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
Stephen Davis [F]
Christine Hayes [Sp]

Professors Harold Attridge (Divinity), Joel Baden (Divinity), Gerhard Bowering, John J. Collins (Divinity), Stephen Davis, Carlos Eire, Steven Fraade, Paul Franks (Philosophy), Bruce Gordon (Divinity), Philip Gorski (Sociology), Phyllis Granoff, Frank Griffel, John Hare (Divinity), Christine Hayes, Jennifer Herdt (Divinity), Noel Lenski (Classics), Nancy Levene, Kathryn Lofton, Ivan Marcus, Andrew McGowan (Divinity), Sally Promey (American Studies), Gregory Sterling (Divinity), Harry Stout, Kathryn Tanner (Divinity), Shawkat Toorawa (Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations), Miroslav Volf (Divinity), Robert Wilson

Associate Professors Zareena Grewal (American Studies), Willie Jennings (Divinity), Noreen Khawaja, Hwansoo Kim, Chloë Starr (Divinity), Eliyahu Stern, Tisa Wenger (Divinity), Travis Zadeh

Assistant Professors Maria Doerfler, Eric Greene

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

Lecturers Jimmy Daccache, Felicity Harley-McGowan (Divinity)

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 ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS
The department requires previous study in areas relevant to the chosen field of study, including ancient languages where applicable; and a writing sample of 15–25 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 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, proficiency must be shown in one or two foreign languages as determined by the faculty. 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. 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 510b, Method and Theory  Kathryn Lofton
Required seminar for doctoral students in Religious Studies. Others admitted with instructor’s permission.

RLST 538b, The Golden Age of Islam  Gerhard Bowering
The development of Islamic civilization in the Middle East, North Africa, Spain, Iran, and India from Muhammad through the Mongol invasions to the rise of the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal empires (600–1500 CE). Emphasis on the intellectual and religious history of Islam in the age of the caliphs and during the rule of regional dynasties.

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 557b, 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 574a, Chinese Buddhist Texts  Eric Greene
Close reading of selected Chinese Buddhist texts in the original.

RLST 608b, Approaches to the Study of Christianity in Late Antiquity  Stephen Davis
This seminar addresses key methodological and historiographical issues in the periodization and commodification of late antiquity as a field of inquiry, focusing especially on Christianity from the rise of Constantine (313) to the Council of Chalcedon (451). Part One of the course focuses on theories and methods that have marked the study of late ancient Christianity in recent decades, including the analysis of discourse, sexuality and gender, bodies and ritual practice, and hybridity and ethnic identities. Part Two focuses on a series of case studies, including the rise of Constantine, North African ecclesiastical resistance, the role of bishops and councils, barbarians and Roman borders, monasticism, pilgrimage, and the cult of the saints. The course concludes with a consideration of early Christian archaeology. The course is designed for EMWAR students with a primary or secondary area of concentration in Early Christianity, Late Ancient Christianity, Christianity and Judaism in the Hellenistic East, and West Asian Religions of the Sasanian and Early Islamic Eras. The course also provides important historical context for students concentrating in New Testament and in Scriptures and their Interpretation in Antiquity. Students interested in completing a seminar-based exam in connection with the course are encouraged to speak with the instructor. EMWAR area of concentration designations: EarXty, LateXty, XtyJudEast, WAR.

RLST 633b / CLSS 845b / HSAR 641b / MDVL 520b / NELC 639b, Images of Cult and Devotion in the Premodern World  Jacqueline Jung
This seminar explores the use of shaped materials, mostly figural but sometimes aniconic, in the formal rituals and private devotional practices of premodern people. Various religious traditions are represented, including ancient Near Eastern and Greek polytheism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, and early and medieval Christianity. We look at both the distinctive features of image use in these cultures and the links among them, including the connection of sacred images to the dead, the numinous presence of relics, the importance of concealment and revelation, the instrumental power of votive objects, the role of images in sacrificial rites, and problems of idolatry and iconoclasm.

RLST 640b, The Body in Early Christian Thought and Practice  Maria Doerfler
The study of late antiquity has, from its very inception, been preoccupied with bodies, injecting questions about physicality and materiality into fields previously preoccupied predominantly with intellectual or spiritual matters. This seminar aims to provide an introduction to the “bodily” considerations that have preoccupied and continue to preoccupy students of late antiquity, including matters of sex, gender, and sexuality; race and ethnicity; health, illness, and death; bodily abjection, including that of slavery or asceticism; etc. In the process, connections emerge between bodily and spiritual topoi: human bodies could, for example, serve as loci of sin or salvation, or become signifiers of religious identity (for better or for worse), while the “special” bodies ascribed to angelic and demonic beings, to Jesus and the Virgin Mary, or to humanity in its paradisiacal and eschatological manifestations similarly preoccupied late ancient thinkers. The sources considered in this seminar focus on the period from roughly the second through the sixth century, and range primarily across the Latin, Greek, and Syrian-speaking realms. Most of the primary sources under consideration originate in Christian communities (broadly defined), although engagement with “pagan” and Jewish interlocutors features prominently in both sources and scholarship. In the same vein, this course focuses predominantly on textual matters; students interested in material culture are nevertheless very welcome and warmly encouraged to bring to bear their expertise on both conversations and final projects. EMWAR area of concentration designations: EarXty, LateXty, ScrInterp. The course also provides important historical context for students concentrating in Rabbinic Judaism, Christianity and Judaism in the Hellenistic East, and West Asian Religions of the Sasanian and Early Islamic Eras.

RLST 651b, Interpreting the Bible in Antiquity: Case Studies  Christine Hayes
An examination of the rich and polyphonic tradition of interpretation of two biblical narratives (Jacob and Esau; the Golden Calf) that were classical loci of Jewish–Christian polemic. Beginning with inner-bible exegetes, and continuing with ancient translations, Second Temple and Hellenistic period Jewish literature, early Christian sources, and finally classical rabbinic midrash, this course explores the
interpretable techniques and rhetorical strategies of ancient readers (especially *midrash* and allegory) and considers the way sacred texts have been employed to stake out competing intellectual and cultural claims. Prerequisite: reading proficiency in Hebrew. *EMWAR area of concentration designations: STHJ, RabJud, ScrInterp, XtyJudEast, WAR.*

**RLST 655a, Proseminar: Christianity in the Second Century**  Maria Doerfler and Andrew McGowan

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 692a / HIST 595a / JDST 844a, 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 720b, The Qur’an and Its Interpretation**  Gerhard Bowering

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, Al-Ghazali’s Impact on Islamic Thought**  Frank Griffel

**RLST 727b, Classical Arabic Philosophy**  Frank Griffel

Close reading of primary texts from the Arabic philosophical tradition ca. 750–1300, with attention to the major arguments and underlying assumptions of each author. The translation movement via al-Farabi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), al-Ghazali, Maimonides, and others; the philosophical textbooks of Muslim madrasa education.

**RLST 733a, Seminar on Sufism**  Gerhard Bowering

A study of Islamic asceticism and mysticism with emphasis on the early development of Sufism. Readings in Arabic Sufi sources of the ninth to eleventh century. Prerequisites: reading knowledge of classical Arabic and permission of the instructor.

**RLST 739a, Jonathan Edwards and American Puritanism**  Harry Stout

This course offers students an opportunity for intensive reading in and reflections upon the significance of early America’s premier philosophical theologian through an examination of the writings of the Puritans, through engagement with Edwards’s own writings, and through selected recent studies of Euro-Indian contact. Through primary and secondary literature, the course familiarizes students with the life and times of Edwards and encourages reading and discussion about his background, historical and intellectual contexts, and legacy.

**RLST 740b / JDST 734b, Textual and Thematic Approaches to Classical Rabbinic Literature**  Christine Hayes

The course trains students in the two basic approaches employed in the advanced study of classical rabbinic literature: (1) the critical analysis and elucidation of a defined unit of text using tools of higher criticism, and (2) the investigation and elucidation of a concept, theme, or topic across a range of texts viewed in literary, cultural, historical, and/or comparative context. The last few weeks of the course are devoted to the evaluation of recent dissertations that both exemplify these research methods and stimulate reflection on the place of rabbinic literature in the study of religion in antiquity and in the broader humanities. This course is designed for EMWAR students with a primary or secondary area of concentration in Rabbinic Judaism, Scriptures and their Interpretation in Antiquity, Christianity and Judaism in the Hellenistic East, and West Asian Religions of the Sasanian and Early Islamic Eras. The course also provides important historical context for students concentrating in Second Temple and Hellenistic Judaism, New Testament, and Late Ancient Christianity. *Note:* an additional hour will be scheduled for students working with the texts in original languages. Students interested in completing a seminar-based exam in connection with the course may speak to the instructor. *EMWAR area of concentration designations: RabJud, ScrInterp, XtyJudEast, WAR.*

**RLST 757a / JDST 755a / NELC 704a, The Dead Sea Scrolls and the History of Ancient Judaism: The Damascus Document**  Steven Fraade

Study of the Damascus Document, one of the most important of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Attention to the document’s place in the history of biblical interpretation and ancient Jewish law; the nature and rhetorical function of its textual practices, both narrative and legal; and its relation to the central sectarian writings of the Qumran community. Prerequisite: reading proficiency in ancient Hebrew. *EMWAR area of concentration designations: STHJ, ScrInterp. The course also provides important historical context for students concentrating in Rabbinic Judaism.*

**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 800a, Hebrew Bible Seminar: Problems in the History of Israelite Religion**  Robert Wilson

Readings in selected problems in the history of ancient Israel’s religion, including the ancient Near Eastern context of Israel’s religion; the origins of monotheism; the distinctive religions of Israel and Judah; prophecy; and priesthood. Prerequisite: previous critical study of the Hebrew Bible.

**RLST 801b, Hebrew Bible Seminar: Problems in the Book of Jeremiah**  Robert Wilson

A close reading of selected chapters of the Hebrew text of Jeremiah in order to test recent theories of the book’s compositional history.
RLST 835a / SMTC 545a, Northwest Semitic Inscriptions: Aramaic  Jimmy Daccache
This two-term course is designed to familiarize students with Aramaic epigraphy from the first millennium BCE. The Aramaic grammar is illustrated through early monumental inscriptions on stones from Anatolia and the abundant papyri of the Persian period from Egypt.

RLST 882b / ANTH 828b, Neighbors and Others  Nancy Levene
Concepts and stories of family, community, borders, ethics, love, and antagonism. Sources include philosophy, psychology, anthropology, literature, and film.

RLST 888b, The Surreal  Noreen Khawaja
An interdisciplinary study of reality, representation, and mode centered in the philosophy, literature, and art of global surrealism. What makes a work of signification surreal? How do surrealist works intervene in our sense of the real, and what ends can such interventions serve? What differentiates the surreal from the mysterious, the unreal, the fantastic, the supernatural? We consider basic relations of surrealist work: consciousness and automatism, accident and reason, freedom and artifice. The focus is on questions of ontology, aesthetics, and politics.

RLST 890a, Religion and Modernity  Nancy Levene
Seminar for students working at the intersection of religion, philosophy, and politics in modernity. Readings and topics change from year to year.