RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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

Chair
Kathryn Lofton

Acting Chair (2018–2019)
Harry Stout

Director of Graduate Studies
Christine Hayes

Professors Harold Attridge (Divinity), Joel Baden (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 Griffel, John Hare (Divinity), Christine Hayes, Jennifer Herdt (Divinity), Noel Lenski (Classics), 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, Nancy Levene, 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

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  Travis Zadeh
Required seminar for doctoral students in Religious Studies. Others admitted with instructor’s permission.

RLST 522b / HIST 565b, 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 537b, Readings in Indo-Islamic Texts  Supriya Gandhi
Close readings from a wide range of Persian and/or Urdu texts produced in South Asia. The selection of texts accommodates the research interests of enrolled students.

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 567a / SAST 562a, Readings in Pali Texts  Phyllis Granoff
In this course we read a selection of ritual texts from India's three classical religions, Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism. Prerequisite: a knowledge of Sanskrit.

RLST 592b / HIST 888b, Society and Religion on the Silk Road  Eric Greene and Valerie Hansen
An introduction to artifacts and documents pertaining to social history and religion from the most important sites on the Northern and Southern Silk Roads in China, including Niya, Kizil, Turfan, and Dunhuang. Assigned readings are in English. Readers of Chinese also participate in a separate section reading documents in classical Chinese from Turfan and Dunhuang.

RLST 594a / EALL 700a, The Three Teachings in Medieval China  Lucas Bender and Eric Greene
This course explores intersections between the Three Teachings—Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism—in late medieval China, focusing on the seventh through the ninth century. Too often studied in isolation from one another, these religious and intellectual teachings were deeply intertwined throughout this period, and scholars aiming to understand the religious, intellectual, and literary history of the Tang need to be able to read broadly across their boundaries. All primary readings are in classical/literary Chinese. Open to undergraduates with sufficient language skills. Prerequisite: reading ability in classical/literary Chinese.

RLST 595a, Readings in Indian Philosophy  Phyllis Granoff
In this course we read selections from a variety of sanskrit texts, the samkhyatavakamudi, madhyamika karika, brahmasutra bhasya, and pramananayatattvalokalankara.

RLST 598b / EAST 511b, Modern Korean Buddhism in the Global Context  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 613a / CLSS 877a / CPLT 556a, Rhetorics of the Ancient World  Michal Beth Dinkler and Irene Peirano
This interdisciplinary course takes as its starting point Greco-Roman rhetoric as a codified system and explores its relevance for contemporary interpretation of ancient texts. Moving back and forth between rhetoric as a set of norms and rhetoric as a condition of discourse, we engage with contemporary rhetorical studies in Classics and Biblical studies. Topics include rhetoric and narrative, exemplarity and imitation across the literary and spiritual realms, “anti-rhetoricism,” embedded rhetorical performances (e.g., speeches, oratory, etc.), and nonverbal forms of persuasion (e.g., visual, emotional, etc.).

RLST 649a, Jesus to Muhammad: Ancient Christianity to the Rise of Islam  Stephen Davis
The history of Christianity and the development of Western culture from Jesus to the early Middle Ages. The creation of orthodoxy and heresy; Christian religious practice; philosophy and theology; politics and society; gender; Christian literature in its various forms, up to and including the early Islamic period.

RLST 653a, Gnostic Texts in Coptic  Harold Attridge
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: EGYP 510 or equivalent.
RLST 658b / EGYP 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: 
EGYP 510b or equivalent.

RLST 601a / HIST 260a, 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 703a, Interrogating the Crisis of Islam  
Zareena Grewal
In official and unofficial discourses in the United States, diagnoses of Islam’s various “crises” are ubiquitous, and Muslim “hearts and 
memories” are viewed as the “other” front in the War on Terror. Since 9/11, the U.S. State Department has made the reform of Islam 
an explicit national interest, pouring billions of dollars into USAID projects in Muslim-majority countries, initiating curriculum 
development programs for madrasas in South Asia, and establishing the Arabic Radio Sawa and the satellite TV station Al-Hurra 
to propagate the U.S. administration’s political views as well as what it terms a “liberal” strain of Islam. Muslim Americans are also 
consumed by debates about the “crisis” of Islam, a crisis of religious authority in which the nature and rapidity of change in the measures 
of authority are felt to be too difficult to assimilate. This course maps out the various and deeply politically charged contemporary debates 
about the “crisis of Islam” and the question of Islamic reform through an examination of official U.S. policy, transnational pulp Islamic 
literature, fatwas and essays authored by internationally renowned Muslim jurists and scholars, and historical and ethnographic works 
that take up the category of crisis as an interpretive device.

RLST 705b / AMST 705b / HIST 582b, Readings in Religion in American Society, 1600–2018  
Tisa Wenger
This course explores intersections of religion and society in American history from the colonial period to the present as well as 
methodological problems important to their study. It is designed to give graduate students a working knowledge of the field, ranging 
from major recent studies to bibliographical tools. In short, the seminar is a broad readings course surveying religion in American history 
from colonization to the present. It is not a specialized research seminar, but it does require a basic understanding of historiography.

RLST 715a, The Theology and Philosophy of Fakhr al-Din al-Razi  
Frank Griffel
Recent research has shown that Fakhr al-Din al-Razi was the most influential Muslim theologian in the so-called postclassical period in 
Islam after 1100. In his works, Islamic theology and philosophy reached a mature state that brings together several intellectual traditions, 
among them that of classical Ash’arism, of Aristotelian philosophy (falsafa), of al-Ghazali’s critique of falsafa, and of Sufism. The kind 
of synthesis that Fakhr al-Din al-Razi created dominated the education of Sunni theologians up to the mid-eighteenth century, when the 
confrontation with modernity created new priorities. This seminar takes a close look at this understudied thinker. The goal is to 
understand the most widespread kind of Islamic theology of the centuries between 1200 and 1750, a time that is not yet covered in 
textbooks on Islamic intellectual history. We read selections of Fakhr al-Din’s work in the Arabic original. Prerequisites: a firm grounding in 
classical Arabic and permission of the instructor.

RLST 716b, Theories and Methods in Islamic Studies  
Travis Zadeh

RLST 717a, Islamic Theology and Philosophy  
Frank Griffel
Historical survey of major themes in Muslim theology and philosophy, from teachings of the Qur’an to contemporary Muslim thought. 
The systematic character of Muslim thought and of the arguments given by thinkers; reason vs. revelation; the emergence of Sunnism in 
the tenth through eleventh centuries; the reaction of Muslim theology (from 1800) to the challenges of the West; and contemporary 
Muslim thought.

RLST 720b, 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 731a, 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 733a, Seminar on Sufism  
Gerhard Böwering
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 739b, Jonathan Edwards and American Puritanism  
Harry Stout and Kenneth Minkema
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 746a / JDST 736a / NELC 701a, Midrash Seminar: The Exodus from Egypt  
Steven Fraade
The Exodus from Egypt as seen through rabbinic eyes. Close readings of the early rabbinic commentary (midrash), Mekhila, to the 
narrative of Exodus 13:17ff (the lection Behshallah). Particular attention to the methods and language of rabbinic exegetes and to the
rhetorical interplay of tradition and scriptural commentary. Interpretations and interpretive strategies compared and contrasted with those of other ancient biblical exegeses (Jewish and non-Jewish) where available. Prerequisite: reading fluency in ancient Hebrew.

**RLST 751b, Introduction to 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 rabbi; the synagogue; faith in reason; Sabbath and festivals; history and its redemption.

**RLST 752a / JDST 727a / NELC 702a, Mishnah Seminar: Tractate Sanhedrin**  Steven Fraade

Close study of a section of the Mishnah, the earliest digest of Jewish law, treating religious courts and their jurisprudential practice. Dual attention to the historical significance of the institutions of law represented and to the cultural significance of the rhetoric of that representation. Consideration of the textual practices of rabinic legal discourse in relation to its social function, as well as to the interplay of law and narrative. Prerequisite: reading fluency in ancient Hebrew.

**RLST 763a / JDST 701a, The Bible**  Christine Hayes

This course introduces students to the writings common to both Jewish and Christian scripture (the twenty-four books of the Hebrew Bible or Tanakh found in all Bibles) and examines these writings as diverse and often conflicting expressions of the religious life and thought of ancient Israel as well as a foundational element of Western civilization. Special emphasis on the writings’ cultural and historical setting in the ancient Near East; close reading of selected passages; the interpretive history of selected passages influential in Western culture. Students are also introduced to a wide range of critical and literary approaches to biblical studies, including source criticism, tradition criticism, redaction criticism, and contemporary literary criticism. Students view course lectures, which survey the entire Bible, online; class time focuses on comparative materials, close readings, and the interpretation of specific biblical passages in Jewish and Christian culture.

**RLST 774b, History of Jewish Culture, 1500 to the Present**  David Sorkin

A broad introduction to the history of Jewish culture from the late Middle Ages until the present. Emphasis on the changing interaction of Jews with the larger society as well as the transformation of Judaism in its encounter with modernity.

**RLST 775a / CPLT 688a / JDST 842a, Political Theology**  Hannah Hever

This course investigates the theological aspects of modern political ideologies. Subjects include sovereignty, universalism, law, election, commandment, and messianism. Primary readings include Carl Schmitt, Martin Buber, Alain Badiou, Slavoj Žižek, Daniel Boyarin, and Giorgio Agamben.

**RLST 776a / HIST 601a / JDST 790a, 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 782a / JDST 654a, Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Judaism**  John Collins

This course explores various forms of early biblical interpretation in the Second Temple period, including Philo and the Dead Sea Scrolls, and implicit interpretations in biblical paraphrases. Prerequisites: Hebrew and Greek.

**RLST 797a / HIST 597a / JDST 861a, Twentieth-Century Jewish Politics: Holocaust, Israel, and American History**  David Sorkin

This course explores the changing nature of Jewish politics in relationship to three of the twentieth century’s major events. First we examine Jewish political behavior during the Holocaust, especially the notion of “resistance” vis-à-vis the so-called Jewish councils and the controversy surrounding Hannah Arendt’s book *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Second, we probe the continuities and discontinuities in the establishment of the State of Israel, focusing on the politics of the “Yishuv” (Jewish settlement in Mandatory Palestine) and its relationship to British imperialism. Third, we analyze shifts in the domestic and foreign policies of the organized American Jewish community during the era of the civil rights movement (1946–64).

**RLST 800a, Hebrew Bible Seminar: Problems in the Book of Ezekiel**  Robert Wilson

A close reading of the Hebrew text of Ezekiel, with a focus on the book's literary history and religious thought.

**RLST 803b / ANTH 531b / ARGC 531b / CLSS 851b / EALL 773b / HIST 502b / HSAR 564b / JDST 653b / NELC 533b, Sensory Experiences in Ancient Ritual**  Carolyn Laterrriere and Andrew Turner

A comparative exploration of the role the senses played in the performance of ancient and premodern ritual, drawing from a range of ancient traditions including those of Greece, Rome, and Egypt, and from cultural traditions of the Near East, India, China, and the New World. Placing particular emphasis on the relationship between art and ritual, we discuss the methods available for reconstructing ancient sensory experience, how the ancient cultures conceived of the senses and perception, and how worshipers’ sensory experiences, whether visual, sonic, olfactory, gustatory, or haptic, were integral aspects in their engagement with the divine within religious ritual. This seminar incorporates material in the Yale Art Gallery.

**RLST 828b / NELC 631b, Authors, Editors, and Scribes: The Making of the Hebrew Bible**  Joel Baden

This course provides an overview of the diverse compositional techniques employed in the creation of the various books of the Hebrew Bible. By closely examining the literary features of a selection of biblical texts, along with comparative evidence from related corpora, students learn how authors, editors, and scribes have created and influenced this central text of Western civilization. Prerequisite for Divinity students: REL 503 or REL 504 or equivalent; for Graduate School students: an introductory course in the Bible at some level is preferred.
RLST 833a / ARCG 611a / CLSS 811a / NELC 611a, The Ancient Egyptian Temple as Cosmos: Correlation of Architecture and Decoration Program  Christina Geisen

The course focuses on the correlation of archaeology, iconography, and philology by analyzing ancient Egyptian temples under the specific consideration of the interplay of architecture and decoration program. The different types of temples and their developments over time are discussed. The main focus is the function of each temple type, which can only be understood by analyzing the architecture of the monument, its decoration program, related texts (such as rituals, myths, and festival description, but also historical texts), and its place in the cultic landscape of the specific location. The class also provides an overview of rituals performed and festivals celebrated in the temples, as well as of the administrative sphere of the temple. Optional field trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York to see the Temple of Dendur. No previous knowledge of ancient Egyptian culture or languages is necessary; all texts are read in translation.

RLST 834b / SMTC 546b, Northwest Semitic Inscriptions: Phoenician Epigraphy  Jimmy Daccache

This course is designed to lay the groundwork for the study of the Phoenician grammar, illustrated through a selection of a wide variety of inscriptions (monumental, cursive, numismatic, seal inscriptions). The chronological span stretches from the early centuries of the first millennium BCE to the Hellenistic period. The study of inscriptions – examined from photographs and drawings – follows a geographical and chronological order beginning with the inscriptions from “Phoenicia” itself (Byblos, Sidon, and Tyre), Anatolia, Cyprus, Greece, and other places around the Mediterranean. By the end of the term, students have an overview of the Phoenician inscriptions and are able to transcribe, translate, and analyze Phoenician inscriptions from different periods.

RLST 835a and RLST 836b / SMTC 513a, Introductory Syriac  Jimmy Daccache

Syriac was an Aramaic dialect which developed its own written tradition in the city of Edessa in classical antiquity. This two-term course provides students with a basic working knowledge of the language, namely, the three principal scripts (Estrangela, Serê, and “Nestorian”), verbal morphology, and the fundamental rules of the 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 840a / SMTC 520a, Introductory Ugaritic  Jimmy Daccache

The Ugaritic texts from the Bronze Age found at Ras Shamra on the Mediterranean coast of Syria provide the earliest well-attested example of the use of alphabet writing. The Ugaritic corpus comprises more than 2,000 texts of several genres (myths, rituals, incantations, “scientific” manuals, letters, administrative documents, and others), written in a “cuneiform” script. This two-term course prepares students to read, transcribe, and analyze texts written in Ugaritic by using basic grammar rules.

RLST 880a / JDST 860a / PHIL 603a, Spinoza and the God of the Bible  Nancy Levene

This course considers Spinoza’s metaphysics and social and political thought in light of a family of problems named religion: the concept of God; the relations among politics, divine law, and their institutions; the value of Judaism and Christianity; and the interpretation of the Bible. We read from Spinoza’s principal works as well as from the Bible and a few other thinkers, medieval and modern, in conceptual proximity to Spinoza.

RLST 885a and RLST 886b, The Works-in-Progress Seminar (WIPS) for New Testament and Ancient Christianity  Stephen Davis and Michal Beth Dinkler

The Works-in-Progress Seminar provides a context for collegial academic engagement among graduate students and faculty in the fields of New Testament and Ancient Christianity. It is designed to be a setting where participants engage both constructively and critically in a context of mutual support, focusing principally on works in progress (e.g., books, dissertations, articles, and seminar papers being turned into articles). ½ Course cr per term

RLST 890a or b, Advanced Topics in Religion and Modernity  Staff

Advanced seminar for doctoral students working at the intersection of religion, philosophy, and politics in the modern period. Readings and topics change from year to year.

RLST 892b / ENGL 950b, Interdisciplinary Philosophy  Noreen Khawaja

Seminar for humanities doctoral students who have theoretical interests and who are seeking to explore and strengthen the philosophical dimension of their work. Part I of the course is reading and discussion, including philosophical works and works of recent scholarship across disciplines which have something to teach scholars in literary studies, cultural studies, religious studies, and science studies about how to link, for example, the ethnographic and ontological, history and theory of mind, close reading and phenomenology, affect and aesthetics. Part II centers on students’ own research projects. Collaborative development, discussion, critique.

RLST 905a, Theology Doctoral Seminar  Linn Tonstad

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