-ti-kəm I. N., 1. TRAVELLING
MONEY, PROVISIONS FOR A JOURNEY
(IN THE FORM OF FOOD, MONEY, ETC.).
2. (TRANSF.) INTELLECTUAL OR
SIMILAR RESOURCES

One of the most significant contributions

higher education makes to the wider culture is the knowledge creation that emerges from the work of the faculty. The scholarship at Asbury University represents a small part of that work occurring in colleges and universities around the world. The inaugural issue of *Viaticum* initiates another path by which Asbury University engages the culture, and makes its vital contribution. The research by faculty within the College of Arts and Sciences is the focus of this issue, with topics ranging from literature to math, and psychology to natural science.

Asbury University's commitment to a Christian view of the whole person brings a unifying approach to the research and scholarship of its faculty. St. Augustine stated "if faith does not think, it is nothing." John Henry Newman contended that if universities exist to expand knowledge, and if theology is in fact a branch of knowledge, then bringing God into the big picture is a reasonable act for any university to perform. John and Charles Wesley called for the uniting of "knowledge and vital piety" and "learning and holiness."

In his work Protagoras (B.C.E. 380), Plato's Socrates stated "knowledge is food for the soul". Likewise, we believe that knowledge, when integrated with faith in the mind and heart of the believer, not only feeds the soul, but also provides intellectual and spiritual resources for the journey of life.

I trust you will find the "resources" in this issue of *Viaticum* useful and engaging, and that they will continue to nourish your heart and mind on your journey as a lifelong learner. ▀



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jon S. Kulaga". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

Jon S. Kulaga, Ph.D.
Provost
Asbury University





Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division: LC-U9- 10361-15

New Evangelical Left

A less-studied aspect of evangelical politics — the progressive wing

Politics and religion might be off-limit topics of conversation for extended family holidays, but for David Swartz, assistant professor of history at Asbury University, they are research subjects.

In April of this year, Swartz attended an invitation-only academic workshop in the United Kingdom. Held at Keele University, the conference featured top young scholars in the field of American evangelical history from Princeton University, Purdue University, Cambridge University, the University of West Georgia, California State University-Long Beach and Kent State University.

The conference theme, “New Perspectives on American Evangelicalism and the 1960s,” revisited the “backlash theory,” which argues that evangelical politics emerged in the 1970s and 1980s as a spontaneous, fully formed countermovement to the cultural disruptions of the 1960s.

The conference participants, using case studies on the oil industry, abortion, civil rights, school prayer, Charles Colson and prison reform and the Great Society, instead suggested that evangelical political mobilization had actually begun decades earlier — and that evangelical mobilization in many respects actually followed the patterns of 1960s reform efforts.

“My own contribution analyzed a less-studied aspect of evangelical politics — its progressive wing,” Swartz said. “I argued that groups such as the Post-American community in Chicago or the Christian World Liberation Front in Berkeley with civil rights added a structural component to evangelicalism’s social theory.”

Realizing that soul-winning by itself could not solve racism, many evangelicals saw value in government pressuring Southern states to end segregation. Likewise, the Vietnam War provoked a substantial structural critique among



faculty and students at evangelical liberal arts colleges of the nation's complicity in systemic evil.

Swartz's theory on the contributions of progressive evangelicalism plays out in more recent history, as well. Extending the evangelical vision beyond the individualist, a soul-winning approach toward corporate responsibility paved the way for participation in electoral politics. This political impulse took shape in Evangelicals for (George) McGovern, the first explicitly evangelical organization in postwar American politics to support one of the presidential candidates.

Evangelicals for McGovern helped accelerate a new era in which politics was a viable option for evangelicals. In Swartz's analysis, this articulation of social and political engagement pioneered by the evangelical left was eventually co-opted by a rising religious Right, complicating the assumption that the "backlash" alone provoked evangelical political mobilization.

The following paragraphs are excerpts from:
*"The New Evangelical Left and the Move
from Personal to Corporate Responsibility"*
by David R. Swartz (April 17, 2011)

In 1947, journalist-theologian Carl F. H. Henry published "The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism." This seminal tract of the so-called "new evangelicalism" decried the obscurantism of his native religious tradition. Henry railed against the failure of fundamentalism to fully apply the gospel message. Modernity, Henry began, was replete with social evils, among them "aggressive warfare, racial hatred and intolerance, liquor traffic and exploitation of labor or management, whichever it may be."

But fundamentalism, motivated by an animus against religious modernism, had given up on worthy humanitarian efforts.

“Realizing that soul-winning by itself could not solve racism, many evangelicals saw value in government pressuring Southern states to end segregation.”

Henry’s clarion call, however, had limits. In “Uneasy Conscience,” for example, Henry’s clearest suggestion for social change ironically had less to do with party politics and social activism than with personal transformation. Authentic social transformation could only be sparked by spiritual transformation, he declared. Henry’s conception of social engagement thus consisted largely of placing redeemed individuals into positions of social importance more than specifying particular programs to oversee society.

By the 1980s, things looked very different. Many evangelicals were participating in unembarrassed political advocacy. The Moral Majority offered very specific policy prescriptions on issues as diverse as abortion regulation, prayer in school, economics and diplomacy. Major news magazines ran cover stories on the surge in evangelical political and cultural power. *Newsweek* even dubbed 1976 the “year of the evangelical.” Evangelicals, many clearly in a post-pietist context, no longer had to legitimize participation in debates over the public good.

What factors led to this evangelical surge? Why the sudden burden to extend evangelical responsibility from the personal to the corporate and social realms? Clues to this shift can be seen in the evangelical left of the 1960s and 1970s. Faculty and students at dozens of evangelical liberal arts colleges helped articulate this new shift toward corporate responsibility... [and] were profoundly shaped by the civil rights movement, Vietnam protests, the initiatives of the War on Poverty and other key elements of liberal politics.

The evangelical left amplified this postwar willingness to engage social and political systems, complicating the assumption that “backlash” solely provoked the emergence of public evangelicalism.

Evangelicals on the left thus added to the growing numbers of evangelicals on the right who clearly, insistently and powerfully articulated that evangelical faith could bring about political redemption. Due in part to the work of moderate and progressive voices on issues of civil rights and Vietnam, many more evangelicals now agree — in far greater proportion than in the 1940s — that the Gospel calls for holistic, not just personal, transformation.

Progressive evangelicals were attentive to structures — to institutional racism, civil religion, poverty and the electoral college. In this way, they rode the crest of a broader wave of sociology, poverty alleviation and other efforts that over the past several centuries have sought to address the vagaries of the industrial revolution. In their own way, the religious right has been addressing the same dislocations. Thus, it can be said that the move toward electoral politics has stemmed as much from a steady integration into American culture as from a reaction to it. Increasingly less isolated from cultural norms, evangelicals of all stripes have been investing in civic organizations. The rise of public evangelicalism can and should be seen as a result of its resonance with key developments in American culture. ▸



David R. Swartz is an Assistant Professor of History at Asbury University. David earned his M.A. and Ph.D. in American History from Notre Dame University after obtaining his bachelors degree from Wheaton College. Among other outlets, he has been published in *Books & Culture*, *Religion and American Culture*, and *Wesleyan Theological Journal*. His first book — “Left Behind: Progressive Evangelicals in an Age of Conservatism” — is scheduled to be published by University of Pennsylvania Press in 2012. David and his wife, Lisa, have four young children: Andrew, Jonathan, Benjamin and Anna.

TEA 101

The Study of Antioxidants and Other Surprises in Tea

Tea, the most widely consumed beverage in the world after water, has been praised as “liquid wisdom,” “lubrication for the brain” and “the comforts of solitude and the pleasures of wisdom.”

Asbury University Professor Bruce Branan has another few words for tea: scientifically fascinating.

The earliest recorded usage of tea as a beverage dates back to the 10th century B.C., in China. Since then, scientists and philosophers have examined this ubiquitous beverage, discovering along the way about antioxidants, flavanoids and caffeine.

“I’ve worked with the students to conduct research on many tea-related projects, from determining chemical compounds... to testing whether tea can be naturally decaffeinated.”

But how do the growing conditions of tea affect the concentrations of antioxidants? How does the composition of the water in which tea is brewed affect oxalate levels? How practical is it for tea drinkers to decaffeinate their own tea?

Branan is asking those questions — and finding some answers, with the help of Asbury students. When he needed a science project for his seventh-grader at home, he bought some tea from the grocery store, and together they analyzed the levels of the antioxidant epigallocatechin gallate, or EGCG.

EGCG is a powerful antioxidant credited with helping “clean up” free radicals in the human body, thus reducing damage to cellular DNA that could trigger disease. This project piqued his interest in tea and the rich variety of chemistry represented in the tea plant.

A turning point occurred in 2008 when Branan met Bruce Richardson, owner of Elmwood Inn Fine Teas in Perryville, Ky., an author and recognized expert on teas. Richardson and his wife, Shelley, spent 14 years running the Elmwood Inn Tea Room, a well-known location for traditional afternoon tea and the first American venue to be included in the Guild of British Tea Rooms’ annual “Guide to the Best Tea Places.”

Collaborating on tea research has been fruitful ever since, with Richardson supplying teas from all over the world, and Branan and his students providing the laboratory work.

“I’ve worked with the students to conduct research on many tea-related projects,” Branan said, “from determining chemical compounds responsible for the grape-like aroma of Darjeeling black teas, to testing whether tea can be naturally decaffeinated at home.”

The decaffeination study ended up exposing a myth, widely circulated, that tea drinkers could decrease the caffeine in their cups of tea by 80

percent infusing the tea leaves for 30 seconds to “wash” out the caffeine, discarding the water and then continuing with the brewing process. In truth, the tea required a three-minute infusion to reduce caffeine levels 46 to 70 percent.

Several students have worked on the question of how the altitude at which



tea is grown affects the EGCG and theanine (an amino acid) levels of the tea.

Branan's current project focuses on how calcium in water affects the EGCG and oxalate levels in teas. This could help in better understanding how methods of preparing tea affect its health benefits.



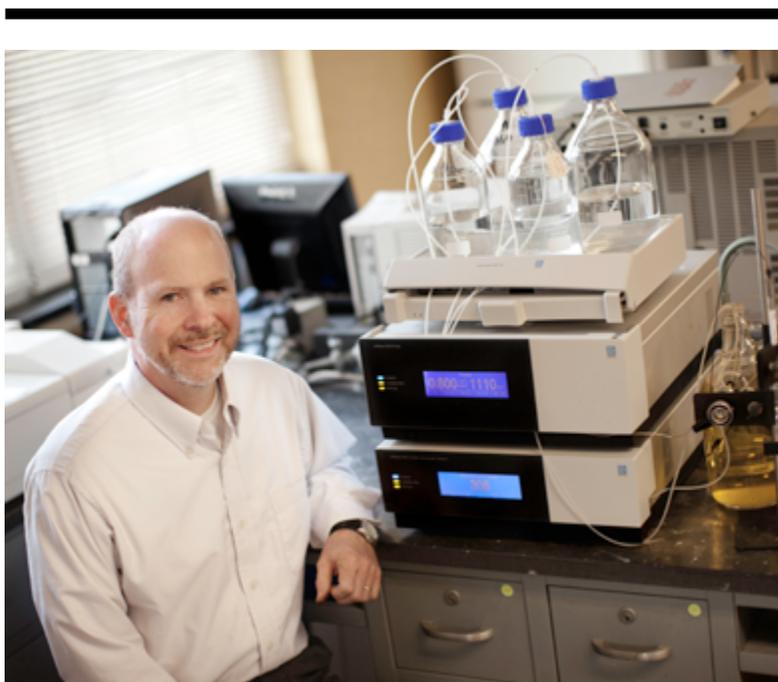
"I find projects that can be accomplished by students using the time, equipment and facilities we have right here on campus," Branan said. "I try to make it so that if they can't go off campus and spend eight weeks over the summer at a research university, they can still conduct valid research projects. The projects may be smaller, but they are still tailored for undergraduate science majors."

Several students who have worked with Branan have presented their research projects at the Kentucky Academy of Sciences, gone on to dental school, conducted graduate research at state universities, while others intend to go *directly* into the health professions.

Branan is always eager to encourage students to do laboratory research, because it solidifies their interest in science, and gives them a project to call their own.

Opportunities for students include projects in organic synthesis (making molecules of theoretical interest), using modern instrumental analysis methods to investigate naturally occurring compounds (like resveratrol, EGCG and theanine), or the opportunity to develop a project of their own.

What is most important, Branan says, is helping students recognize that they can contribute to a project, learn and have fun in the lab all at the same time. ▀



Dr. Bruce Branan has taught at Asbury University since 2000. He earned his B.A. in chemistry from UNC-Greensboro, and a Ph.D. in synthetic organic chemistry with Professor Leo Paquette at the Ohio State University in 1994. He and his wife, Laura, live in Wilmore, where they enjoy raising (and homeschooling) their eight daughters and two sons.

Beyond the Boundaries

Methodologies of the History of Christianity in the Visual Arts

The study of Art History, a field in which the aesthetic, cultural, sociological and psychological components of an artist's creativity are carefully evaluated, relies on proven methodologies to maintain a baseline of unbiased equity. But what happens when the methodologies themselves have become suspect?

Methodological Studies of Christianity in the History of Art — a book edited by Asbury University Professor Linda Stratford and James Romaine (co-founders of the Association of Scholars of Christianity in the History of Art) — explores underlying assumptions and “supports” by critically examining the success and failure of varying art historical methodologies when applied to works of art which distinctly manifest Christian narratives, themes, motif and symbols.

“Many recent methods of art history have maintained what has been viewed by some as a necessary skepticism toward matters of religious faith,” said Stratford, “presuming the discipline of art history and religion, especially Christianity, do not belong together.

“But there is an urgency to develop an open and rigorous discussion of methods by which scholars can constructively engage the history of Christianity and the visual arts, as a benefit not only to that history, but to the very integrity of the field of art history itself.”

The book offers 16 chapters that examine specific works of art from the history of Christianity and the visual arts. These chapters have been chosen, organized and edited to provide a chronological overview of selective examples from the history of Christianity and the visual arts with the aim of identifying specific works of art that

offered interesting methodological problems. In each chapter, the author has introduced a topic, reviewed the relevant critical literature, suggested methodological issues manifested by this literature's engagement of the topic, and offered a new potential reading.

“Recent scholarship in the fields of art history and theology points to growing interest in the complex and sometimes contradictory history of Christianity and the





visual arts,” Stratford said. “Serious art historical work has begun to rediscover ways in which works of art function as sites of sacred encounter. Recognizing and cultivating conversations about Christian content, art historians are exercising a variety of interpretive frameworks assuring that religious imagery will not be overlooked.”

In May 2010, a gathering of scholars convened in Paris, France, for a symposium entitled “History, Continuity, and Rupture: A Symposium on Christianity and Art.” At this symposium, sponsored in part by Asbury University and its Lilly Transformations Project, participants came to the consensus that the field of art history lacked scholarly forums in which issues of the history of Christianity in the visual arts could be openly, charitably and critically addressed.

The symposium became the inaugural event of the Association of Scholars of Christianity in the History of Art (ASCHA), dedicated to the facilitation and promotion of scholarship that examines the complex and contradictory history of Christianity and the visual arts.

At the conclusion of the Paris symposium, it was proposed that selected papers be gathered and published in order to continue the dialog. In February 2011, ASCHA held a symposium in New York and selected papers from

ASCHA's Paris and New York symposia were joined by essays specifically written for this book.

Methodological Studies of Christianity in the History of Art participates in this dialogue, aiming to develop and apply methods of art history that are academically rigorous as well as responsive to the art's Christian content. It calls for an expanded discourse on works of art that employ religious, specifically Christian,

“The present study contends that scholars ignore the pervasive and influential presence of Christianity in the history of art at the risk of distorting that history.”

— Dr. Linda Stratford

themes, iconography, subjects, and forms through the development of a diversity of methodologies that are fitting to and effective in critiquing and interpreting this art. ▶



Linda Stratford holds a Ph.D. in History from The State University of New York, Stony Brook where she studied the role played by art in the construction of cultural identity in modern France. She completed an undergraduate degree in Art from Vanderbilt University. As Associate Professor at Asbury University, she has produced numerous publications and presentations which draw upon cross-disciplinary training in art history, aesthetics, anthropology and sociology, and also served as co-curator for the traveling exhibition *A Romance with the Landscape*. Her interest in the intersection of art and Christian faith also informs her work. She was named president of Christians in the Visual Arts (CIVA) in 2009.

Creating Music with Mathematical Ideas

Ancient practice of expressing musical intervals as numeric proportions

There is a certain ease about the way Asbury University Associate Professor of Mathematics Dr. Duk Lee sits on a stool and strums his classical guitar. It's similar to the gentle manner and ease in which he communicates with his students and the ease in which he progresses through mathematical equations or fragmented geometrical shapes.

Based on his personal studies and the topic of papers and talks he's presented, that a mathematics professor finds ease relating to music and musical theory is really no surprise.

In a 2011 presentation provided to colleagues by Lee — who was chosen chair-elect of the Kentucky Chapter of the Mathematical Association of America in 2011 — he spoke about the mathematical study of music as a very ancient idea.

“Dating back to ancient Greece, Pythagoreans expressed musical intervals as numeric proportions,” Lee said. “Music and mathematics use different languages and deserve separate-independent places, but there are undeniable connections between them. Later under Plato’s influence, music was even understood as mathematical practice and application. However, this close relationship between these two disciplines seems forgotten or refused by many, including modern musicians and mathematicians.”

Recently, as Mandelbrot’s fractal geometry and its self-similarity concepts evolved — and, hence, influenced



Section of a woodcut showing Pythagoras with bells in Pythagorean tuning. From *Theorica musicae* by Franchino Gaffurio, 1492.

science, nature and arts — Lee said, “I became interested in analyzing musical intervals in a new way, and they saw fractals in music.”

“Beautiful and fascinating arts are ideas, and people ponder if the beauty of works, both visual or musical, has the so-called “self-similarity,” Lee said.

Mathematical procedures pertaining to fractal geometry construction have been implemented in making music by many, but some “fractal music” sounds — though interesting — are generally considered somewhat strange. This encourages the belief that creating music just with mathematics is not sufficient, and leads to an interdisciplinary project combining some components of mathematics, music theory, creative writing and technology. All of this is to create good sounding music that has a message.

To move in that direction, Lee says there must be an understanding of self-similarity in fractal geometry. A self-similar object is one that is exactly or approximately similar to a part of itself.



“Roughly speaking, when we know what the whole thing looks like just by observing a small portion of it, we say it has a self-similarity,” Lee said. “For example, a tree has a self-similarity. It could be created from a single vertical branch by an iteration process of attaching three small branches left, right, and top (see the visual example to the right). We could apply this iteration process in creating a sequence of musical notes, also.”

One example of this iteration process from Lee:

“To make a song in the key of C major or A minor — without any accidentals — we need a starting set of elements and rules for generating more elements. Say we start with a set of two notes, CE, and the rules are that the C note turns to three notes CGE, G to two notes EC, E to FE, and F to GC. The starting set and rules are purely random. For simplicity, assume each note is a quarter note. On the first iteration, CE becomes CGEFE. On the second iteration, CGEFE becomes CGEECFEGCFE. On the third iteration, CGEECFEGCFE

becomes CGEECFEFEGCGEGCFEECCGEGCFE.”

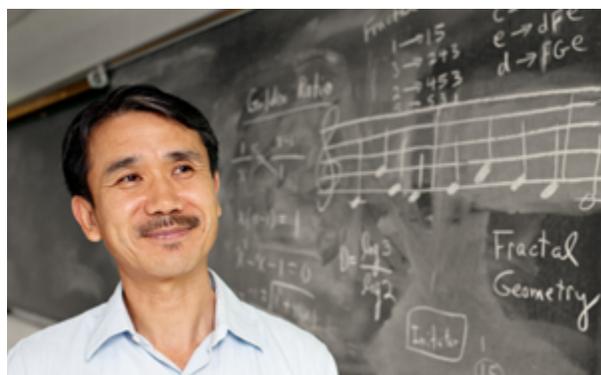
If one iterates that way for infinitely many times, a fractal sequence of notes would be created and that would be “fractal music” with a self-similarity. “Now poets in creative writing class can come in and add a title and lyrics and a real song is born,” Lee said.

With fractals, lyrics and music technology such as Logic Studio, the logical next step is recording, and this interdisciplinary project was actually accomplished during this past summer of Kentucky Governor’s Scholars Program. Students in classes of modes of mathematical thinking, music and creative writing worked closely together.

“All of the high-school students were absolutely amazed by the beautiful music that was being created right before their eyes,” Lee said. “But the greatest outcome of them all is the realization that seemingly very different disciplines such as math, music and writing were able to collaborate for one common goal, making a fascinating piece of art.”



Pythagoras Tree, as an illustration of self-similarity in fractal geometry, is an iteration process that can be applied in creating musical notes and sequences.



Duk H. Lee is a native of Korea who earned his bachelor’s degree in Chemical Engineering — and doctorate degree in Mathematics — at Arizona State University. He is in his 11th year at Asbury University and has taught a broad range of mathematics from mathematics for non-majors to complex analysis. For the past nine summers, Lee has served at the Kentucky Governor’s Scholar Program and he is president of the Kentucky Chapter of Korean-American Scientists and Engineers Association. He is passionate about origami art — and its mathematics and applications — loves music, playing classical guitar and discussing the inseparable connections between math and music.

Catching the Research Spirit

The Effects of Spiritual vs. Secular Mindfulness and the Impact on Stress Reduction

Like many undergraduate psychology students, Dr. Janet Dean, an assistant professor in Asbury University's Department of Behavioral Sciences, complained about taking Experimental Psychology. Convinced she was drawn to psychology to study the human mind, understand why we do what we do and learn how to help people with mental illness, she just couldn't muster much excitement about research... until she became involved in a research study on leadership styles. That experience, combined with research in graduate school, not only proved to her the practice of psychology is dependent on scientific research, but also that it could be engaging, challenging and fun.

"This is the spirit that I want our students to catch — and to catch it, they have to get involved," she said, referencing the requirement for students in Asbury's Experimental Psychology class to jump into research themselves. "Students in my class have to do original research projects. They work their way through the entire research process from developing a research question to working out the research design, seeking permission from the Institutional Review Board, collecting data, running the statistical analyses and presenting their research."

Class projects deemed to be of excellent quality are invited to represent Asbury at the annual Academic Conference sponsored by the Kentucky Psychological Association. Students who have gone to this conference have gained the opportunity to interact with faculty and students from around the state.

Collaboration is a key theme of several research possibilities for Asbury students. Dean is currently working with Asbury professor Dr. Paul Nesselrode and Asbury Theological Seminary professor Dr. Steve Stratton to develop a research program in the area of mindfulness. Mindfulness meditation — a long-lost spiritual practice in the Christian tradition — is a form of present-moment awareness, and its practice has been found to be linked to lower levels of anxiety and higher levels of spirituality. The team has been exploring the meditation practices of students and the differential effects of spiritual vs. secular mindfulness.

Several Asbury students were able to present their contributions to this research at the annual international conference of the Christian Association for Psychological Studies in 2011. This academic year, the research group will tackle a large study on forgiveness, working with 16 other institutions to explore the effectiveness of a broad community initiative in helping students find

greater forgiveness in their personal lives. Next year's project will be an investigation into the role of mindfulness in the forgiveness process and will be conducted in conjunction with research teams at Biola University and Bowling Green State University.





Jennifer Kimbrough: prayer 3, mixed media

Working with students on these research projects is an excellent avenue for teaching. Through this mentoring, professors are able to see students engage the research process and grow in their curiosity, critical thinking and administration skills.

“Every year, a student says to me: ‘You know, you’ve ruined my ability to *just* listen, right? Another professor said something interesting, and I found myself thinking through how I might study that phenomenon!’” Dean said. “I just smile — They have absolutely caught the research spirit.” ▶



Janet B. Dean is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Behavioral Sciences at Asbury University and a licensed psychologist in Kentucky. She holds an M.Div. from the Asbury Theological Seminary and a Ph.D from Ohio State University. Her current research interests include spiritual development, sexual identity development and religious values in counselor education. She’s the proud mom of two teenage boys and the devoted wife of soon-to-be-retired Navy Chaplain Lt. Cmdr. Kevin Dean (Asbury Class of 1992).

Another Asbury University research team is developing under the direction of Dean and Dr. Gay Holcomb to explore the spiritual development of students during their time at the University. Students helped develop good interview

questions regarding spiritual development and then interviewed their fellow students. Currently, the team is in the midst of analyzing the results and improving the research process for another intensive round of interviews.



George Herbert

Saturated Phenomena

English Poetry, Religious Experience and “Counterexperience”

With his scholarly study focused on the intersections of literature, philosophy and religion, Dr. Dan Strait, professor of English at Asbury University, investigates poetic thought to the very edge of what can be articulated.

In 2005, he was invited to the University of Notre Dame to participate in a NEH (National Endowment of Humanities) Summer Seminar entitled “Religious Experience and English Poetry, 1633-1985,” which established the trajectory for his more recent scholarly work. Then in 2007, he presented a paper on George Herbert and “saturated

experience” at the 2007 Pacific Northwest Renaissance Society meeting in Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

“This essay explores how George Herbert attempts to ‘name’ religious experience,” Strait said. “Yet in an attempt to ‘name’ the experiences, the poet confronts what Jean Luc Marion calls ‘counterexperience,’ a saturated phenomena that disappoints by its refusal to fulfill the intentions of the subject. In Herbert’s poetry, this foiling of experience holds the potential for another kind of fulfillment the poet doesn’t initially seek, nor foresee. Understood this way, counterexperience, as saturated phenomena, opens the way for rethinking Herbert as a ‘speller’ of religious experience.”

“The complexity of the religious poetry of Herbert and Dickinson poses compelling questions about what, in fact, counts as religious experience.”

More recently, Strait presented a paper on religious experience in the poetry of Herbert and Emily Dickinson at the International George Herbert Conference held at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro: “George Herbert’s Travels: International Print and Cultural Legacies.” Here, he developed his interest in phenomenological approaches to religious poetry. His essay, “‘Counterexperience’ in the Poetry of George Herbert and Emily Dickinson,” explains that religious poems are often characterized by a quality of “beyondness,” that is, of poetic language pointing beyond the reach of signs, what Dickinson describes, in her own inimitable way, as “The Glimmering Frontier / that skirts the Acres of Perhaps.”

“The complexity of the religious poetry of Herbert and Dickinson, in particular, poses compelling questions about what, in fact, counts as religious experience,” Strait said. “One important question in this study has to do with how religious poems, considered not so much as objects but as unfolding events, reveal the poets confronting the very possibilities for, and conditions of, experience.”

Strait’s research interests also extend to Shakespeare studies. In 2010, he presented at the Renaissance Society of America (RSA) meeting in Venice, Italy, where he read a paper on Shakespeare’s Falstaff, entitled “Following Falstaff: Ethics, Morality, and the Literary Imagination.” This study focuses on ethical and moral problems in Shakespeare’s Second Henriad, a sequence of well-known historical plays: Richard II, Henry IV (parts I and II), and Henry V. In March 2011, he continued his work in this area, presenting a paper at the RSA meeting in Montreal, Canada, on the Welsh dimension of Shakespeare’s Second Henriad. This

essay explores how the Welsh dimension of the plays disrupts — but also shapes — the moral demands of Prince Henry’s dramatic narrative. The Wales and Welsh culture mark a moral contour in the Henriad, a boundary which not only poses a political problem for Prince Henry, but also requires him to negotiate the moral tension between public obligations and private values.

This fall, Strait gave a paper on Herbert and Dylan Thomas (“Voice and Anguish in George Herbert and Dylan Thomas”) at the “Locating George Herbert: Family, Place, and Traditions” conference at the University of Wales. And in March 2012, at the RSA in Washington, D.C., he will present “‘Routes of Initiation’: Cavell, Shakespeare, and the Renaissance” as part of a panel presentation on the work of the American philosopher Stanley Cavell on Shakespeare studies.

“Teaching at Asbury takes place within the ambience of the classical liberal arts tradition, the ‘great conversation,’” Strait said. “Yet what makes this great conversation even greater, what gives its variety, is its creative reach, its depth of expression and its resonance, its life and fullness — its real humanity — is the truth of Christianity.”



Dan Strait is a professor of English at Asbury University, where he has taught for 13 years. He holds a Ph.D. in English from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, and in addition to his research, he’s an editorial board member of *The Chesterton Review* — a quarterly journal of religion, literature and culture. Dan and his wife have two children and live in Wilmore, Ky.



Missionary, Pastor, Pioneer

The Kinlaw Library Archives & Special Collections houses unique materials that document the life work of some of Asbury University's most illustrious alumni. Throughout Asbury's history, its students have been committed to following God's call to serve their fellow man, both here and overseas. J. Waskom Pickett is a significant example of that service.

At 20, Pickett had already earned both a B.A. (1907) and an M.A. (1908) from Asbury. He taught at Taylor for a year, but was encouraged to go to India by his college roommate, fellow missionary pioneer E. Stanley Jones. Pickett pastored churches and worked tirelessly to improve the lives of India's poor. He served 46 years in India

in such capacities as pastor, editor, publisher, secretary of regional and national Christian councils, and Bishop of the Methodist Church. He was influential in Indian affairs and became friends with Mahatma Gandhi and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Pickett is regarded as one of the best-informed American spokesmen for Christian missions throughout the world.

The Pickett Collection includes 27 boxes of primary source materials. It contains family records, personal correspondence, documentation of Methodist work in India from 1930-70s, extensive records of the Mass Movement, newspaper clippings, original manuscripts of speeches and articles he wrote, copies of Pickett's eight published works, rare books on India, as well as photographs and audio materials.