

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Humanities Quadrangle, 203.432.0828
<http://religiousstudies.yale.edu>
 M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Chair

Travis Zadeh

Director of Graduate Studies

Linn Tonstad (*Divinity*)

Professors Joel Baden (*Divinity*), Stephen Davis, Carlos Eire, Steven Fraade, Paul Franks (*Philosophy*), Bruce Gordon (*Divinity*), Jennifer Herdt (*Divinity*), Hwansoo Kim, Nancy Levene, Kathryn Lofton, Ivan Marcus, Andrew McGowan (*Divinity*), Laura Nasrallah, Sally Promey (*American Studies*), Chloë Starr (*Divinity*), Gregory Sterling (*Divinity*), Elli Stern, Kathryn Tanner (*Divinity*), Miroslav Volf (*Divinity*), Tisa Wenger (*Divinity*), Travis Zadeh

Associate Professors Maria Doerfler, Eric Greene, Willie Jennings (*Divinity*), Noreen Khawaja, Todne Thomas, Linn Tonstad (*Divinity*)

Assistant Professors Supriya Gandhi, Sonam Kachru

Lecturers Jimmy Daccache, Felicity Harley-McGowan (*Divinity*), Adam Ployd, Matthew Steele

FIELDS OF STUDY

Students must enroll in one of the following fields of study: American Religious History, Asian Religions, Early Mediterranean and West Asian Religions, Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, Islamic Studies, Medieval and Modern Judaism, Philosophy of Religion, Religion and Modernity, Religious Ethics, and Theology.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PH.D. DEGREE

Students are required to take a minimum of 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. In the field of American Religious History, students must demonstrate proficiency in two skilled areas. Typically students study two foreign languages, but occasionally students study one foreign language and one technical knowledge area directly related to their proposed dissertation, such as musicology, financial accounting, or a performance art. 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 three terms as an academic requirement and one term as a financial requirement 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. See Degree Requirements under Policies and Regulations.

M.A. Students who withdraw from the Ph.D. program may be eligible to receive the M.A. degree if they have met the requirements and have not already received the M.Phil. degree. Students in Religious Studies must take seven graduate-level courses to be eligible for the M.A.

Program materials are available online at <http://religiousstudies.yale.edu>.

COURSES

RLST 510a, Method and Theory Tisa Wenger

Required seminar for doctoral students in Religious Studies. Others admitted with instructor's permission.

RLST 538a, Religion and State in Early Modern South Asia Supriya Gandhi

Exploration of religion, state, and society during a formative period in South Asian history, from 1500 to 1800. Topics include models of empire and sovereignty, spheres of temporal and religious authority, the circulation of texts and ideas across regions, linguistic and religious traditions, and vernacular literary and religious cultures. We also consider the question of epistemological disruption arising out of colonial rule.

RLST 560a, Ethnographic Methods in Religious Studies Todne Thomas

Long considered a hallmark of anthropological knowledge production, ethnographic fieldwork generates rich humanistic perspectives and robust debates. This new interactive methods course introduces students to myriad contexts and research techniques involved in ethnographic studies of religion. Organized into three sections, the course examines: (1) the interior politics and experiences of the fieldwork process, (2) the central skills vital to conducting ethnographic research, and (3) the various types of methodologies employed by contemporary researchers. The course ends with presentations of capstone research projects in which students apply disciplinary, reflective, and skills-based knowledge cultivated through course readings, discussions, and practice modules.

RLST 568a / EALL 521a, Introduction to Chinese Buddhist Literature Eric Greene

This class is an introduction to Chinese Buddhist literature. Although written in classical Chinese, Buddhist texts in China were written in a particular idiom that was much influenced by the Indian languages and which can be difficult to understand without special training. This class introduces students who already have some reading ability in literary Chinese to this idiom and the tools and background knowledge needed to read and understand Chinese Buddhist literature. We read a series of selections of some of the most influential Chinese Buddhist texts from various genres including canonical scriptures, apocryphal scriptures, monastic law, doctrinal treatises, and hagiography. Secondary readings introduce the basic ideas of Indian and Chinese Buddhist thought to the extent necessary for understanding our readings. Prerequisite: CHNS 571 or equivalent, or permission of the instructor. Students of Japanese or Korean literature who can read basic *kanbun* or *gugyeol* are also welcome to enroll; no knowledge of modern, spoken Chinese is required.

RLST 574b, Chinese Buddhist Texts Eric Greene

Close reading of selected Chinese Buddhist texts in the original.

RLST 610b, The Psalms, A Cultural History of Ancient Prayer Stephen Davis

This course introduces students to the Book of Psalms and its significant cultural and religious impact in ancient Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The course is organized in three units. Unit 1 focuses on the text of the Psalms, with special attention to their literary forms, editorial organization, and early ritual context in ancient Israel. Unit 2 focuses on the reception and use of the Psalms in late ancient Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, with special attention to matters of translation, interpretation, worship, prayer, and scriptural authority. Unit 3 focuses on material and sensory encounters with the Psalms from antiquity to the present day within these three religious traditions—case studies related to tactile and visual contact with the physical book, oral and aural engagement through song or chant, and embodied forms of writing, reciting, and enacting the Psalms in the context of ritual practice, including magical spells. The goal of the course is thus to trace the life and afterlife—to write the textual and extra-textual “biography,” as it were—of a major biblical book.

RLST 630a / AMST 696a / ENGL 906a / ER&M 696a / HSHM 782a / WGSS 696a,**Michel Foucault I: The Works, The Interlocutors, The Critics** Greta LaFleur

This graduate-level course presents students with the opportunity to develop a thorough, extensive, and deep (though still not exhaustive!) understanding of the oeuvre of Michel Foucault, and his impact on late-twentieth-century criticism and intellectual history in the United States. Non-francophone and/or U.S. American scholars, as Lynne Huffer has argued, have engaged Foucault’s work unevenly and frequently in a piecemeal way, due to a combination of the overemphasis on *The History of Sexuality, Vol 1* (to the exclusion of most of his other major works), and the lack of availability of English translations of most of his writings until the early twenty-first century. This course seeks to correct that trend and to re-introduce Foucault’s works to a generation of graduate students who, on the whole, do not have extensive experience with his oeuvre. In this course, we read almost all of Foucault’s published writings that have been translated into English (which is almost all of them, at this point). We read all of the monographs, and all of the Collège de France lectures, in chronological order. This lightens the reading load; we read a book per week, but the lectures are shorter and generally less dense than the monographs. [The benefit

of a single author course is that the more time one spends reading Foucault's work, the easier reading his work becomes.] We read as many of the essays he published in popular and more widely-circulated media as we can. The goal of the course is to give students both breadth and depth in their understanding of Foucault and his works, and to be able to situate his thinking in relation to the intellectual, social, and political histories of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Alongside Foucault himself, we read Foucault's mentors, interlocutors, and inheritors (Heidegger, Marx, Blanchot, Canguilhem, Derrida, Barthes, Althusser, Bersani, Hartman, Angela Davis, etc); his critics (Mbembe, Weheliye, Butler, Said, etc.), and scholarship that situates his thought alongside contemporary social movements, including student, Black liberation, prison abolitionist, and anti-psychiatry movements. Instructor permission required.

RLST 643a / JDST 845a, The Global Right: From the French Revolution to the American Insurrection Elli Stern

This seminar explores the history of right-wing political thought from the late eighteenth century to the present, with an emphasis on the role played by religious and pagan traditions. This course seeks to answer the question, what constitutes the right? What are the central philosophical, religious, and pagan, principles of those groups associated with this designation? How have the core ideas of the right changed over time? We do this by examining primary tracts written by theologians, political philosophers, and social theorists as well as secondary literature written by scholars interrogating movements associated with the right in America, Europe, Middle East, and Asia. Though touching on specific national political parties, institutions, and think tanks, its focus is on mapping the intellectual overlap and differences between various right-wing ideologies. While the course is limited to the modern period, it adopts a global perspective to better understand the full scope of right-wing politics.

RLST 653a / EGYPT 514a, Gnostic Texts in Coptic Staff

The course reads selected portions of important texts from the Nag Hammadi collection, including the Apocryphon of John, the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Truth, Thunder, the Treatise on Resurrection, the Tripartite Tractate, as well as other noncanonical texts preserved in Coptic, including the Gospel of Mary and the Gospel of Judas. Prerequisite: EGYPT 510 or equivalent.

RLST 658b / EGYPT 512b, Egyptian Monastic Literature in Coptic Stephen Davis

Readings in the early Egyptian classics of Christian asceticism in Sahidic Coptic, including the Desert Fathers and Shenoute. Prerequisite: EGYPT 510b or equivalent.

RLST 667a / NELC 668a, Arabic Bible and Biblical Interpretation Stephen Davis

This graduate seminar focuses on the ways the Bible was transmitted and interpreted in the medieval Arabic-speaking world. *The topic for fall 2024 is the Book of Psalms, with a focus on the Psalms' use and interpretation in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim contexts.* Students who have completed the equivalent of three terms of Arabic instruction, including Classical Arabic, are eligible to enroll in the course with permission of the instructor.

RLST 691a / EMST 660a / HIST 560a, Society and the Supernatural in Early Modern Europe Carlos Eire

Readings in primary texts from the period 1500–1700 that focus on definitions of the relationship between the natural and supernatural realms, both Catholic and Protestant.

Among the topics covered: mystical ecstasy, visions, apparitions, miracles, and demonic possession. All assigned readings in English translation.

RLST 699a / AMST 805a / HSAR 720a / WGSS 779a, Sensational Materialities:

Sensory Cultures in History, Theory, and Method Sally Promey

This interdisciplinary seminar explores the sensory and material histories of (often religious) images, objects, buildings, and performances as well as the potential for the senses to spark contention in material practice. With a focus on American things and religions, the course also considers broader geographical and categorical parameters so as to invite intellectual engagement with the most challenging and decisive developments in relevant fields, including recent literatures on material agencies. The goal is to investigate possibilities for scholarly examination of a robust human sensorium of sound, taste, touch, scent, and sight—and even “sixth senses”—the points where the senses meet material things (and vice versa) in life and practice. Topics include the cultural construction of the senses and sensory hierarchies; investigation of the sensory capacities of things; and specific episodes of sensory contention in and among various religious traditions. In addition, the course invites thinking beyond the “Western” five senses to other locations and historical possibilities for identifying the dynamics of sensing human bodies in religious practices, experience, and ideas. The Sensory Cultures of Religion Research Group meets approximately once per month at 7 p.m. on Tuesdays; class participants are strongly encouraged, but not required, to attend. Enrollment is by permission of the instructor; qualified undergraduates are not only welcome but encouraged to join us. There are no set prerequisites, but, assuming available seats, permission will be granted on the basis of response to three questions: Why do you wish to take this course? What relevant educational or professional background/experience do you bring to the course? How does the course help you to meet your own intellectual, artistic, or career aspirations?

RLST 737a, Romance, Idea Noreen Khawaja

Advanced readings in the philosophy of myth.

RLST 773a / HIST 596a / JDST 761a / MDVL 596a, Jews and the World: From the Bible through 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 803a / ANTH 531a / CLSS 815a / EALL 773a / HIST 502a / HSAR 564a / JDST 653a / NELC 533a, Archaia Seminar: Law and Society in China and Rome
Noel Lenski and Valerie Hansen

An introduction to the legal systems of the Roman and post-Roman states and Han- and Tang-dynasty China. Emphasis on developing collaborative partnerships that foster comparative history research. Readings in surviving law codes (in the original or English translation) and secondary studies on topics including slavery, trade, crime, and family. This course serves as an Archaia Core Seminar. It is connected with Archaia's Ancient Societies Workshop (ASW), which runs a series of events throughout the academic year related to the theme of the seminar. Students enrolled in the seminar must attend all ASW events during the semester in which the seminar is offered.

RLST 819b / AMST 630b / HSAR 529b, Museums and Religion: The Politics of Preservation and Display Sally Promey

This interdisciplinary seminar focuses on the tangled relations of religion and museums, historically and in the present. What does it mean to “exhibit religion” in the institutional context of the museum? What practices of display might one encounter for this subject? What kinds of museums most frequently invite religious display? How is religion suited (or not) for museum exhibition and museum education? Enrollment is by permission of the instructor; qualified undergraduates are not only welcome but also encouraged to join us. There are no set prerequisites, but, assuming available seats, permission is granted on the basis of response to three questions: Why do you wish to take this course? What relevant educational or professional background/experience do you bring to the course? How does the course help you to meet your own intellectual, artistic, or career aspirations?

RLST 834a / SMTC 546a, Northwest Semitic Inscriptions: Phoenician and Punic Epigraphy Jimmy Daccache

This course completes the introduction of Phoenician epigraphy. It is designed to study the Phoenician and Punic inscriptions found in the western Mediterranean basin. The chronological span stretches from the eighth century BCE to the Roman period. The study of inscriptions—examined from photographs and drawings—follows a chronological order: Phoenician inscriptions from the eighth and seventh centuries BCE (Italy, Iberian Peninsula); Punic and Late Punic inscriptions between the sixth century BCE and the first century CE (Italy, Iberian Peninsula, North Africa [Carthage, Maktar, etc.]). At the end of the term, students have a firm grasp of the Phoenician language and script and its evolution toward Punic and Late Punic.

Prerequisite: RLST 832.

RLST 838a / SMTC 513a, Elementary Syriac I Jimmy Daccache

Syriac was an Aramaic dialect that developed its own written tradition in the northern Levantine city of Edessa in classical antiquity. It became (and remains to this day) the liturgical language of Eastern Christianity in its various manifestations. This course provides students with a basic working knowledge of the language, namely, the three principal scripts (Estrangela, Ser#o, and “Nestorian”), verbal morphology, and the fundamental rules of syntax. Extracts of several Syriac texts are studied for purposes of application. At the end of the course, students are able to read, translate, and analyze simple texts.

RLST 839b / SMTC 514b, Elementary Syriac II Jimmy Daccache

Syriac was an Aramaic dialect that developed its own written tradition in the northern Levantine city of Edessa in classical antiquity. This course provides students with a basic working knowledge of the language, namely, the three principal scripts (Estrangela, Ser#o, and “Nestorian”), verbal morphology, and the fundamental rules of syntax. The course completes the introduction to the Syriac language. Extracts of several Syriac texts are studied for purposes of application. At the end of the course, students are able to read, translate, and analyze simple texts. Prerequisite: RLST 838/SMTC 513.

RLST 848a / SMTC 523a, Intermediate Syriac I Chris Mezger

This two-term course is designed to enhance students’ knowledge of the Syriac language by reading a selection of texts, sampling the major genres of classical Syriac literature. By the end of the year, students are familiar with non-vocalized texts and are

capable of confronting specific grammatical or lexical problems. Prerequisite: RLST 839/SMTC 514 or knowledge of Syriac.

RLST 868b / SMTC 524b, Intermediate Syriac II Chris Mezger

The goal of this course is to enable students to gain proficiency in the Syriac language at a higher level. We continue readings in the major genres of classical Syriac literature, with special emphasis on texts from the ninth century onward. By the end of the term, students will have mastered complex grammatical structures. Prerequisite: RLST 848/SMTC 523 or knowledge of Syriac.

RLST 874a / SMTC 553a, Advanced Syriac I Jimmy Daccache

This course is designed for graduate students who are proficient in Syriac and is organized topically. Topics vary each term and are listed in the syllabus on Canvas.

RLST 875b / SMTC 554b, Advanced Syriac II Jimmy Daccache

This course is designed for graduate students who are proficient in Syriac and is organized topically. Topics vary each term and are listed in the syllabus on Canvas.

RLST 882b, Readings on Mind and Nature Nancy Levene

Study of works on nature, history, reason, person. Readings vary from year to year.

RLST 961a, Directed Readings: American Religious History Staff

RLST 962a, Directed Readings: EMWAR Staff

Directed readings in Early Mediterranean and West Asian Religions.

RLST 963a, Directed Readings: Asian Religions Staff

RLST 964a, Directed Readings: Ethics Staff

RLST 965a, Directed Readings: Judaic Studies Staff

RLST 966a, Directed Readings: Islamic Studies Staff

RLST 968a, Directed Readings: Old Testament/Hebrew Bible Staff

RLST 969a, Directed Readings: Philosophy of Religion Staff

RLST 970a, Directed Readings: Religion and Modernity Staff

RLST 971a, Directed Readings: Theology Staff