

O'Brien becomes new department head

By Beth Hall

Dr. Julia O'Brien became the new head of the religion department during the fall 1996 semester after Dr. Cochran stepped down from the position in order to pursue a half-time teaching career.

Perhaps most students know O'Brien from the Religion 100 courses she teaches. All students are required to take a Religion 100 class to graduate. This course, according to the Meredith 1996-1997 Undergraduate Catalogue, is a "historical and theological study of the central meaning of the Bible."

O'Brien says she has seen an overall decrease in students' knowledge of Bible history (pre-

vious to taking the class) since she first began teaching at Meredith eight years ago. Now she has to spend time introducing traditional Bible stories, instead of expounding on stories students are already familiar with.

O'Brien also says she has seen a growing number of students who initially resent being forced to take a class that does not reflect their religious background. Some of these students have grown up Muslim, Buddhist, Jewish, or with some other religion other than Christianity. Others are just apathetic about Bible history and do not feel they should have to take a course such as Religion 100. However, O'Brien feels

that after taking the class, these students appreciate the history they study.

On the other end of the spectrum is a number of students who already have concrete ideas about Bible teachings and are defensive when alternative insight is offered. These conservative students feel that conflicting ideas corrupt the message of the story instead of adding dimension to the message.

But O'Brien has to disagree. She says that the diversity of ideas is what makes religion courses so interesting. O'Brien states that she is constantly learning more from the Bible and learning to see things in a different light.

Another reason O'Brien has such an interest in religion is her religious upbringing. Her father was a United Church of Christ minister. She says although she "did not particularly like being a preacher's kid," she does feel that "being in church every Sunday and hearing those stories...got into a really important part of [her] consciousness" and helped her make her career decision.

After receiving her master's and Ph.D. from Duke University, O'Brien briefly taught part-time at Duke. In 1989, O'Brien began teaching various religion classes full-time at Meredith. She has taught classes ranging in



Dr. Julia O'Brien is the new head of the department of Religion here at Meredith.

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the program: a broad curriculum emphasis, a mathematics emphasis and a reading emphasis. Graduate students are required to take courses such as "Educational Research," "Curriculum Development," and "Philosophy of Education." In order to earn the master of education degree, a student must pass comprehensive written and oral examinations.

The music department at Meredith offers two separate master degrees in music: performance and pedagogy and music education. Graduate students concentrating in performance and pedagogy are given the opportunity to gain teaching experience in the department of music, as well as performance experience in recitals in the Meredith community and the Raleigh community. Only students with an undergraduate degree in music are eligible for admission.

In addition to the three graduate degrees offered, Meredith also offers a dietetic internship to eligible applicants who have completed the American Dietetic Association (ADA) established academic requirements. Students in the program take two nutrition courses and participate in a rotation process which includes clinical nutrition, food service management and community nutrition. Students are also given the opportunity to attend the ADA Legislative Symposium in Washington, D.C.

Applicants for Meredith's graduate programs must apply by August 1 for the fall semester and Dec. 1 for the spring semester. Further information on the John E. Weems Graduate School can be obtained in the Graduate School Office on the first floor of Park Center.

Wednesday Worship-Jones Chapel Spring 1997

January 29	Carol Hill, Associate Campus Minister
February 5	Laurie Powell, MCA Worship Co-Chair
February 12	Ash Wednesday
February 19	Carl Johnson, Youth Minister First Baptist Church, Sanford, N.C.
February 26	Staff Worship William Cooper, Meredith staff member
March 5	Ashley Parr, Meredith student
March 19	TBA
March 26	Easter W.I.N.G.S.

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