

RODE SHEWAYE MOLLA

Alexandria, VA | Phone: 703-461-1784 | rmolla@vts.edu

EDUCATION

Iliff School of Theology, University of Denver CO Ph.D. in the Study of Religion	Denver, 2021
United Hospital Certificate of Four Units Clinical Pastoral Education	Saint Paul, MN 2016
Western Theological Seminary Master of Theology	Holland, MI 2015
Luther Seminary Master of Arts: Special Concentration in Children, Youth, and Family Ministry	Saint Paul, MN 2013
Mekane Yesus Seminary B.Th. in Theology	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 2005

TRAINING AND CERTIFICATIONS

- Wabash Doctoral Students Teaching Seminar | 2019
- Completed Certificates in:
 - Theological Foundations of Peace Building | CORAT Africa | Nairobi, Kenya | 2011
 - Children's Counseling, Children Discipleship Training | Sharon Ministry | Addis Ababa, Ethiopia | 2008
 - Child Advocacy | Compassion Ethiopia | Addis Ababa, Ethiopia | 2007
 - Child Abuse and Protection | Compassion Ethiopia | Addis Ababa, Ethiopia | 2006

RESEARCH AND TEACHING METHODS

In the field of religious and theological studies, I place myself as a pastoral and practical theologian. My research and teaching employ an interdisciplinary methodology at the intersection of postcolonial theory; political, public, and intercultural pastoral care; practical and lived religion; a critique of neoliberalism; and liberative pedagogical practices. Beyond teaching pastoral care and theology and practical theology courses, I am equipped to teach electives and seminars in contemporary religious studies, such as postcolonialism; globalization; neoliberalism; lived religion; children, youth, and family ministry; and education and social change.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Assistant Professor, Berryman Family Chair for Children's Spirituality and Nurture | *July 2022 -- Present*
Virginia Theological Seminary | Virginia, Alexandria

- Teach the equivalent of 15 credits each year in the Master's and Doctoral programs, taking into account responsibilities for course development and/or advising the Lilly Grant as Faculty Advisor on Christian Parenting and Care
- Lead a weekly formation and advise colloquy group during the school terms
- Serve on faculty committees and participate tenure evaluation process
- Participate in worship, including attending one daily act of corporate worship and leading occasionally
- Actively participate in community life, including lunch and various on-campus events
- Submit an annual report in alignment with the requirements of the chair
- Hold the Berryman Family Chair for Children's Spirituality and Nature, which involves engaging in research, teaching, and advocacy concerning children's spirituality and nurture

**Graduate Teaching Assistant | Courses: Pastoral Care & Theology, Practical Theology, & Hebrew Bible | 2017
University of Denver and Iliff School of Theology | Denver, CO**

- Consulted with the course professor on syllabus design with input based on my intercultural teaching experiences
- Provided teaching support for online, hybrid, and residential courses, which included topics on intercultural pastoral care and practical theology and the Hebrew Bible
- Expanded students' scope of learning to ensure they learned intercultural and international pastoral care methods and skills
- Facilitated group conversations to provide support for assignment completion and offered strategies and feedback to complete and improve upon final projects and papers
- Taught practical theology methods to address contextual, individual, and communal issues in their organizations, churches, and communities

**Graduate Teaching Assistant | Courses: Pastoral Care and Theology | 2014-15 Academic Year
Western Theological Seminary | Holland, MI**

- Graded papers and provided feedback for students in their ongoing pastoral leadership and formation
- Developed skills in translating residential course experience to the online and hybrid format that integrated methods of building connection and personalizing the online learning experience
- Facilitated group compassionate listening exercises to empower students to practice their pastoral skills
- Provided real-time coaching for students on compassionate listening during their delivery of pastoral care
- Attended meetings with other TAs and the professor to discuss and evaluate our teaching methodology

**Instructor of Pastoral Care of Children and Children and Youth Ministry Courses | 2013-14 Academic Year
Evangelical Theological College | Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

- Designed course syllabi with a focus on teaching the foundations about participatory youth ministry and pastoral care of children
- Empowered students to implement creative and strategic youth approaches in their respective congregations
- Facilitated group assignments, presentations, and conversations in/outside of the classroom to build intercultural caregiving approaches
- Cultivated strong relationships among ethnically diverse student groups to demonstrate the capacity of self-differentiation, openness, and curiosity
- Developed intercultural and cross-cultural student-teacher communication skills to create cohesion and productive dialogue among students from diverse ethnic backgrounds
- Created a space for students to demonstrate the skill of inclusivity and diversity by promoting multilingual communication and acceptance and respect of different identities
- Applied participatory pedagogical methods to promote active engagement in the learning process
- Designed and launched the first-ever pastoral care of children course into the curriculum to fill a gap in the Ethiopian theological discourse that had previously not been addressed
- Provided interdisciplinary reading materials to challenge students to bring a critical lens while engaging literature and other content framed in the predominantly Western context
- Mentored students to apply the theology of participatory youth ministry and children's pastoral care methods to write final projects designed to create and deliver youth ministry models within their congregations

RESEARCH AND ACADEMIC CONFERENCES, PRESENTATIONS, AND PANELS

- Panel Facilitator | Religious Education Associate 2023 Annual Gathering entitled "Whose Children are They?" | A Plenary on Responses for Early Childhood Educators | July 2023, online.
- Speaker | Alfred Street Baptist Church | Providing Space for all Children | July 2023, at Virginia Theological Seminary, Alexandria, VA.
- Keynote speaker | Godly Play North America 2023 Annual Gathering entitled Faith and Creativity | "Towards a Postcolonial Practical Theology of Children" | June 2023, Kansas City, MO.

- Panelist | Society for Pastoral Theology 2023 Annual Gathering for the Postcolonialism and Globalization Group | “A Postcolonial Political Theology of Care and Praxis in Ethiopia’s Era of Identity Politics: Reframing Hegemonic and Fragmented Identities through Subjective in-Betweenness” | June 2023 Online.
- Presenter | American Academy of Religion National Annual Gathering 2023 African Religion Unit | From Holistic Theology to In-Between Theology | Denver, CO, November 2022
- Speaker | The University of Denver DU Impact 2025 | “Relay” | 2019, Denver, CO
- Panelist | DU Graduate Student Government | “Finding Your Voice” | 2019, Denver, CO
- Panelist | Advanced Fundraising Course - University of Denver | “Charity and Religion” | 2019, Denver, CO
- Presenter | Rocky Mountain-Great Plains Region | “Resisting Ethiopia’s Imposed Higher Education Ideologies Through Lived Religious Experiences of Ethiopians” | *“The Lived Religion Unit”* | 2019, Omaha, NE
- Presenter | 34th Society for Pastoral Theology Conference | “Inviting Ethiopia to the In-between Spaces: A Pastoral Theology of Hope for a Fragmented Ethiopia” | *“Pastoral Theology as Activism: Disruptive Pedagogies and Transgressive Practices”* | 2018, Atlanta, Decatur
- Poster Presenter | DU Research and Performance Summit | “Reframing the Adwa Victory as a Decolonizing Praxis: Discourse Around Colonization in the Ethiopian Context” | 2018, Denver, CO
- Presenter | American Academy of Religion (AAR) Annual Conference | “The Affective Power of Child Baptism,” Children’s Religiosity Beyond Sunday School Class” | *“Childhood Studies and Religion Unit”* | 2018, Denver, CO
- Presenter | American Academy of Religion (AAR) Annual Conference | “Decolonizing White Painted, Tamed, Traumatized Ethiopian Bodies” | *“African, Black, and Indigenous Religion Unit”* | 2018, Denver, CO
- Panelist | Iliff School of Theology | *“Why the Church”* Course | 2017
- Presenter | Queens College’s Second Annual Interdisciplinary Conference | “Applying Ethiopian Ways of Knowing to Interrogation of Under-Development and Risks to Children in Ethiopia” | *“Sustaining Diverse and Inclusive Communities”* | 2017, New York, NY

ACADEMIC AWARDS

- Outstanding Academic Work | Iliff School of Theology Honors and Convocation | 2018-19, 2020-2021
- Larry Kent Graham Scholarship | 2019-2020
 - Scholarship for recognition of my work on pastoral care and theology and publication on “Pastoral Care for At-Risk Children in Ethiopia.”
- Outstanding Publishing & Research Excellence Award | Iliff School of Theology and the University of Denver Joint Doctoral Program | 2017-18
 - Awarded for outstanding publishing and research and writing in presenting papers, publishing book reviews, and articles.
- Inclusive Engagement Scholarship Award | The University of Denver | 2016-2017 and 2017-2018
 - Awarded for achievement in pastoral care work for at-risk children in Ethiopia and focus on intercultural, social justice care research, writing, ministries, and practices.
- Outstanding Th.M. Student Award | Western Theological Seminary | 2015
 - Award presented for demonstration of intercultural, academic, and research competence throughout the academic year.

PUBLICATIONS

Books

- *A Postcolonial Political Theology of Care and Praxis in Ethiopia’s Era of Identity Politics: Reframing Hegemonic and Fragmented Identities through Subjective In-Betweenness.* Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2022.

Articles

- “Children’s Experiences Matter: An Interdisciplinary Approach.” *Religious Education* 118, no. 2 (2023): 113 – 118.
- “From Holistic Theology to In-Between Theology: The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus.” *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 21 (Spring 2022): 202-219.
- “De-Colonizing Identity Politics Through Subjective In-Betweenness.” *The New Polis* 1 (Fall 2022): 167-185.
- “Reframing the Adwa Victory as a Decolonizing Praxis: Discourse Around Colonization in the Ethiopian Context.” *Journal of Culture and Religious Theory* 19, no. 2 (Spring 2020): 452-462.
- Molla, Rode and Conner, Benjamin T. “Beyond the Limitations of Applying Western Youth Ministry Thought to an Ethiopian Context.” *Journal of Youth Ministry* 16, no. 3 (Fall, 2018): 48-64.
- “Pastoral Care in the Living Web for At-Risk Children in Ethiopia.” *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 28, no. 3 (2018):189-102.
- “Mekane Yesus and Children, and Youth.” *Connect Journal of Children, Youth, and Family Ministry* (Spring, 2013).

Reviews

- Review of *The People’s Zion: South Africa, The United States, and a Transatlantic Faith-Healing*, by Joel Cabrita. *Pneuma* 41, no. 3-4, (2019): 589-591.
- Review of *For the Love of God: Principles and Practice of Compassion in Mission*, by Jerry M. Ireland (ed.) *Pneuma* 39, no. 4, (2017): 572-574.

Dissertation and Theses

- “Reframing Hegemonic and Fragmented Identities through Subjective In-Betweenness: A Postcolonial Political Theology of Care and Praxis in Ethiopia’s Era of Identity Politics.” Dissertation, the University of Denver and the Iliff School of Theology Joint Doctoral Program in the Study of Religion, Denver, CO, 2021.
- “Pastoral Care in the Living Web for At-Risk Children in Ethiopia.” Master of Theology Thesis, Western Theological Seminary, Holland, MI, 2015.
- “The Theology of Fenedata Youth, the Flowers and the Fruits of Today in the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus.” Master of Theology Thesis, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, MN, 2013.

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

President - University of Denver Graduate Student Government (GSG) | June 2019 – June 2020

University of Denver (DU) | Denver, CO

- Recruited, interviewed, and assigned student board members to positions of VP, Communications, Community Engagement, and Inclusive Excellence
- Partnered with the Chancellor’s office to facilitate orientation to educate new board members about DU’s strategic plan and overall programs and initiatives
- Designed and crafted mission, vision, and values for the GSG based upon DU’s strategic plan
- Created a culture and tradition that supports holistic development where students flourish within relationships, professional development, intercultural experiences, and inclusive excellence
- Organized quarterly events and programs to promote engagement, community building, and career development
- Mentored and supported elected board members to thrive and excel within their roles
- Planned and facilitated biweekly and monthly board and senate meetings
- Served on search committees representing the voice and concerns of graduate students

Resident Chaplain | August 2015 -- June 2016

Allina Health United Hospital | Saint Paul, MN

- Completed four-units of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)
- Created pastoral learning goals for pastoral formation, competency, and reflection

- Utilized spiritual assessment, internal family systems theory, verbatims, inner-spiritual dialogue, role plays, Enneagram, and psychosynthesis to achieve pastoral learning goals
- Integrated topics and themes of power, shame, race, and gender in clinical discussion to cultivate awareness about power dynamics in clinical relationships
- Incorporated spiritual and emotional care and compassionate listening to fulfill a clinical assignment in intensive care and cardiac units
- Shared on-call responsibilities with peers, meeting urgent needs throughout the hospital
- Implemented intercultural pastoral care approaches by designing a care model called the 4D's (Discern, Define, Describe, and Develop) and 2A's (Articulate and Aware)
- Utilized the 4D's and 2A's care model to assess and evaluate the multiple dimensions within the inner and outer living web of chaplains and care receivers
- Met weekly with supervisor to reflect on personal and spiritual life to develop pastoral competency
- Presented, listened to, and reflected on verbatims, case studies, and spiritual reflection during tri-weekly group supervision
- Collaborated with interdisciplinary team to address needs of patients and their families in the ICU, Children's Unit, and other Units.
- Developed skill of self-differentiation as a method to maintain awareness around triggers in clinical dynamics and strategies to set boundaries essential for pastoral competency
- Met with several care receivers daily to provide space to share stories of vulnerability, covering such themes as miracles, joy, death, along with addiction, grief, and loneliness

Children's Ministry National Coordinator | *July 2009 -- July 2014*

The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) | Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

- Oversaw 24 synods' children's ministry in the EECMY
- Solely planned and launched national conferences and trainings to equip pastors and leaders with knowledge and tools to advocate for children in EECMY and communities
- Organized an interdisciplinary advisory committee of theologians, child psychologists, social scientists, and curriculum developers to collaboratively build curriculum
- Wrote proposals to solicit financial support from donors to help fund curriculum, child advocacy programs, and ministries
- Designed and delivered holistic child development curriculum with a relevant and inclusive approach integrating different developmental and learning levels
- Developed cultural competency skills to bring understanding and respect for the myriad cultural differences across congregations and synods in the EECMY
- Leveraged inclusive communication and relational approaches to welcome all leaders and ministers who represented multiple cultural and linguistic backgrounds and identities

Board Vice Chairperson | *May 2006 -- November 2009*

EECMY Children and Youth Ministry Department | Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

- Held leadership role, while also managing full-time position of Project Director and forum leader
- Led the synod youth ministry forums to discuss issues affecting youth and proposed strategies for resolution
- Represented the North Central Ethiopia Synod Youth Ministry at the Synod Council and National Youth Ministry Forum
- Proposed launch of inaugural Children's & Youth Day in the EECMY calendar, which was successfully approved by the Executive Board and remains an annual national and synod event
- Initiated proposal to expand division to the department level to increase the budget and grow and improve upon ministries
- Prepared and presented reports to the Council, an Executive Board of the EECMY

- Assisted youth forum preparation at The National Office of Children and Youth Ministry by providing relevant and contextual recommendations
- Evaluated and approved annual finances and budget for the children youth department in the EECMY
- Evaluated the EECMY President's yearly job accomplishments
- Attended EECMY's quarterly executive board meetings in Addis Ababa

Project Director | *May 2006 -- November 2008*

Compassion Ethiopia Kombolcha Mekane Yesus Child Development Project | Kombolcha, Ethiopia

- Planned, facilitated, and organized quarterly and yearly child development project activities
- Organized an active children's ministry committee within the congregation and community to achieve holistic development of children
- Designed projects and programs to nurture and empower children by providing solid education, after school programs, skills training, and social clubs, including spiritual conferences and youth programs
- Prepared awareness training for the community and congregations about children's rights in order to create a society that supports and advocates for children
- Served as a voice for children through teaching, preaching, leadership decision-making, and program facilitation
- Built strong relationships and networks with religious leaders, NGOs, and private and public schools to create a collective voice that nurtures and protects children in their living web

Full-Time Minister | *June 2005 – May 2006*

EECMY North Central Ethiopia Synod Kombolcha Congregation | Kombolcha, Ethiopia

- Preached once a month
- Provided counseling and taught confirmation classes
- Visited congregation members
- Coordinated and delivered mission conferences
- Led Prayer, Bible study, and other small groups
- Taught adult Bible and theology classes
- Trained youth and children and women ministry leaders
- Facilitated children and youth ministry within the congregation

LEADERSHIP AND INTERCULTURAL EXPERIENCES

- Served in diverse advisory committees: worship committee, VTS Portfolio revision, Life Long Learning and tenure revision committees at Virginia Theological Seminary since August 2022
- Editorial Board for the Journal of Pastoral Theology Since June 2023
- Serve as a substitute pastor as needed at Peace Lutheran Church
- Ordained in the ELCA for Word and Sacrament on December 3, 2022, at the Immanuel Chapel at Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria, VA
- Substitute Pastor | Saint Peter Lutheran Church | November - December 2021
- DU/Iliff Joint Ph.D. Program Senator - Student Government | University of Denver | 2017-2019
- Administrative Assistant | University of Denver Internationalization Office | 2017-2018
- Student Government International Students Representative | Western Theological Seminary | 2014 - 2015
- Assistant | Luther Seminary International Students and Scholars Affairs Officials | 2012 –2013
- Children Program Leader | American Lutheran Normandale Congregation | 2012 – 2013
- Children & Youth Ministry Leader | America Lutheran Church | Christ Lutheran on Capitol Hill | 2012 - 2013

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS

Comprehensive Exam in the Professional Field: Pastoral and Practical Theologies | Winter 2019

- Examined and articulated trends, concerns, and methods and the theological content in various pastoral and practical theology models and paradigms
- Analyzed and reflected on the intersection between pastoral and practical theology
- Explored how lived human experiences, including religion, could be integrated into individual and public care, social justice, political actions, and praxis
- Articulated political, postcolonial, intercultural, and embodied pastoral and practical theological methods to be used in dissertation
- Was equipped to create a pastoral care model that resists the imposed neoliberal ideologies and governmentalities through in-betweenness and in-between spaces
- Developed competency in teaching and conducting research in practical and pastoral theologies

Comprehensive Exam in the Minor Area of Study: Globalization, Neoliberalism, Postcolonial, and Decolonial Theories (Globalneocolonialism) | Winter 2019

- Demonstrated general awareness and understanding of the process of globalization and the rationality of neoliberalism as articulated in literature with a particular focus on its relationship to religion
- Analyzed and reflected on the differences and similarities between decolonizing and postcolonial theories
- Articulated how neoliberalism and globalization normalize and legitimize the definitions of development, poverty, and risks to children in Ethiopia, and identified the potential cultural and material harm of simply accepting these definitions in work with Ethiopian children
- Compared and contrasted the relationship between religion, globalization, neoliberalism, and postcolonialism in order to articulate the social and economic struggle of postcolonial nations
- Identified and created postcolonial resources that identify possibilities for resisting or disrupting these two forces
- Became familiar with neoliberalism and globalization theories to create conversation in teaching and researching

Comprehensive Exam in the Area of Study: Religion and Human Experience (Lived Religion) | Fall 2019

- Understood religion in relation to fields of social scientific inquiry, including psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, media/communications, and cultural/ethnic/gender studies
- Identified the theories and methods to integrate into the research in the field of lived religion
- Explored how pastoral and practical theologies apply social scientific, psychology and ethnographic research
- Applied practical reflection and analysis in the area of lived religion using critical response on gender, race, ethnic, and sexual identities of individuals and communities
- Refined skills in depth of knowledge in teaching and research in the area of lived religion

Comprehensive Exam in Perspective Religion | Fall 2019

- Examined theological, philosophical, critical, social, and psychological perspectives and methods in the study of religion
- Critically reflected on religion and religious study using postcolonial, borderlands religion, and decolonial and deconstructive approaches to religion
- Created a conversation on the field of religion and theological studies that could enable me to be heard in the academy
- Deepened skills in articulating theories of contemporary religious studies and methods such as affective religion, borderland religion, postcolonial studies, neoliberalism, and globalization to apply within teaching and researching

REFERENCES

- Dr. Carrie Doehring: Professor of Pastoral Care and Theology, Counseling at the Iliff School of Theology. cdoehring@iliff.edu
- Dr. Katherine Turpin: Professor of Christian Education and Practical Theology at the Iliff School of Theology. kturpin@iliff.edu

- Dr. Carl Raschke: Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Denver. carl.raschke@du.edu
- Dr. Emmanuel Lartey: Professor of Pastoral Theology and Spiritual Care at the Candler School of Theology, and Graduate Division of Religion. elartey@emory.edu

Updated on June 6, 2023