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## Megan Adamson Sijapati, Associate Professor of Religious Studies

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## Megan Adamson Sijapati, Associate Professor of Religious Studies

### **Abstract**

In this new *Next Page* offering, Associate Professor of Religious Studies Megan Adamson Sijapati divulges her old school methods of keeping track of what to read next, as well as which book recently replaced Steinbeck's *East of Eden* as her go-to book for giving as a gift.

### **Keywords**

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# Next Page

## Megan Adamson Sijapati, Associate Professor of Religious Studies

November 7, 2013

*In this new Next Page offering, Associate Professor of Religious Studies Megan Adamson Sijapati divulges her old school methods of keeping track of what to read next, as well as which book recently replaced Steinbeck's East of Eden as her go-to book for giving as a gift.*

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Megan Adamson Sijapati and her family.

### **What are you reading now (or have read recently) that you would recommend? Why?**

Tillie Olsen's [Tell Me a Riddle](#), which is a collection of four short stories. I recommend it because Olsen's writing is spellbinding. It is hard to even describe. In the words of one reviewer: "prose that lashes like a whip, that cracks and stings. And then the judgment coming down like a terrible swift sword. And then a forgiving grace note, like haiku or pascal. memory, history, poetry, and prophecy converge." The stories deal, in part, with the experience of living in grinding poverty. My favorite so far is 'I Stand Here Ironing', which is about labor, the individual versus institutions, the love and pain of a parent for a child, and the limits to understanding another person and even oneself.

### **What book/article/blog have you recently recommended for a student to read? Why?**

I recently recommended that a student re-read Edward Said's [Orientalism](#). She is studying the ways that people form perceptions of the 'other', particularly people of religious communities outside one's own. *Orientalism* is a key text for understanding the dynamics of colonial and post-colonial othering and exoticizing, which still directly influence contemporary discourses on the Middle East and Asia by 'the West.'

### **How do you keep track of what you have already read, are reading currently, or want to read in the future?**

I am not very good at keeping track of what I've already read. But for what I'd like to read in the future, I have two (very old school) methods: for fiction and poetry I have a stack on a table at home, and for academic works - journal articles, books, etc. - I jot titles down in my now ragged Moleskine notebook, which contains many years' worth of references, field notes, and research ideas.

### **What is your favorite book to give as a gift?**

It used to be [East of Eden](#) by Steinbeck, more recently it is [Sweetness in the Belly](#) by Camilla Gibb.

## Who is your favorite writer of all time?

I don't have one, though I love Dostoevsky, Marilynne Robinson, and the poet Mary Oliver. And now Tillie Olsen.

## What are you planning to read next?

I've just begun reading *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* by Thomas Tweed. Believe it or not scholars continue to debate over the very definition of religion: what is it we're studying, and what is it we're doing, when we study religion? How are we best to approach it? Tweed's book was deemed a theoretical classic in the field of religious studies when it came out a few years ago, and it is particularly appealing to me for its theorization of religion through frames of movement and geography.

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