

First Year Research Award: Religion

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Kati Fitzgerald

Position Title: Buddhism in American Prisons

Criteria: The Wittenberg University Department of Religion will offer a First Year Research Award for the academic year 2025-2026 to an incoming student to work with Dr. Kati Fitzgerald. This student will have a demonstrated academic ability and/or research interest in Buddhist Studies, mass incarceration, police brutality and prison chaplaincy.

Expectations: FYRA Scholarship recipients will devote between 6 and 8 hours per week across their first year to FYRA program and their research-related project, according to the FYRA Learning Contract agreed upon by the sponsoring professor and the scholarship recipient. Recipients will also be expected to participate in a regular meeting of FYRA recipients, present their results in an appropriate forum and submit a copy of their presentation to the appropriate university office. FYRA Scholarship recipients will also participate in an assessment of the FYRA program. (The FYRA Scholarship is not part of a student's work study award.)

Research Activity: The First Year Research Award recipient will assist Dr Kati Fitzgerald, Assistant Professor of Religion, in her ongoing research on Buddhism in American prisons as agreed upon in the FYRA learning Contract. The FYRA Scholarship recipient will have the opportunity to be involved in many aspects of Dr. Fitzgerald's research, including: conducting literature reviews, compiling data on past and present programs, reaching out to organizations to collect data, sending inquiries and making initial contact with institutions, etc. The FYRA recipient will be mentored in these research practices and will have an opportunity to present their work publicly at an undergraduate conference or colloquium at Wittenberg University, or a regional conference. Depending on the recipient's interest and level of involvement, there may also be the potential for co-authorship of manuscripts to be submitted for publication in an academic journal or presentations at professional conferences. Recipients should have good critical thinking and writing skills and an interest in police brutality, mass incarceration, rehabilitation programs and Buddhist thought and practice.