

Brittany Ann Acors

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CURRENT EMPLOYMENT

Postdoctoral Fellow, Clinical Center Department of Bioethics, National Institutes of Health, 2024–present

EDUCATION

Ph.D. Religious Studies (American Religious History), University of Virginia, 2024

Dissertation: “Creed and Crisis: American Religious Responses to Polio”

Certificate in American Studies

Master of Public Health, Health Policy, Law, and Ethics, University of Virginia, 2022

Master of Arts, Religious Studies, University of Virginia, 2021

B.S. Biology, Religious Studies, College of William & Mary, *summa cum laude*, Highest Honors, 2018

IN-PROGRESS PROJECTS

“Medical Science and Civil Religion: Past and Present”

- Using historical examples and analysis of present events, this article argues that, throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, science became an essential part of America’s understanding of itself, its duty to its people, and its mission to the world, and, therefore, part of American civil religion.
- Revising draft based on departmental feedback; projected submission by September 2025

“Religious Perspectives on Non-Invasive Prenatal Testing Among Black Women in the United States”

- Through secondary data analysis of qualitative interviews, this project analyzes the role religion and/or spirituality plays in Black women’s views of noninvasive prenatal testing.
- Co-authoring with Shameka Poetry Thomas, Ohio State University
- Awaiting co-author draft review; projected submission by September 2025

“Ethical Considerations for Closing and Modifying NIH-Sponsored Research”

- This report provides ethical guidance for the closure of NIH-funded clinical trials with terminated or delayed grants, with particular attention to social value, scientific validity, informed consent, and community partnerships.
- Co-authoring with several faculty members of the NIH Department of Bioethics
- Internal report was finalized in June 2025; projected submission for publication in an academic journal by October 2025

“BMI and Weight-Based Participation Criteria in Clinical Trials: A Systematic Search and Ethical Analysis”

- This study serves as a caution against the arbitrary inclusion of BMI-and/or-weight-based participation in clinical trials, of which IRBs and researchers should be aware.
- Co-authoring with Emily Peugh, Johns Hopkins University
- Finalizing draft; projected submission by November 2025

PUBLICATIONS*

**Sole authorship, unless otherwise noted*

Articles

“Commentary: Weighing Parents’ Reasons Regarding the Use of GLP-1 Medications in Pediatric Care,” *American Journal of Bioethics* (accepted, forthcoming 2025)—co-authored: **B. Acors**, E. Peugh

“A Caution Against Monstrosity Language in Virology Communications,” *Science Communication* (2025)

“‘Why God Wanted Me to Have Another Chance’: American Catholic Women, Disability, and Vocation in Polio Memoirs,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* (2024)

- Recipient of the New Scholar Essay Prize from the Francis and Ann Curran Center for American Catholic Studies at Fordham University

“Masks v. God and Country: The Conflict Between Public Health and Christian Nationalism,” *Studies in Church History 58: The Church ‘in Sickness and in Health’* 58 (2022)

“The Relationship of Workplace Health Climate and Telework Status,” *American Journal of Health Research* 10, no. 3 (2022)—co-authored: A. Lowry, **B. Acors**, L. Kheir, D. Bhojwani, and V. Tringali

“Legally Faithful: Establishing a Constitutional Definition of ‘Religion’ for the United States,” *University of Pennsylvania Undergraduate Law Journal*, 9th ed. (2017)

Book Chapters

“What Are Religious Delusions? A Challenge at the Intersection of Belief and Mental Illness,” *Survival, Resistance, Flourishing: Religion and Disability*, ed. Heike Peckruhn & Kirk VanGilder (forthcoming from Routledge, 2026)

Book Reviews

“A Review of *The Lives of Jessie Sampter: Queer, Disabled, Zionist* by Sarah Imhoff,” *Reading Religion* (October 2023), online at: <<https://readingreligion.org/9781478018063/the-lives-of-jessie-sampter/>>

“A Review of *Flat Earth and Fake Footnotes: The Strange Tale of How the Conflict of Science and Christianity Was Written Into History* by Derrick Peterson,” *Reading Religion* (December 2022), online at: <<https://readingreligion.org/9781532653339/flat-earths-and-fake-footnotes/>>

“The Dreams of Our Past and Present: A Review of *Imagining Judeo-Christian America*,” *Religion and Its Publics Blog* (November 2020), online at: <<http://relpubs.as.virginia.edu/the-dreams-of-our-past-and-present-a-review-of-imagining-judeo-christian-america-by-brittany-acors/>>

“Anointed with Oil – Response,” *Religion and Its Publics Blog* (April 2019), online at: <http://relpubs.as.virginia.edu/anointed-with-oil-response-by-brittany-acors/?fbclid=IwAR0yO207HO-vDHA_wAGj9bCaM5PW3FhmrgbxFbm80PdfM_JZE89OCiJu0NM>

PRESENTATIONS

“Disability, Vocation, and Catholicism,” Invited Lecture at Fordham University (forthcoming March 2026)

“Bankruptcy in the Headlines: Ethics of the 23andMe Bankruptcy,” Lecture at William & Mary School of Law (forthcoming October 2025)

“Ethical Guidance for Abrupt Closeout of Clinical Trials,” Clinical Center Ethics Committee Meeting, April 14, 2025

“The Unseen Monster: Polio, Fear, and American Religion,” American Society of Church History Annual Meeting 2025

“Sacred Research: Medicine, Disease, and Trust in American Civil Religion,” American Society of Church History Annual Meeting 2025

“Overcoming Fear: Examples from Polio Epidemics,” Health Humanities Consortium 2024 Meeting

“Religious Responses to Pandemics: A Historical Perspective,” Huskey Research Exhibition 2024

“Communities During Health Crises: Caring vs. Casting Out,” AAR-SE Annual Meeting 2024, Panel co-sponsored by the Religions in America Unit and the History of Christianity Unit

“(Re)Making Space: Polio Survivors and Accessible Architecture in Houses of Worship,” American Society of Church History Annual Meeting 2024

“Memoirs as Authoritative Sources for Religion and Disability,” New Directions for Church History Conference 2023, Co-sponsored by the Ecclesiastical Historical Society and the American Society of Church History

“‘Praying for Strength & Courage’: Gender, Religion, Class, and Care in the Polio Epidemics,” American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting 2023, Panel co-sponsored by the Feminist Theory and Religious Reflection Unit and the Lesbian-Feminisms and Religion Unit

“Healing,” Invited Lecture for the Theology, Medicine, and Culture Initiative Lunch Series at Duke Divinity School, September 2023

“Creed and Crisis: Lived Religious Responses to the U.S. Polio Epidemic,” William & Mary Graduate & Honors Research Symposium 2023

“A Catastrophe of Body and Spirit: Religious Responses to Polio,” American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting 2022, Panel sponsored by the Science, Technology and Religion Unit

“Religion, Sex, and HPV,” American Society of Bioethics and Humanities Annual Meeting 2022, Vaccines and Religion session

“Flash Presentation: Burst the Bonds: Religious Responses to the Polio Vaccine,” American Society of Bioethics and Humanities Annual Meeting 2022, Issues Highlighted by the COVID-19 Pandemic session

“Executive Summary: Public Health Partnerships in History,” White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, Spring 2021

“Masks v. God and Country: The Conflict Between Public Health and Christian Nationalism,” AAR-SE Annual Meeting 2021—*Religion, Health, and Disease*, Panel sponsored by the Religion, Culture, and the Arts group

“A Government of Geniuses: The Raëlian Vision for the Future,” Boston University’s Graduate Program in Religion Conference 2020: Religion and the Future

“Children of Faith: American Protestantism, ‘A Formula of Agreement,’ and the Twentieth-Century Ecumenical Movement,” Southeastern Commission for the Study of Religion Annual Meeting (SECSOR) 2020 Conference, Panel sponsored by the Secularism, Religious Freedom, and Global Politics group

“Children of the Bible: American Protestantism, ‘A Formula of Agreement,’ and the Twentieth-Century Ecumenical Movement,” Honors Colloquium 2018, College of William & Mary

“The Availability of Health Care Facilities in Detroit,” Summer Research Showcase 2015, College of William & Mary

“The Modern Anti-Vaccination Movement,” Colonial Academic Alliance (CAA) Undergraduate Research Conference 2015, Drexel University

HONORS AND AWARDS

New Scholar Essay Prize, Francis and Ann Curran Center for American Catholic Studies at Fordham University (2025)

Visiting Student Award for Excellence in Scholarship in the Humanities and Social Sciences, William & Mary Graduate & Honors Research Symposium (2023)

Institute of the Humanities & Global Cultures Dissertation Prospectus Fellowship (2022 – 2023)

PhD+ Internship Fellowship (2022 – 2023)

Dean’s MPH-PhD Fellowship in Public Health (2021 – 2022)

Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences (AHSS) Summer Research Award (2021)

Jefferson Fellowship Finalist (2021)

American Academy of Religion – Southeast Region Graduate Paper Award Honorable Mention (2021)

Project on Lived Theology Research Grant (2020)

Southeastern Commission for the Study of Religion Graduate Paper Award (2020)

TEACHING*

**At University of Virginia, unless otherwise noted*

Instructor of Record

“RELG 2660: ‘Spiritual But Not Religious’: Spirituality in America” (Summer 2024)

“Introduction to Health Humanities,” UVA Northern Virginia Summer Enrichment Program (Summer 2023; course cancelled)

Co-Instructor

“RELG 334: Christian Reformations, Protestant Denominations, and Modern Religious Politics,” College of William & Mary (Spring 2018)

Teaching Assistant

Graduate Seminar on Teaching Writing (Summer 2022)

Summer Transition Program (Summer 2020; Summer 2021)

“RELG 2660: ‘Spiritual But Not Religious’: Spirituality in America” (Spring 2021)

“RELC 2050: The Rise of Christianity” (Fall 2020)

“RELG 2160: Religion in America Since 1865” (Spring 2020)

“RELG 1400: The Art and Science of Human Flourishing” (Fall 2019)

“RELI 2024: Jewish-Muslim Relations” (Spring 2019)

ADDITIONAL WORK EXPERIENCE

Joint Commission on Health Care (Internship, Fall 2022 – Spring 2023)

Hoo’s Well: UVA’s Employee Wellness Program (Applied Practice Experience for the Master of Public Health Degree, Spring 2022)

Center for Health Humanities and Ethics (Research Assistant, 2021 – 2022)

Jefferson’s University Early Life Project (Research Assistant, Summer 2019)

Saturday Enrichment Program, Curry School of Education (Instructor, November 2018 – February 2019)

The Roy R. Charles Center for Academic Excellence, College of William & Mary (Peer Scholarship Advisor, 2014 – 2018)

SERVICE

Counseling Simulation Actor, Johns Hopkins University Genetic Counseling Master's Program

Volunteer, The Autism Society of Central Virginia

Associate Editor, *Essays in History*

Teaching as a Graduate Student (TAGS) Facilitator, University of Virginia Center for Teaching Excellence

Vice President of Communications (2020 – 2021), Department Representative (2018 – 2020), Social Chair (2018 – 2019), University of Virginia Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Council

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

William & Mary Women's Weekend (September 2025)

Mid-Atlantic Bioethics Fellows Conference (April 2025)

Tomorrow's Professors Today Program through the Center for Teaching Excellence (2018 – 2024)

c3Design Workshop, Center for Teaching Excellence (Summer 2023)

Fellowship Workshop Series, UVA PhD+ Program (Summer 2023)

Graduate Seminar on Teaching Writing (January 2021)