

## Instructor Introductory Letter

December 19, 2008

Dear *Writing the University*:

I am writing to introduce one of my students, Mr. Ronald Moore, and to submit his essay for inclusion in the journal *Writing the University*. I believe the essay is an ideal example of writing in the discipline of the academic study of religion.

Ronald was a student in my “History of Religion” course during this spring semester of 2008. He and his classmates were given the assignment of exploring the eighteenth century phenomenon of the “First Great Awakening.” They were required to discuss how this event led colonial Americans to move from a religious context within which people did not conceive themselves “apart from a larger collectivity” to a revivalistic context within which this collective vision was “penetrated and shattered” by directing the message of Christianity “to the individual.” They were also asked to discuss how the “massive stirrings of divine grace among the colonists were signs that America might have a special destiny in God’s plan—as the site of the beginning of the millennial kingdom”; and how either Native Americans or Africans/African Americans were excluded, both collectively and individually, from experiencing this “millennial kingdom.” Given America’s current claims of political, cultural, economic, and religious exceptionalism, I find this admittedly difficult assignment particularly relevant.

Ronald’s essay, “America’s First Great Awakening,” examines these issues in brilliant fashion. It is certainly illustrative of the sort of work being produced by scholars who are involved in the academic study of religion. In my opinion, although it was written for an undergraduate course, it is clearly representative of graduate work. The essay is powerfully written, moving from one idea to the next in an informative and provocative way.

Sincerely,

Philip C. DiMare  
Department of Humanities and Religious Studies