

# ALISON MEARNS BENDERS

---

## EDUCATION

**PH.D.** Boston College, Systematic and Comparative Theology,  
Dissertation: *A Comparative Study of Self Awareness and Self-Transcendence* (Lonergan and Sankara)

(<http://escholarship.bc.edu/dissertations/AAI3255941/>)

**S.T.L.** Jesuit School of Theology, Systematic Theology

**M.A.** Boston College, Systematic Theology/Spirituality

**J. D.** University of Virginia, School of Law

**B.A.** Yale University, Philosophy

## ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

July 2020 - **Associate Dean and Senior Lecturer - see below**

to present Jesuit School of Theology, Santa Clara University, Berkeley, CA

On sabbatical through July 2021. Project title: *Recollecting America's Original Sin: A Pilgrimage Walking the Color Line.*

- *Continuing SCU Service Responsibilities:* dissertation committee member for GTU doctoral student, and thesis reader for JST masters students; orientation and advising new JST Dean; training for and service on SCU Equity Hearing Panel (Title IX office); and continuing consultation on JST staff, faculty and student issues as needed.

July 2019 - **Interim Dean and Senior Lecturer**

July 2020 Jesuit School of Theology, Santa Clara University, Berkeley, CA

- *Responsible* for comprehensive operations of the school, including financial oversight of all operations and fundraising. Reporting to Santa Clara University Provost, with oversight by JST Board of Directors (25 members); nine direct reports in areas of: academic administration; non-degree academic programming; enrollment; finance and operations; and development. Fifteen faculty members, 15-20 adjuncts. 150 students: 40-45% international; 25% women; 45% Jesuit seminarians or priests. Oversight for all staff positions, with final decisions for hiring, promotion, and annual evaluations.
- *Major initiatives:* Strategic goals implementation resulting in: restructuring of development area and enrollment area; Global Theology Initiative; supervisory oversight of strategic enrollment plan; curriculum development toward public and social issues engagement; school-wide transition to and faculty development for fully online learning. Oversaw two faculty searches for tenure track positions. Created Director of External Relations position to support development. Coordinated JST 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration, spring 2020 events cancelled due to Covid. Oversaw self-study for reaccreditation by Association of Theological Schools (ATS), visit scheduled for March 2021.

- *Santa Clara University*: Served on Dean’s Council, Presidential Action Committee, and numerous university level committees for development, strategic planning, faculty status issues, and personnel searches.
- *Graduate Theological Union*: Served on Consortial Council of Presidents and on Board of Trustees of the Graduate Theological Union (fiduciary board), assigned to Academic Committee.
- *Other Service and Activities*:
  - *Ignatian Colleagues Program* – participant in formation in Ignatian values and application for higher education through the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (cohort 12, July 2019-December 2020)
  - *Academics*: thesis director for 1 STD student and 1 STL student; reader for 1 PhD dissertation and 1 STL thesis; regular guest lecturer on racial justice and theological anthropology in JST classes
  - *Bay Area Coordinator for American Pilgrimage Project*: coordinating with the Berkeley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, Dr. Paul Elie (Senior Fellow), American Pilgrimage Project Conversations with for Story Corps in Bay Area, work postponed due to pandemic.
  - *Sabbatical Project*: University approved sabbatical for 2020-21 for Race Pilgrimage Project, under book contract with Liturgical Press

2014  
to 2019

**Associate Dean and Senior Lecturer**

Jesuit School of Theology, Santa Clara University, Berkeley, CA

- *Responsible* for the comprehensive operations, staffing and budgeting in Academics, Enrollment Management and Student Life and Formation. Ongoing academic administration activities include oversight for six graduate academic degrees (both civil and ecclesiastical) and non-degree programs for approximately 150 students, and for coordinating academic initiatives as a member school of the Graduate Theological Union. Supervisory responsibility for nine direct reports (staff, academic administrators and faculty formation directors). Particular responsibilities include:
  - Managing academic operations for course scheduling, academic staffing, registration, adjunct hiring, visiting instructor program, overload contracts, and student advising.
  - Leading curriculum development and academic programming in collaboration with faculty curriculum committee and faculty program directors.
  - Leading JST’s annual and accreditation academic assessment in collaboration with University administrators; professional accreditation through Association of Theological Schools; regional assessment through Western Association of Schools and Colleges for civil degrees; and Vatican Curia (Roman Catholic) for ecclesiastical degrees.
  - Coordinating with Dean on hiring, evaluation and development of all permanent faculty and faculty administrators.
  - Supervising Assistant Dean of Enrollment Management, Assistant Dean of Student Life, JST Registrar, and Academic Operations Specialist.

- Supervising directors of non-degree academic programming: Intercultural Initiatives, Academic Support Services, Instituto Hispano, Spiritual Formation, Ministerial Formation, Women of Wisdom and Action (ended 2019), and Renewal (Sabbatical) Program.
  - Overseeing area personnel and operational budgets for academic and non-academic units.
  - Providing administrative leadership for JST Strategic Plan (2018-2023).
  - Serving as Program Director for degrees of Master of Theology (2014-2019) and for Master of Theological Studies (2014-18).
- *Achievements:*
- Serving as first Associate Dean of JST with both academic and operational responsibilities; developed vision for new role; supervised reorganized JST's administrative units, in collaboration with Dean and Provost's Office (2014-present).
  - Overseeing Director of Ministerial Formation in the development of structured Ministerial Formation curriculum for students, standards for field experience and placements, and expectations for learning outcomes (2015 to present).
  - Developed two new positions: Director of Intercultural Initiatives and Immersion Programming and Director of Academic Support Services (supporting writing and international student support); restructured Renewal Sabbatical Program (2017-18).
  - Led initiative to secure WASC approval for Master of Theological Studies online degree track (2014-15) and oversaw launch of new program; developed Bridge Course program for JST - one-credit academic and community
  - Principal Investigator:
    - *Science in the Seminaries* grant initiative (2015-2018) with \$125,000 grant from the American Academy for the Advancement of Sciences (AAAS)
    - *Hispanic Ministry Hub Grant* (2016-2019) to study needs for development and formation of leaders for Hispanic Catholics
    - *Global Theology Initiative* (co-leader) (2017 to present) to develop partnerships sharing academic resources among English speaking Jesuit theology centers around the world
    - Received \$5,000 SCU Faculty research grant for sabbatical project (2019)
    - Supervised director of grant funded *Women of Wisdom and Action* (\$750,000), coordinating with Sponsored Projects Office; completed July 2019.
  - Scholarly collaboration with students, staff and faculty on two major projects: *Liturgy of the Hours for a Beloved Community* (current project with 25 women authors); *Reflections of a Civil Rights Pilgrimage*, student authored, published by JustFaith, 2018. See publications below.
  - Earned Sacred Licentiate in Theology (STL) degree from JST.

- *Service:*
  - Member of Association of Theology Schools Chief Academic Officers Advisor Board (ATS-CAOS); peer reviewer for ATS (fall 2019 to present)
  - Member of Graduate Theological Union, Council of Deans; served as convener from August 2015 to May 2018
  - Board member for Society for Phenomenology of Religious Experience (SOPHERE), 2017-19
  - Member of Sustaining Excellence – President’s Consultation on excellence and efficiency at SCU, 2016-17
  - Member - SCU Assessment Committee
  - Advisory Board Member to University Writing HUB, 2014-2016
  - Delegate to Jesuit Western Province consultation, 2017 and to Jesuit Universities’ Western Conversations meeting, October 2014
  - Service on JST Appointment Rank and Tenure committee, Statutes and Curricula committee, numerous faculty and staff search committees and task forces at JST, and staff support for JST Board of Directors Academic Affairs and Enrollment Committee
  
- *Teaching and Advising:* Theological Anthropology; Race Theology and Justice; Ignatian Camino Course; occasional guest lecturer; and serving as thesis and dissertation director or reader for 3-4 masters, advanced masters and doctoral students per year

2012-2014     **Professor of Theology** (tenured)

Ohio Dominican University, Columbus, OH

- *Teaching:* Eight course load per year - World Religions; Freshman Seminar; Pneumatology; Introduction to Catholic Theology; Moral Theology; and Race and Social Justice
  
- *Service and Professional Development:*
  - Tenure and Promotion Committee
  - Theology Department Curriculum Review
  - Collegeville Institute for Ecumenical and Religious Studies, Summer 2013 fellowship in “Apart and Yet A Part”
  - North Central Association Higher Learning Commission Consultant Educator/Peer Review Corps (approximately two visits per year)
  - Private consultant for university accreditation visits

2011-12     **Vice President for Academic Affairs**

**Professor of Theology** (tenured)

Ohio Dominican University, Columbus, OH

- *Responsible* for overall academic vision, quality, and direction for academic programs (undergraduate, graduate, and adult degree completion) with approximately 2500 students and 80 full time faculty, serving on the President’s Cabinet. Particular responsibilities included:
  - Hiring, orientation, evaluation and development of faculty, in collaboration with deans and academic program administrators

- Coordinating work of all faculty committees in conjunction with deans and faculty senate
  - Oversight of personnel and operational budgeting for Academic Affairs and six academic divisions
  - Supervising and evaluating the following positions: Associate VP for Academic Affairs, University Librarian, Registrar, Director of Academic Advising, Director of LEAD (adult degree completion program), Director of Graduate Admission, Director of Center for Instructional Technology and E-Learning, Director of Academic Resource Center, and all academic deans
  - Coordinating college-wide accreditation and academic strategic planning as well as new program initiatives
  - Serving as staff for the Board of Trustees Educational Affairs Committee
  - Overseeing academic aspects and ‘hosting’ of fall and spring University commencement ceremonies
- *Achievements:*
    - President’s 2011-12 Goals:
      - Secured initial accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission and supervised launch of Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies
      - Supervised LEAD Division (adult degree completion program), unit budget, personnel and program restructuring
      - Led comprehensive university and community process resulting in [2012-2017 Strategic Plan](#)
      - Restructured Academic Resource Center and created Office of Student Success within Office of Academic Affairs
    - Academic Vice President’s Initiatives:
      - Completed Ohio Board of Regents and Higher Learning Commission accreditation for Master of Education in Leadership
      - Reorganized Education Division
      - Completed institutional participation in Higher Learning Commission Assessment Academy
      - Launched BS in Accounting and AA in Gerontology in LEAD division
      - Established data dashboards of key academic performance indicators for Board of Trustees
      - Redesigned room scheduling process
      - Created an endowment-funded faculty research and development program to award (\$75,000 annually)
      - Partnered with Institutional Advancement on donor cultivation and solicitation
- *Service:*
    - Served on University Budget Committee and Deferred Maintenance Committee
    - Chaired Faculty Handbook Revision Committee (year 1)

- Staffed Board of Trustee committees for Educational Affairs and Enrollment Management/Student Affairs
- Represented university at Dominican Universities Colloquium and Ohio Colleges Regional Dual Enrollment Initiative
- Trained and served in North Central Association-Higher Learning Commission Consultant Educator/Peer Review Corps

2010-11      **Vice President for Academic Affairs/Chief Academic Officer**  
**Professor of Religion**– Tenure earned February 2011  
 Lake Erie College, Painesville, OH

- *Responsible* for the overall academic vision, quality, and direction for academic programs in five academic divisions (graduate, three undergraduate units, and professional development) of 900 students and 45 faculty members, serving on the President’s Cabinet. Particular responsibilities included:
  - Hiring, orientation, evaluation and development of faculty, including coordination of faculty committees (with faculty governing body)
  - Overseeing academic quality assessment, accreditation, strategic planning, program initiatives and academic budgets
  - Supervising: Associate VP for Academic Affairs, Librarian, Registrar, Director of Information Technology, Director of Center for Entrepreneurship, and Director of Professional Development and supervision of all academic deans
  - Overseeing University commencement ceremonies and Freshman Orientation
- *Achievements:*
  - Launched Learning Communities to recruit for fall 2011
  - Initiated *Academic Directions* visioning project for academic and institutional quality
  - Hired five new faculty members
  - Led committee to revise Faculty Handbook and secured Board approval
  - Realigned staff in Academic Affairs to address budget deficits
  - Created adult degree completion program in business administration to launch in fall 2011
- *Service:* College representative to the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Ohio (AICUO); member of College Budget Committee; member of College Space Committee; and liaison to Academic Policy and Planning Committee of the Board of Directors
- *Teaching:* Freshman Seminar in Critical Thinking; Introduction to Philosophy

2007 -2010    **Dean, School of Graduate and Professional Studies (2008-10)**  
**Dean, School of Graduate Studies (2007-08)**  
**Associate Professor** - tenure earned fall 2008  
 Ursuline College, Pepper Pike, OH

- *Responsible* for academic quality, course scheduling, and oversight; faculty hiring, evaluation and development; strategic planning; collaboration with deans and academic directors on comprehensive college initiatives; and budget management.
- *Achievements:*
  - Consolidated School of Graduate Studies, School of Professional Studies and adult accelerated undergraduate program (UCAP) into a single school of 900 students, 35 faculty and 20 majors/programs
  - Established Graduate Admission Office
  - Supervised faculty committee to secure Ohio Board of Regents and Higher Learning Commission accreditation for MBA
  - Supervised successful NCATE initial accreditation for Education Unit
- *Service:* Assessment Committee member; Steering Committee for the Doctorate of Nursing Practice member; Sub-Committee for Strategic Technology Planning - chair; co-chair of HLC Self-Study; chaired search committees for ten faculty and staff positions in two years; Academic Appeals Board member; Catholic Identity Committee member; represented college at Council of Independent Colleges-College Learning Assessment Academy (CIC-CLA); convener of Graduate Curriculum Committee and Graduate Program Directors
- *Teaching:* Moral Theology; Spirituality of Palliative Care (co-instructor, online); and Christian Anthropology

2003-07      **Co-Director, Graduate Ministry Program** (Assistant Professor, 2007, Instructor 2003-2006), Ursuline College, Pepper Pike, OH

- *Responsible* for recruitment of students and program outreach; student advising; hiring, development and supervision of adjuncts; expense budget management; serving as liaison between Ursuline Ministry Program and regional religious institutions; curriculum assessment
- *Service:* Academic Program Review Committee, chair 2005-06; Catholic Identity Committee; liaison to Board of Trustees Academic Affairs Committee; Cleveland Catholic Diocese Lay Ministry Certification Committee
- *Teaching:* Moral Theology; Spirituality of Palliative Care (co-instructor, online); Christian Anthropology; Foundations of Theology; Catholic Social Teaching; Pastoral Ministry Practicum; and Asian Religious Traditions

2003-2010      **Board Member and Faculty, Cleveland Ecumenical Institute for Religious Studies**, Cleveland, OH (Adult Continuing Education). Multi-week seminars and one day retreats taught: *World Religions; Beyond Sunday Morning; Easter Retreat – Three Easy Pieces; Reflecting with Women Mystics; Religion in the Public Forum; Sacred Sites: A New Religious Cleveland;* and *Christ and Krishna.*

- 1991-2003 **Adjunct Academic Instructor**  
*Case Western Reserve University*, Department of Religion, 2002-2003  
*John Carroll University*, Department of Religious Studies, 2001-2003  
*Villanova University*, School of Law, 1991 – 1993  
 Courses included: *Christ and Krishna*; *Mysticism*; *Introduction to Religion*; *Hinduism*; *White Collar Crime* (law); *Civil Pre-Trial Practice* (law)
- 1983-92 **Associate Attorney (Licensed in Pennsylvania):**  
*Dechert Price & Rhoads*, Philadelphia, PA, 1991-1992  
*Schnader Harrison Segal & Lewis*, Philadelphia, PA, 1983-1991
- 1982-1983 **Law Clerk, The Honorable Boyce F. Martin, Jr.**, United States Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals, Cincinnati, OH

## PUBLICATIONS

- 2021 *Recollecting America's Original Sin: A Pilgrimage Walking the Color Line* (under contract with Liturgical Press, publication scheduled for July 2021)
- 2020 *Reading, Praying, Living The US Bishops' Open Wide Our Hearts: A Faith Formation Guide*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2020.
- "Genetic Moral Enhancement? Yes. Holiness? No." in Fullam, L. and Charles Curran, eds., *US Moral Theology from the Margins: Readings in Moral Theology No. 19*, Mahway, NJ: Paulist, 2020 (reprint of 2018 article)
- Review "Seeing race again: Countering colorblindness across the disciplines. Crenshaw, KW (Ed.).(2019). Univ of California Press. ISBN: 978-0520300996. \$32.95. xviii+ 410." *Teaching theology and religion* 23.3 (2020): 209-211
- [Quilting as Spiritual Practice and the Possibility of Redemption](#), GTU Doug Adams Gallery, Black Lives Matter Exhibit (Online)
- 2019 "Evaluating the Effectiveness of Culturally Contextualized Theology" in *Doing Theology as if People Matter*. Eds. Fernandez, Eduardo and Deborah Ross. New York: Herder and Herder, 2019
- 2018 "Genetic Moral Enhancement? Yes. Holiness? No." *Theology and Science* 16.3 (2018): 308-318
- "Reconstructing the Moral Claim of Racially Unjust Mass Incarceration" in *Today I Gave Myself Permission to Breathe*. Eds. Brigham, Erin and Kimberly Rae Connor. San Francisco: USF Press, 2018
- Reflections on a Civil Rights Pilgrimage*, editor of student writings, JustFaith Ministries
- 2017 Sidebar comment in Hens-Piazza, Gina. *Lamentations*. Wisdom Commentaries, Vol. 30. Liturgical Press, 2017



- 2016 "Book Review: Walking with the Mud Flower Collective: God's Fierce Whimsy and Dialogic Theological Method. By Stina Busman Jost." *Theological Studies* (2016): 267-267
- 2015 *Just Prayer: Book of Hours for Peacemakers and Justice Seekers*, Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015, awarded *First Prize* in Prayer and Spirituality category by Catholic Publishers Association in 2016
- "Book Review: God at the Margins: Making Theological Sense of Religious Plurality. By Aimée Upjohn Light." (2015): 365-367
- 2014 "Handling Faculty Dismissals" *Resource Handbook for Academic Deans*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Laura Behling (American Conference of Academic Deans), Jossey-Bass, 2014
- "Effective Staff Hiring," *Resource Handbook for Academic Deans*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Laura Behling (American Conference of Academic Deans), Jossey-Bass, 2014
- 2013 "Fundamental Theology/Method: Theological Method as Leading Beyond Impasse." *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 64 (2013)
- 2011 Sharpnack, Patricia A., Quinn-Griffin, M., Benders, A., Fitzpatrick, J. "Self-transcendence and spiritual well-being in the Amish." *Journal of Holistic Nursing* 29.2 (2011): 91-97
- 2010 "Book Review of *The Faithful: A History of Catholics in America*, by James M. O'Toole." *Emmanuel*, March/April 2010: 187-188
- Sharpnack, P., Quinn-Griffin, M., Benders, A., Fitzpatrick, J. Spiritual practices and alternative healthcare practices of the Amish. *Holistic Nursing Practice*, 24:2, March-April, 2010
- 2008 "Beyond MySpace: Grounding Postmodern Identity in Lonergan's Interiority Analysis." *Lonergan Workshop*. Vol. 21 (2008)
- 2007 "Renewing the Identity of Catholic Colleges: Implementing Lonergan's Method for Education." *Teaching Theology & Religion* 10.4 (2007): 215-222
- 2006 Dissertation: "A comparative study of self-awareness and self-transcendence: What do Lonergan and Sankara have to say to each other?" Boston College Dissertations and Theses (2006): AAI3255941
- 1990 Brown, Stephen D., and Alison M. Benders. "How to Handle a Complex Criminal Environmental Case." *Vill. Envtl. LJ* 1 (1990): 149

## RECENT PRESENTATIONS

### 2020

*Can We Talk About Race?* presenter, Women-in-Conversation Community Group (Newman Center, UC Berkeley), November 14, 2020

*Reframing Covid-19 Crisis as Opportunity*, convener, Association of Theology Schools, Academic Leaders Event, October 21-22, 2020

*Race and Justice: A Primer*, presenter, University of California (Berkeley) Life-Lounge: Catholic Women's Leadership, September, 2020

*I Have Seen the Lord: Resurrection Hope in Turbulent Times*, invited workshop leader at St. Mary Magdalene Parish, Berkeley, CA, July 2020

*Inculturated Liturgy*, panelist for national workshop sponsored by GIA Publications, July 2020

### 2019

*Race, Class and Gender in Institutions*, invited presenter at the Association of Theological Schools, Chief Academic Officer conference, Pittsburgh, PA, October 23-24, 2019

*Mary Magdalene: I Have Seen the Lord!* Invited homilist at St. Mary Magdalene Parish, Berkeley, CA, July 2019

*Theology and Ministry of Academic Administration*, workshop presented at the Association of Theological Schools, Chief Academic Officer Conference, Newport Beach, CA, April 2019

*Tech and the Human Spirit*, Bannon Center Forum, moderator (January 24, 2019).

### 2018

*Reactions and Reflections on the Catholic Church Sexual Abuse Crisis*. Arrupe Group (workshop at St. Ignatius Prep High School, San Francisco), September 2018

[\*Turbulent Spirit in Turbulent Times\*](#), *Catholic Women Preach: Homily June 10, 2018*.

*Humankind as Originators of Value according to Lonergan's Theological Anthropology*. Catholic Theological Society of America, June 2018, Lonergan Consultation, Indianapolis, IN; see CTSA Proceedings 73 (2018) 136-137 (refereed)

*Lonergan and Phenomenology in Dialogue*. Society for Phenomenology of Religious Experience, Second International Conference, Berkeley, CA, January 2018 (refereed)

*Racism and Catholic Social Teaching*, Workshop for Catholic Diocesan Communication Directors (California), January 2018.

*Mass Incarceration: From Indifference to Awareness, Acknowledgment and Action.*  
USF Lane Center Roundtable Forum on Race and Mass Incarceration, invited  
presenter and facilitator, May 2018

*Lonergan and the Spirituality of Desire,* JST Renewal Program, annual invited  
speaker (2014-18)

References available upon request.