RELIGIOUS STUDIES

451 College Street, 203.432.0828
http://religiousstudies.yale.edu
M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Chair
Kathryn Lofton

Director of Graduate Studies
Christine Hayes [F]
Travis Zadeh [Sp]

Professors Harold Attridge (Divinity), Joel Baden (Divinity), Christopher Beeley (Divinity), Gerhard Böwering, John J. Collins (Divinity), Stephen Davis, Carlos Eire, Steven Fraade, Paul Franks (Philosophy), Bruce Gordon (Divinity), Philip Gorski (Sociology), Phyllis Granoff, Frank Griffl, John Hare (Divinity), Christine Hayes, Jennifer Herdt (Divinity), Kathryn Lofton, Ivan Marcus, Andrew McGowan (Divinity), Sally Promey (American Studies), Carolyn Sharp (Divinity), Gregory Sterling (Divinity), Harry Stout, Kathryn Tanner (Divinity), Miroslav Volf (Divinity), Robert Wilson

Associate Professors Zareena Grewal (American Studies), Willie Jennings (Divinity), Noreen Khawaja, Nancy Levene, Andrew Quintman, Eliyahu Stern

Assistant Professors Maria Doerfler, Eric Greene, Travis Zadeh

Senior Lecturers John Grim (Forestry & Environmental Studies), Margaret Olin, Mary Evelyn Tucker (Forestry & Environmental Studies)

Lecturers Jimmy Daccache, Supriya Gandhi, Felicity Harley-McGowan (Divinity), Daniel Jennings

FIELDS OF STUDY

SPECIAL ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS
The department requires the scores of the GRE General Test; previous study in areas relevant to the chosen field of study, including ancient languages where applicable; and a writing sample of 20–30 pages, which will be evaluated for both content and style. Prospective students must apply in one of the ten fields of study, and when requesting information they should specify their particular field of interest.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PH.D. DEGREE
Students are required to take twelve term courses that meet the Graduate School Honors requirement, including RLST 510, Method and Theory, normally taken in a student’s first year. Proficiency in two modern scholarly languages, normally French and German, must be shown, one before the end of the first year, the other before the beginning of the third; this may be done by passing an examination administered by the department, by accreditation from a Yale Summer School course designed for this purpose, or by a grade of A or B in one of Yale’s intermediate language courses. Mastery of the languages needed in one’s chosen field (e.g., Chinese, Hebrew, Greek, Japanese) is also required in certain fields of study. A set of four qualifying examinations is designed for each student, following guidelines and criteria set by each field of study; these are normally completed in the third year. The dissertation prospectus must be approved by a colloquium, and the completed dissertation by a committee of readers and the departmental faculty. Upon completion of all predissertation requirements, including the prospectus, students are admitted to candidacy for the Ph.D. This is expected before the seventh term in American Religious History, Philosophy of Religion, Religion and Modernity, Religious Ethics, and Theology; before the eighth term in other fields. Students begin writing their dissertation in the fourth year and normally will have finished by the end of the sixth. There is no oral examination on the dissertation.

In the Department of Religious Studies, the faculty considers learning to teach to be an important and integral component of the professional training of its graduate students. Students are therefore required to teach as teaching fellows for at least two years during their graduate programs. Such teaching normally takes place during their third and fourth years, unless other arrangements are approved by the director of graduate studies.

A combined Ph.D. degree is available with African American Studies. Consult department for details.

MASTER’S DEGREES
M.Phil. and M.A. (both en route to the Ph.D.) See Degree Requirements under Policies and Regulations. Students in Religious Studies must take seven courses to be eligible for the M.A. degree.
Program materials are available online at http://religiousstudies.yale.edu.

COURSES

RLST 510a, Method and Theory  Kathryn Lofton
Required seminar for doctoral students in Religious Studies. Others admitted with instructor's permission.

RLST 514b / CLSS 807b / HIST 512b, Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews  Joseph Manning and John Collins
This seminar examines two incidents in the Hellenistic world that can be construed as persecution of the Jews. The first was in the years 167–164 B.C.E., when the Seleucid Antiochus Epiphanes tried to suppress the traditional Jewish cult in Jerusalem. The second was in Alexandria in 38 C.E., when the Jewish community came under attack from its Gentile neighbors and the Roman authorities. The seminar examines these incidents in the context of Seleucid and Roman policies toward subject peoples.

RLST 539b, Sensing the Sacred in India: Sensory Culture in South Asian Religions  Finnian Moore Gerety
This seminar explores South Asian religions through the body, the senses, and aesthetics. Drawing on Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain traditions, and concentrating on embodied practices such as meditation, chanting, eating, sex, asceticism, ritual, possession, and performance, we examine experiences of the sacred in India, past and present. How has sensory culture—the sound of mantras, the smell of incense, the touch of a guru’s embrace—shaped lives, practices, and doctrines? What place does the gratification (or denial) of the senses have in South Asian traditions? The course draws on premodern texts as various as law codes, erotic handbooks, and medical treatises, and integrates a range of new media from ethnographic films to graphic novels.

RLST 542a, Early Chan/Zen Buddhism  Eric Greene
Exploration of the literature of early Chan/Zen Buddhism (seventh–eighth century). Selected readings in genres such as hagiographies, lineage texts, ritual manuals, and doctrinal treatises. Introduction of tools and methods for studying Buddhist texts in Chinese.

RLST 544b, Animals in Indian Religions  Phyllis Granoff
Students read Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain texts dealing with animals. We examine divergent beliefs about the place of animals in the hierarchy of living beings. Readings include stories of the Buddha’s births as an animal, the Ramayana on the monkey god Hanuman, and Jain rebirth narratives. Philosophical readings on animal sacrifice culminate in a consideration of recent debates against sacrifice in the Indian supreme court.

RLST 546a, Tibetan Historical Texts  Andrew Quintman
This seminar focuses on a variety of Tibetan sources on Buddhist religious history. Prerequisite: reading knowledge of Classical Tibetan. Graded Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory.

RLST 547b, Classical Tibetan Literature  Andrew Quintman
This seminar focuses on a variety of Tibetan sources on Buddhist religious history. Prerequisite: reading knowledge of Classical Tibetan.

RLST 551b, Readings in Indian Texts  Phyllis Granoff
This is a course for students who read Sanskrit/Prakrit/Pali and would like to study a particular text in depth. The choice of text is determined after discussion with interested students.

RLST 557a, Medieval Indian Texts  Phyllis Granoff
An advanced reading course in Sanskrit texts. Depending on student interest we read literature or philosophy. Prerequisite: two years of Sanskrit.

RLST 565b / SAST 567b, Buddhist Traditions of Mind and Meditation  Andrew Quintman
Buddhist meditation practices examined in the context of traditional theories of mind, perception, and cognition. Readings both from Buddhist canonical works and from secondary scholarship on cognitive science and ritual practice. Recommended preparation: a course in Asian religions.

RLST 583a / SAST 567a, Visual Worlds of Himalayan Buddhism  Andrew Quintman
The role of images and imagining in the religious traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. How Tibetan Buddhist cultures produce religious images; ways of visualizing those images to invest them with meaning. Topics include specific modes of visual representation, relationships between text and image, social lives of images, and processes of reading and interpretation.

RLST 589a, Readings in Urdu Texts  Supriya Gandhi
Readings from a range of Urdu texts, with a focus on works produced in the nineteenth century. Topics include Hindu reform, Islamic revival, colonialism, and interreligious polemic. The selection of texts takes into account the research interests of enrolled students.

Required of doctoral students in New Testament studies and ancient Christianity. The topic and instructor change yearly. The topic for spring 2018 is the ways in which current literary theory can illuminate a range of ancient Christian literary genres.

RLST 608b, Christianity in Late Antiquity  Maria Doerfler
Required of doctoral students in ancient Christianity. Topics include the relation of church and state after Constantine; theological controversies and church councils; interfaith relations; pieties and practices; and material culture.
RLST 632b, Introduction to Contemporary Political Theology  Staff
Most political theology courses begin with Spinoza’s Tractatus Theologico-Politicus and focus primarily on Carl Schmitt’s famous 1922 book, Political Theology. This course generally concentrates on the turn to political theology since the fall of the Soviet Union. It deals specifically with recent political circumstances in the United States and Europe that have led to a renewed interest in the subject of political theology: French secularism, Islam, executive power, states of exception, the politics of religious freedom, neoliberalism, nationalism, race, international law, etc. Readings include works by Giorgio Agamben, Talal Asad, Saba Mahmood, Olivier Roy, Samuel Moyn, Willie James Jennings, and many others.

RLST 654a, Biblical Interpretation in Early Christianity  Maria Doerfler
Scripture was both the primary focus of early Christians’ literary attentions and the most significant resource for resolving questions of theological, ethical, or practical concern in their communities. Yet Scripture frequently did not speak with sufficient clarity and univocality; it required mediation—in homily, hymn, commentary, and treatise—and, in the process, interpretation and exposition. This course introduces students to a survey of ancient Christian writers’ exegetical efforts from the very beginnings of Christian interpretive activity through the flowering of exegesis across the Roman and Sassanid Empires in the fourth through sixth century.

RLST 655a, Proseminar: Christianity in the Second Century  Stephen Davis
Philological problems in the study of the second century and its aftermath. Required of all doctoral students in New Testament Studies and Ancient Christianity. Open to other doctoral students by permission of the instructor.

RLST 686b, Religion in the American West  Tisa Wenger
This course investigates the histories of religious encounter and the formation of diverse religious identities in the American West, placing them in broader contexts of Atlantic world, Pacific world, hemispheric, and national histories. The West has played multiple roles in the nation’s imagination: a place to be conquered and controlled, a place for new beginnings (religious or otherwise), a place of perils and of opportunities. Over the course of the term we ponder the religious dimensions of each of these constructed meanings and examine their very real impact on the people and landscapes of the West.

RLST 692b / HIST 595b / JDST 844b, Introduction to Modern European Jewish History  David Sorkin
This course introduces students to European Jewish history since approximately 1648. It teaches the major historiographical traditions as well as the major themes of European Jewish history. Its audience is students specializing in Jewish history but also other historians who wish to add an understanding of Jewish history to their understanding of Europe.

RLST 711b, Al-Ghazali and Maimonides  Frank Griffel
Close study of the lives and the thought of two of the most influential theologians and philosophers in Islam and Judaism. Comparison of their lives and writings, focusing on their integration of Aristotelian philosophy into the theology of Islam and Judaism.

RLST 719b, Al-Ghazali’s Impact on Islamic Thought  Frank Griffel

RLST 720a, The Qur’an and Its Interpretation  Gerhard Böwering
Intensive study of the Qur’an with special emphasis on its biblical roots. Readings in Arabic commentaries on the Qur’an. Prerequisites: advanced knowledge of Arabic and permission of the instructor.

RLST 722b, Islamic Theology Seminar  Frank Griffel

RLST 731b, Islam, Conquest, and Conversion  Travis Zadeh
Through examination of conquest and religious conversion in the formative periods of Islamic history, this course interrogates the idea that Islam was spread by violent domination. Case studies are drawn from the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean, Iberia, and West Africa.

RLST 739b, Life and Thought of Jonathan Edwards  Harry Stout
This course offers students a comprehensive view into the life and thought of Jonathan Edwards.

RLST 751b / JDST 721b / NELC 703b, Judaism in the Ancient World: From Temple to Talmud  Steven Fraade
The emergence of classical Judaism in its historical setting. Jews and Hellenization; varieties of early Judaism; apocalyptic and postapocalyptic responses to suffering and catastrophe; worship and atonement without sacrificial cult; interpretations of scriptures; law and life; the rabbis; the synagogue; faith in reason; Sabbath and festivals; history and its redemption.

RLST 762b / CPLT 690b / JDST 838b, Politics of Modern Hebrew Literature  Hannan Hever
An overview of the poetics, culture, history, and political dynamics of modern Hebrew literature over the past 250 years. No background in Jewish literature and Jewish culture is required. All readings in English.
RLST 772a / JDST 760a, Rabbinics Research Seminar  Christine Hayes
An in-depth survey of research debates and of methods and resources employed in the study of classical (pre-Geonic) rabbinic literature of all genres. Required of graduate students in ancient Judaism. Prerequisites: knowledge of Hebrew and Aramaic, ability to read academic Hebrew, and permission of the instructor.

RLST 773a / HIST 596a / JDST 761a, Jewish History and Thought to Early Modern Times  Ivan Marcus
A broad introduction to the history of the Jews from biblical beginnings until the European Reformation and the Ottoman Empire. Focus on the formative period of classical rabbinic Judaism and on the symbiotic relationships among Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Jewish society and culture in its biblical, rabbinic, and medieval settings.

RLST 776b / HIST 601b / JDST 790b, Jewish History, Thought, and Narratives in Medieval Societies  Ivan Marcus
Research seminar that focuses on the two medieval Jewish subcultures of Ashkenaz (northern Christian Europe) and Sefarad (mainly Muslim and Christian Spain).

RLST 777b / HIST 590b / JDST 764b, Jews in Muslim Lands from the Seventh through the Sixteenth Century  Ivan Marcus
Introduction to Jewish culture and society in Muslim lands from the Prophet Muhammad to Suleiman the Magnificent. Topics include Islam and Judaism; Jerusalem as a holy site; rabbinic leadership and literature in Baghdad; Jewish courtiers, poets, and philosophers in Muslim Spain; and the Jews in the Ottoman Empire.

RLST 790b / HIST 587b / JDST 764b, Jews in Muslim Lands from the Seventh through the Sixteenth Century  Ivan Marcus
Introduction to Jewish culture and society in Muslim lands from the Prophet Muhammad to Suleiman the Magnificent. Topics include Islam and Judaism; Jerusalem as a holy site; rabbinic leadership and literature in Baghdad; Jewish courtiers, poets, and philosophers in Muslim Spain; and the Jews in the Ottoman Empire.

RLST 799b / HIST 587b / JDST 793b, Introduction to Modern Jewish Thought  Eliyahu Stern
An overview of Jewish philosophical trends, movements, and thinkers from the seventeenth to the twenty-first century. Topics include enlightenment, historicism, socialism, secularism, religious radicalism, and Zionism.

RLST 800a, Hebrew Bible Seminar: Problems in the History of Israelite Religion  Robert Wilson
An intensive study of important features of ancient Israelite religion, including the origins of monotheism, the priesthood, worship, prophecy, and apocalyptic.

RLST 801b, Hebrew Bible Seminar: Problems in the Book of Isaiah  Robert Wilson
A close reading of selected chapters of the Hebrew text of Isaiah in order to test recent theories of the book's compositional history.

RLST 803a / SMTC 545a, Northwest Semitic Inscriptions: Aramaic  Jimmy Daccache
The Ugaritic alphabet was used in Ras Shamra-Ugarit in the thirteenth century B.C.E. on the Syrian coast. This course is an initiation into the linguistic system of the Ugaritic language, written in a cuneiform script, and into the Ugaritic civilization.

RLST 805a, Moral, Religious, and Social Issues in Bioethics  Stephen Latham
A selective survey of issues in biomedical ethics. Comparison of different points of view about biomedical issues, including religious vs. secular and liberal vs. conservative. Special attention to issues in research and at the beginning and end of life.

RLST 905a, Theology Doctoral Seminar  Chloe Starr and Kathryn Tanner
Spurred by contemporary criticisms of systematic theology, this course considers the various literary forms that theological writing takes, their theological presuppositions and theological effects, with attention to the influence of differences in historical and cultural contexts. Required of Ph.D. students in Theology.
RLST 961a or b, Directed Readings: American Religious History  Staff
RLST 962a or b, Directed Readings: Ancient Christianity  Staff
RLST 963a or b, Directed Readings: Asian Religions  Staff
RLST 964a or b, Directed Readings: Ethics  Staff
RLST 965a or b, Directed Readings: Judaic Studies  Staff
RLST 966a or b, Directed Readings: Islamic Studies  Staff
RLST 967a or b, Directed Readings: New Testament  Staff
RLST 968a or b, Directed Readings: Old Testament/Hebrew Bible  Staff
RLST 969a or b, Directed Readings: Philosophy of Religion  Staff
RLST 970a or b, Directed Readings: Religion and Modernity  Staff
RLST 971a or b, Directed Readings: Theology  Staff