

# Sarah Elizabeth Shortall

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## ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

### University of Notre Dame (USA)

*Associate Professor of History*

2024 – present

*Assistant Professor of History*

2017 – 2024

### University College, Oxford University (UK)

*Sanderson Junior Research Fellow*

2015 – 2017

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## EDUCATION

### Harvard University (USA)

*Doctor of Philosophy, History*

November 2015

- Dissertation: “Soldiers of God in a Secular World: The Politics of Catholic Theology, 1905-1962” **Awarded the 2015 Harold K. Gross Prize (best dissertation in History at Harvard University)**
- Advisor: Peter Gordon (Harvard University, History Department)
- Committee: Judith Surkis (Rutgers University, History Department), Francis Schüssler Fiorenza (Harvard University, Divinity School), Ann Blair (Harvard University, History Department)

### Harvard University (USA)

*Master of Arts, History*

2010

- Examination fields: Modern France (Judith Surkis), Modern European Intellectual History (Peter Gordon), Early Modern European Intellectual and Cultural History (Ann Blair), Modern Catholic Theology (Francis Schüssler Fiorenza)

### Queen’s University (Canada)

*Bachelor of Arts (Honours, with Distinction), History*

2007

- Honours Thesis: “Reactionary Avant-Gardism: The Catholic Counter-Revolution, Transgressive Catholicism, and the Roots of the French Postmodern”
- Advisor: Harold Mah (Queen’s University, History Department)

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## PUBLICATIONS

### Books

*Soldiers of God in a Secular World: Catholic Theology and Twentieth-Century French Politics*  
(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021).

**Laurence Wylie Prize in French Cultural Studies**

**Giuseppe Alberigo Award (junior category), European Academy of Religion  
College Theology Society Book Award  
First place, History category, Catholic Media Association Book Awards  
Shortlist, Wallace K. Ferguson Prize (best book on non-Canadian history), Canadian  
Historical Association**

Co-edited with Daniel Steinmetz-Jenkins: *Christianity and Human Rights Reconsidered* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

**Peer-Reviewed Publications**

“‘Building the Earth’: Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Science, and the Spirituality of the United Nations,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 85, no. 4 (October 2024): 827-55.

“Decolonizing Theology: EATWOT and the Rise of Third World Theologies,” in *Decolonization and the Remaking of Christianity*, ed. Elizabeth Foster and Udi Greenberg (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2023), 198-217. Invited contribution.

“From the Three Bodies of Christ to the King’s Two Bodies: The Theological Origins of Secularization Theory,” *Modern Intellectual History* 20, no. 3 (September 2023): 785-807.

“Theology and the Politics of Christian Human Rights,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 79, no. 3 (July 2018): 445-460. Invited contribution.

“Psychedelic Drugs and the Problem of Experience,” *Past and Present* 222, suppl 9 (2014): 187-206.

**Essays and Reviews**

“Institutions, Ideas, and the Depoliticization of Religion” (review of Jonathan Laurence, *Coping With Defeat: Sunni Islam, Roman Catholicism, and the Modern State*), *Syndicate Network* (submitted).

“Religion and the Divine: A Global History of Twentieth-Century Catholicism through the Eucharist,” *A Cultural History of Ideas in the Modern Age*, ed. Stefanos Geroulanos (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), 109-26. Invited contribution.

“God of the Continental Philosophers,” *Commonweal*, February 28, 2020.

“When Catholicism Embraced Modernity,” *Boston Review*, August 10, 2018.

“Lost in Translation: Religion and the Writing of History,” *Modern Intellectual History* 13, no. 1 (April 2016): 273-286.

“Bergson, Henri (1859-1941),” *Routledge Encyclopedia of Modernism*, ed. Stephen Ross (Routledge, 2017).

**Academic Blog Posts**

“The Enigma of Pope Francis,” Series on the legacy of Pope Francis, *Contending Modernities*, July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2025

At *The Immanent Frame* (Social Science Research Council):

- “Conclusion,” forum on “Experience between the secular and the divine,” October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

- “Beyond a Christian genealogy of the secular,” forum on “History and theorizing the secular,” September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017.
- “The Vatican Spring?” forum on the election of Pope Francis, May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2013.
- “The Vatican and the ‘war on women religious,’” May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2012.
- “Of Saints, separatism, and secularization (Part 2),” January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2011.
- “Of Saints, separatism, and secularization (Part 1),” November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010.
- “Belonging without believing,” August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2010.
- “Who’s afraid of Pelagius?” August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2010.
- “Impure thoughts,” July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010.
- “Sex, scandal, and the secular,” June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

### Commentary

On the Québec Charter of Values:

- “There’s more than one path to female empowerment,” *The Montreal Gazette*, November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2013.
- “Importing France’s model of laïcité is a mistake for the PQ,” *The Montreal Gazette*, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2013.

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## PRESENTATIONS

“Catholic and Secular Narratives of Globalization: Pierre Teilhard de Chardin at the United Nations,” Annual Meeting of the American Society for Church History, held in conjunction with the Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association, Chicago, January 2026.

Roundtable on “Innovation and Religion: Promises, Pitfalls, and Paths Forward,” invited panelist, de Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture Fall Conference, University of Notre Dame, November 2025.

Roundtable on “Religion and the Common Good: The Ethical Framework,” invited panelist, Commission for Religion and the Common Good in Australia, University of Divinity, Melbourne, Australia, August 2025,

“‘Building the Earth’: Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Science, and the Spirituality of the United Nations,” invited paper, Modern Europe Workshop, Center for Collaborative History, Princeton University, April 2025.

“Soldiers of God in a Secular World: The French Jesuits Between the Anticlerical Campaign and the Rise of Fascism,” invited lecture, Living Well at the End of the World, Morningside Institute, April 2025.

“Decolonization and the Remaking of Christianity,” invited lecture, Valparaiso University, January 2025.

“(Re-)introducing Vatican II,” Roundtable on Shaun Blanchard and Stephen Bullivant, *Vatican II: A Very Short Introduction*, University of Notre Dame, April 2024.

- “Planetary Catholicism: Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and the Spirituality of the United Nations,” keynote speaker, Center for Research on Global Catholicism seminar fellowship program, Saint Louis University, January 2024.
- Roundtable on Jonathan Laurence, *Coping with Defeat: Sunni Islam, Roman Catholicism and the Modern State* (Princeton University Press, 2021), Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, November 2023.
- “Planetary Catholicism: Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and the Postwar Global Order,” Transatlantic Workshop: University of Notre Dame/Bielefeld University, May 2023.
- Roundtable on *Soldiers of God in a Secular World*, invited lecture, Catholic University of America, January 2023.
- “Roundtable in Honor of the 2020-2021 Laureate of the Wylie Prize in French Cultural Studies: Sarah Shortall, *Soldiers of God in a Secular World*,” invited lecture as recipient of the 2020-2021 Wylie Prize, New York University, October 2022.
- “The Weapons of the Spirit: Catholic Theology and the Resistance to Nazism in France,” Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association (panel held virtually due to Covid-19), February 2022.
- Invited participant, Templeton Religion Trust and Templeton World Charity Foundation consultation on Progress in Theology, Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium, March 2020.
- “The *Nouvelle Théologie* and the Battle for the Soul of Existentialism in Postwar France,” invited paper, workshop on Phenomenology and Religion, Harvard University, October 2019.
- “Christianity and Human Rights Reconsidered,” Moral Theology Colloquium, University of Notre Dame, May 2019.
- “‘The World in a Wafer’: The Eucharist and the Global History of Catholicism,” conference on Global History and Catholicism, University of Notre Dame, April 2019.
- “Soldiers of God in a Secular World: The Politics of Catholic Theology in Twentieth-Century France,” Notre Dame Institute for Advanced Study, February 2019.
- “The Weapons of the Spirit: Catholic Theology and the Resistance to Nazism in France,” Annual Meeting of the Society for French Historical Studies, Pittsburgh, March 2018.
- “New Perspectives on Twentieth-Century Catholicism,” panel on James Chappel, *Catholic Modern* and Piotr Kosicki, *Catholics on the Barricades*, University of Notre Dame, February 2018.
- “A Spiritual Front: Catholic Theology and the Resistance to Nazism in France,” Modern Religious History Seminar, Oxford University, May 2017.
- “Exile Catholicism: Anticlericalism, Antimodernism, and the Birth of the ‘Nouvelle Théologie,’” invited paper, workshop on New Perspectives on Political Pluralism and Religious Conflict, University of Edinburgh, May 2017.

- “The Theological Foundations of the Spiritual Resistance to Nazism in France,” History of Political Thought Seminar, Oxford University, February 2017.
- “From Royalism to the Mystical Body of Christ: The Interwar Revolution in French Catholic Political Theology,” Cambridge Political Thought Seminar, Cambridge University, November 2016.
- “Marxism, Decolonization, and the Rise of a Planetary Catholic Consciousness,” conference on Religious and Secular Internationalisms, University College, Oxford University, May 2016.
- “The Weapons of the Spirit: Catholic Theology and the Resistance to Nazism in France,” History Department Research Seminar, Monash University, Australia, March 2016.
- “An Alternative History of Christian Human Rights,” invited presentation, Annual Symposium in the Humanities and the Social Sciences, Queen Mary University of London, January 2016.
- “The Heart of Matter: Marxism, Négritude, and the ‘Planetary’ Turn in Global Catholicism,” invited presentation, conference on Political Catholicism, The Remarque Institute, New York University, December 2015.
- “From the Three Bodies of Christ to the King’s Two Bodies: A Theological Genealogy of Secularization Discourse,” conference paper, conference on Theorizing Religion in Modern Europe, Harvard University, March 2014.
- “Secularizing Theologies,” invited panelist, conference on After Secularization, University of California Humanities Research Institute, University of California, Irvine, March 2013.
- “Separation Anxiety: Theological Anthropology and the Problem of Christian Democracy in France,” conference paper, conference on Transnational Christianity and the Problem of Democracy, Harvard University, February 2013.
- “Theology in Exile: Jersey and the Institutional Roots of the Nouvelle Théologie,” conference paper, Annual Meeting of the American Catholic Historical Association, held in conjunction with the Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association, New Orleans, January 2013.
- “Henri de Lubac, Gaston Fessard, et les enjeux politiques de la théologie catholique française (1926-1950),” invited presentation, Atelier des Doctorants, Groupe Sociétés, Religions, Laïcités, École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris, April 2012.
- “Religion and Intellectual History,” invited panelist, The Remarque Institute Kandersteg Seminar, Kandersteg, Switzerland, March 2012.
- “Integrating Theology: Henri de Lubac and the Interwar Origins of the Critique of Neo-Scholasticism,” conference paper, Annual Meeting of the American Catholic Historical Association, held in conjunction with the Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association, Chicago, January 2012.

“An Atheism that is not Humanist Emerges in French Thought,” discussant, book discussion by Stefanos Geroulanos, Harvard University Colloquium for Intellectual History, Harvard University, March 2011.

“Drugs and the Problem of Experience: The Case of the American Psychedelic Drug Culture, 1949-1969,” conference paper, conference on Intoxicants and Intoxication in Cultural and Historical Perspective, Cambridge University, July 2010.

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## AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

Shortlist, Wallace K. Ferguson Prize, Canadian Historical Association	2023
First place, History category, Catholic Media Association Book Awards	2022
Laurence Wylie Prize in French Cultural Studies	2020 - 2021
Giuseppe Alberigo Award (Junior category), European Academy of Religion	2021
College Theology Society Book Award	2021
Harold K. Gross Dissertation Prize, Harvard University	2015
Sanderson Junior Research Fellowship, University College, Oxford	2015 - 2018
Mellon/ACLS Dissertation Completion Fellowship	2014 - 2015
Charlotte W. Newcombe Dissertation Fellowship, Woodrow Wilson Foundation (Declined)	2014 - 2015
Krupp Completion Fellowship, Center for European Studies, Harvard University (Declined)	2014 - 2015
Dan David Prize Scholarship, Dan David Foundation (Israel)	2012 - 2013
History Department Prize Instructorship, Harvard University	2012 - 2013
Certificate of Distinction in Teaching, Bok Center for Teaching, Harvard University	Spring 2011
Frederick Sheldon Traveling Research Fellowship, GSAS, Harvard University	2011 - 2012
Krupp Research Fellowship, Center for European Studies, Harvard University	2011 - 2012
Dissertation Proposal Development Fellowship, Social Science Research Council	Summer 2010
Graduate Society Summer Pre-dissertation Fellowship, GSAS, Harvard University	Summer 2010
Doctoral Fellowship, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada	2008 - 2012
Weatherhead Center for International Affairs Grant, Harvard University	2009 - 2010
Dean's Honour List, with Distinction (top 3% of graduating class), Queen's University	2006 - 2007
Arthur M. Keppel-Jones Essay Prize (best essay in History), Queen's University	2005 - 2006
Frank Carrel Merit Scholarship, Queen's University	2003 - 2007

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## TEACHING

**University of Notre Dame** Fall 2017 – present

- ALHN 13950: Honors Seminar (Freshman Seminar, Glynn Honors Program)
- History 35557: Catholicism and Empire
- History 30554: Catholicism Confronts Modernity
- History 35524: Modern European Thought from Rousseau to Foucault
- History 93362: Perspectives on Religion and Politics (Graduate Seminar)
- History 13184: Modern European Catholicism (Freshman Seminar)
- History 30454: Modern France since the Revolution

**University College, Oxford University**

- Disciplines of History:
    - Religion and History Hilary Term 2016
    - The Linguistic Turn Hilary Term 2016
- Trinity Term 2017



## Harvard University

- History 72L: “Religion and Modernity in Transatlantic Perspective”  
*Undergraduate seminar I designed and taught as the recipient of a competitive graduate student instructorship.*

Spring 2013

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## ACADEMIC SERVICE

### *Referee*

- Harvard University Press, Georgetown University Press, Manchester University Press
- *Modern Intellectual History; French History; Social History of Medicine; Journal of the History of Ideas; Catholic Historical Review; Bulletin of the History of Medicine; RES - Anthropology and Aesthetics*
- Henry Luce Foundation

### *Laurence Wylie Prize in French Cultural Studies, Selection Committee*

2024

- Committee to select the 2024 recipient of a major book prize awarded bi-annually for the best book in French social or cultural studies on any time period.

### *Transnational France Research Cluster, Co-Chair (University of Notre Dame)*

2022 – present

- Co-chair of an interdisciplinary hub for the study of France and the Francophone world at Notre Dame. The Transnational France research cluster brings in speakers, puts on a film series, and organizes numerous events pertaining to France and the Francophonie every semester.

### *Catholic Re-Visions, Advisory Committee*

2021– present

- Advises the editors of *Catholic Re-Visions*, an academic blog under the Political Theology Network.

### *Department Service (University of Notre Dame)*

- Job Search Committee: “Transnational History, post-1800” 2025 – 2026
- Strategic Planning/DEI Committee 2024 – 2025
- Graduate Placement Officer 2023 – 2024
- Exploratory Job Search Committee: “History of Race and Religion” 2023 – 2024
- Graduate Studies Committee 2021 – 2023
- Advisory Committee to the Chair (elected) 2019 – 2020  
2021 – 2022
- External Review Committee 2018 – 2019
- Works in Progress Colloquium Organizing Committee 2017 – 2018

### *Global History and Catholicism Conference, Planning Committee*

April 2019

- Member of planning committee for a three-day conference on global history and Catholicism held at Notre Dame in April 2019.

### *Religious and Secular Internationalisms, Conference Co-Organizer*

May 2016

- Co-organized an international workshop on internationalism at Oxford University. Participants included both the leading and emerging scholars in the field.

<i>Undergraduate Admissions for History (University College, Oxford)</i>	2015 – 2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducted undergraduate interviews, graded admissions exams, and selected successful candidates for admission to the B.A. in History at University College.</li> </ul>	
<i>Theorizing Religion in Modern Europe, Conference Co-Organizer</i>	2013 – 2014
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-organized a major interdisciplinary conference on the role of religion in modern Europe at Harvard University in March 2014.</li> </ul>	
<i>Society for French Historical Studies Annual Conference, Organizing Committee</i>	2012 – 2013
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Member of seven-person committee charged with organizing a major three-day, 500-person academic conference jointly hosted at Harvard and MIT.</li> </ul>	
<i>Center for European Studies Graduate Workshop, Chair (Harvard University)</i>	2010 – 2011
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revived, organized, and chaired a yearlong workshop for Ph.D. candidates to present and receive feedback on dissertation chapters and articles.</li> </ul>	

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## LANGUAGES

French (native-level proficiency in writing, reading, and speaking)  
Italian (advanced reading; intermediate speaking)  
Spanish (advanced reading; intermediate speaking)  
German (intermediate reading; beginner speaking)  
Brazilian Portuguese (intermediate reading; beginner speaking)

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## AFFILIATIONS

Nanovic Institute for European Studies (University of Notre Dame)  
Kellogg Institute for International Studies (University of Notre Dame)  
Ansari Institute for Global Engagement with Religion (University of Notre Dame)  
Groupe Sociétés, Religions, Laïcités (École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris)  
American Historical Association  
American Catholic Historical Association  
American Academy of Religion

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## REFERENCES

### **Ann Blair**

Henry Charles Lea Professor of History  
Harvard University  
Center for Government and International Studies  
South Building, Room S437  
1730 Cambridge Street  
Cambridge, MA 02138  
amblair@fas.harvard.edu

### **Peter E. Gordon**

Amabel B. James Professor of History



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Center for European Studies, Room 305  
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**Udi Greenberg**  
Associate Professor, Department of History  
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**Samuel Moyn**  
Chancellor Kent Professor of Law and History  
Yale University  
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**Francis Schüssler Fiorenza**  
Charles Chauncey Stillman Professor of Roman Catholic Theological Studies  
Harvard University, Divinity School  
Divinity Hall, Room 301  
14 Divinity Ave.  
Cambridge, MA 02138  
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**Jonathan Sheehan**  
Professor of History  
Director, Berkeley Center for the Study of Religion  
University of California, Berkeley  
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**Judith Surkis**  
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