RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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

Chair
Frank Griffel

Acting Chair [Sp]
Kathryn Lofoon

Director of Graduate Studies
Linn Tonstad (Divinity)

Professors Joel Baden (Divinity), Stephen Davis, Carlos Eire, Steven Fraade, Paul Franks (Philosophy), Bruce Gordon (Divinity), Frank Griffel, John Hare (Divinity), Christine Hayes, Jennifer Herdt (Divinity), Noel Lenski (Classics), Nancy Levene, Kathryn Lofoon, Ivan Marcus, Andrew McGowan (Divinity), Laura Nasrallah, Sally Promey (American Studies), Chloë Starr (Divinity), Gregory Sterling (Divinity), Kathryn Tanner (Divinity), Shawkat Toorawa (Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations), Miroslav Volf (Divinity)

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

Assistant Professors Maria Doerfler, Supriya Gandhi, Eric Greene, Nicole Turner

Senior Lecturers John Grim (School of the Environment), Mary Evelyn Tucker (School of the Environment)

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 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. 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 522a / HIST 565a, Early Modern Spain Carlos Eire
Reading and discussion in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish texts (all available in English translation) and also in recent scholarship on early modern Spain.

RLST 568a / EALL 421a, 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 598b / EAST 511b, Modern Korean Buddhism from Sri Lanka to Japan Hwansoo Kim
This course situates modern Korean Buddhism in the global context of the late nineteenth century to the present. Through critical examination of the dynamic relationship between Korean Buddhism and the Buddhisms of key East Asian cities—Shanghai, Tokyo, Taipei, and Lhasa—the course seeks to understand modern East Asian Buddhism in a transnational light. Discussion includes analyzing the impact of Christian missionaries, pan-Asian and global ideologies, colonialism, Communism, capitalism, war, science, hypermodernity, and atheism.

RLST 606b, Pedagogy Nancy Levene
Seminar for doctoral students on the craft of teaching, with emphasis on the cultivation of a variety of learning environments.

RLST 616a / HIST 603a / JDST 806a / MDVL 603a, Jews and Christians in the Formation of Europe, 500–1500 Ivan Marcus
This seminar explores how medieval Jews and Christians interacted as religious societies between 500 and 1500.

RLST 620a, Origins of Islam Travis Zadeh
This seminar examines the formative stages of Islamic history. The topic of origins offers a broader framework to probe the histories of Orientalism and modern Islamic reform through case studies focusing on law, ritual, gender, race, slavery, and memory. Readings are drawn from epigraphic materials, prosopographical compendiums, exegesis, hadith collections, juridical manuals, and universal and regional histories.

RLST 626a / AFAM 626a / HIST 721a, African American Religious History Nicole Turner
African American religions have been central to the African American experience since Africans arrived in North America. An amalgam of traditional African religions, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and African American ingenuity, African American religions are dynamic and multifaceted. Although they are often depicted as sources of black resilience and emblems of black resistance, they have also been critiqued for marginalizing and racializing black people, as well as encoding archaic gender paradigms and reinforcing class divisions. This course explores the ways histories of African American religions have produced these various interpretive frames. Questions that animate the course include: What role have African American religions played in African American life? How have scholars studied the history of African American religions and ultimately shaped the discourse about African American religious life, and by extension African American history? The course engages foundational works, such as Albert Raboteau's Slave Religion and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham's Righteous Discontent, as well as newer works like Judith Weisenfeld's New World A-Coming and Matthew Harper's The End of Days.

RLST 641a, Death and Afterlife in Eastern Christian Traditions Maria Doerfler and Vasileios Marinis
Death, for ancient Christians as in the present era, sat at the intersection of a wide range of discourses. Doctors and intercessors sought to avert it, jurists to mitigate its impact on families and the flow of capital, philosophers and theologians to prescribe approaches to it, and bishops and other religious professionals to create rituals by which to assist the departed's transition into the afterlife and to channel the grief of surviving loved ones. This seminar introduces students to the plurality of material, literary, and liturgical practices surrounding death in early and Byzantine Christianity, from the fourth through the fifteenth century CE. After an initial foray into the sources, both biblical and philosophical, from which Christians constructed ideas about death and the afterlife, the seminar moves to exploring strategies of commemorating the departed; competing notions about the fate of the soul after death; and the anticipated final judgment and the loci—heaven and hell—to which Christians expected it to assign all humanity. Admission is at the instructor's discretion. While there is no formal prerequisite, familiarity with the outlines of early and Byzantine Christian history, and with biblical literature, is an asset to participants.

RLST 646a / SAST 670a, Indian Philosophy in Sanskrit Literature Aleksandar Uskokov
In this course we focus on issues of philosophical significance in Sanskrit literature of “nonstandard” philosophical genres, i.e., other than the treatise and the commentary. Specifically we read from canonical Hindu texts such as the Upaniṣads, Mahābhārata, Rāmāyaṇa,
RLST 696b / AMST 837b, Troubling Heritage  Sally Promey
This seminar invites students to interrogate the complex implications—the racial and religious, political and commercial, problems—of (American) heritage. The term is a familial one, implying genealogies of belonging, securing identities, designating insiders and outsiders, laying claim to aesthetics and ethics of incorporation and exclusion. Heritage enforces history; it (re)invents the past. Heritage often elicits the modifier “sacred,” enunciates itself in the aura of sacrality. It assumes a degree of inherited intimacy with the category “religion.” The state denominates, administers, and preserves “heritage”; an official apparatus (executive, legislative, judicial) supports this maneuver. Heritage is a power operation. Recent events have clearly revealed the extent to which various state and state-supported entities have shaped American heritage to facilitate the institutionalization of racism and the preservation of white (Christian) supremacy. Heritage fabrication in the United States, and to these ends, long predates the erection of heroic Confederate statuary in the early decades of the twentieth century. The course examines this history and aims to understand, especially, its material effects.

RLST 704a / AMST 730a / ANTH 727a, Readings in Critical Muslim Studies  Zareena Grewal
This course surveys key texts from a broad range of fields, including transnational American studies, religious studies, history, and anthropology, to explore methodological and theoretical questions that include: What is the “critical” in critical Muslim studies? What and who is “the Muslim” in these scholarly formations: a religious subject, a racial category, a location of subjection and surveillance, or all of these? What theoretical frameworks have emerged in the past twenty years to analyze the Muslim experience, and what is the impact of these intellectual projects on the academy and Muslim populations? What different methodologies are used and what kinds of knowledge do they yield? How does critical Muslim studies as an emergent field complicate notions of an “American Islam” and “American Islamophobia,” terms that are and have been practiced, debated, encoded, and altered both by transnational populations within the United States and by U.S. imperial policies, investments, and interests in Islam. The aim is to combine the resources and insights of various disciplines while identifying theoretical and methodological pitfalls and possibilities for future research. We focus on the relationship of our readings to other interdisciplinary formations that transcend disciplines, such as critical security studies and the anthropology of the secular, and the debates and trends therein. Permission of the instructor required.

RLST 741b, Phenomenology  Noreen Khawaja
In-depth introduction to phenomenology as a theory of what is and as a method for studying it. Key figures in the history of phenomenology, emphasizing connections to social theory, aesthetics, and religion. Readings from Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger, Fanon, Husserl, Ahmed, Barad, and others.

RLST 750b, Religion, Ethnicity, and Identity in American Jewish History  Elli Stern
An exploration of how Jews in America negotiated, and renegotiated, religion and ethnicity to forge a hyphenated American identity. Topics include the impact of Protestant domination, immigrant experiences and legacies, the role of discrimination, and self-presentation and representation by others.

RLST 771a / HIST 598a / JDST 764a, Jewish Emancipation in the Nineteenth Century  David Sorkin
A study of the various forms of emancipation politics in the nineteenth century. Conventional historiography has identified Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment) and religious reform as the predominant forms of emancipation politics. This course explores neglected forms of emancipation politics including: the citizen intercessor, lawyers using law, organized community politics, cooperation with the state, opposition to the state, horizontal alliances, public protests, private diplomacy, etc.

RLST 772a / HIST 596a / JDST 761a / MDVL 596a, 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 819a / AMST 630a / HSR 520a, Religion and Museums  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? Permission of the instructor required; qualified undergraduates are welcome.

RLST 837a / SMTC 547a, Northwest Semitic Inscriptions: Official Aramaic  Jimmy Daccache
Official Aramaic is the lingua franca of the Persian Empire during the sixth and fourth centuries BCE. This course is designed to familiarize students with texts from Achaemenid Egypt (the abundant papyri of Elephantine and Hermopolis), Bactria, Anatolia, and Mesopotamia. The Aramaic grammar is illustrated through the texts. Prerequisite: RLST 835, or some knowledge of Aramaic or a related Semitic language.

RLST 848a / SMTC 533a, Intermediate Syriac I  Jimmy Daccache
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 861b, Archaeology of the Roman Empire for the Study of New Testament and Early Christianity  
Laura Nasrallah

The first portion of the course introduces students to working with archaeological data from the Greco-Roman world (inscriptions, architecture, sculpture, coins). The second consists of seminars in Greece and Turkey during May, including some meetings with archaeologists and other scholars abroad. The course is designed for EMWAR students with a primary or secondary area of concentration in New Testament, Early Christianity, Late Ancient Christianity, and Christianity and Judaism in the Hellenistic East. The course also provides important historical context for students concentrating in Second Temple and Hellenistic Judaism and in Rabbinic Judaism. The course can also be applied to secondary areas of concentration focused on archaeology and material culture. Prerequisites: some level of reading ability in Greek, Latin, or Arabic; some level of reading ability in German, French, or modern Greek; and previous course work in early Christianity, New Testament, or Classics/Roman history. EMWAR area of concentration designations: NT, EarXty, LateXty, XtyJudEast.

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, designed for graduate students who are proficient in Syriac, is organized topically. This term’s topics: language (the language of Adam, the language of Paradise); hagiography (Persian martyr acts); scientific texts (pandemic of bubonic plague, Medicine); and philosophy.

RLST 890a, Religion and Modernity  
Nancy Levene

Seminar for doctoral students working at the intersection of religion, philosophy, and politics in modernity. Readings and topics vary from year to year.

RLST 897a, EMWAR Seminar I  
Stephen Davis

Required seminar for doctoral students in the EMWAR program, which also welcomes students who are interested in the religions of antiquity (including those students continuing in the tracks of New Testament, Ancient Christianity, Ancient Judaism). This term consists of 3–4 meetings, arranged so that the maximum number of students and faculty in the program can attend. Events include presentation of written works in progress, delivery of paper drafts for upcoming conferences, and a seminar for professionalization. ½ Course cr

RLST 898b, EMWAR Seminar II  
Stephen Davis

Part II of the EMWAR seminar consists of every-other-week sessions, which include such events as discussion of works in progress, key professionalization topics, and meetings with invited scholars in the field. ½ Course cr

RLST 905a, Theology Doctoral Seminar  
Kathryn Tanner

Combining seminar and workshop formats, this course solicits text suggestions from both students and faculty on the topic of Christian theology and anti-black racism in order to facilitate an ongoing communal practice of collegial and constructive reading and conversation. Sat/Unsat or Audit only. This is the required seminar for the doctoral program in theology, but doctoral students and faculty in other areas of the Religious Studies department or in the wider University community may also request permission to attend.