Professor’s Influence Goes Beyond the Classroom
by Timothy Snediker (MA ’16)

One thing can be said confidently of Professor Carl Raschke: his reputation precedes him. One hears about his colorful, intricate lecture style; one reads his prose, equally intricate, rendered with a nearly impenetrable density of citations; one learns that he has been known to change his wardrobe mid-class, penciling in a thin mustache above his lip and bursting into the room as The Event; one hears so many stories about him that, taken together, they begin to resemble a sort of hagiography.

In a way, the mythical status that Raschke has achieved is well deserved. He obtained a PhD from Harvard in 1973. He has served as a faculty member in the department of Religious Studies at the University of Denver for over 40 years, throughout which he has authored nearly twenty books, co-authored two-dozen books (not to mention numerous articles and blog posts), sat on dozens and dozens of dissertation committees, and given countless lectures. To say Raschke is a fixture in the department is perhaps not enough—better to say he’s a force.

On the other hand, outside of the classroom, Raschke tends to shed his role as agent provocateur and assumes a more paternal or pastoral disposition. He joins his students after class for drinks, meets frequently at local coffee shops for advising sessions, and even leads a group of students on an annual trip to Vienna during the Winter intersession. DU alumna Kieryn Wurts said of Raschke: “he is a remarkable advisor and mentor. He cares about each of his students, and really does all he can to resource them and make us successful—he’s a true community-builder.”

Despite his long tenure at DU, Raschke has been phenomenally productive. His latest book is Force of God: Political Theology and Crisis of Liberal Democracy, published in late 2015 by Columbia University Press. The book is, as Mike Grimshaw states on the back cover, “a manifesto of searing personal vision, with the rhetoric to match.” The book represents a certain culmination of Raschke’s thinking over the past decades, while simultaneously marking new forays into political theory and radical theological thinking.

Longtime readers of Raschke will not be disappointed: on one page a close reading of Hegel; on another an excoriating critique of late capitalist culture; and on still another page a synthesis of Marx and Baudrillard. New readers may initially be baffled by the intensity of Raschke’s style, but will be rewarded by a slow and careful reading.

If one is interested in tapping into the mind of Raschke, he tweets at @carlruschke, and blogs frequently at politicaltheology.com. You can also catch him on certain days at Kaladi Coffee near the DU campus, usually deep in conversation with one of his students.