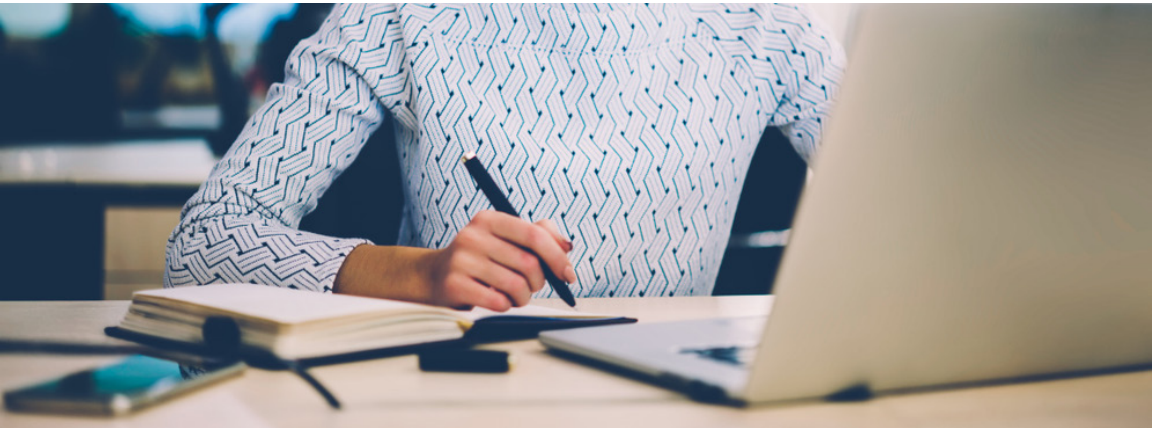
TEACHING RELIGION IN A CHANGING PUBLIC UNIVERSITY



Sandie Gravett

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Introduction

In 1962, a curriculum committee at Duke University attempted to eliminate the two-semester religion requirement for all candidates seeking the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees. James L. Price, then chair of the Department of Religion, offered his faculty's rationale for keeping the courses. He wrote,

> Do we wish to make it possible for students to be graduated with a bachelor's degree from this University without this study of the primary source of our Hebraic-Christian tradition? Do we wish to require no course of all students in the liberal arts and sciences which examines the ideological bases of our intellectual heritage in the West?[1]

For Price and his colleagues, "to exclude the religious dimension of the great tradition of the West is to distort that tradition, and to limit a student's capacity to understand himself and his world."[2]

Not surprisingly, for an institution historically and, at that time actively, related to the United Methodist Church[3], the faculty equated the study of religion largely to coursework in the Bible. Price explained, "The principal option is a two-semester historical and critical study of that literature which originated and sustains the Hebraic-Christian tradition of the Western World—the Old and New Testaments."[4] In fairness, he noted that a second possibility also proved popular. That course canvassed biblical materials more selectively in the first semester; then, in the second, "the scriptures of several of the major non-Christian religions are examined." As a result, he claimed "our students … study first-hand the normative literature of their own religious heritage. And they are given the opportunity to study, with equal seriousness, the classical sources of other major religions of the modern world."[5]

Reading Price's comments carefully marks the battle lines at Duke. From his vantage point, the explicitly Christian religion requirement in the core curriculum "provides a tangible and fitting expression"[6] of the university's aspiration to see knowledge and religion as joined. He defends Duke's "long-standing commitment to honor and commend to each student generation the Christian faith and life."[7] Even though Price maintains that in teaching these classes "there is, of course, no desire on our part to proselytize members for any church or to impose upon students prescribed types of belief or actions," he also indicates that "we do not hide our personal convictions nor the reasons for holding them." By contrast, the committee making the recommendation against which he reacts planned to group the study of religion within a larger pool of humanities classes and to structure the choices available to students in a way that made it possible to opt out of any course in religion.[8] In Price's telling, this faction of the faculty viewed the existing requirements as "archaic remnants of our legacy from the past," as well as "a 'cultural lag'…[or] a roadblock

to progress."[9] The divide reflected the disquiet in many universities, public and private, about the place of religion in a modern, secular curriculum. Indeed, a larger conversation on this topic was happening during this era throughout the country. A series of court cases leading to the 1963 United States Supreme Court *Schempp*[10] ruling supported a consensus that scholarly practice in public institutions should distinguish between teaching about religion and instruction in religion.[11]

Troy Organ, a Professor of Philosophy at Ohio University, a public institution, writes at roughly the same time (1963) on the same topic as Price. He, too, identifies religion as an essential component of a liberal arts education, which he defines as "inspiring, challenging, and encouraging the better minds of the younger generation to labor for that civilization and culture which is not now, but may come to be."[12] But he arrives at that position via a different route than Price. Organ argues, "If the principal aim of a liberal arts education is to free the minds of men, there must be conversation in all subject matters, and especially in those areas where ignorance, atrophy, dogmatism, and intolerance are most prevalent." For Organ, "Religion is one of these areas."[13] On the surface, his rationale might seem completely distinct from that of Price and his colleagues. A closer look, however, reveals that Organ cites three fundamental reasons necessitating the academic study of religion and, in them, touches on some of the same ground. First, he contends most persons possess a stunning level of religious illiteracy and thus "the most obvious reason for the inclusion of religion in liberal arts education is to foster accurate, unbiased information in this field."[14] Second, he asserts that "an education which does not include the study of some facets of religion misses one of man's noblest efforts to know himself and his world."[15] Lastly, Organ also advocates for the study of religion as part of moral and intellectual development. He says: "For many a student the college class in religion represents the first time he has discussed religion at a mature level, witnessed an honest effort to understand a religion other than his own, and attempted to see his own faith in a context which includes other religions." He then adds why he judges such an event important. "Surely modern life is too fraught with tragic eventualities for an enlightened society to risk producing engineers, editors, scientists, and other leaders who remain ignorant of religion."[16]

This debate over the study of religion in higher education, now more than a half-century past, continues into the present. Many professionals within the field of religious studies claim that the academic study of religion remains necessary because of the profound impact of religion on the lives and history of peoples around the world. At the University of Pennsylvania, for example, the Department of Religious Studies web page[17] poses the question "Why Study Religion?" and opens:

> Religion is a major source of inspiration, meaning, and controversy in human culture, informing history, politics, economics, art, and literature. It rivals trade as a major trans-national force across the globe. One cannot hope to understand world history and literature—or current events like Middle East politics, the recent insurgencies in Thailand, the genocide in Sudan, or US presidential elections—without knowledge of religion.
>
> Moreover, the study of religion purportedly offers students a set of tools for building

a more complex picture of various cultures and for understanding difference with greater clarity. The University of Wisconsin – Madison's Religious Studies Program page says:

> Religious Studies is an academic discipline that looks at religious phenomena worldwide from a variety of angles in order to understand the many roles that religion plays in human life. To this end, students of religion learn to use a variety of theoretical analyses and methods. These include historical methods to understand how religions develop in time; critical literary methods to understand religious ideas; aesthetic methods to understand religious art and material culture; social-scientific methods to understand the relationship between religion, society and culture. Religious Studies can also engage a variety of professional disciplines in analysis of how religion functions in economic, educational or political contexts, healthcare and scientific research, to name some examples.

More controversially, along the lines of what Price claimed at Duke University, some would argue that the study of religion provides an opportunity for personal development and enrichment. Mark Wallace of Swarthmore College's Department of Religion, for example, identifies three emphases of religious studies in his essay "Why Study Religion?" on the departmental web page:

- Religious studies is intellectually exciting because it provides access to the mystery of the other
- Religious studies is academically enriching because it is a transdisciplinary mode of inquiry that engenders deep intercultural literacy
- Religious studies is personally meaningful because it raises questions of purpose and value along with developing important life skills.

Even though speaking as a faculty member at a private institution, these goals also resonate at many public universities. The University of Northern Iowa, for example, says to students that "studying religion gives you the opportunity to explore some of the deepest and most significant ideas and values that have emerged in human history" Although stressing that the study of religion assists in conceptualizing and understanding history, cultures, literature, art, politics, and the like, the personal aspects of this investigation persist. "The study of religion gives you the opportunity to explore the range of answers to these profound questions, and allows you to consider your own beliefs and values."

These descriptions of the study of religion place the field firmly within the Humanities. As Leon Wieseltier, the American writer and cultural critic, notes, "The purpose of the humanities is not primarily utilitarian, it is not primarily to get a job ... The purpose of the humanities is to cultivate the individual, cultivate the citizen."[18] But not all religious studies scholars within the field agree with locating the field in this manner. Russell McCutcheon at the University of Alabama, for example, argues for properly categorizing the academic study of religion as a social science, understanding religion as "facts of social life susceptible to the ordinary methods of study used throughout the human sciences."[19] His position resists valorizing religion as a unique category of human experience or turning to its study for personal and/or moral development. Indeed, he argues that the widespread use

of descriptive and/or comparative categories within the field masks the political agendas of scholars and fails to acknowledge interpreters' positions of power and privilege. Most relevant to this study, he contends that "speculating on issues of ultimate meaning and inexpressible essences housed within a thing called 'Human Nature'… hardly constitute legitimate data for scholars in the public university."[20]

These contestations about the field of religious studies and its place in higher education arise for an array of reasons. The evolution of the place of religion in the academy over time represents one starting point. Certainly, few would argue the fact that religious studies as an academic enterprise emerges largely from Christian theological roots and builds into an increasingly "scientific" study of texts and practices. Indeed, Christianity largely remained a touchstone for the development of the categories scholars employed in their work. As James Turner notes in his book on the development of such study in America, "The discipline of religious studies was born from a felt need to measure Christianity against alternatives."[21] Further, even with the advent of more expansive definitions of what constitutes religion, greater reflectiveness about methodologies, and serious attempts to inscribe these understanding in curricula, the legacies of such a Christian-focused history[22] continue to prove problematic for many.[23]

A larger suspicion about the academic study of religion as educationally sound also generates scrutiny as the headline-grabbing battle over the General Education curriculum at the private, but unquestionably influential, Harvard University demonstrates. In 2006, a curricular proposal would have required students to take a course within a category labeled "Reason and Faith." While designed to guarantee that students learned something about the nature of how religion functions in the world, the poor choice of words provided the opposition, led by experimental psychologist and Johnstone Family Professor in the Department of Psychology Steven Pinker, with plenty of ammunition to strike it down. Pinker writes, "Faith—believing something without good reasons to do so—has no place in anything but a religious institution, and our society has no shortage of these."[24] This sentiment shocks no one in the academy. Indeed, in her study of university scientists, Elaine Howard Eklund finds that:

> Many scientists believe that religion has no legitimate place in the modern American academy; 54 percent mentioned the dangers that religion could bring to universities (in particular, to science) when it goes wrong. A large minority of scientists I talked with (about 36 percent) have a model of university life that does not allow *any* positive role for religious people, institutions, and ideas on their campuses. They have few models for how scientists (with or without faith) might sustain productive interaction with or even respond to religious people and ideas. In their models of the university, such people and ideas exist primarily as a threat to science.[25]

What her work discovered represents nothing new. In 1932 Bernard Iddings Bell, a Professor of Religion at Columbia University, wrote "…religion as a subject for serious intellectual concern enjoys no vogue among the great majority in university halls."[26] Yet departments dedicated to the study of religion continued to develop throughout the 20th

century and persist into the present at both private and, for consideration in this book, public universities.

In the current higher education environment, religious studies programs at public universities still face these type of objections, but confront additional pressures as well. The financial duress experienced by many state-funded institutions, for example, often results in demands by legislative bodies and other publics for concrete measurements of value. Metrics such as the number of students enrolled in classes or declaring a major, graduating from a program and the time to degree, as well as the ratio of faculty to students, become indicators of a program's utility. Job preparation and placement, or acceptance rates into graduate school, supposedly demonstrate the efficacy of a course of study in securing meaningful employment. For religious studies programs, this data-driven approach generally means defending small numbers. While some figures suggest a positive trend of student interest[27] in religious studies, that assessment needs much sharper clarification. And the future looks troubled. Fading enrollments and reduced numbers of graduates in many humanities fields and disciplines[28] will, no doubt, continue to make their impact known in the study of religion.

Likewise, the rise of the so-called "nones" among millennials[29] and subsequent generations likely does not bode well for an academic major in religious studies as decreasing personal interest and investment in religious practice could easily correlate into declining interest in its study. Additionally, a growing number of private, religiously confessional institutions in both the not-for-profit and for-profit higher education markets cater to students interested in the study of religion from an explicitly sectarian foundation. The ability of these institutions to market their programs to students, including adult learners via non-traditional learning platforms, makes them an attractive option for religiously devout students seeking an education consonant with their worldview.[30] And, most important, they draw students away from public university alternatives.

Against this complicated backdrop, the following volume explores the teaching of religion in the public university, with a focus on undergraduate education. Consideration of the field itself and instructional practices within it alone will not, however, suffice. Revolutionary changes in the higher education landscape call for sustained reflection on the impact of these items on the structures in which academic work in religious studies happens and the conditions of faculty life. The advent of new educational technologies, the needs of more diverse student bodies, and alterations in the relationships between universities and communities also raise questions about how religious studies scholars and the programs they provide will evolve. In brief, this book highlights the need for critical engagement with religion in an academic setting and considers pathways for public university programs in religious studies to survive.

Chapter One begins with an exploration of the professional settings and prevailing conditions where the academic study of religion takes place and outlines a series of indicators that assist in making determinations about the health of a program. Chapter Two examines traditional "types" of religious studies courses as a mechanism to ponder how faculty understandings of the field shape curricular decisions and to think about the conceptualization of religious studies courses within a wider university environment. Chapter Three addresses modes of instruction, with an emphasis on the impact of technology, specifically how programs

handle the pedagogical challenges of online and hybrid learning. Chapter Four looks at how the field confronts the contemporary challenges of living in responsible relationship to people from many difference cultural backgrounds in an increasingly global environment and the pressures of religious difference on communities and nations by evaluating how faculty handle issues of diversity in curricula, faculty hiring, and the classroom. Chapter Five concludes by exploring possible futures for religious studies programs. The distinct needs of a changing student population receive emphasis, as do the demands for programs to demonstrate viability and relevance. Current pressures to produce job-ready graduates on a solid career path provides a point of access into imagining new educational models and the place of religious studies within them.

The challenge of this topic comes not only in its breadth, but also in knowing that the constitution of religious studies departments, programs, and units varies dramatically. Local histories of programs, the idiosyncrasies of individual institutions, and the complex and ever-changing mix of local, state, national, and global political circumstances also result in real differences in how programs understand their work and seek to live out their missions. Nonetheless, a search for common ground and specific insight into the development of a sound undergraduate program with adequate institutional support and firm footing within the public university paradigm will, ideally, emerge over the course of this volume.

This effort presumes that the academic study of religion matters to the educational enterprise. Many religious studies programs, in fact, put forward evidence to that effect on their web pages. A quote from former Secretary of State John Kerry turns up frequently. In one iteration of his comments, he writes:

> One of the most interesting challenges we face in global diplomacy today is the need to fully understand and engage the great impact that a wide range of religious traditions have on foreign affairs. I often say that if I headed back to college today, I would major in comparative religions rather than political science. That is because religious actors and institutions are playing an influential role in every region of the world and on nearly every issue central to U.S. foreign policy.[31]

He echoes another former Secretary of State, Madeline Albright, who said of her time in that leadership position: "My goal was to signal to the State Department that having an understanding of a country's religious dynamics is just as important as knowing its language, culture, and history."[32] These two diplomats make the case that religion shapes the ways in which humans live and that education into the whys and hows serves a shared life in a multicultural and increasingly globalized world. Their comments seem, upon reflection, reminiscent of those made by Professor Organ over 50 years ago now when he said, "The goal of the college is to help the student discover his place in the total human situation—scientifically, politically, socially, aesthetically, morally, philosophically, and religiously."[33] How religious studies programs in public institutions navigate the landscape in front of them and make the case for their continued presence in campus curricula certainly deserves ongoing study and conversation. Hopefully, this volume makes some small contribution to the dialogue.

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Approximately ten years ago, a working group of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) characterized the state of academic religious studies: "By most indicators, the field is growing, perhaps significantly. The number of religious studies majors increased by 22 percent in the past decade (to an estimated forty-seven thousand students), with like percentage increases in the number of total courses offered, course enrollments, and faculty positions in the field." The scholars writing this report further noted, "The number of religious studies majors at public institutions has grown even more rapidly, by 40 percent during the same period" and then concluded that trend as "signifying a sea change in the field." They argued,

> What was once a major situated largely within liberal arts colleges and denominationally linked institutions is now establishing a widespread presence at state universities. In the past five years alone, new degree programs or departments of religion have been proposed or established at the University of Texas; Ohio State University; Georgia State University; the University of Minnesota; the University of North Carolina, Charlotte; the University of North Carolina, Asheville; and Towson State University—among other public institutions.[1]

Crediting this uptick to the shock of 9/11 and its subsequent fallout, as well as contentious debates over issues where religion plays a defining role such as marriage equality, stem cell research, euthanasia, and the origins of life, seemed a reasonable assumption. Indeed, the group concluded, "Clearly, the field of religious studies now finds itself at a pivotal moment. An unprecedented confluence of world events, public perceptions, and educational insights has created exciting possibilities for the growth and reimagining of the field—possibilities that were unthinkable even a decade ago."[2]

Recent figures on the field of religious studies, however, prove difficult to determine with precision, and what does emerge may not sustain as optimistic a view. In 2014, Data USA[3] reported that 18,426 students received degrees[4] in Philosophy & Religion; in 2015 that number declined to 17,447.[5] These counts depend on campus reporting to IPEDS (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System).[6] While a solid total, the significance of the raw numbers remains murky. First, the figures come from an undifferentiated CIP (Classification of Instructional Program) code[7] used to designate "Philosophy & Religion" broadly. The data, then, includes degrees in Philosophy, Logic, Ethics, etc., in addition to Religion. Second, it also covers, as seen below, degrees offered by sectarian institutions and/or in contexts stressing vocational outcomes, which raises questions about what courses comprise the degree and how the topics get approached.

The possibility for greater nuance does exist. Honing the search to a 4-digit CIP code designating religious studies alone, for example, yields 7,354 degrees in 2014 and 7,089 in 2015.[8] Of this number, approximately 75% are bachelor's degrees and 7.7% associate's degrees. While this specificity in coding handles the first concern by pinpointing "religion" as the subject of specialty,[9] the question of what kinds of coursework comprises those degrees designates remains unanswered. Further, even though one can isolate various institutional types and even individual schools, those measurements still, as seen subsequently, do not resolve what constitutes earning a degree in "religious studies." Moreover, a third problem must be noted: these CIP codes cannot capture data for religious studies concentrations that might be equivalents to the major existing under the broader rubric of "Philosophy & Religion," or "Humanities," or "Interdisciplinary Studies," as well as majors housed under other departmental headings such as Anthropology, Sociology, History, etc.

Even with the difficulties evaluating this simple "data dump" firmly in mind, the information available looks troubling for persons interested in the academic study of religion at public universities. In both 2014 and 2015, the top three schools in terms of religious studies degree production all espoused a marked sectarian perspective. Liberty University,[10] the Virginia institution founded by the Rev. Jerry Falwell and the largest Christian university in the world, ranks first in both years and by a significant margin. In 2014, this institution awarded 17.5% of all the degrees in religious studies nationally. That number rose to 18.6% in 2015. In 2014, Grand Canyon University,[11] a for-profit private Christian University in Arizona and another private Christian institution, Cairn University—Langhorne (formerly Philadelphia Biblical University)[12] tied for the next highest percentage of degrees at 2.3% each.[13] In 2015, Yeshiva University,[14] the private research university in New York City with a focus on a distinctly Jewish education, awarded 4.7% of the total with Cairn following at 2.2%.[15] At public institutions, the University of Virginia main campus conferred the highest number of degrees in both years at 1.4% and 1.5%. And, it must be noted, that although small, the figures from Data USA might over-report. Data USA claims 103 Religious Studies degrees for the University of Virginia in 2015. However, for academic year 2014-2015, IPEDS itself says the Religious Studies program granted 43 Bachelor's, 12 Master's, and 15 Doctoral degrees, for a total of 70.[16]

As noted, limiting an IPEDS search to public institutions might resolve some concerns about gathering usable data for commentary on the state of religious studies in these settings, but that move still falls short of providing a basis for a thorough assessment of the numbers. Without the larger context of all higher education, interpretation can skew problematically. How public institutions compare to other venues speaks, at least in part, to influence. And, to continue with problems mentioned previously, where the study of religion resides institutionally varies. The University of Michigan, for instance, offers no undergraduate degree in Religion, but does feature a series of related undergraduate majors, a minor run through the History Department, and the possibility of constructing a unique course of study through the Individualized Major Program. Those related majors include Judaic Studies and three sub-majors of Near Eastern Studies: Ancient Near Eastern Studies, Arabic Studies, and Hebrew Studies. Depending on the specifics of the program, IPEDS would not always recognize such students under a religious studies designation.[17] To add

another data-related complication, while the reporting fields for institutions submitting data to IPEDS allow for up to two majors per degree, variations in what schools provide may also result in problems at this level. The reported totals could miss students who earn religious studies credentials as a second or even a third major. In short, the many possible "quirks" or variants mean counting graduates in religious studies, or with religious studies as a primary focus, eludes straightforward quantitative measure across institutions. And, again, given the wide range of what constitutes the Religious Studies degree, what that label designates can defy comparative value in determining useful examination for trends in the field over time.

With the current higher education environment driven by metrics and measurement, these shortcomings matter. Data points such as course enrollment figures, major counts, number of graduates, average time to graduation, and statistics on post-graduate success in employment or graduate school admission serve as a medium of communication to administrators, boards, legislative bodies, and wider publics. These figures demonstrate a program's utility, justify its continued existence, form the basis for receiving new or replacement faculty lines, and generate leverage in campus conversations about curricula and resources. Consequently, an acute need for accurate measures exists on the local level at the minimum. Truthfully, that need has existed for a long time. Back in 1987, Robert Gustafson wrote, "The call for more 'practical' academic offerings coupled with decisions to remove or reduce religious studies courses from the core curricula has depressed enrollments and prompted administrators more swayed by cost-benefit analyses than academic judgments to slash religious studies programs."[18] Similarly, E. Ann Matter describes how in 1993 the Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences recommended the closure of the Religious Studies department at the University of Pennsylvania along with the departments of American Civilization and Regional Science. Matter characterizes that ensuing struggle to save the program as driven by the need to clearly distinguish the study of religion as distinct from other areas of academic inquiry, but also hints that department size and strength played a role.[19] In more recent days, Western Illinois dropped its major program in religious studies in 2016 after being flagged for low enrollments in a system-wide report[20] and the University of California at Berkeley stopped accepting majors in March 2017 due to a declining number of students and what official university communication characterized as decreased investment of the faculty.[21]

Smart directors, chairs, and heads, then, not only keep a close eye on how institutionally requisite reports accumulate and present data, but they also stay prepared for a larger defense of their existence. Accomplishing these ends requires understanding their program's place in a college's hierarchy, strategically developing their academic profile via means such as faculty hires, and maintaining currency on the directives of the university's (and/or university system's) business managers. Additionally, keeping attuned to peer programs and how they navigate this terrain can be an important avenue in building a cohesive field equipped to react to challenges as they arise in specific locations. But this work should not remain solely the function of a single administrator. Every faculty member should be engaged in, at the minimum, discussions of the same on their campus. National bodies in the field should also take leadership roles in connecting programs and accumulating

useful and accessible data.[22] Even though the circumstances of every program reflect local histories, distinct administrative arrangements, and the predilections of a given faculty, commonalities do exist. Those shared features can point to more widely held understandings of the place of religious studies in the educational enterprise, help articulate how religious studies contributes to academic knowledge both globally and on a campus, and provide roadmaps for responding to the pressures of the business model that now dominates higher education administration.

This chapter suggests foregrounding three areas for fuller consideration in assessing "trends" in religious studies in the public university. The first explores a program's location within the larger structures of an institution and how that placement links to a specific mission. A second criteria gauges the history and growth of religious studies faculties by area of specialty. Choices in hiring certainly reflect specific movements within the field. They also, however, speak to how a program works within its local context, striving to position itself in the institution as well as responding to external pressures (or funding). Finally, the application of specific kinds of business models to define the work and guide the operation of universities offers an opportunity to examine some ways in which religious studies programs get harmed. But it also demonstrates how religious studies may be uniquely positioned to challenge the premises that undergird such models and their application to the work of higher education. In terms of the health of religious studies as a field, looking at these three areas helps evaluate what programs claim that they accomplish, their practices in staffing to achieve that work, and the institutional realities shaping both of those criteria. These indicators may further provide insight into the question of why religious studies programs in public universities should continue even if they generate small numbers of students in comparison to other majors and to sectarian institutions, and what, if anything, religious studies faculties might consider changing to survive.

WHAT IS RELIGIOUS STUDIES? DEFINITIONS, INSTITUTIONAL PLACEMENTS, AND MISSION

Religion/Religious Studies programs in American public universities evolved on a series of diverse pathways, even though growing out of a relatively common background. Wendy Doniger points out, "Academe began in the shadow of religion, as theology was queen of the sciences and academic institutions were religious institutions."[23] Over the course of several centuries in Europe, however, the rise of scientific thinking began to dominate the quest for and the production of knowledge. Leading thinkers in the study of religion adapted to this change. *Religionswissenschaft,* or the science of the study of religion, emerged as an approach to the topic distinct from the work of theology, its purposes, and its methods of inquiry. Where, or even if, to draw the line between the academic study of religion and theology, however, has haunted the field of religious studies over the course of history. The potential conflation led and leads some scholars external to this area to see religion as having no place in the modern university, even as it divides specialists within the field to the present day.

In the United States, the goal of educating ministers[24] prompted the establishment of many of the first institutions of higher learning. Even though some schools established

curricula that took a more varied approach to knowledge from the earliest days, the prominent place of religion endured. For instance, the University of North Carolina (now UNC-Chapel Hill; chartered in 1789; opened in 1795) featured an Enlightenment-driven course of study drawing from history, the sciences, composition, classical languages, and philosophy. Nonetheless, students still learned the New Testament, and the University required that they begin and end each day in prayer, attend Sunday services, and undergo Sunday evening questionings on morality and religion.[25] The 1876 establishment of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore brought the German model for higher education, with its stress on research and scientific approaches to the generation of knowledge, to the United States.[26] This format for advanced learning quickly spread, producing at least two consequences for the study of religion. First, scholars increasingly adopted approaches to religious texts and practices corresponding to the growing emphasis on scientific modes of inquiry and to emerging developments in the study of history, literature, and culture. As a result, academic inquiry into religion became less related to the concerns of religious institutions and believers. Second, and somewhat conversely, the role of religion in many, particularly public and non-religiously affiliated private institutions, shifted away from the classroom and toward "campus life." Religion became more of a private, optional activity focused on developing a student's moral character than an object of serious academic exploration.

The scientific examination of religion, as discussed below, started with critical analysis of the biblical text. As methodologies multiplied to engage in that pursuit, professional academic organizations distinct from religious bodies began to emerge. Instead of interpretations percolating largely within communities and institutions built around religious practice, the Society of Biblical Literature, founded in the 1880s as the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, drew together leading faculty members for sharing of scholarly papers and discussion to accomplish this work. Ernest W. Saunders observes in his history of the organization that

> College, university, and seminary faculties were well represented from the beginning. Half of the initial group of thirty-five were European trained in such universities as Berlin, Halle, and Tübingen. Even the American Academy of Religion, now the largest professional organization of religious studies scholars, was founded in 1909 as the Association of Biblical Instructors in American Colleges & Secondary Schools, changed in 1922 to the National Association of Biblical Instructors, and only in 1963 adopted its current name. … Through the labor of these scholars, German biblical science with its application of rigorously observed method to the text became typical of American scholarship and teaching on religion.[27]

From the infancy of critical study of the Bible, scholars started to branch out into academic examination of other religious traditions as well. Yet the influence of biblical studies and Christianity endured (even when instructors utilized "objective" methodologies) on public university campuses. At UNC-Chapel Hill, for instance, a 1920s decision to offer courses in the history and literature of religion came to fruition with the hire of Bernard Boyd to an endowed professorship in 1946 "to impart 'the fundamentals of the Bible' to undergraduates."[28] Likewise, the history of the Department of Religious Studies

at the University of Iowa, which traces its history back to 1927 with the establishment of the School of Religion, reveals that coursework in Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish traditions dominated until the mid-1960s when "the School of Religion branched more decisively into the study of Asian religions and hired its first specialist of Indian religions."[29] So, too, by the middle of the 20th century, the University of Alabama offered limited coursework largely following a Protestant Christian seminary model, and staffed these classes primarily with volunteer faculty culled from campus chaplains or other local religious leadership.[30] Nonetheless, expansion of the methodological breadth and sophistication of the field continued apart from Christian influence, as evidenced in the twentieth century by developments such as the creation of the Committee for the Social Scientific Study of Religion in 1949.[31] Only in the 1960s and 1970s, however, did the idea of religion defined outside of Christianity result in a widespread emphasis on hiring faculties with specialties in non-Christian religious traditions and a true proliferation of methods in line with that change begin.

Many department histories indicate that to make such a move, they chose to break, often with fits and starts, from more theologically-bound models for the study of religion. Temple University, for instance, says of its transition:

> The Temple University Department of Religion was founded in 1961, one of the earliest religion departments ever established at a public or state-related university. Although emerging out of an erstwhile school of theology in a private Baptist college, the Department has since its inception seen itself as distinct from seminaries and religion departments in religiously based institutions.

They do not, however, specify how they managed to achieve that outcome. The University of California at Santa Barbara, however, offers an intriguing hint at their process. A 1961 committee recommending "a major in Religious Institutions designed to offer *'a preparatory background of studies for individuals planning post-graduate work or careers in the field of theology'*" met with significant opposition from other units on campus. A second proposal in 1962 dropped the word theology altogether and received approval for a major *"designed for students desiring a general education with emphasis upon this aspect of Western civilization and comparative cultures."*[32] In short, these scholars discovered that framing their efforts within the Humanities carried them where theology could not. Even then, making a true distinction between theology and religious studies and constructing a faculty prepared to offer courses with a conceptually broader idea of religion took time.

To see a well-documented example of how a program instituted a break with the theological model for religious studies, Western Michigan University's story proves helpful. The selection of that campus in 1953 by the Danforth Foundation as one of fifteen to pilot a project on teacher education and religion initiated a process that would eventually lead to a Department of Comparative Religion. According to their web page, the early growth in the program came primarily in the study of Christianity or fields largely making use of Christian models: "In response to growing demand, the department began to expand and several hires were made in the early '60s: E. Thomas Lawson (Philosophy of Religion) and Otto Gründler (Reformation Christianity) in 1961; John Hardon (Catholic Thought

and Practice) and Maynard Kaufman (Religion and Literature) in 1962; Jerome Long (African Religions) in 1964; and Guntram Bischoff (Medieval Christianity) and Rudolf Siebert (Ethics and Sociology of Religion) in 1965." That trend, however, did not hold. By 1966, they hired H. Byron Earhart in Japanese Religions and Nancy Falk in Hinduism and Buddhism. Then, when separating from Philosophy and reimagining the curriculum in the summer of 1967, the faculty determined to cease favoring Christian studies: "The program was redesigned with four components: historical studies, morphological and phenomenological studies (later changed to comparative studies), methodological studies, and constructive studies." Their narrative goes on to claim that "in so doing, Western's was the first religion department in the United States to build a program that paid as much attention to Non-Western religions as it did to those of the West."

An interesting case showcasing the impulse for change comes in Arizona State University. In his review article on the formative years, Linell Cady writes,

> The 1972 appointment of Professor Wentz, which marked the inauguration of religious studies at ASU, did not lead to the duplication of the campus ministry courses that had been offered in previous decades, but to forging a new paradigm for the study of religion, a paradigm that had gradually been taking shape at other nondenominational colleges and universities.[33]

The faculty "recognized that the culture and background of the majority of the students warranted greater depth in the Christian tradition than in others where student demand was less intense."[34] But they wanted to find the right balance between "the study of a variety of religious traditions across different geographical regions without ignoring or shying away from the history and theology of the Christian tradition."[35] They determined that instead of building a curriculum around the so-called "Seminary Model" (The Bible, Christian History, Systematic Theology, and perhaps Christian Ethics), to offer a wider array of religious traditions to students and to employ more consciously descriptive, explanatory, and comparative models of religion. Martin S. Jaffee drew the contrast between these paradigms in a 2004 article.[36] "In the seminary model, the study of religion is motivated by the concern to present a particular faith tradition as a model for personal reflection and systematic embodiment; by contrast, the exponents of religious studies in the public university study religion in order to better understand human culture and history."[37] By situating the emergent field firmly within the Humanities, programs established a more uniformly accepted institutional place for the academic study of religion within a University setting at a point when the resources for expansion of course offerings and majors was on the rise.

According to the Congressional Act establishing the National Foundation for the Arts and Humanities (written 1965, but here as amended):

> The term 'humanities' includes, but is not limited to, the study and interpretation of the following: language, both modern and classical; linguistics; literature; history; jurisprudence; philosophy; archeology; comparative religion; ethics; the history, criticism, and theory of the arts; those aspects of the social sciences which have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods; and the study and application

> of the humanities to the human environment with particular attention to reflecting our diverse heritage, traditions, and history and to the relevance of the humanities to the current conditions of national life.[38]

The inclusion of religious studies under this rubric came after the original legislation[39] and holds only under certain conditions. Religion as "humanities" means "programs in the comparative, nonsectarian study of religion; studies of particular religions; history of religion; ... it does not include programs in theology or ministry."[40] In other words, this definition relies on a clear border between confessional study of a tradition and "academic" inquiry. Intentionally or not, this directive follows how acceptable discussion of religion in publicly funded institutions (teaching about religion instead of teaching religion) proceeded in the post-Schempp environment.[41]

The influence of the Supreme Court's Schempp decision on public education, however, did not rob people of a need to understand how religion produces meaning or to explore some of life's central questions through religion. Nor did it prevent academic programs from tackling these issues. Indeed, the prevalence of this work within a Humanities paradigm comes across in what many religious studies scholars and programs say about their efforts. Johnathan L. Walton wrote while on the faculty at the University of California, Riverside: "To grapple with the subject of religion is to wrestle with what it means to be human."[42] The program at James Madison University argues on its page "Why Study Religion?" (all emphases the author's): "*Basic questions of human existence* are addressed by religion: the meaning and purpose of life; the presence of death, sorrow and anxiety; the existence of God; questions of morality and justice; the possibilities of transcendence, salvation, peace, and liberation for individuals and communities." Likewise, the University of Arizona Religious Studies web site declares (again, emphases the author's), "The Religious Studies major provides students with a broad understanding of human diversity, the complexities of social and cultural systems of thought, and *the human pursuit of meaning*." And, the University of North Carolina answers the "why" of academic examination of religion in this way (emphases the author's):

> The study of religion provides an invaluable opportunity for exploring the ways in which *human beings find meaning, purpose, and wonder in their lives*. Religion is a key mechanism for the transmission of cultural memory and tradition, but it is also a site of *profound human creativity*. The study of religion offers an extraordinary window into *how human beings give structure to their personal identities, their communities, and their understandings of the cosmos around them.*

The conceptualization of the study of religion within a humanities framework did not, however, resolve internal debates within the field, or with other university entities, over curricula and about methodologies.

Indeed, the exploration of "ultimate" questions, and their relationship to the place and work of courses once key to the "seminary model," continues to trouble both religious studies faculties and scholarly societies (and will be discussed further in the next section). Jaffee characterizes the situation in this way:

> "Empiricists" charge their "hermeneutical" colleagues with smuggling sentimental religiosity into the classroom in the guise of secularist interpretation. "Hermeneutes," for their part, point out that empiricist explanations of religion are themselves grounded in *a priori* commitments that are embraced no less passionately than religious convictions—and are no more demonstrable or disinterested than those of the convictions that they seek to displace.[43]

These arguments manifest in a variety of forms. For instance, some empirically leaning scholars harbor lingering suspicions about the ability of more hermenutically oriented colleagues to maintain an appropriate analytical perspective. Or, perhaps, some scholars might argue that the "objective" critical tools developed for their work actually emerged from Christian conceptualizations. Others still might enter into contestations over the westernized construction of religion itself as a category, or the appropriateness/necessity of articulating one's ideological and methodological commitments. All of these possibilities and more keep scholars in departments and the field itself in lively conversation with one another. But these interactions often exist within environments where a palpable resistance to the relevance of religious studies, even the fear that the study of religion may mask a promotion of the same, play out.

Indeed, in the public university, these trepidations can get quite pitched. Colleagues housed in other academic units all too often express strong opposition to instruction in religious studies as appropriate for work at institutions committed to serving diverse publics. As Douglas Jacobsen and Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen observe in their recent book, "Some professors worry that talking about religion poses a threat to the quality of education on campus; they fear it may undermine the Enlightenment's emancipation of religion's oppressive grip."[44] While both anecdotal and documented battles of this nature occur, a better frame of reference for persons invested in religious studies programs might be how this opposition finds traction in the structure of institutional life itself. Robert Wuthnow notes, "The view that knowledge is best achieved through science and reason remains firmly institutionalized in the natural sciences, in engineering schools, and in more recent additions to the curriculum such as computer science, artificial intelligence, neuroscience, evolutionary psychology, and genomics."[45] He goes on to add economics, political science, public policy, and analytic philosophy to that list as well as, at least in some quarters, social sciences such as sociology. Given that landscape, "softer" studies, including the humanities, not conforming to this standard can appear mired in older, less useful paradigms. The blistering debates[46] between scientists and humanists over the grounds for developing and advancing knowledge, and the ways in which those debates shape academic standards for hiring, scholarship, and advancement, certainly favor the sciences in most public university environments.

Although distancing from and even distaste for the academic study of religion might crop up specifically on occasion in local cases, the disavowal of religious studies can be seen most clearly in the field's lack of institutional influence on most campuses. For universities increasingly administered on business models,

> Power is ultimately vested in those parts of the university that emphasize science and rational argumentation. The big money is there, the cutting-edge discoveries

> are there, the claims to be advancing knowledge into new frontiers are there, and so are the needs for new facilities, the requirements for funding, and the opportunity to invest in students who will pursue remunerative careers.[47]

Money talks. It attracts students to areas of study. It generates grant dollars that can grow faculties. It builds alumni networks that promote the university and donate to it. While understanding religious studies in a humanities frame of reference clarified the mission of many emerging programs in the 1960s and 70s and created institutional space for the new field among more established disciplines, it also relegated these programs largely to service profiles. On an undergraduate level, many programs survive because their faculties provide classes in general education and thereby meet institutional thresholds for credit hour production (and, simultaneously, recruit a handful of potential majors). These programs become, as Wuthnow describes, "the other part of the university—the part that deals with history and tradition and ethnic identity and religion." As such, they are "often a political necessity more than anything else ... These are the departments and programs that are maintained because they offer service courses for the cultural enrichment of undergraduates and because they may train a very small number of graduate students and an even smaller number who actually get jobs in that discipline."[48]

Others might state the matter with less blunt force, but few would argue that religious studies programs today do not feel this pinch. In a time of declining public support for liberal arts education and non-vocationally oriented degrees, the arguments for the continuing inclusion of such minor players cannot rest solely on what early pioneers in the field chose to do in characterizing the study of religion as a part of the Humanities. To situate the academic study of religion within the present landscape, programs must, at the minimum, reflect on their institutional placement and relationships. Many units already recognize this reality, and their program descriptions include additional nuance, although most often leaving the Humanities framework untouched. For instance, instead of focusing exclusively on what the American Academy of Arts & Sciences identifies as "those indicators dealing with the humanities [that]… focus on humanistic activity as part of everyday life and the workings of institutions that strive to promote the intellectual development and lifelong education of citizens," they choose to stress how the humanities address "the need, in a democracy, for programs that help citizens more fully understand their nation's government, history, culture, and principles; and/or promote citizen reflection on ways of responding to the world."[49]

This effort most often highlights global competency, defined by the NEA as:

> The acquisition of in-depth knowledge and understanding of international issues, an appreciation of and ability to learn and work with people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, proficiency in a foreign language, and skills to function productively in an interdependent world community.[50]

At the University of Minnesota, for example, the Religious Studies program declares on its website that: "Religious ideas and practices shape behavior throughout the world. Those who have a deep understanding of religion—how its features interact with and depend upon social and cultural contexts—are in a better position to grasp the salient aspects of

religiously-based communication and interactions." Likewise, the University of New Mexico says, "The Religious Studies Program … trains undergraduate students in the academic study of religion, with a particular emphasis on religion in a rapidly globalizing world." These explanations generate a case for the study of religion as equipping future graduates with tools for engaging complex problems in the local, national, and international contexts they will encounter at graduation.

Other units choose to meet the relevancy challenges by shifting the Humanities framework and stressing the interdisciplinary nature of the field. This approach to learning teaches students to envision processes from varied vantage points, and those attributes speak to what Joyce Hwee Ling Koh, Ching Sing Chai, Benjamin Wong, and Huang-Yao Hong describe in their work on design thinking as skills necessary for the knowledge economy. They write, "Future industries need to be supported by workers who possess 21st century competencies or the abilities to solve complex and ill-structured problems through confident exploitation of the technology, self-initiation, and the arbitration of diverse viewpoints."[51] So the University of North Florida situates its Religious Studies degree in its Cross-Disciplinary program, and asserts that:

> Education in the 21st century is changing. It is evolving by virtue of both new knowledge and entirely new fields of knowledge that require the capacity to solve complex problems by drawing on concepts, methods, and information from multiple disciplines. This increasingly interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary knowledge is widely recognized as essential to the new employment opportunities in the knowledge economy that is expanding worldwide. To help prepare students for these opportunities, the College of Arts and Sciences offers the following cross-disciplinary options for majors and minors.

Or one might look at the Center for the Study of Religion at UCLA, where in the undergraduate major, "Students complete courses in a wide range of departments in which religious phenomena are analyzed, including but not limited to: Anthropology, Art History, Asian Languages and Cultures, Classics, Comparative Literature, English, History, Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, Philosophy, Political Science, and World Arts and Cultures" and "can anticipate gaining versatile intellectual tools for approaching, analyzing, and appreciating the deep roots, human motivations, and history of the formation of religious traditions in their respective cultural contexts."

Still other programs secure their institutional longevity by tying their goals and practices to those of their university home. Situating one's work as cooperative with larger campus or system concerns not only demonstrates currency with changing norms, but also with responsiveness to public pressures. Mission statements, while often abounding in buzz words and platitudes,[52] demonstrate the point. The Religious Studies program at California State University Northridge, for instance, signals the need to fall in step with institutional imperatives directly in the body of their document. By saying, "In correspondence with the University's current effort to develop assessment plans for each instructional area" to foreground their discussions about Student Learning Outcomes, the faculty seizes an opportunity to signal administrators that they are aware of and contribute to what the university defines as essential.

The University of North Carolina at Asheville's Religious Studies program serves up an extended illustration of how to draw these parallels. In looking at UNCA's declaration of purpose, one finds these words about the institution itself: "UNC Asheville is distinctive in the UNC system as its designated liberal arts university." Naturally, then, the religious studies program speaks directly to that context in its own document: "The primary mission of the Department of Religious Studies is to provide students with an exemplary liberal arts education through courses and programs dedicated to the academic study of the human religious experience in its manifold and multiple expressions." Initially, making such a general statement might seem less than adequate in today's educational environment, but they continue to specify in other parallels. The University document, for instance, stresses "connections among disciplines" and responsiveness "to the conditions and concerns of the contemporary world both as individuals and as a university." Therefore, the program seizes the opportunity to emphasize how it crosses disciplinary borders and addresses religion globally by saying, "Although properly considered a field within the humanities, the study of religion is interdisciplinary and even multidisciplinary in its methodologies, and comparative and global in its scope."

Perhaps most important to religious studies, the UNCA Mission Statement includes this passage: "We encourage students to clarify, develop and live their own values while respecting the views and beliefs of others." Reflecting that sentiment could get tricky for a program in academic religious studies. To make their position of academic inquiry about religion crystal clear, the department distinguishes its work from religious sectarianism and proselytizing, stating: "In order to foster a critical and disciplined understanding of the various roles of religion in human societies, the department assumes no confessional position, nor are its courses and programs designed to advocate for or against particular religious beliefs or practices." Given that this statement might sound as if religiously committed points of view are not welcomed, they add: "Rather, the department seeks to provide students with the opportunities to explore some of the fundamental questions of human existence from a variety of perspectives, and to seek to understand the ways in which religious ideas, practices, and communities have contributed to the construction of meaning, both historically and within contemporary cultures and societies." In this way, the department expresses its consonance with the ideals of the University on this fundamental tenet of the field.

While this comparative peek does not exhaust the touchstones between the two documents, it nonetheless provides an easy example of how a unit seeks to grasp its institutional environment and position itself comfortably within it. At first glance, this mission for a modern religious studies program might strike the reader as too traditional in its appeal to a structure of learning, namely the liberal arts, that may no longer carry as much influence in public institutions. Its strength, however, rests in creating a cogent connection to what the University itself seeks to accomplish. It might also be tempting to think that within a liberal arts institution, tying the academic study of religion to institutional purpose comes more easily than in other types of institutional settings. Other programs, however, also manage this effort successfully. For example, although not technically in a mission statement format, the Comparative Religion Program at the

University of Washington says it is "grounded in the cultural and political understanding of the central importance of religion in public policymaking" and "is highly international and trans-cultural in character" with "faculty from Sociology, History, Asian Languages and Literature, Near East Languages and Civilization, Political Science, Anthropology, Classics, Comparative Literature as well as from the School of Law." These foci respond directly to the directives of its institutional home, the Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies (JSIS), which "combines the social sciences, humanities, and professional fields to enhance our understanding of our increasingly interconnected globe."

Again, the point of the example is a simple one. Consonance between what a program and its sponsoring institution seek to accomplish generates a shared purpose. The close correspondence can, over time, build positive relationships and even forge alliances. It demands, however, that faculties think intentionally about what they are striving to do within their field of study and curricula, and how they want to adapt those efforts to their immediate context. As a standard for assessing the health of a program, the potential payoff for expending the time to do this work makes it worthwhile. Constructing innovative links to other units both within and outside of an institution builds up a protective layer of insulation. In times of cutbacks or change, it becomes more difficult to end a program well integrated into a larger system and/or one with considerable numbers of allies. Indeed, programs survive, at least in part, because their directors/chairs/heads—and their faculties—can articulate clearly the relationship of the work their program achieves to the constantly shifting field of academic religious studies, to the always changing needs of the institution they serve, and to the rapidly evolving trends in higher education. They stay current on all fronts and adjust accordingly, but within reason.

That important caveat deserves emphasis. Units cannot and should not chase every fad that rears up either in religious studies or a given university or higher education. Institutions, after all, enshrine tradition and often change slowly for good reasons. The desire to maintain the ongoing life of a department or program provides motivation for attentiveness in structured reflection and sustained discussion of the internal and external forces shaping a faculty's work. That level of awareness positions programs to keep an orientation toward the future as opposed to one toward the past and "the way things have always been done." It guards against curricular stagnation and helps scholars stay keyed into the questions driving scholarship within the field and the concerns reflected in other academic areas. For exclusively undergraduate programs, this focus on relevance assists in constructing effective networks regionally, nationally, and internationally, in addition to on campus. A program with a stronger profile on all these levels is a less vulnerable target for cutbacks and can more readily ward off threats of elimination.

Without doubt, this work gets complicated by the realities of university life and employment. Statistics show that at least 70%[53] of all faculty now work apart from the tenure track and small programs can feel the impact of this hiring practice. Variation in personnel or in the number of lines or both from year to year can diminish curricular innovation as well as the investment of the faculty in the needs of a program that may or may not provide steady employment into the future. In locations where tenured lines remain intact, smaller and even mid-sized programs might go years without being able

to add to or replace a faculty member. Once established, tenured professors can resist altering the course of their teaching or scholarship or service to adapt to new directions in the field or in higher education. These factors mean, at the minimum, that no function of an academic program clarifies the necessity of thoughtful contemplation more than decisions about who to bring on board as faculty. When seeking to hire into tenured or tenure-track positions, these choices reveal how a unit defines the contours of religious studies in its setting as well as shows an attentiveness to connecting to others within and outside of the university in ways that will sustain a program's work over time in forward-thinking academic partnerships. When selecting faculty for non-tenure track positions, how to integrate the work of contract employees into the life of the program is becoming an increasingly important task. Thus, building the faculty becomes the next item up for consideration when thinking about how to assess the health of a program.

DEVELOPING A RELIGIOUS STUDIES FACULTY

A traditional beginning point for exploring the construction of a religious studies program looks at areas of inquiry or methodological approach represented by dedicated faculty lines. As opposed to carrying out a quantitative assessment of job openings,[54] at what kind of university, or how often programs appear to add faculty, foregrounding this factor brings a fuller picture of what a given unit seeks to accomplish into focus while also demonstrating the trend lines within religious studies across colleges and universities. Moreover, as stated above, programs that reflect on and track growth in relationship to the needs of their setting (as well as to the field and within the context of what is happening in higher education) can benefit from such intentionality. Shaping a faculty (and a curriculum) that maintains currency and relevance, participates meaningfully in advancing an institution's mission and goals, and affects the ways in which persons in the field think about the academic enterprise represent only a handful of the possible outcomes of this practice.

Emerging religious studies programs in the mid-to-late-twentieth century commonly exhibited concern for wider coverage of a variety of traditions, interest in a more expansive vocabulary regarding the idea of religion itself, and a greater sensitivity to tools for its analysis. When looking at the histories of faculty development efforts, however, appointing the personnel to achieve those visions often took time. After all, the longevity of tenure in a small field with fewer employment opportunities reduces the number of new hires. Additionally, most institutions made the transition from already-existing courses or programs with persons trained in traditional conceptualizations of religion. Initiating newer paradigms thus became a bit more challenging. Although somewhat out of the ordinary in terms of size, visibility, and availability of resources, the University of California at Santa Barbara (UCSB) nonetheless offers a well-known, but informative, illustration.

Robert Michaelsen arrived at UCSB in 1965 as chair following nine years in that position at the University of Iowa. In a piece written in 1962, he had said that "an adequate graduate program in religion must rely on buttressing made possible through such disciplines as history, language studies, archaeology, sociology, and philosophy, as well as offerings in areas studies."[55] That statement reads as advocating a bourgeoning movement toward

exploring more religious traditions in their cultural contexts and embracing a variety of methodologies to undertake that effort. But he added that "at the heart of such a program there ought to be a group of theological scholars whose primary center of study and research is the nature and structure of the various major religious traditions of the world, who focus attention of the consensus of the various communities of faith, and whose primary take is not historical or sociological—although they cannot ignore these approaches—but theological."[56] For Michaelsen at that time, an unmoving center in the academic study of religion existed across traditions and it was theological in its orientation. What he meant by that designation might be debatable, but his thinking clearly influenced his work on program development at UCSB.

It should be noted that Michaelsen's work addresses graduate education as opposed to an undergraduate program of study. Further, the article cited came at a moment when theological schools dominated graduate studies in religion and thereby served as the training ground for future faculty in the field. Adopting and adapting the norms from that setting would seem the most likely route for scholars educated in those environments. At a public institution like UCSB, however, Michaelsen sought a strategy to produce scholars apart from the traditional system, namely scholars conversant with the established "scientific" standards of studying religion as defined primarily in European institutions and yet capable of building on that model to express the developing arc of academic religious studies in the American context. But he did not want to lose, in this process, connection to lived religious traditions, and his use of "theology" could be read as a signal of that desire. As chair, then, he helped construct a faculty capable of pushing the boundaries of what "religious studies" designated as well as of guiding that next generation of scholars and teachers. An undergraduate curriculum that reflected many of the emergent trends in the field would follow. A review of UCSB's History of the Department suggests how this process unfolded in their context.

The first full-time member of the department, W. Richard Comstock (appointed 1963), specialized in Religion and Philosophy as well as Religion and Theology, although he eventually taught a variety of courses on topics like Religion and Science, Religion and Literature, and Religion and Film. He earned his advanced degrees at Union Theological Seminary in New York and served as a Presbyterian minister during those years. Walter Capps, the second full-time appointment in 1964, was a historian of Christianity with advanced degrees from Yale Divinity School, who became known over time for his strong interest in the Ethics of Public Life and taught courses on topics ranging from mysticism to Vietnam. The Christian existentialist philosopher and theologian (and ordained Lutheran minister) Paul Tillich came on board for a quarter in that year as well. Michaelsen, a scholar of American religions also educated at Yale Divinity School, entered into the picture the next year, followed by Thomas O'Dea (1967). O'Dea, a sociologist with degrees from Harvard University, had professional interests in the sociology of religion and studies of Mormon, Roman Catholic, and Saudi Arabian religious communities. O'Dea arrived as Director of the Institute of Religious Studies and held appointments in the departments of Religious Studies and Sociology until his death in 1974. This connection to another academic discipline and his hire into a position deliberately created to make that link

indicates that the members of the department were recognizing the necessity of, as the proposal for the institute indicated, doing "*what a department cannot do adequately, that is, to stimulate and support research in the phenomenon of religion by scholars from a variety of disciplines and fields.*" But all the appointments evidenced concern for the tight relationship between religion and its practice in lived communities.

The program's web page characterizes the hiring of Wilbur Fridell, a specialist in Japanese religions, in 1967 as "an important turning point in the department's history: with his coverage of Japan, the department slowly moved to add faculty in the fields of South Asian and East Asian religious traditions."[57] Nonetheless, Fridell not only held a History degree in East Asian studies from the University of California at Berkeley, but he also completed divinity training at Berkeley Baptist Divinity School and spent more than a decade as a missionary in Japan. That same year brought Jonathan Z. Smith in as a Visiting Assistant Professor while writing his dissertation for the History of Religions program at Yale University. He had previously earned a Bachelor of Divinity degree at Yale Divinity School. Birger Pearson (1969), a scholar of early Christianity and Gnosticism (a Bachelor of Divinity in Biblical Studies and Theology from Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary; an MA in Greek from the University of California, Berkeley; and a PhD in New Testament and Christian Origins from Harvard University) arrived on the full-time faculty in the same year that world renowned philosopher and historian of religion Mircea Eliade taught for a quarter. The full-time faculty, augmented by noted names, certainly could be classed as eclectic in terms of academic interests in comparison with most "theological" or even "religion" faculties at that time. Yet the group still tended toward a rather limited range of concern in terms of coverage of traditions, and most received at least a part of their academic training at theological institutions. That statement should not read as a criticism, but rather a reflection of what kinds of institutions sponsored the advanced study of religion in this era. Developing the field in new directions would require building a more expansive array of graduate programs and training students within them.

To grow the UCSB department during the 1970s, a more concerted push to expand areas of inquiry emerged, but the ongoing focus on method and theoretical considerations often hinted at the theological center Michaelsen described. Faculty additions in this era included Gerald J. Larson (1970), a specialist in Indian Philosophy (MDiv Union Theological Seminary and PhD Columbia University); Raimon Pannikar (1972), a Catholic theologian (and priest) whose studies of Hindu and Buddhist traditions sparked his interests in interfaith dialogues; and Richard Hecht (lecturer 1974, assistant professor 1976; trained as a historian at UCLA but also held the BHL degree from Hebrew Union College in Rabbinics) in Judaica. He explored Hebrew Judaic Studies as well as History of Religion. Likewise, Robert Gimello (1975) in Chinese and Buddhist Studies started his academic life at Seton Hall, a Catholic institution, and his current profile at the University of Notre Dame says "he is now especially concerned, as a member of a Catholic university, to contribute robustly Catholic theological perspectives on Buddhism." The next hire, Ninian Smart (1976), while a trailblazer in the secular and comparative studies of religion, was both a philosopher and a theologian.[58] A second sociologist, Philip Hammond (1978), came on board in the Sociology of Religion. Explicitly trained in sociology, he became a

leading advocate for the social scientific study of religion. Finally, Inés Talamentez (1978) brought a background in ethnopoetics and comparative literature to the study, both literary and anthropological, of Native American traditions.

Perhaps some of the clearest indications of the thinking that guided the decision making in this group about their own growth and development comes in looking at the programming they established. Lacking a model of graduate education for this emergent field outside of the theological, the PhD program established in 1969 sounded somewhat uncertain as to what might unfold. Building on an existing MA, it sought to support student inquiry into "history of religions, religious thought or theories of religion and religious behavior." But the faculty planned to accomplish that goal by generating "a particular program for each doctoral student that reflected the student's needs as well as the strengths of the department and the cognate resources at UCSB." A mere four years later, a revised, more defined plan emerged. In 1973, "The PhD program was reinterpreted, entitled Cross-Cultural & Interdisciplinary Studies in Religion, and was divided into three areas or tracks for special concentration: Cross-Cultural Studies in Religious Traditions; Sociology of Religion; and Coordinated Studies in Religion and the Humanities." Two faculty assumed responsibility for overseeing each track, and only five students per track would be admitted. This effort stood alongside an undergraduate curriculum revised in the early 1970s. At that time, "the structure of the undergraduate major consisted of forty-eight upper division units, eight each in the three areas of Western Religious Studies, Asian Religious Studies, and Religion and Culture. From four to twelve units were expected to be taken from cognate courses in other departments." In these early years, the department's degree planning shows what the program's faculty wanted to achieve as well as what they saw as possible to accomplish with the existing personnel. Students would graduate with coursework in a broad range of religious traditions and experience with a variety of disciplinary perspectives. This rubric, further, shaped the decisions regarding areas for faculty appointments in the ensuing years. More impressively, even after the dust settled from sorting out the degrees and their requirements, in 1977, "The Religious Studies Graduate and Faculty Colloquium series was initiated to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas of common interest and to provide a focus for on-going departmental discussions of the study of religion." That level of intentionality regarding how the faculty understood the field, and its own efforts in relationship to it, made the program at UCSB a leader in the emerging field of academic religious studies.

As seen implicitly above, constructing a faculty requires significant resources and thus demands institutional commitment. Program development unfolds most successfully, however, when that support combines with clarity about goals. Linell Cady describes Arizona State as building their department in accord with newer ideas about religious studies and characterizes that process as eased by the story of the university itself. He writes that "the institution did not have a long history of a liberal arts faculty with traditional and powerful disciplines in place which may have fuelled opposition to this controversial academic upstart. This situation parallels that at the University of California at Santa Barbara where religious studies was established a little more than ten years earlier."[59] The ASU faculty started with the appointment of American Church Historian Richard E.

Wentz in 1972, but quickly expanded with lines in Buddhism, Islam, contemporary western religious thought, Native American religions, history of Christianity, and Judaic Studies by 1979.[60] Most public universities only dream of getting that many faculty lines in such a short span of time![61] Further, even though the vast majority of the students came from a Christian culture, and a greater demand for courses in Christian thought developed, Cady remarks on "a consciousness that the curriculum and the faculty were part of the newly emerging paradigm of the study of religion, different from the paradigm located in the divinity school, seminary, or denominational institution. For this reason, … the department did not choose to appoint a biblical scholar to the faculty."[62]

This dividing line in religious studies continues to mark the field more than 40 years later and deserves consideration when exploring factors that shape hiring by faculty areas of study. The UCSB model Cady references stresses hiring specialists in a variety of traditions who think critically and in a cross-disciplinary manner about religion and its study. Instead of seeing biblical criticism as representative of this approach, Cady correlates it to the "seminary" curriculum. As he explains it, to the Arizona State faculty "a biblical scholar was the premier icon of the 'old order,' the intellectual and institutional constellation for the study of religion within a Christian framework."[63] That decision erected an interesting barrier, given that in the newer model for religious studies, material seminary courses traditionally taught under the labels of history or theology often remained on the books, although they were shifted into classes pitched as "history of" a certain religion or into philosophy of religion. But, at least for Arizona State, biblical studies found no obvious place.[64] The decision reached at ASU did not hold across institutions. Many faculties chose to teach biblical studies with an array of critical tools and no overt links to a sectarian paradigm. The elimination of biblical studies at others, however, raised several unanswered questions about the place of this work in the study of religion. What areas of inquiry, if any, ought to fall within the provenance of sectarian religious institutions alone certainly comes to mind as one query. Another would ask if rejecting a seminary model of education necessarily meant the rejection of biblical studies, including pondering the reasons why biblical studies became the locus of resistance in this new order.

Ronald Hendel offers insight into these issues. He points out that the genesis of critical inquiry into religion by Enlightenment thinkers aimed specifically towards Christianity and came via study of the Bible. The tools developed and employed by the first biblical scholars sought "to undermine the theological-political authority of the Bible, which was the basis for the governmental power of kings, princes, and clergy."[65] Different from courses in Christian history or theology that explored the tradition, the academic study of the Bible dismantled its authoritative base, particularly as understood in Protestant thought. This work, given its varied methodologies from literary analysis to the study of the social and cultural setting of the texts, would seem consistent with the programmatic emphases of the emerging field known as religious studies, as well as with the desire to stress religion as a human phenomenon. However, over the course of time, religiously motivated scholars adopted and adapted these "historical-critical methods" for use in the theological training of ministers. That development was not surprising. As David Law points out in his exploration of historical criticism, "The concerns that have occupied

modern historical critics of the Bible were also known to the early Church Fathers."[66] One could easily add in centuries of Jewish interpretive practice as well. Thus, although Enlightenment critics introduced troubling questions about the Bible's composition by underscoring its human origins and stressed the difficulties and errors in its transmission, these methods also generated interpretive data amenable to theological interpretation and became a standard part of the curriculum for ministerial students.

Indeed, the search for the "original" text and/or its meaning common to these methodologies could be viewed as seeking an authoritative "Word" of God. George Eldon Ladd, a Baptist minister and professor of New Testament exegesis at Fuller Theological Seminary in the middle of the 20th century, famously comment that this approach to biblical interpretation

> Has shed great light on the historical side of the Bible; and these historical discoveries are valid for all Bible students even though the presuppositions of the historical-critical method have often been hostile to an evangelical view of the Bible. Contemporary evangelicals often overlook this important fact when they condemn the critical method as such; for even while they condemn historical criticism, they are constantly reaping the benefits of its discoveries and employing critical tools.[67]

In a related vein, Hendel posits that academic biblical critics using and developing these methods at universities both in Europe and the United States were still, at first unknowingly and then later in more recognized ways, shaped by theological interests. Starting from an intensive, very Protestant, focus on the text and continuing through to the equation of meaning with "original" contexts and the valorizing of methods that helped recover the same, these ties to theology, in effect, "domesticated" these scholarly efforts "to the interests of the church."[68] It is this intersection of church and academy in biblical studies that troubles many scholars engaged in the academic study of religion, particularly in public institutions committed to open inquiry and wanting to avoid establishing any religious tradition.[69] Neil Elliot states the difficulty directly: "To the degree that biblical scholarship is evaluated by its serviceability to 'church life,' that institutional acquiescence becomes a chronic pressure on the practice of scholars."[70] It begs the question of how one might distinguish faith-driven interpretation with these tools from strictly academic efforts, or if such a distinction can even be made. In short, if the work proves usable in a church or other religious setting, the issue of whether it inevitably lacks scholarly integrity arises. For some religious studies programs, then, the decision to eliminate courses in the Bible represents the best option to assuring themselves and others within the university that their program maintains an academic, non-sectarian, non-theological study of religion.

With not a little irony, the same concerns did not appear tied to the study of the oral or written stories and documents of other, non-Christian religious traditions. Further, this suspicion of biblical scholars can cut another way. It can trap religious studies programs, to their own detriment, in an anti-theological paradigm. That is, instead of clearly identifying what distinguishes religious studies—including biblical studies—from theological efforts, "not theology" becomes the determinative parameter. One could say this position reinscribes theology as the base or standard from which all definitions of the study of religion emerge.

Programs at places like UCSB and ASU understood themselves as part of the creation of a new impulse in the study of religion distinct from faith-based academic training and shaped their hiring accordingly. But it can be argued that these programs merely expressed programmatically what scholars already practiced. While many credit the Supreme Court's Schempp decision, with its emphasis on more secular approaches to the study of religion, as driving these conversations in the public universities,[71] some 50 years past that ruling, scholars like Winnifred Fallers Sullivan argue that religious studies scholars would benefit from reassessing the "mythic" role of Schempp in narratives about the origins of the field.[72] Instead, by recognizing that the academic study of religion was taking this turn itself long before the courts, scholars then can also grapple with the fallout such decision making kicked up. For example, taking this position could have, inadvertently, resulted in the loss of at least one vital attribute. The theological model articulated "a reasonably clear understanding (whether implicit or explicit) of how studying religion mattered in relation to contemporary daily life."[73] With more secular models jettisoning these concerns, some scholars postulate that regaining an interactive dialogue with lived traditions in the public arena may be the critical task of academic religious studies in the present.

Jonathan Sheehan, for instance, advocates reintroducing theology to the study of religion, but in a redefined format that is broader than Christian experience.[74] He says, "Let's provisionally imagine a new idea, then. Let's call theology *that constellation of conceptual commitments and modes of inquiry that together have enabled communities to investigate and understand the world in religious terms*." As a result, he argues, "Theological reflection can hardly be captured, in this view, in the relatively small collection of foundational texts and canonical thinkers in the various traditions. It is far more than the history of doctrines or received opinions. Rather, we are asked to investigate diverse religious communities and their diverse conceptual commitments in diverse ways: in paintings, in poetry, in legal opinions, in the built environment, in ordinary practices, and more."

Warren Nord, for example, picks up this notion in his work when he says, "The study of religion in departments of religious studies is typically grounded in the secular methods of the humanities and social sciences; it begins outside religion."[75] By making religion more of an object of study rather than an active subject in the constructing of knowledge in many communities through entities like a text, Samuel Joseph Kessler suggests that the methods of inquiry utilized by religious studies scholars exclude and/or dismiss the concerns and voices of the religiously devoted. As a result, meaningful links to the religious lives of people and to the conversations animating public debates on issues where the perspectives of religious persons play out can struggle to find space in academic religious studies, scholarship, and classrooms. Or, as Jonathan Sheehan states, "Theology is a fraternal shadow both to the secular disciplines and the secular university, an absent presence in many of the questions we ask, and the answers we give."[76] Faculties that exclude theology and biblical studies from their inquiries into religion may, in fact, perpetuate that gap.

For Kessler, this state of affairs leads to a provocative hypothesis that bears consideration. He argues that "millions of Americans who regard religion as central to their lives may have become disenchanted with and disenfranchised by public higher education."[77] In fact, he wonders if the meteoric rise of parochial schools (and one might add the growth of large

sectarian universities like Liberty University) may indicate a "flight" of a large segment of the religiously faithful from public educational institutions to an alternative system.[78] The high numbers of degrees awarded in religious studies by such institutions might look for explanation no further than the work of Warren Nord and Charles C. Haynes. In their consideration of K-12 education and its need to include religious studies, they write, "The survival of public education may be at stake. The exodus from public schools is fueled in large measure by dissatisfaction with how schools address issues concerning religion and values."[79] If one extends these observations to programs in religious studies at public universities,[80] such a shift might concretize an already-present separation between the insights of critical discourses about religion and the actual practice of religion.

Perhaps here they echo C. John Sommerville, an emeritus professor of English History at the University of Florida, whose provocative 2006 book argued that "the secular university is increasingly marginal to American society and … that this is the *result* of its secularism."[81] Nord and Haynes, like Sommerville, go on to construct an argument for the place of religion as part of moral education in the public schools, constructed not from a position of neutrality with respect to religion, but from a place of inclusion of and acknowledgement of religious ways of knowing in multiple traditions. The controversies potentially surrounding such a proposal will not be the focus here. Rather, the question becomes if religious studies programs in public universities are losing ground both in terms of quantitative measures (numbers of degrees conferred, students enrolled in coursework, for instance) and cultural influence precisely because they no longer effectively speak to the religiously devoted and to issues arising as the result of the practice of religion in the public square. If a viable contention, this critique would reduce the work of many scholars of religion to descriptive and comparative analyses of religious phenomena, or argumentation over what constitutes religion and its study, presented primarily to insular, friendly audiences often within the halls of an academy where many students who practice religion may no longer walk. In that formulation, the faculty in academic religious studies programs would become increasingly irrelevant when speaking to issues of public concern or shaping the thought of future leaders and participants in religious communities.[82]

For building faculties in religious studies, including hiring replacement positions for retirements or employing contingent faculty to meet teaching obligations, understanding these issues takes on an urgency in the current climate. The heyday for program development in the 1960s and 1970s, with abundant institutional resources and ample opportunity to grow, no longer exists. Indeed, the downsizing, and in some cases shuttering, of programs may more accurately speak to the present realities. As noted, religious studies, like many other academic areas, faces pressure to demonstrate its value to universities increasingly managed by data and evaluated on business metrics. For religious studies programs, this situation frequently can mean providing courses that are "popular," that is, the courses that generate student credit hours by filling seats, as opposed to taking risks with experimental options or diverting too many resources into smaller upper-division offerings. Recruiting and graduating at least a minimal number of majors also proves important. Too often, these benchmarks drive the parceling out of limited resources such as new or replacement faculty lines.

And by any measure, the number of faculty positions in religious studies is diminishing. The 2016 AAR-SBL Employment Services Jobs Report indicated that for Academic Year (AY) 2016, positions advertised fell 10.2% from AY 2015. Further, "Fewer than 300 faculty positions were posted, the lowest number of faculty positions since AY02," and "The discrete number of institutions posting a job declined each of the past five years from 311 in AY11 to 248 in AY16, a decrease of 20.1%"[83] Making meaningful determinations about what these numbers indicate would mean digging into issues such as why job openings become available and what happens at institutions in cases of departures/retirements. Further, no good figures on the number of contingent faculty hired to cover service or other instructional options exists, much less details about whether contracts underwrite positions for multiple years or include benefits as opposed to simply paying a nominal sum per course. Again, better record keeping by national organizations could produce useful information about these questions and could even include surveys of graduate programs about the numbers of students being admitted, how many persist to the terminal degree, and job placement (in or out of religious studies tenure-track lines, in or out of academe, etc.). It seems safe to conclude, however, that the construction of a faculty now looks different from the construction of some of the most storied religious studies programs as they grew and developed, and looks different from the construction of a faculty even ten years previous.

If building a faculty speaks, as proposed here, to the health of a program, then program directors, chairs, and faculty must recognize that the conditions which once existed and allowed for expansion of the study of religion in terms of both areas and methods no longer exists. What constitutes a sound faculty capable of offering a viable curriculum will, of course, vary depending on the institution and its resources. But if national organizations assisted, by promoting ongoing conversations about what constitutes a religious studies "faculty" or a religious studies "curriculum," it might help programs think strategically about their futures. Good relationships with cognate fields and departments, for instance, may offer the opportunity to offer additional courses, engage in cutting-edge research, or build a service learning program directly related to the needs of a community. Graduate education and fellowship opportunities that considered more varied institutional settings, including undergraduate programs struggling to maintain degrees, concentrations, or even course work, could also prove beneficial. For example, equipping students with the skills to present often esoteric research as related to broader concerns, and to be nimble in their instructional and service capabilities, would likely end up more useful in terms of employment prospects than trying to anticipate gaps in the field or not acknowledging the contraction of religious studies positions. Replicating the intentionality of pioneering programs with respect to attending to the conditions of the study of religion more broadly and the application of such in specific institutional contexts ultimately might turn out more useful than replicating the programs those schools created. The resource limitations, the public pushback against the humanities, and the changing conditions of faculty life in the current environment demand rethinking how a program constructs its faculty and thus constructs what the field is about and can accomplish in the current setting.

THE UNIVERSITY AS BUSINESS

When assessing the state of a religious studies program, consideration of how an institution operates may not immediately pop to mind for most people. Recent biblical scholarship, however, offers a point of access to help understand the need for looking more broadly at how programs fit into the "economy" of higher education given the place of public universities within the global economic system. In his book *Reading the Bible in an Age of Crisis: Political Exegesis for a New Day,* Bruce Worthington sets a neoliberal stage by observing that "global capital, and specifically the transnational corporation, has replaced (or is replacing) the state as the dominant mode of political-economic power at the international level" and that the current instabilities in the economic, social, ecological, and political realms that result underscore "the general impotence of the state against the ubiquitous power of the global market."[84] Higher education on the whole experiences the impact of this altered power structure, but public universities stand in the direct line of impact. If the state functions as the primary driver of an institution in name only,[85] then the ways in which the university conducts its business will necessarily change. One of the clearest indicators of such a shift comes in defining the purpose of a state-funded university. Although vastly oversimplified, the "ideal" espoused by many state institutions (educational and governmental) rests in seeing their purpose as accomplishing a "public good." But the new order defined by global capital interests undercuts and reorients that claim.

To use the term "public good" technically means to embody two characteristics: nonrivalrous (its use does not reduce its availability to others) and nonexcludable (all within a society have access to it without diminishing its availability). As illustration of these qualities, Article IX, "Education," Section 1 of the Constitution of the state of North Carolina, reads, "Religion, morality, and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools, libraries, and the means of education shall forever be encouraged." Section 8 of that same article continues to spell out the role of the state in assuring that effort moves forward, specifying that the General Assembly "shall maintain a public system of higher education" and, in Section 9, that "the General Assembly shall provide that the benefits of The University of North Carolina and other public institutions of higher education, as far as practicable, be extended to the people of the State free of expense."[86] In turn, the mission of the University of North Carolina (as a system, not individual educational institutions) begins, "The University of North Carolina is a public, multi-campus university dedicated to the service of North Carolina and its people."[87]

Even a casual observer of the higher education landscape could enumerate multiple points of contention with this characterization of purpose. For example, at no point in history did (or, for that matter, in the present, do) "all" citizens have equal access. To stay with the example of the UNC system, six of the sixteen universities came into existence to serve minority populations and one began as a school for women, indicating that the definition of "public" did not always extend to all persons equally.[88] Further, the opportunity to matriculate continues to be difficult for every person who desires entry. Antoinette Flores, a senior policy analyst of Postsecondary Education Policy at the Center for American Progress, observes that "the nation's public universities—a key vehicle of upward mobility—must do more to even the playing field for all students. As it currently

stands, students from the least advantaged populations earn degrees at a lower rate and are burdened with a greater portion of debt than their peers."[89] Common obstacles to degree completion for these students include inadequate academic preparation (often as the result of weak preparatory schools), the inability to finance all the related expenses, educational environments and models that do not address the social realities of a diverse range of students, and the lack of encouragement from families, peers, and teachers to attain an education. But one must also acknowledge that many of these institutions never truly existed solely for such a noble purpose. David L. Kirp, the James D. Marver Professor of Public Policy at the University of California at Berkeley, points out that "markets and money have always mattered in American higher education," just "not nearly as much as they do today."[90] This argument holds that the guise of universities as providing a public service obscured some of the economic drivers of these institutions, such as generating advances in science and technology, promoting pathways for business development, producing teachers and community leaders, and sustaining the arts. Nonetheless, the prevailing ethos of the state-sponsored school persisted in the claim society in its entirety benefits from the work accomplished on publically supported campuses, even if other more economically oriented benefits resulted or, more plausibly, took precedence.

In more recent years, the notion of a societally shared benefit, however problematic it might be, receded. David Schultz, a Professor of Political Science at Hamline University, approaches the "business" of education from a different vantage point and lends insight to this idea. He argues that "since the end of World War II, two business models have defined the operations of American higher education." The first, post-WWII, invested significant funding in institutions of higher education to advance the political interests of the United States in defeating communism. And yet, "It also represented the expansion of more and more middle- and working-class students entering college." As a result, he concludes, "This was higher education's greatest moment. It was the democratization of college, made possible by expansion of inexpensive public universities, generous grants and scholarships, and low-interest loans."[91] The second phase came as a neoliberal response to the fiscal crises of the mid-1970s. Schultz notes that declines in federal and state government support for institutions of public education meant that "college increasingly use[d] corporate structures and management styles to run the university." Consequently, on campuses, professional programs became the primary funding streams, an openness to public-private partnerships emerged, and, eventually, institutions eagerly tapped into the potential for new technologies such as online education to alter the way the universities interacted with student populations.[92] In this paradigm, however, tuition and fees rose to replace lost state revenue, students and their families accumulated increasing debt burdens to both the federal government and private lenders to finance an education, and therefore a greater emphasis emerged on educational pathways that could generate income sufficient to repay money borrowed. As a result, the most financially insecure populations lost access to educational opportunities. These outcomes also pointed to another transformation. The "beneficiary" of higher education was no longer society or even the immediate region around a school; the individual student became the focus of a university's efforts.

With the high cost of attaining an education placed on the student, a market for

assurances about the quality and "value" of the educational experience developed and college rankings ensued. The data comprising these ratings systems most often result from the application of business metrics to creative comparative measurements in select categories.[93] More to the point for the purposes of this consideration, these rankings also establish rivalrous relationships by functioning as marketing tools aimed at the "consumer-student." Additionally, according to many higher education leaders, they incentivize institutions to favor wealthy students. Brit Kirwan, former Chancellor of the University of Maryland system, states the case succinctly:

> If some foreign power wanted to diminish higher education in America, they would have created the U.S. News and World Report rankings," he said. "You need both more college graduates in the economy and you need many more low-income students getting the benefit of higher education—and U.S. News and World Report has metrics that work directly in opposition to accomplishing those two things that our nation so badly needs.[94]

For a religious studies educator, this fact alone matters (and that is without any consideration of the ethical implications). Any factor that shrinks the population of students matriculating on a campus will disproportionately affect smaller programs. But before exploring why, several other related impacts must be noted.

First, by creating an environment of competition for desirable students, these ranking systems also encourage institutions to invest in amenities such as fancy dorms, gyms, and student centers (even if they must privatize to do it). The quality of these facilities often far exceeds aging and ill-equipped classrooms, laboratories, computer centers, and other resources that support and sustain the educational mission.[95] But they serve, much like good advertising, as "draws" to a campus. Second, as funding levels from governments continue to decline, the need for cost savings falls on the primary line item in any university budget —personnel. In this case, faculty and the supports for their work (supplies, travel budgets, etc.) get cut. The increasing numbers of contingent instructors and a pulling back on the number of tenure-track or tenured positions available can be one consequence.[96] Third, and in some ways at perverse cross-purposes with the previous, the pressures of rankings makes measuring accountability a prime emphasis of governments as a preventative to "wasteful" spending. The increased reporting requirements at both the state and federal levels and the need to set up instrumentation to measure efficiencies on campus as signs of academic quality and success (graduation, retention, assessment functions) demands that institutions spend funds hiring cadres of "middle management" administrative professionals. As Henry Giroux, the scholar of educational theory and critical pedagogy, forcefully states with regard to this practice in K-12 systems:

> What is truly shocking about the current dismantling and disinvestment in public schooling is that those who advocate such changes are called the new educational reformers. They are not reformers at all. In fact, they are reactionaries and financial mercenaries who are turning teaching into the practice of conformity and creating curricula driven by an anti-intellectual obsession with student test scores, while simultaneously turning students into compliant subjects, increasingly unable to

> think critically about themselves and their relationship to the larger world. This poisonous virus of repression, conformity and instrumentalism is turning public education into a repressive site of containment, a site devoid of poetry, critical learning and soaring acts of curiosity and imagination.[97]

In short, the educational mission of the institution gives way to a culture of measurement that quashes what it seeks to quantify.

Somewhat intriguingly, Schultz contends that persistent unemployment, the loss of consumer wealth, a contraction in the demand for higher education thanks to declining numbers of students, and a loss of confidence in what universities offer resulted in a collapse of this model in 2008, even though many of its practices continue to persist on campuses. Whether that premise holds, no one doubts that institutions of higher education at present are confronting brutal assessments of their value to the consumer (the student) and questions about their contributions to the wider public tied directly to their costs and the perceived ideological bent of their faculties. An all-too-common characterization of the higher education landscape today runs like the one by Charles Hughes Smith in *Business Insider*. He writes, "Paying a bloated institution for the privilege of sitting through four years of lectures, online courses and a few labs no longer makes sense for the vast majority of students."[98] William Bennett and David Wilezol say that "the frighteningly paltry amount of learning taking place on some college campuses … for the exorbitant prices that students and parents pay for a college education, too many of our students are not being equipped to be competitive in the global workforce."[99] And, of course, a poll released in the Summer of 2017 revealed that "fifty-eight percent of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents now believe America's institutions of higher learning 'have a negative effect on the country.'"[100]

Worthington, then, has it right. These criticisms reduce the educational experience to "return on investment" for the individual student and perhaps her/his parents who now expect a job-related outcome. They want the benefit of the pricey professional model of education without the expensive price tag and the extensive debt burden. In this process, any positives of an education for the larger public dissipate entirely. For faculties in the humanities, the political discourse around the purpose of higher education raises troubling, if not dire, alarms. For instance, in 2013 North Carolina Governor Pat McCrory made headlines when he said the following:

> So I'm going to adjust my education curriculum to what business and commerce needs to get our kids jobs as opposed to moving back in with their parents after they graduate with debt. What are we teaching these courses for if they're not going to help get a job? If you want to take gender studies that's fine. Go to a private school, and take it. But I don't want to subsidize that if that's not going to get someone a job.[101]

Given the lack of a clear path between earning that credential and immediate, directly related employment, the need to demonstrate "public" accountability in terms of assessable outcomes and job placement strikes particularly hard at humanities programs offering bachelor's degrees alone. Even more disturbing, the "solutions" to controlling the costs of

higher education add yet another layer of threat to programs. University of Florida President Bernie Machen observes, "Administrators and even state legislators have emphasized that general education (the traditional humanities 'cores' like English and history) can be accounted for with credits from high school and community colleges. The focus of higher education then becomes, almost solely, preparation for a job."[102] With students completing "core" credits elsewhere, the service function that sustains many humanities and almost all religious studies programs teeters on the verge of collapse and stands ready to take the religious studies major with it.

That brings the conversation back, at least initially, to numbers. The increasing pressure on public university campuses to demonstrate viability through data-driven measures directly impacts most religious studies programs. Even when housed in stand-alone departments and featuring both undergraduate and graduate programs, these departments typically remain on the periphery of the public university. Again, reliable figures prove almost impossible to ascertain, but no one labors under the delusion that religious studies competes for students with powerhouse majors such as Psychology, Business, or Communications. The latest Humanities Indicators report on Religion degrees awarded notes that "From 2011 to 2014, the number of bachelor's degrees conferred in the academic study of religion fell 6.8% (from 4,904 to 4,569 degrees). This was the largest decline in 28 years of available data for the discipline." That does not mean the news reads as all bad. "Even after the drop, however, the number of bachelor's degrees awarded in the discipline was almost 2,000 more than in 1987."[103]

But the 2014 figure represents 0.26% of all the bachelor's degrees awarded and the continuation of decline since 2006. Overall increases in the number of master's and doctoral degrees conferred might read as encouraging news except for losing ground in the percentage totals.[104]

Since many universities look to the number of majors and degree completion rates as measures of program health, the pressure to recruit students occupies faculty time. In blogging about a meeting of religious studies chairs at public universities, Russell McCutcheon highlights the stakes (emphasis the author's):

> Like many other department chairs, I suspect, I became chair after years of teaching, writing, and generally being collegial—but I received little or no training on how to be a chair. And the work as chair of a department of Religious Studies in a public university comes with its own particular set of issues. What does the study of religions include when it is in a state-supported setting? Where can we profitably collaborate with other disciplines? *And perhaps, above all, how can we recruit new students to the academic study of religions?*[105]

Survival depends on selling the benefits of the program to its consumers and earning their business. These efforts take many forms. One common strategy takes a marketing approach, showing students and the wider public the value of this degree for employment prospects.

The University of Northern Iowa, for example, lists an array of skills graduates will attain. "Our major in the Study of Religion will give you a foundation for future employment by educating you to: think critically about our world; write, speak, and think criticially [sic] and

with confidence; work well with others; read, think, and write about challenging subjects; approach problems from a variety of perspectives and find imaginative solutions; be flexible in your approach to your own future; interact meaningfully with people from different countries and cultures." In this same vein, the University of Wisconsin – Madison goes for the simple, unelaborated promise: "Religious Studies provides important preparation for thinking, communicating and functioning professionally and personally in a complex, multi-dimensional world." By contrast, the University of Oklahoma, while defending its successes, also acknowledges the fundamental problem.

> Majoring in Religious Studies is not, for most students, a route to a religious career, any more than majoring in English leads to being a novelist, poet, or literary critic. Our majors have gone on to pursue careers in a wide variety of fields, including Non-Profit work, Education, Law, Social Work, Medicine, Business/Finance, and Graduate School.

Although typical of the liberal arts educational mission,[106] the fact that studying religion as an undergraduate does not directly correlate to any specific career trajectory or lead to any measurable impact in the practice of religion does not bode well in today's public university environment.

Fortunately for most programs, the numbers game turns to criteria other than counting graduates or even majors. Offsetting a small number of students seeking a degree frequently depends on successful placement of popular courses within General Education requirements. The resulting Student Credit Hour production in a "service" profile to the larger university supports a major as well as becomes a primary rationale for faculty lines and its attendant program maintenance and/or growth. These courses also, traditionally, serve as a recruiting tool for programs. Again, McCutcheon elucidates:

> In terms of courses, presumably like many departments, our main contribution is to serve what we call the Core Curriculum (or what others might call General Education courses)—either offering lower-level core "humanities" courses for incoming students or upper-level core "writing" courses. We offer other courses too, such as upper-level seminars mainly attended by majors/minors, but the majority of our classes carry a core designation. As others know all too well, these so-called service courses are also the main gateway classes to the major since the vast majority of incoming students have never heard of what we do, and so few are chomping at the bit to declare REL as their major when they first arrive.[107]

Keeping steady student numbers here requires that faculty not only place their courses wisely, but also that they present options that play to incoming student interests in religion. But, as noted above, diminished enrollments in these courses, and the prospect of students earning these credits before matriculating on a four-year campus, too often not only equates to a loss of opportunity for recruitment into a program, but also to declines in much-needed student credit hour production.

This inability to attract students directly affects the distribution of faculty lines. In fact, the declining number of tenured and tenure-track lines in religious studies at public

universities already shows this pressure. According to the AAR Employment Trends, in AY 2002, a total of 190 advertised positions with tenure explicitly mentioned appeared. The economic shock of 9/11 likely accounts for a dip to 153 in AY 2003, but then the numbers rose dramatically to 241, 197, 246, 257, 275, and 210 in subsequent years. Not unexpectedly, Islamic Studies emerged as one of the strongest hiring areas during this period. The impact of the 2007-2008 economic crisis, however, turned up on public campus job advertisements in 2010 and 2011 with only 9 positions in the former and 33 total in the latter. Public institutions, clearly, lacked the resources to make "permanent" hires. While 2012, with 155 positions, showed signs of recovery, the years following never fully bounced back with 110, 132, and 135 lines.

Not enough data exists to determine if departments now rely more on nontenure-track contingent faculty to the same extent as national trend lines about the hiring of adjunct faculty might suggest.[108] Certainly, many religious studies scholars do find themselves cobbling together positions with poor pay and no benefits or leaving academia all together in lieu of securing a tenure-track line.[109] But no significant study traces what is happening with the number of tenured and tenure-track lines in religious studies programs at public universities. No one knows for certain if tenure-track lines being permanently "lost" to retirement/deaths or if falling student enrollments, particularly in lower level general education courses where students now earn credits from community colleges and in high schools, mean faculty lines are not being assigned to programs. Anecdotal tales of cuts, realignments, and threats to the future of programs abound, but what a more nuanced exploration of the data available might tell remains necessary to establish a complete picture. At present, no statistical decline in the number of religious studies departments appears evident (even with some slight loss of degrees at all levels).[110] Programs under pressure to make evident their value through quantifiable measures appear to be finding a way to survive, but what that survival entails poses the interesting study question.

The business model paradigm that stresses reliance on performance metrics to determine programmatic success certainly might ensure a place for some scholars of religion to continue forward in the academy, particularly in elite public (and private) institutions. But one must ask if this future is eroding away for many, less well-positioned programs. Given the changing dynamics of public higher education and the impact of those changes on the study of religion, mounting an effective resistance to what constitutes the feasibility of a program looks daunting at best. Worthington's work, however, provides, if not a roadmap, at least a basis, for envisioning what a religious studies program, indeed, what a university commitment to the "public good," could look like. Assuming he is correct in suggesting that biblical interpretation (in this context extended to include religious studies or even most academic disciplines and fields) is "linked in a circular manner with 'systems of power,' which produce and sustain the regulation, distribution, and operation of appropriate statements within global capital,"[111] then these systems necessarily include the university and the profession. In brief, the "business model" approach to education cannot function as the bogeyman against which scholar/teachers, romantically idealized, struggle for survival. Scholars must also forthrightly examine how the structures in and through which the production of knowledge happen, the models of scholarship they create

and utilize, also participate in this activity and contribute to the conditions now present. Recognition of complicity in the problems necessarily precedes positing any realistic alternative approaches.

In attempting this work, two key points stand out. First, the ideal of the "objective," scientific investigator operating from a dispassionate, neutral vantage point limits the kinds of knowledge a scholar produces. In religious studies, texts get locked into the past, traditions and practices get historicized or explained away as serving a sociological, psychological, biological, or other function, and engaging current issues remains not only non-sectarian, but also apolitical. Rooted, at least in the American context, in the split between religious studies and theology, this decidedly "neutral" option, effectively removes consideration of the impact of religion in the world and in people's lives and thereby cedes perhaps the most effective drawing card for students to the academic study of religion, as well as for influencing the ways in which religion functions in the public arena.

Second, if the pendulum swings in the opposite direction, allowing ideologically and theory-driven interpretive paradigms that seek to explore religious phenomena as relevant from a variety of perspectives to take hold, scholars often neglect to see the compromised nature of these approaches as well. As Worthington points out:

> The dynamics of global capital does not necessarily limit the proliferation of alternative scholarly voices, nor does capital necessarily produce violent scholarly hegemony or academic monoculture, or quash minority voices. Instead, global capital produces scholarly subjectivities with impressive variety, a context in which almost any interpretive approach is now valid, except for the approach that challenges the patron of all interpretation itself—global capital.[112]

In this instance, the ever-increasing array of sub-disciplines often looks like and gets read as a sign of health in the field. However, the atomization of knowledge created makes it virtually impossible for scholars within the same academic field to speak meaningfully to one another, much less to speak intelligibly about their work to a non-specialist public. Faculty address one another at conferences and write books or papers that speak only to a limited few in their own field or, more likely, sub-field, and garner acclaim from their peers. But they can remain oblivious to their increasing lack of relevance to the practice of religion or to public concerns related to religious norms.

The lack of coherent and/or thoughtful voices trained in academic religious studies shaping local, national, and international conversations on religion sets a dangerous course. Worthington asserts, again with respect to biblical studies, that scholars too often fail in the effort to account for how institutions and communities committed to the Bible's authority use this text to shape their social, political, and cultural worlds and to fall short in assessing the text's ongoing influence in public squares around the globe. Expanding that insight to religious studies as a field follows easily. If, as Worthington holds, that by "developing a scholarly apparatus that cannot address fundamental questions of ultimate meaning,"[113] scholarly work at the university level functions as "an apologetic for capital in the world,"[114] then academic life quickly becomes what we now see. Insulated and isolated scholars speak only to one another in languages only other experts understand.

As noted above, academic work often does not translate to a broader public, but instead seems arcane and out of touch with the pressing questions and issues in communities. Into the gap between the work scholars do and its isolation from invested audiences step not only all manner of clerics, but also enthusiasts, and pseudo-experts who advance positions at variance from well-established norms within a field of study and find receptive audiences simply because they possess the ability to create a platform, build a following, and spread whatever message that person or group chooses. While this issue has always been present throughout history with regard to religion, the internet and social media amplify these voices. A Google search of almost any topic in religious studies, underscores that what the algorithms generate rarely hits on academic scholarship or on sources that rely on what scholars produce. Even though not always necessarily problematic from an academic perspective, the biases in sectarian and politicized sites can skew toward advancing propositions scholarship problematizes, not to mention promoting "false facts" or denigrating scholarly voices. In this environment, academic religious studies scholarship gets drowned out amongst the religious in favor of what circulates and carries the weight of authority simply because it turns up on a web search.

This absence of a viable scholarly presence in the marketplace of ideas allows for the perception of the university as "out of touch" with the concerns of ordinary people to thrive. The familiarity of this trope, indeed, feeds routinely into politicized rhetoric blasted from various news outlets. Religion is often featured in stories designed to promote distorted images of university communities (or it lurks closely around the edges of the reporting) because tapping into religiously inflected rhetoric evokes audience response. Take as an example a June 2017 Todd Starnes piece for Fox News Opinion. He writes about the decision made by East Central University, a public teaching university in Ada, Oklahoma, to remove crosses, Bibles, and other religious symbols from a campus chapel to conform to their practice of using the building for multiple faith traditions and welcoming students from a variety of backgrounds. Of the President's statement that they were seeking to preserve some items, Starnes says, "So on the bright side, it appears East Central University will not burn the Bibles or toss the crosses into a wood chipper."[115] Or, in a more nuanced vein, Eugene Volokh in his Washington Post column took on the University of Oregon's definition of harassment as it relates to free speech in a December 2016 column. Although focused on a report responding to a specific case involving race and a costume worn by a law school faculty member at a party in her home, he characterizes the broad implications of the subsequent report by jumping immediately to hypothetical and inflammatory examples that include religion: "A faculty member could be disciplined for displaying the Mohammed cartoons, if it caused enough of a furor. Or a faculty member could be disciplined for suggesting that homosexuality may be immoral or dangerous."[116]

By setting up institutions of higher learning as problematic for persons who hold certain political or religious points of view, the characterizations of the ways religion functions in (public) university settings inevitably blow back on the perception and reception of all faculty, including those in religious studies, outside of campus. Nothing of intellectual (much less spiritual) value, the argument would go, can emerge from such a compromised place. For public institutions, this state of affairs matters. Support for governmental funding

depends on public confidence in the utility of an institution and, increasingly, with many people questioning the value of a college education,[117] survival is on the table. Effecting change demands that faculty take on their detractors, but it can also demand that faculty challenge internal structures in the institutions that provide their livelihood.

With respect to the former, religious studies faculty stand in a unique position to contest the disconnections between scholarship and life and the negative characterizations of what happens within the university. Precisely because religious practice continues to demonstrate its staying power for a majority of people around the globe,[118] forging partnerships with groups outside of the university setting, and creating classroom experiences and scholarship that encounters people in the midst of their daily lives, becomes a first step to altering the narrative. Instead of speaking solely in academic language to how institutions, both religious and political, encourage behaviors, shape opinions, and build constituencies historically or in the present, this alternative assumes that mobilizing the capabilities of religion in public life need not to rest solely with popular expressions of religious faith, sectarian institutions, or self-described experts in today's multi-religious, multicultural, and democratic settings. In brief, academic religious studies scholars can and perhaps should assume an activist role in the public arena. Chapter Five takes up this notion from the vantage point of radical, as well as less comprehensive, ideas about how to restructure religious studies in the public university in ways that link scholars, students, and the community. Engaging in such a makeover would address the relationship between religion and American public life, and walk back the perception of universities as elite institutions increasingly distant from the lives of many of the people in this country and on this planet.

This paradigm, moreover, offers the possibility for dismantling, or at least moderating, the current incarnation of the business model in university education by leveling challenges to the impact of global capital on the structures of human communities. If academic inquiry into religion once deconstructed the authoritative foundations undergirding the state by taking on the Bible and changed the course of how people thought about the world, the rise of religious identities and movements (both positive and negative) as counter-forces to the corporatized models of humanity and community perpetuated by transnational corporations and economies created to serve them also offer opportunities for the work of religious studies scholars to effect similar change. But undertaking this scholarship requires active engagement with questions of ultimate meaning as they find expression in continual crises around issues such as the environment and the sustainability of life or income inequalities and the disruptiveness of debt to both nations and individuals or tribalism, nationalisms, and the politics of terror.

Inevitably, these efforts would demand taking on the increasingly corporatized nature of the university and the ways in which the generation of knowledge in these institutions gets circumscribed to the interest of capitalism and the production of labor forces. By freeing scholars from their self-imposed limits on interactions with "lived" religion, academic work both within and outside of the classroom could unambiguously challenge the dominant models generated by global capital and offer alternative ways to produce knowledge, to conceptualize communities, and to build governments, businesses, and other institutions. Consequently, public accountability would become less about metrics such

as job placement and more about how programs sparked change in local, national, and international conversations, effected transformational changes in communities, and engaged with other institutions. The integration of students in this work would become the marker of skills attained while also paving the way for citizens less reliant on the simplifications and polarizing impulses of niche media and groups invested in advancing agendas based on limited perspective, and more capable of weighing and analyzing the complexities of the most pressing problems and acting thoughtfully on that basis.

By reflecting on how their programs relate to the higher-education environment generated by global capital and the impact of such a paradigm on their work, religious studies faculties can more effectively grasp that the quest for survival is about more than metrics and measurement, funding streams, and faculty positions. This conversation, however, cannot be effective if it happens in isolated local settings alone. National organizations need to promote debate not just about the field itself and its constitution, but how these issues impact the practice of religious studies in the academy with serious consideration of how the signs of the erosion of the field are already readily apparent.

CONCLUSIONS

A relative newcomer on the stage of American higher education, academic religious studies established itself as and remains one of the minor players in public colleges and universities. With the generation that established currently operating programs just now passing away, considering how these first scholars conceptualized what exists, and how those decisions grew the field, proves instructive in assessing current issues and challenges even with full recognition of a much-changed landscape for higher education. The conditions that made possible the development of many public universities religious studies programs, and assured their rapid growth, no longer exist. The appetite for continued expansion of public education has shifted dramatically, as has the place of religion in the American and in global contexts.

This chapter pondered how public university programs in religious studies might begin to pose questions about the field and their placement in it given the current environment in higher education. While local factors always differ, understanding the shape of religious studies more broadly assists in determining how scholars see their work fitting within established norms, where need for change exists, and how to join with other scholars in common purpose and in common defense. Nothing magical about these three areas exists. Instead, they simply draw on the ability to assess the placement of religious studies within the broader mission of an institution, to think historically about the progression of the field that results in what appears at present, and to comprehend how programs function within prevailing business models. At each stage, as noted, opportunities also exist to challenge prevailing norms and make transformational changes.

Chapter Two

INTRODUCTION

In 2009, a piece produced by the American Academy of Religion asserted that "what constitutes the religious studies major is … undergoing rapid change." Departmental surveys completed in 2000 and 2005 formed the basis for that conclusion. The writers of this assessment saw "an unprecedented confluence of world events, public perceptions, and educational insights [that] has created exciting possibilities for the growth and reimagining of the field." The emergent paradigm they pointed to, however, sprung up around a familiar fault line.

> Departments and curricula in religious studies at public, private, and church-related institutions are gradually, persistently, and unevenly shifting from a "seminary model" for the study of religion (in which courses in Bible, Christian history, and Christian doctrine are seen as primary and courses on other religions and aspects of religion are deemed secondary or even unnecessary) to a comparative model (in which the focus is on promoting student understanding of the beliefs, practices, and histories of multiple religious traditions in a comparative context.)[1]

Defining this shift as indicative of a "pivotal moment" might overexaggerate the timeline for this development, not to mention skewing the natural rhythms of curricular change. After all, centuries of "scientific" approaches to religion and a more than 50-year evolution of religious studies as a modern academic field do not necessarily qualify as the seeds for something radically new. Moreover, the gradual nature of curricular change and its resistance to dramatic modification often gets written into the committee structures of colleges and universities for a variety of reasons, both internal and external to the area of inquiry itself.

At the undergraduate level, instruction in a religious studies classroom typically seeks to familiarize students with foundational information about a given topic, as well as to demonstrate recognized academic approaches to the material under consideration. Textbooks underscore this effort by enshrining time-honored conceptualizations of a subject in a manner accessible to a non-specialist audience. Variations in what receives coverage occur to add current events/examples, just as explanations of how that knowledge gets produced reflect incremental shifts in disciplinary practice. Only rarely, and most often in upper-level courses, do faculty members venture on to the cutting edge of scholarship and explore the terrain of the field at its newest, emerging boundaries. This inherent conservatism likely reflects, at least in part, pressures from institutions against wide-sweeping alterations. If, for example, a course connects to General Education, core curricula, or programs of study in a variety of majors, it might be designed around humanities credit criteria and/or structured to impart skills in basic research, writing, or critical thought. Established

standards for such elements, enforced by committees and tied to assessment outcomes, encourage the status quo. Courses will also correlate in a catalog with the year of a student's matriculation. Too many variations introduce difficulties in tracking what students complete and crediting their work appropriately toward graduation. But the persistence of courses can also come from faculty members. Writing syllabi and lectures, constructing activities, assignments, tests, and other resources, and evaluating what "works" and what does not, takes time. Updates via tweaks come more easily than building something new from the ground up. And, lest anyone forget, faculty members who manage to get specific courses "on the books" can resist change, particularly if the class reflects a unique scholarly interest.

How then to assess the instructional dimension of undergraduate religious studies programs, and to think through whether the field exists at the pivotal moment the AAR report trumpeted, becomes an interesting challenge. One could choose to examine the entire curricula of programs. While this approach, when done comparatively across institutions, might speak to what select faculties see as the "core" elements in the field, it would also need to account for items such as how institutional demands exert influence over what gets listed and how many sections, frequency on the schedule (catalogs can depict an accretion of courses over time as opposed to what gets taught), and the relationship between personnel on hand and courses offered. Even then, this method would fail to account for *how* scholars communicate the substance of a topic to either an audience of generalists or to budding specialists. Exploring what scholars do in the classroom might generate a clearer picture of the latter, but short of observation, that task gets tricky. And the idiosyncratic nature of individual classroom styles could miss the commonalities across the field.

To try and capture at least a snapshot of what programs see as important to the field and how it plays out in the classroom, this chapter will proceed to work through syllabi in four select areas that typify religious studies instruction. From the vantage point of text-based, tradition-focused, method and/or theory driven, and experientially oriented courses, it becomes possible to think through how scholars in the field constitute knowledge as well as to see what instructor choices of material reveals about communication of that work. Additionally, these categories offer some insight as to how academics in religious studies construct knowledge around select artifacts, concepts, and practices. Consideration of the processes by which some of these options become entrenched ways of "doing" religious studies also becomes clear in this examination, raising questions about the need to construct a sense of stability within an area of study while balancing against potential stagnation.

The necessity of thinking about such work in the contemporary environment also deserves mention. Numerous commentators scrutinize, if not outright attack, the value of a liberal arts education. Religious studies, no doubt, sits squarely within such a paradigm. Vinod Khosla, co-founder of SUN Microsystems and venture capitalist, for instance, asserts that "traditional education is far behind and the old world tenured professors at our universities with their parochial views and interests will keep dragging them back. My disagreement is not with the goals of a liberal arts education but its implementation and evolution (or lack thereof) from 18th century European education and its purpose."[2] His plea for change raises hard questions about whether what educators do matches the 21st century needs of the planet in terms of facility in problem solving, critical thought,

acquaintance with key issues and, thus, produces intelligent and thoughtful citizens. Far more common, however, management consultant Steve Tobak, writing for Fox Business, calls liberal arts degrees "useless" and opines, "Granted, an English major can someday become an airline pilot or a neurosurgeon, but you just don't see that a lot."[3] For him, job skills far outweigh the utility of a degree obtained at great cost and with little practical application. The ubiquity of these voices, and their influence over both the public and members of state legislatures, means that religious studies faculty must be prepared to defend (and, increasingly, to assess) not only the courses that comprise their program, but also what the approach taken and assignments made accomplish for the students enrolled. Assessment initiatives certainly attempt to demonstrate student learning in a course. But the impulse to do this work and the metrics utilized frequently come from outside of faculties and thus the process of writing course goals and gathering artifacts to evidence their attainment can remain distinct from what happens inside the classroom.[4]

Faculties engaged in a meaningful process that thinks through not only the construction of their majors, minors, and interactions with other institutional entities, but also the structure of the classes and assignments themselves, ideally become better advocates for their programs. As Jonathan Z. Smith observes in his writing on classroom practice:

> What we seek to train in college are individuals who know not only that the world is more complex than it first appears, but also that, therefore, interpretive decisions must be made, decisions of judgment which entail real consequences for which one must take responsibility, from which one may not flee by the dodge of disclaiming expertise. This ultimately political quest for fundamentals, for the acquisition of the powers of informed judgment, for the dual capacities of appreciation and criticism, must be the explicit goal of every level of the liberal arts curriculum. The difficult task of making *interpretive decisions* must inform each and every course.[5]

In fact, the effort to encourage such reflectiveness about course construction should begin at the graduate school level for scholars seeking a teaching appointment. Providing thoughtful guidance to future instructors on conceptualizing and developing an undergraduate class, building assignments that fully realize the goals of a contemporary liberal arts education, and considering how this work contributes to understanding and advancing the academic study of religion in a departmental or program setting is every bit as important as being able to give an engaging lecture, lead a discussion, or manage classroom behavior. For scholars teaching religious studies, establishing venues for more intentional rumination on classroom instruction outside of routine curricular review could contribute to maintaining the field's on-going relevance. For example, engaging in these conversations might encourage the forging of creative partnerships with other areas of inquiry inside the university as well as with outside entities. It certainly should keep curricula or classroom practice from becoming too fixed.

One final note should be put forward in this introduction. The syllabi cited in this section all appear on publically available web pages and serve solely as examples. None of the observations offered about any of the documents analyzed seeks to evaluate the merits of a course or its contents, much less speak to the work of an individual faculty member.

Rather, this approach begins with the recognition that syllabi are a university mandated and defined form of discourse and are often both formulaic and reductive in nature. Their use here merely lends a convenient point of departure for a wider consideration of methodological trends and practices.

TEXT-BASED CLASSES

As noted previously, biblical scholarship functioned as the foundation point for the academic study of religion. No doubt that the influence of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions in the "West" and the prominent place of a book in each encouraged religious studies scholars to define texts as primary objects of inquiry. An ongoing orientation toward text-based pedagogy, however, speaks to a variety of educational goals, some of which relate to the "book" orientation of the Abrahamic religions and some of which do not. The study of documents certainly valorizes a set of voices (or accepts the valorization of select past communities) as central to a tradition or a culture. Nonetheless, controversies over which texts to include, as well as whether texts alone provide the best method of approach, crop up among scholars. Moreover, in a postmodern environment, what constitutes a text and how that study proceeds all become valid questions. Declaring written and preserved documents as the prime objects of inquiry also underscores the idea of literacy as fundamental to the idea of religion, not to mention essential to the educated person. It further defines what constitutes literacy as functionality in reading, interpreting, and communicating meaningfully about texts, as well as the display of intellectual prowess via exposure to and, more aptly, understanding of the documents in question.[6] Without doubt, this approach to knowledge creates a stratifying norm by positively correlating this ideal of literacy to social status and to the ability to participate effectively in a community.[7] But what this understanding of literacy means to a generation immersed in social media and the larger impact of a post-literate orientation in a culture[8] continues to evolve.

While biblical studies courses naturally come immediately to mind as exemplars for a text-oriented an approach, a look at a few courses not centered on the Tanakh or the Christian Bible demonstrates the far-reaching influence of this instructional template. For instance, David Vishanoff's Fall 2013 course "The Qur'an" at the University of Oklahoma begins by articulating several course goals on the syllabus. Enrolled students will strive:

- To become thoroughly acquainted with the major themes and literary forms of the Qur'an.
- To develop the skills of close reading and textual analysis.
- To develop the skills and ethics of constructing knowledge through discussion of primary texts.
- To develop a critical awareness of multiple interpretive approaches to sacred texts.
- To become better prepared (intellectually and morally) to listen to, converse with, and get to know Muslims whose perspectives and convictions differ from our own.

As outlined here, students not only build competence in the laudable goals of carefully and thoughtfully reading texts, but they also encounter glimpses of a document's interpretive history and begin to understand the processes through which both scholars and other

readers produce meaning. Even more specifically, students contemplate what it means for communities to utilize the label "sacred" and consider the impact of such a designation on how people handle, read, and think about a text.

In this course, the Qur'an itself remains the centerpiece of inquiry, the focal point of all assignments and discussions. As with many text-based courses, the period of its composition and what one can know about its writer(s), editors, social setting, and reception assumes prominence, especially in determining what a text "means." A "Notes" section of Vishanoff's site accessed through clicking on his "Current Information" link describes a grammatical-historical approach for the first access of students to the material. He likens this work to biblical studies in that it allows for "sorting out the grammar of the text … and figuring out what it appears to be saying to whom in its historical context." From that point, he then sets off on a path to demonstrate how context and identity shape the production of meaning. According to the course goals and plan, Vishanoff assists students in approaching the Qur'an from different vantage points, adding to the use of contemporary western scholarly perspectives by including reading strategies from the Muslim world. His way into this process asks students to assume an interested or invested position as a reader by posing the question, "How does this text speak to me?"

Such a step leads to a final course goal which appears, at first glance, to stand at some variance from a strictly text-centered effort. Indeed, "to become better prepared (intellectually and morally) to listen to, converse with, and get to know Muslims whose perspectives and convictions differ from our own" replaces the text with a group of unspecified Muslims. In assessing what Vishanoff seeks to accomplish, a plain reading might point to promoting real world dialogue with Muslims, aiming to help students live conversantly with others in a multicultural and global world. It could, however, also position Muslims as "others" in a way that works against such an aspiration. A closer look at the syllabus, in the context of the sponsoring department's mission, unpacks Vishanoff's purpose with greater clarity and demonstrates how such a text-based course functions within a humanities context.

The stated interest in generating useful dialogues with "Muslims whose perspectives and convictions differ from *our* own," (emphasis the author's), not only begs the question of what specific Muslims, but also poses who represents the collective "our." While the wording in no way precludes the possibility of practicing Muslims as members of the class, the language presumes a clash of some sort. The plural could function here as a kind of royal "we" by marking the student as the singular locus of this dissonant encounter. But when read carefully, the syllabus presents an alternative option. The "Overview" equates the assumed interpretive community to the class itself: "In the first half of the course *we* study passages from the Qur'an directly, attempting *our* own collective analysis of their form, purpose, assumptions, audience, and context, and comparing *our* conclusions with those of a prominent Western historian" (emphasis the author's). "We" and "our" here certainly seems to include not only the class, but these pronouns also incorporate western academic scholarship. As the course continues, however, Vishanoff says that students will "read from three very different Muslim commentaries on the Qur'an, by a 9th-century Sufi named Tustari, a pair of 15th-century Sunni scholars called the Two Jalals, and the 20th-century Islamist Sayyid Qutb." These interpretive partners and the lenses they provide reflect

distinct approaches to the material. The first is noted for its clarity and accessibility, the second for its mystical emphasis, and the third for its explicitly political agenda. The design of the course, then, creates interaction between students training in academic exploration of the text and varied, although still historical, Muslim voices reading the same from distinct times and social locations. The "we" and "our" get clarified in this context because they posit a contrast between these exemplars and 21st century students in an American university likely primarily, but perhaps not exclusively, engaging this text from a western, scholarly, non-Arabic speaking, and non-Muslim, points of view.

While the interpretive strategy Vishanoff advocates here avoids the all-too-common traps of claiming neutrality or objectivity as the stance of the well-equipped scholarly reader, multiple questions remain. One must consider what links together these students as an interpretive community. Or if their newly learned grammatical-historical interpretive principles alone guide their reading process and shape their outcomes. Given that most of these students probably do not know classical (or modern) Arabic, how they negotiate the inevitable limitations of reading in translation and the diminishing of nuance across languages, times, and cultures also becomes an issue. Moreover, for non-Muslim students or Muslim students who do not regard this text as sacred, it would be intriguing to know how they account for such claims and responses to the text as such. Even more, Vishanoff's assertion in his final goal of some type of moral preparation on the part of students also remains under scrutiny. As an instructor at a public university, the form his preparation of students for moral engagement in the wider world takes begs for examination.

Michael Beaty, Professor of Philosophy at Baylor University, assists in framing this final goal as part of what the humanities accomplishes in a liberal arts education. He notes in his work: "Included in the classical understanding of the liberal arts was not only intellectual formation, but moral formation as well. As the modern notion of the humanities developed in the twentieth century, we see its defenders endorsing and promoting this very same self-understanding: the education of one's humanity promotes both intellectual and moral formation, thus making students morally better persons and citizens."[9] What constitutes this "moral" person remains unclear beyond participating, with some intellectual training, as citizens (locally, nationally, globally, all?) in a common life. Certainly Beaty, working in an explicitly Christian institution,[10] might turn to a religious tradition for a definition of "moral." But the state university as commonly defined today cuts off that option. Vishanoff, therefore, more likely grounds his instructional practice in one of the purposes of his program: "By providing a greater understanding of religion in its pluralistic expressions the Program will promote a more informed citizenry."[11] In turn, as the program's mission statement reads: "The mission of OU's Religious Studies Program is educational, to equip students with the knowledge to function in the diverse and complex global environment of the 21st Century." The ideal for the student enrolled in "The Qur'an" at the University of Oklahoma, then, becomes emerging from the course with more than theoretical and analytical tools for reading. This text-based course cultivates a kind of literacy that enables student to engage in intellectually grounded and ethically meaningful dialogue in real world situations.

Religious studies courses oriented towards philosophical traditions often employ a text-based approach as well. Jim Blumenthal of Oregon State University says on the syllabus for PHL/REL 430/530 The History of Buddhist Philosophy that students will "develop an ability to analyze Buddhist philosophical texts, interpret Buddhist philosophical worldviews, and assemble key Buddhist ideas." Likewise, Edwin Bryant notes in his Spring 2014 syllabus for Introduction to Hindu Philosophy at Rutgers University that "the course will utilize primary texts wherever possible" and his reading list includes the Upanishads, the Bhagavad-Gita, and The Yoga Sutras of Patañjali. In these course designs, texts provide a point of access into a thought-world, however historically conditioned. Bryant's formulation, for example, appears to use texts as a window to the past. He writes, "This course will attempt an overview (and no more) of some of the main schools of orthodox Hindu thought up to the medieval period." Further, in the absence of any other dialogue partners from these periods, "attention will be paid to some of the prominent interconnections and points of contestation amongst some of these schools." As put forward, this course sees texts functioning to illuminate how select people saw and understood their world, to reveal the questions they posed about key issues, and to describe their struggles with various alternatives.

Although Bryant makes no statements about learning goals or course outcomes, an examination of the assignments indicates a focus on teaching students how to read Indian philosophy, much as Blumenthal does for Buddhism. In fact, Blumenthal, like Vishanoff, also explicitly states that the course will teach students how to "successfully engage ... texts in translation, and recent scholarship in the field." Students will learn, then, how to read both primary texts and academically based discussion of them. This combination of analytical and interpretive goals makes clear how these courses embody what humanities scholars seek, even if framed, at least in part, differently from Vishanoff. Gary Lease, a former professor of the History of Consciousness Department as well as the one-time Dean of the Humanities Division at the University of California at Santa Cruz, states the purposes of the humanities succinctly.

> It is precisely in the humanities that the key skills and elements for the formation of culture are intensively studied, inculcated, and perfected: the ability to express oneself clearly and accurately, both orally and in writing; the skill of critical evaluation, both of ideas and actions; the courage to make choices based on shared values and priorities; the opportunity to conduct an intensive conversation with the traditions, present and past, that help make us who we are, and above all who we will be; and as a result, the ability to understand and make sense of other people and their cultures.[12]

To this final point, Blumenthal says of his class: "Often degrees in philosophy in American universities ignore non-Western philosophical traditions and leave students thinking a survey of Western philosophy is a survey of philosophy as a whole. Thus a goal of this course is to take a step towards filling that intellectual gap and demonstrating the importance and some of the penetrating questions raised and responded to in non-Western philosophical discourse." In sum, students not only build skills in reading and

interpreting and expression, but will also come to understand different pathways to engage perennial questions and to develop knowledge that will lessen common cultural blindness to alternative perspectives. This type of literacy, following Beaty, could be described as moral preparation for life and citizenship.

This relationship between texts, cultures, readers, and intellectual/moral formation in the past and present remains complex. Even though the latter two syllabi do not explicitly embrace that "moral" language, undertaking the study itself implies value for an American university student having some acquaintance with these traditions. Former United States Secretary of Education (1985-1988) and sometimes controversial conservative political commentator William Bennett makes explicit what this type of study might produce: "The humanities tell us how men and women of our own and other civilizations have grappled with life's enduring, fundamental questions: What is justice? What should be loved? What deserves to be defended? What is courage? What is noble? What is base? Why do civilizations flourish? Why do they decline?"[13] Lease negotiates the value of this terrain by stressing skill development that also yields persons prepared to participate in a common life via establishing points of connection based on shared (or at least similar) values and priorities, although they emerge from differing historical and/or cultural contexts.

Yet while these syllabi advance the notion of enduring human concerns, they avoid eliding distinctions between cultures too easily. Richard G. Wang, in the syllabus for his Spring 2015 University of Florida course on Taoism and Chinese Culture, demonstrates the point. Like the others noted above, this class includes reading Taoist texts (in English) as well as commentary, analysis, and material that helps contextualize the study. But Wang asserts, "Taoism is a specific set of cultural traditions that evolved within the historical context of ancient, medieval, and modern China, evolving to meet the spiritual needs of people in specific historical situations. The multi-sources and complexity of Taoist belief systems and ritual practice, and the influence of Taoism upon Chinese thought, religion, art, culture and society will also be covered." This historicizing impulse emerges not to lock texts into the past, but here, at least in part, to serve as a corrective to a Western tendency to appropriate, without any careful study, "other" traditions. The relationship between text and its setting and culture comes to the forefront. Wang firmly and directly asserts in the Course Description: "Taoism is not some abstract 'timeless wisdom" that simply consists of a set of warm, fuzzy ideas." Instead, then, of romanticizing Taoist philosophy, equating it to Western ideas, or reducing it to pithy sayings, Wang demands that students "learn respect for, and understanding of, the teachings and practices of all those people" who contribute to what he describes as Taoism's "great subtlety and complexity."

Text-based courses grounded in historically and culturally remote documents consistently struggle with the tension between past and present, familiar and distant, especially when engaging texts spiritually significant and/or resonant to many students in the classroom. As with Wang, some scholars veer toward mitigating inclinations to read ahistorically. A Spring 2010 New Testament course taught by Kenneth Atkinson at the University of Northern Iowa illustrates the point. He positions the text as distant from the modern world: "Because the New Testament reflects an ancient culture that no longer exists, and was written in a language that few know today, it is often a difficult

book to understand." As a result, he finds traditional historical-critical tools attractive as a method of inquiry into the document and its world(s). Atkinson says that "the primary goal of this course is to help you understand what took place during this complex period when Christianity emerged as a distinctive religion, without imposing later ideas or value judgments upon the New Testament."

The syllabus Atkinson produces acknowledges an ongoing conversation between contemporary readers and this text in a range of settings: "Each day people as varied as lawmakers, journalists, teachers, and members of religious communities invoke the New Testament to sway public opinion or to regulate contemporary life." But by calling this fact out, Atkinson sets up a straw horse to demonstrate why his approach proves superior. He implies that such readings go wrong precisely because these readers lack the requisite knowledge to understand these texts properly and thereby limits the truly "literate" audience to those persons initiated in this scholarship. He says, "By examining the New Testament in light of its historical and cultural background, you will not only learn how Christianity developed, but you will also gain an understanding of why people disagree, and have fought for centuries, over how the New Testament should be interpreted." Stripping away the veneer of the contemporary reader for him puts the author and receiving audience's world in the place of interpretive privilege. Additionally, the classic distinction between biblical studies and theology becomes apparent. Biblical scholarship (in this paradigm, at least) sees the text as inextricably linked to its origination, while theology represents a living tradition crammed with subsequent understanding and application across time and location.

Rodney Duke, at Appalachian State University, makes a similar point about the Bible's sway in his 2013 syllabus, but for different ends. He says,

> Many people hold a specialized interest in studying the New Testament (NT): the religious communities that hold it sacred, historians, sociologists, archaeologists, philosophers, and all those who appreciate literary beauty. More importantly however, most people, at least in [the] Western world and parts of the Eastern world, should realize that they have a vested interest in the Bible (both Old and New Testaments). It has influenced their formative political documents, laws, culture, concept of "rights" and morality, etc.

In these circumstances, "the text" becomes more than a historic document; it also carries with it the freight of thousands of years of interpretive history as well as ongoing authority. Further, its continued influence on various cultures, as well as on the lives and communities of persons sitting in the classroom, single out this text as worthy of examination. Even if a student does not maintain any faith commitment, Duke indicates that the cultural power of the text makes it relevant to the academic context. For such a "loaded" document, the question then becomes how best for a reader/interpreter to make an approach.

Like Atkinson, Duke wants students prepared to "place the NT literature in its historical and cultural context," and yet he directs less focus on the text and more on the reader's acquisition of a specialized set of tools:

> The modern reader who does strive for independent knowledge of the NT often does not know how to read it skillfully, since the NT is composed of writings of different literary types that belonged to the ancient world. Therefore, this course seeks to help the kind of person who engages the issues of life to develop basic skills for reading the NT independently with understanding.

Here, he follows an approach shaped by scholars like John Barton who argues "biblical criticism is essentially a literary operation."[14] Reading the text free of modern social and cultural influence as well as separating this effort from the interests, acknowledged or unacknowledged, of the interpreter, requires strategies that cut through differences in eras, cultures, and languages and reveal the documents as written. His method, then, stresses both "exploratory (inductive) readings of select NT texts for their literary features and meaning" in addition to learning "how to read them with a consciously applied reading strategy" based on recognition of literary type in historical and cultural context.

Construction of a New Testament course according to these models reflects the tendency for biblical scholars to emphasize the text in its "original" setting and posits the reader as one who needs a solid grasp of that world to navigate it successfully. So Thomas Dixon, at Rutgers University, says on his Fall 2016 syllabus that students will "acquire a basic knowledge of the New Testament's contents, with emphasis on their salient historical, literary and religious characteristics," while Kent Mereness at West Texas A&M says of his Spring course, upon completion "a student will be able to comprehend the literary, political, social, economic, and religious background of the New Testament." As with the other text-based introductory courses, even an elementary level of knowledge improves one's situation over that of the uninitiated reader, but the divide between academia and theology also informs this emphasis.

Victor Matthews, for instance, in the syllabus for his 2012 course Literature and the World of the Old Testament at Missouri State, takes the issue on directly.

Matthews creates an entire section on his syllabus dedicated to "Religious Studies Courses in a State University" and says:

> The U.S. Supreme Court (Abington v. Schempp) in 1963 encouraged the objective study of religion and the Bible. This is why we teach an introductory course to the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible at Missouri State. However, the approach here is different from that taken in a religious group. We will concentrate on reconstructing what the text originally meant to its ancient audience in the light of its ancient Near Eastern setting rather than on what the text means for us today.

Of some interest, he also treads carefully with regard concerns removing biblical studies from the faith-based setting. He writes:

> You do not have to have a faith commitment in this course, nor will you be asked to abandon your faith. My purpose is to increase your knowledge and understanding of the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible, and to help you think carefully and in new ways about what it originally meant.

The necessity of this caveat moves beyond simply addressing student fears about

collegiate life. It responds to a growing political reality. The American Center for Law & Justice (ACLJ), for instance, said in 2015: "Public colleges and universities are taking the gloves off when it comes to Christian students on their campuses. Gone are the days of surreptitious slights against Christians; now it is open season on faith. Blatant, in-your-face anti-Christian discrimination is the new norm."[15] News outlets, likewise, occasionally feature similar reporting, including the reduction of grades for students advocating a Christian position.[16] Thus the strong emphasis on the legality of such inquiry in a public university, the lack of bias of the interpretive effort, and original setting rather than the religious institution or cleric as determinative of meaning in the academic environment, strongly discourage bringing contemporary faith concerns into the classroom. Yet it still could be read as offering something of value to the student who espouses a faith-based relationship to the text, and in no way eliminating the currency of the material for the student.

But Matthews redefines what should constitute that currency. His first course objective states that this study will "provide students with a basic understanding of the OT/HB and of the social world of ancient Israel that will serve as the foundation for future study and assist with developing cultural competence." This last phrase captures the humanities focus in that it connects the Hebrew Bible explicitly with Western tradition and holds up this document as worthy of attention for the culturally literate person. To make that move, Matthews steps right into the question of biblical authority for the person of faith. He claims the course will "prepare students to deal openly and intelligently with the text of the OT/HB, neither minimizing nor over-emphasizing the very real historical and intellectual difficulties that they will encounter." The adjectives "openly" and "intelligently" stand out, firing a shot across the bow of faith-based ("what my community confesses") or personalized reading ("what it means to me") by characterizing these interpretive strategies as closed off to alternative meanings, not always based on rational premises, and thus ill-equipped to deal with "the very real historical and intellectual difficulties" (read: historical and textual inaccuracies, errors, assertions contrary to scientific principles, etc.) any *educated* reader would recognize.

Text-based study of the Bible can evolve differently. For a more comparative direction, Robert Kawashima's 2013 Hebrew Scriptures course at the University of Florida shows one possibility. He certainly leads with the same type of historical and literary interests already seen; the syllabus reads: "While we will touch upon various literary genres in the Bible, we will focus on biblical narrative, as we trace the history of ancient Israel—inasmuch as this can be reconstructed from our primary sources—from its origins up to the Babylonian Exile (586 BCE)." From that point, however, Kawashima makes this addition (emphasis the author's): "Our approach will be broadly literary *and comparative*. Thus, we will draw upon the mythic and epic traditions of Mesopotamia and Ugarit, in order to bring the peculiar nature of the Bible and biblical religion into better focus." The course schedule reveals assignments (primarily during consideration of the stories in Genesis and in examination of the law codes) requiring attention to texts from surrounding cultures. Their incorporation allows Kawashima to contextualize the biblical materials on topics such as "myth, ritual, sacrifice, law, and the sacred" in contrast to other religious systems in the ancient Near East. The purpose of doing this comparative work gets a brief mention in the final line of

the Course Description: "And throughout the semester, various methodological questions regarding textual interpretation and the analysis of religion and culture will be raised."

Kawashima, however, keeps the comparisons delimited regionally and historically. In his 1971 piece, "The Study of Religion and the Study of the Bible," Wilfred C. Smith advocates for a much broader comparative field when considering the idea of scripture. As an introduction to this work, he suggests exploring why people in a variety of traditions ascribe sacred status to certain stories or documents, both oral and written. From that point, the hypothetical biblical studies course he describes seeks to determine how the texts finds expression diachronically by engaging in "an investigation into the history of the Bible over the past twenty centuries."[17] To illustrate the principle, Smith describes his own scholarship in Islamic studies, saying: "I devote a fair amount of time and energy trying to make vivid to my students the fact that the Qur'an, if it is to be understood in anything remotely approaching its religious significance, must be seen as not merely a seventh-century Arabian document (which has tended to be the way in which Western Orientalists, as distinct from religionists, have treated it), but also as an eighth-, and a twelfth-, and a seventeenth-, and a twentieth-century document, and one intimately intertwined in the life not only of Arabia, but also of East Africa and Indonesia."[18] For Smith, the formation of sacred documents in a variety of social and cultural locations, including asking the questions of by whom and for whom this process happens, merely serves as beginning points to an exploration of a text's rich interpretive life. While the comparative impulse remains historical in its orientation, this wider sweep of concern attempts to shift the focus from what constitutes the "original" text and from its author(s) as the arbiter(s) of "the" meaning. Indeed, he envisions this approach as introducing larger questions. "What the Bible has been, has done, what role it has played in human life and what it is doing in modern life … these are significant questions which a religion department might surely tackle."[19]

A variation of Smith's alternative does turn up on some biblical studies syllabi that focus on how various interpretive practices produce an array of outcomes. But as with many text-based classes in an academic environment, a scholarly reflexiveness most often focuses on the products of professional readers as opposed to the "receptions" of a text in a variety of communities and forms over time. For example, Nicole Tilford's Spring 2015 Syllabus for Biblical Studies at Georgia State University describes her class as an "introduction to the interpretation, history, and theology of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament." She says of this approach to the material: "Particular attention will be paid to the modern academic methods of biblical scholarship, such as feminist hermeneutics and form/source criticism." Exploration of the various units outlined in the syllabus reveals that in addition to the traditional laundry list of historical-critical methodologies, Tilford includes liberation and gender-based readings as well as social-scientific criticism, iconographic approaches, and reception history. In fact, her syllabus reads much like the bulletin of the SBL Annual Meeting with all its varied "studies" of the text coming together.

In her course, as with Vishanoff's class, students become an interpretive community of sorts. As Tilford explains, students choose a singular biblical text from a provided list and "over the course of the semester, … work in groups of 3 or 4 students to examine this

passage using a variety of academic methods." These conversations generate the material for a presentation of their findings demonstrating how scholarly readings of a text come into being and vary from one another. Further, just as textual interpretation can assume a variety of forms (scholarly exegesis, sermon, activism, literature, art, film, etc.) to express a reading, the students can also choose how they present their articulations of textual meaning. Tilford suggests the possibilities of video, graphic novel, interactive photo essay, website, digital game, or virtual treasure hunt. In the ideal, her students come to see the relationship between documents, readers, and communities in action. Additionally, even though they continue to work with texts, their projects can expand the definition of literacy by embracing non-textual forms common to the 21st century student.

Other comparative ways of reading these texts do exist, but sometimes become easier to accomplish outside of religious studies environments where the history of what constitutes biblical studies and clearly defined parameters of what one "ought" to achieve in a text-based course prevail. For example, comparative literature Professor Steven F. Walker's course "Postmodern Approaches to Sacred Literature" at Rutgers University says in his syllabus (Spring 2015):

> The course does not deal primarily with the theological or historical interpretation of canonic sacred texts, but rather is designed to highlight the literary daring and the sometimes even outrageous postmodern freedom of authors who, through a process of bricolage, and via reference to a canonical sacred text, create statements of religious orientation and personal declarations of faith. By means of the elaboration of a creative and original literary, cinematic and/or psychological response, these authors come to terms personally with the ongoing power of the sacred text to captivate modern minds.

According to his description, he proceeds to engage students in reading "texts" over and against one another, like the canonical tale of Moses and Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* or sections of the *Bhagavad Gita* and Peter Brooks' film *Mahabharata.* "The three particular goals of the course are to train students to think and write freely (in the postmodern spirit) about traditional sacred texts; to do close reading and analysis; and to compare related texts in meaningful ways." For Walker, a certain freeing of sacred texts from their traditional moorings offers an opportunity for students, like the creative minds he assigns in his readings/viewings, to explore themes such as "the antinomy of Good and Evil, apocalypse as a myth of both world and individual transformation, and the feminine side of God" and offer reflection on them in ways that "may be taken to some degree as personal confessions in terms of their particular *sensibilité religieuse."*

These examples demonstrate a range of text-based approaches to sacred texts pitched at a variety of levels and approaching the material from differing perspectives. But emphasizing texts as the route into religion does raise concerns. Anthropologist Katherine E. Hoffman writes that "the metaphor of culture as text is not only a literary metaphor. It seems to presume that we, whoever we are, share an orientation toward the practice of writing and the nature of texts."[20] Texts, however, do not comprise the totality of how scholars construct knowledge of a religion or assess how the world the text presents may

or may not correspond to actual religious practice. Other kinds of epigraphic evidence as well as oral storytelling traditions, for instance, might also speak to religious imagination and practice. The construction of ritual objects, buildings, and practices might do the same. Indeed, Ezra Chitando, a religious studies lecturer at the University of Zimbabwe, presses the issue when he wonders not only how the field of religious studies, but also how the definition of religion itself, skews when a text-based emphasis in the study of religion takes precedence. He writes, "The focus on sacred writings by scholars based in Europe and North America has textualized religious studies. The result had been a concentration on the religion of the text, rather than the lived religion found in the villages and cities of the world today."[21]

The persistence of text-driven approaches in religious studies classroom instruction, however, likely stems from reasons both internal to the field and external in the sense of meeting needs within higher education. Academic religious studies began, as noted previously, with bringing critical tools to the analysis of the Bible. No doubt the Bible and its interpretation stood at the center of much of Christian life and practice in Europe, and especially in Protestant Europe with the focus on *sola scriptura*, when the emergence of the field began. The focus of this work on skills related to textual literacy and on the sleuthing out of the historical environment shaping the production of these documents, however, also "fit" into a developing university environment at ease with literary and historical studies. And in today's university, this work corresponds to the development of skills that surveys indicate the public wants to see in college graduates. For instance, the ability to read thoughtfully and critically, to analyze materials through the application of specifically defined interpretive methods, and to communicate clearly one's conclusions, certainly capture desirable educational outcomes.[22]

Still, it must be recognized that such courses most often speak to academic characterizations of the circumstances surrounding a document's production and early reception rather than its interpretive life in contemporary communities. Indeed, this perspective often ignores community uses of the text to shape human behavior and cultural norms or to advocate for policies (and candidates) in the public square. This lack follows from the discomfort in institutions of higher learning, and specifically at public universities, with promoting explicit religious discourses. But expanding the purview of a course in this manner does not have to be theological. In fact, to stay on safe, "secular" ground, some scholars chose to keep the text locked in the past, while others begin at that point and take on political battles (creationism, views of gender or human sexuality, sustainability, etc.) from an oblique angle, using religiously implicit language.[23] As a result, whether these courses fulfill one of the primary functions of a humanities education—producing better citizens capable of engaging with academic skills on relevant issues—remains largely unknown and unstudied.

TRADITIONS-BASED CLASSES

In the effort to move away from an almost exclusive focus on Christianity in the academic study of religion, many programs adopted a traditions-based model for classroom instruction. As generally understood, courses in this category explore the history, practices, and tenets of one broadly-labeled religious system ("Islam" or "Buddhism", for instance) or several traditions grouped under a general heading ("Asian Religions" or "African Traditional

Religions.") A look at the University of Virginia's course offerings shows this approach on full display. Listings appear under several headings: African Religions, Buddhism, Christianity, General Religious Studies, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism. Included offerings feature classes focused on a singular subject area such as Classical Islam or Tibetan Buddhism Introduction as well as on amalgams like Afro Creole Religions or Intro to Western Religious Traditions.[24] Further, the program statement "Who We Are" indicates the purpose of this approach: "The range of topics that are researched and taught explore the rich diversity of religious life." This definition of diversity will be discussed in the next chapter.

How to pitch such vast subjects to undergraduates often unfamiliar with the basic terrain of religious studies in the time frame of a single semester presents a pedagogical challenge. As with text-based courses, many scholars take a historical tack. Mario Poceski at the University of Florida says on the syllabus for his Spring 2008 Chinese Religions, "The course is a comprehensive historical survey of the main religious traditions in China, including Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and popular religion." He zeroes in on exploring "the formulations and subsequent transformations of key beliefs, doctrines, practices, and institutions that characterized specific religious traditions." This type of historical survey centers on the interaction between what a tradition may teach and/or how its adherents might practice in various periods and locations, with the emphasis on development and change over time and place. Similarly, Patricia Ahearne-Kroll's Fall 2016 Introduction to Jewish History and Cultures at the University of Minnesota "emphasizes political, social, cultural contexts that shaped development of Jewish ideas, practices, and institutions." She features a broad survey through time, saying,: "Students gain an understanding of the ancient, medieval, and modern expressions of Judaism, along with a sensitivity to the points of contact and divergence among these traditions." To accomplish this work, the syllabus outlines a laundry list of topics covering a wide sweep of Jewish life and concerns, from mysticism, to life cycle, to material culture, to nationalism. In these courses and others like them, the explanatory function of historical analysis makes a clear distinction between an *understanding of* and *advocating for* a given religious tradition.

Of some interest, the primary mechanism for achieving understanding of history often comes via assigned texts. Ahearne-Kroll says, for example, "Students engage with these topics through reading a wide selection of primary texts in translation." Likewise, James McHugh's Religions of South Asia in Spring 2012 at the University of Southern California, serves to introduce "the main religious traditions of South Asia in the context of culture and history," and relies primarily on period writings. He says:

> The course will progress chronologically, discussing the complex ritual universe of the Hindu *Vedas*, and the early philosophical speculation of the *Upanishads* … We will then focus on texts dealing with *dharma* … Following an examination of the two enormous Hindu epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, we will linger on the *Bhagavadgita* … In studying Krishna we will carefully read a more highly literary devotional text …

However, McHugh also pushes students to examine other manifestations of religious life and devotion, indicating that "in addition to textual sources, the course emphasizes

material and visual aspects of South Asian religions: the non-textual, physical expressions of religion, including classical and modern artwork, films, and a visit to the LACMA [Los Angeles County Museum of Art]. The class will also visit a Hindu Temple."

The recognition that traditions do not exist solely in the past, but rather take root in a variety of settings that shape their practice in non-uniform (and not textual) ways, can be difficult to experience in a community with fewer multicultural resources. In some ways, the internet levels the playing field by bringing the world a bit closer. Hindu Temples in India, for instance, can be seen in a short introductory video from the Asian Art museum or a discussion of art in religious life might use the brief TED-Ed conversation on the same. Any of these attempts to broaden the consideration of where religion exists, from the use of video to travel outside of the classroom, need to emerge out of a critical, scholarly frame of reference. To make certain that students do not simply focus on the "fun" field trip or get caught up in the exotic allure of otherness, McHugh will most often link reading assignments to the activities as prompts for discussion (1/3 of each class session). For instance, he spends two days on tantra and possession, the first of which requires reading and discussion of select texts and the second viewing and discussion of what he characterizes as a "relatively recent Hindi horror film based on Hindu ideas of demons and the afterlife." Students then demonstrate their grasp of the parallels in their own work. He also assigns a 10-page reflection paper requiring facility in making the connection between a philosophical teaching and its expression. According to the syllabus, students will write about "the manner in which an aspect of the Hindu *dharma* texts is reflected in one of the narratives, myths, images, etc. we have examined."

The positive work achieved by many teachers within the traditions-based paradigm does not meant that this approach stands beyond criticism. Linda Woodhead writes in the introduction to her co-edited volume on religions in the modern world:

> We acknowledge the insights of recent scholars who argue that the notions of "tradition" and "religion" have often been blunt instruments imposed by Western scholars on other cultures. More specifically, we agree that the use of these categories often assumes that Western styles of religion (particularly Protestant Christianity) provide the definitive model for all religion.[25]

She continues to say that the idea of framing a course around concepts such as a founder or key figure, a single set of authoritative documents, a study of doctrines, or an emphasis on supernatural beings all reveal this assumption, as does identifying clear borders distinguishing religion from culture or political life. In short, this "one-size-fits-all model" of what constitutes a tradition says more about practitioners in the field, the evolution of scholarly inquiry into religion, and the constitution of religious studies than it does about the phenomena under consideration.

As a result, while scholars might still embrace the study of history as the best descriptive avenue to establish the basics for a tradition and steer clear of "theology" or advocacy, they frequently problematize the reductionist tendencies of this approach. For example, the syllabus of Derek Maher's Spring 2013 Hinduism course at East Carolina University opens, "Hinduism is the most significant unifying force in Indian tradition." He then proceeds to

raise the controversies surrounding seeing Hinduism as a stable construct emerging in a clear linear path by assigning—for the initial class session—David Lorenzon's essay "Who Invented Hinduism?" Similarly, in a blog post for the Wabash Center on Teaching Islam, Caleb Elfenbein of Grinnell College writes, "The core learning goal of my introduction to Islam is that 'Islam' is not a thing. Islam does not say anything. Islam does not do anything. Islam holds no power over anyone. Given the incredible diversity across time and space that marks the practices, habits, desires, sensibilities, beliefs, and feelings that might fall within the category of Islamic, I want students to struggle with the idea of Islam itself. Is there a thing we can point to as *Islam*?"[26] S. Nomanul Haq, developing an Introduction to Islam course for Thomas Edison State College, shows a brief hint of this thought process in his syllabus by aiming for an outcome where students become capable of "distinguishing its internal diversities" even as he says: "Here we use the word *Islam* in its broadest sense, at once designating a religion, a civilization, a world culture, a human community, and a political entity." Likewise, Jawid Mojaddedi in his Fall 2014 Islam course at Rutgers "provides an overview of Islam, covering Sacred History, the rise to dominance of the ulama, the competing visions of Islam, the ways in which Muslims have responded to modernity, and contemporary issues" but includes "reflection on its diverse schools and historical development." Or one could look at Noam Pianko whose syllabus for Introduction to Judaism at the University of Washington says, "Judaism, like other religious civilizations, cannot be reduced to a clear, unchanging set of beliefs, practices, and values." Perhaps these brief nods to questioning the idea of singular traditions merely dips a metaphorical toe into far more complicated waters. But these instructors at least gesture in the direction of deconstructing ready-made labels as if these terms could ever capture the complexities of Muslim communities, Jewish life, Christian practice, Buddhist experience, or the variety and locally driven expressions of any religious group.

In fact, many scholars draw distinctions between what their courses accomplish and what programs appear to advertise in the traditions-based course model. Yaakov Levi, for example, at the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire, says in his 2015 syllabus for *Judaism: A Cultural and Historical Survey*: "The course explores the diverse forms of Judaism, rather than trying to decipher what Judaism is." Likewise, Robert Kraft's 2002 syllabus for Christian Origins at the University of Pennsylvania demonstrates an older-school shorthand for these concerns by employing the scare quote. He writes, "This course deals with the origins of 'Christianity' in general, to about the year 200 ce, with particular reference to the various writings preserved from early Christians, including the 'New Testament anthology." Even though focused largely on history and how the "foundational" period gets constructed, he explicitly acknowledges both in the language he uses and assignments he employs the problems with the task of teaching the course. For example, his first sequence—"Establishing A Basis for Approaching The Materials"—works with definitions of terms such as orthodoxy, heresy, and heterodoxy, as well as describes the filters through which people receive classical Jewish and Christian Orthodoxies, how scholars evaluate what those systems of meaning put forward, and the ways in which interpreters become imaginative reconstructors of the evidence in hand. Proceeding in this manner alerts students to the issues around speaking about topic like Christianity (or Islam or

Buddhism) as if a singular subject evolving consistently in one, clearly definable expression.

As noted at the outset, some departments use a traditions-based approach as a foundation for their curriculum. The University of Oregon, for example, says, "The Religious Studies Department … focuses on the academic study of religious traditions from around the world in classes taught by experts in the field of religious studies." Not surprisingly, the web page indicates both what this work entails ("Courses focus on the history and philosophy of religions including their origins, sacred texts, rituals and practices, beliefs, and subgroups") as well as the purpose of approaching the material in this way ("The courses provide a broad understanding of the nature and role of religion in the world's many cultures, present and past"). In terms of mission, this places the department firmly within what their Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences, W. Andrew Marcus, says about the purpose of the liberal arts. He writes, "Arts and science education is important because it embraces both theoretical and applied ways of understanding the past, the present and the future. Above all, the core arts and sciences approach to higher education teaches students to examine and challenge taken-for-granted notions about the world."[27] By developing skills in understanding how religions emerge and function, by looking at how they organize human lives and communities, and by considering their artifacts in cultural context, these courses seek to assist students in building the capacity to understand a range of human experience in both the past and present. While these constructs sometimes lack nuance, they do produce a much-needed degree of cultural literacy which likely explains the durability of the category.

As with text-based coursework, a common variant in the traditions-based classes incorporates a comparative impulse. For example, James S. Cutsinger at the University of South Carolina teaches a course once entitled Introduction to Religious Studies and now Comparative Religion. On his Fall 2007 syllabus, he indicates that "students will acquire a wealth of specific information about the world's religious traditions and their development over time. But more importantly they will be encouraged to ponder some of the most fundamental questions of life: Who or what is God? How did the world get started? What is wrong with human beings and how can it be fixed? Where do we go when we die?" (The same language recurs on his current web page description for the Comparative Religion course.) On his syllabus for the same course, Jack Turner makes clear that the comparative work "is not done as a means of evaluating good or bad and correct from incorrect, but rather to highlight differences and similarities between different religious groups." This outline follows closely with the departmental concerns. The program's "Study of Religion" on the web opens with this paragraph: "The study of religion provides insight into the fascinating variety of ways in which people live their lives in light of the sacred: how do they understand the existence of God or gods? Where do they seek answers to questions of fundamental concern? How do they find meaning and purpose in life?"

A comparative conceptualization permits a full range of disciplinary perspectives to understand the topics under discussion. In fact, discovering the bases for drawing comparisons illustrates often proves the most interesting feature of such courses. For example, in the Spring 2011 version of California State University at Fullerton's Contemporary Practices of the World's Religions, Deborah Barrett adopts what she

describes as a "phenomenological approach" (by which she means "focusing on how religions are visibly expressed by their external activities") in order to "explore the themes of image, ethics, birth, death, marriage, food, clothing, daily, yearly or seasonal rituals, religious buildings, and sacred journey." She advertises a "comparative template for each theme" in her syllabus as a way of "enhancing appreciation for common bonds and diversity." The course plan reveals a side-by-side consideration of the ideas on which she places emphasis. For example, one class assignment holds up the second commandment in Jewish tradition, with the Islamic concept of *shirk*, the incarnate Son in Christianity, *murti* in Hindu life, and the three bodies for Buddhists. Similarly, the activities demand that students engage in this type of exploration on their own. A final paper analyzing a practice from the perspective of two traditions could include options such as the role of drumming in Native American and African religious traditions, walking practices such as labyrinths in Episcopalian churches as opposed to in Thich Nhat Hanh's Plum Village, or comparisons between Ramadan and Lent.

This work seeks to provide students both with "specialized information about the practices of each of the world's five religious traditions" and to afford them the "increased ability to compare and contrast religious practices, revealing the common bonds and universality of the human experience, as well as appreciating its unique and diverse expressions." Given Barrett's location as part of a department of Comparative Religion whose mission is "to describe and interpret the developments, worldviews, and practices of religious traditions in a non-sectarian, academic manner," this way of proceeding fits. But it pushes other department goals as well. The value of "scholarly research that contributes to an understanding of the varieties of religious thought and experience" gets underscored, as does investigating "in a scholarly manner the impact of a variety of religious thought and experience on contemporary society." The balance of careful historical consideration with the modern environment, and of philosophical inquiry with experiential expression, works to illumine aspects of varied traditions, while shifting the focus away from survey and more toward avenues for reflective analysis of what gets seen as religious in the world.

A different variant of the comparative approach among traditions comes in Bruce Grelle's Religion, Ethics, and Ecology at California State University at Chico. His Spring 2015 syllabus describes the class as one which "takes a cross-cultural and historical look at how religious and secular worldviews influence attitudes, behaviors, and policies toward our natural and social environments." In a section entitled "Spirit and Nature: Why the Environment is a Religious Issue," Grelle features consideration of Native American, Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim viewpoints. In addition, he introduces debate on the legacy of Christian teachings on environmentalism. Set in a context of understanding ideas like sustainability, the development of a modern world view, and the dominant consumer culture model, Grelle constructs a multi-disciplinary approach to a contemporary concern while also positioning religion as one of many influences on related human behaviors.

This combination of a traditions-based emphasis with multi-disciplinary approaches to contemporary issues occasionally turns up in the structure of a program's curricula. Take the Comparative Religions Program at the University of Washington as illustrative. An extensive number of available courses come from a range of academic departments and

programs as made clear in this description:

> Founded in 1974 by faculty from across campus, the Program today counts faculty from Sociology, History, Asian Languages and Literature, Near East Languages and Civilization, Political Science, Anthropology, Classics, Comparative Literature as well as from the School of Law on campus as part of its core teaching faculty.

The "religion" faculty, institutionally placed as one of seven majors (Asian Studies, Canadian Studies, Comparative Religion, European Studies, International Studies (General), Jewish Studies, Latin American and Caribbean Studies) in the Jackson School of International Studies, offer only a portion of the options that count toward a degree in Comparative Religion. Indeed, Director of the Jackson School Reşat Kasaba says in his welcome, "We have an interdisciplinary faculty with a deep commitment to area and international studies. Our undergraduate and graduate curricula are designed to build in-depth and historically informed understanding of world areas, civilizations, their interactions and the global forces and trends that provide the context for them."

Students must take courses from each of three areas of emphasis—Textual Canons, Historical Traditions, and Social Contexts & Cultural Forms—even if the classes listed are not always taught by the religious studies faculty, and even though some of courses or course types fall under several different rubrics. The RELIG faculty provides traditions-based courses such as Introduction to Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism, but a student can also select classes like Medieval Jewish History taught in Ancient & Medieval History, Introduction to Islamic Civilization (in Near Eastern Languages & Civilization), Greek and Roman Religion (Classics), Modern European-Islamic Migration, Integration, and Citizenship (Geography), or Comparative Study of Death (Anthropology). RELIG faculty do not neglect the comparative or contemporary either. Course such as Religion, Violence and Peace: Patterns Across Time and Tradition (in Religion and Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations) appear in the listings. Overall, this rubric conceptualizes religion as part of the historic and cultural fabric of human life and envisions multiple scholarly possibilities for approaching how a specific tradition functions in a certain time or place, how religions impact on current issues, or how to think comparatively about the role of religion in various settings.

Traditions-based curricula emerged from a perceived need to move away from an overwhelming focus within the field on Christianity and toward an exploration of religion cross-culturally. If, as the Association of American Colleges & Universities says, "Liberal Education is an approach to learning that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity, and change," then courses in this paradigm accomplish that ideal by providing broad knowledge of the wider world, making possible in-depth studies within areas of interest, cultivating a sense of social responsibility, and developing student skills applicable in real-world circumstances. For many smaller religious studies programs in public universities, the challenge often becomes covering broad swaths of the world and time periods and approaches with limited faculty resources. At the University of Idaho, for instance, the Religious Studies Minor relies on a handful of affiliated faculty from departments such as Anthropology, English, and History to build a small number of

offerings in four categories: Asian, Pacific Indigenous Religions, Western Religious Traditions, Approaches to Religious Studies, and Religion and Culture. Larger programs can employ specialists in a variety of areas, but also must work to cover a wide range of offerings for undergraduates while frequently balancing graduate education as well. The University of Texas serves as an example with its 19 core and 15 affiliated faculty offering coursework in four areas: Religions of Asia, Religions of Europe, The Middle East, and Africa, Religions of the Americas, and Approaches to Religion/Comparative Studies of Religion.

Size does matter. Whereas Idaho's minor includes a total of 28 courses (most not taught under a Religious Studies designation) overall with Religious Studies listing 3 courses for Fall 2017 by contrast, Texas offers almost 60 undergraduate courses (and many general rubrics such as "Topics in Religion of the Middle East" or "Topics in Religion and Culture of the Biblical World" can have between 2 and 22 possible topics for focus in any one given term, thus multiplying this initial number). For Fall 2017 alone, the program lists 35 undergraduate and 7 graduate courses. While the numerical gulf appears significant, the similarity in what constitutes the study of religion is what jumps out. Area studies and methodology get highlighted, demonstrating the centrality of courses under this rubric in the field.

METHODAND THEORY-BASED COURSES

As discussed in the previous sections, scholars examining and teaching religious texts and traditions utilize an array of sophisticated methodological tools to advance their efforts. What it means, then, to offer a "theory-based" or a "method-based" approach in the classroom, or to study theory and method as it applies to religious studies, can often puzzle people even within the field. Aaron Hughes proposes that "although we tend to couple 'theory and method' together, they really are … not the same thing at all."[28] He suggests "the term 'method' and, by extension, 'methodology' refers to the scholarly practices that have made and continue to make the academic study of religion possible."[29] These might include sociology, psychology, feminist, gender, or postcolonial studies. Theory, by contrast, "refers to the varied causal and naturalistic frameworks used to account for the origins and transmission of what it commonly referred to as 'religion.'"[30] As examples, he offers totemism, animism, and cognitive science. But these differentiations, as simple as they sound, remain contested within the field itself.

This section will not wade deeply into the current debates over what constitutes method, theory, or even religious studies itself. Instead, it will survey the integration of these scholarly issues into the field from the perspective of course offerings. Specifically, it will consider instruction focused on the "discerning, deciphering, and making sense"[31] of the enterprise of religious studies or the exploration of a topic using a specific set of scholarly tools. Traditionally, philosophy of religion courses assumed responsibility for some of this work. At least among non-realists, philosophers of religion examine how humans construct religious ideas and investigate the reasons belief systems exist and how they operate. Today, theoretically and methodologically based coursework often adapts approaches from a wider range of academic disciplines to shed light on religious behaviors and practices and to examine the ways religions function cross-culturally. These courses also

question, reflexively, the way scholars construct religion and determine what constitutes knowledge about it.

In an era where some scholars decry the state of religious literacy within American culture,[32] and many commentators would assert that a basic grasp of some of the major religions and their impact on the headlines proves crucial to a functional democracy,[33] this focus on scholarly practice might seem more suited only to the religious studies major or even limited to graduate students. Nonetheless, undergraduate programs occasionally introduce "theory and method" at the foundational level. For example, at the University of Alabama, Steven Jacobs says on his Spring 2014 syllabus that the "Introduction to Religious Studies":

> Is a *two-part* exploration: Part I "Introduction to the [Academic] Study of Religion examines the question of *How do we study academically the socio-cultural construct we call "religion" within the boundaries of a secular-state university?* In doing so, we will look at four areas in particular: (1) Problems, (2) Theories & Theorists, (3) Academic Disciplines, and (4) Common Elements in Religions.

After establishing that floor, Jacobs then proceeds to part two which helps students apply that knowledge to a consideration of religion and violence. Scholars covered in his outline for the term include a selection of giants in the study of religion like E.B. Tylor and J.G. Frazer, Sigmund Freud, Émile Durkheim, Karl Marx, Mircea Eliade, E.E. Evans-Pritchard, and Clifford Geertz. He also touches on corresponding approaches to religion such as the study of Anthropology, History, Phenomenology, Philosophy, Psychology, and Sociology. In many ways, this plan surveys the development of religious studies as an academic enterprise, providing students with the tools to think critically about definitions of religion as well as its manifestations and functions.

But teaching such a course at the introductory level, especially as part of general or core education, proves rare. In the case of UA's program, the decision to proceed in this manner reveals not only concern for what constitutes the academic study of religion, but also the program's understanding of religious studies' place in the public university. Spring 2017 syllabi from Vaia Touna and Russell McCutcheon both adapt this basic statement:

> As a general introduction to the academic study of religion, REL 100 is focused on the problem of defining religion, in theory and in practice. The course examines classic approaches to defining religion, identifies the theories of religion's role or purpose implicit in each.
>
> As a Core Curriculum Humanities course, REL 100's goal is for all students to learn to define, accurately describe, and compare in a non-evaluative manner so as to find significant similarities and differences among forms of observable behavior.

Leading off the study of religion focused on these issues indicates an emphasis on research skills most closely aligned with the social sciences. Yet the course itself is located both in a religious studies program and in the core curriculum requirements for the Humanities at UA. The tension between the two begins with a statement from the

department that identifies religious studies as part of "the Human Sciences" which seems to mean thinking about religion as "a fundamentally … *anthropological enterprise*. That is, it is primarily concerned with studying people (*anthropos* is an ancient Greek terms meaning 'human being'; *logos* means 'word' or a 'rational systemic discourse'), their beliefs, behaviors, and institutions, rather than assessing 'the truth' or 'truths' of their various beliefs and behaviors." That co-mingling of humanities and social sciences tends toward the latter if one looks at the templates for Humanities (HU) and Social and Behavioral Sciences (SB) established by the core curriculum committees at the University. These documents classify religion among fields of academic inquiry that address "questions of values, ethics, or aesthetics in humanistic fields of learning." But the descriptions of the courses offered on the syllabi correlate to SB courses, in that they deal "primarily with the study of human behavior, and or social, cultural, economic, and political developments that have molded the world" and are "primarily concerned with social structures, processes and institutions."

In assessing which area best suits the academic study of religion, Adam J. Powell writes, "Religious Studies has always included a number of approaches, methods, theories, lines of inquiry, etc. In some sense, religious studies is a both/and endeavor; it is both science-based and humanities-based, both data-driven and theory-driven, both political and apolitical."[34] Wade Clark Roof explains this complexity as resulting from a progression through time. "Intellectually, the contours of religious studies were first formed largely by two approaches from within the humanities: the history of religions and comparative study."[35] He sees the inclusion of questions generated by newer perspectives like sociology and cultural studies as providing religious studies scholars with a broader "conceptual arsenal"; "The more recent cultural analysis has led humanists to recognize that older, consensual notions of religion must be jettisoned in favor of more negotiated, socially constructed ones."[36] The challenges of dealing with such a broad range of disciplinary approaches, generating theoretical frameworks, and reflecting on the process, however, leads most religious studies programs to delay any in-depth consideration of method and theory to upper-level courses required of a major or to introductory graduate work.[37] Even then, at least in undergraduate education, the emphasis tends to remain on the utility of a given approach to accomplish a specific study as opposed to methodological or theoretical inquiry on its own. Or, as Deal and Beal indicate, these courses detail how the academic field of religious studies consists of a "myriad of conceptual tools used to 'see' religion."[38]

At the undergraduate level, Mario Poceski of the University of Florida taught the Junior Seminar, required of all majors, on method and theory in Spring 2016. Poceski's course sought to prepare students to understand the major thinkers in the development of religious studies as a field as well as to build student capacity to analyze religion critically.[39] Its placement in the sequence for the major clearly acclimates students to advanced level coursework and reading. But to assist students in the move from methods and theories in the abstract to how these varied tools inform scholarly work, Poceski assigns interviews. Students choose two faculty members, one in the Religion Department and a second outside of it (but still selecting a scholar who does significant and substantive study about religion), and speak with that scholar about "the use of various methodologies and theories about religion in their research." Ideally, by talking with faculty about their work, these

majors begin to recognize the relationship of methodological approaches and theoretical frameworks to scholarly production and the generation of knowledge within the field.

Babak Rahimi also teaches "Tools and Methods in the Study of Religion" at the outset of the University of California San Diego's upper division classes in religious studies. His course "provides an advanced introduction to assumptions and norms that shape the study of religion as an academic field; to significant debates within the field; and to tools and methods used for professional research within the field." The Spring 2015 syllabus describes a plan to proceed that covers familiar turf:

> We will study some of the most influential thinkers in the field of religious study (Frazer, Freud, Marx, Weber, etc.), focusing on how these thinkers understood and studied religion in their distinct historical context. We will also look at the more recent approaches in studying religion from postmodernism to postcolonialism. Some other key topics studies include secularism and secularization.

Like Poceski, he requires fieldwork from the students to learn how these varied perspectives shape a scholar's thinking. In this case, however, Rahimi requires students to "locate a place, a group of people, a public activity, a ceremony, or anything that you may consider as 'religious'" on campus. At this point, the student must develop a core research question, gather data via interviews or ethnographies, for example, and perform scholarly analysis of that expression of religion based on the methods and theories studied in the course. In this exercise, instead of asking scholars to describe how the process works for them, students glimpse how religious studies scholars frame their analyses by engaging in the work.

But Rahimi also points toward another objective important to the public university context. He wants students "to foster an alternative understanding of religion as a distinct human practice." The "About" page of UC San Diego's Program of the Study of Religion (where Rahimi makes a similar point in his role as Interim Program Director) helps to unravel what he means and why it matters. He writes:

> The Study of Religion is an intellectually exciting program focused on a subject matter that many scholars in the arts, humanities, sciences, and social sciences consider to be an intrinsic dimension of humanity—religion.

For him, that statement conveys that "religion originates in literature, social organization, imagination, emotions, culture, sexuality, even the physical body itself." To study it, then, requires tools capable of engaging a range of practices and expressions. And so Rahimi adds, "The study of religion is the ideal program for any student who, fascinated by core questions concerning human culture and history, wants the intellectual freedom to pursue answers from a wide variety of perspectives." Choosing to begin that effort with a method and/or theory overview course addresses from the outset that the program does not stress content knowledge independent of providing students access to approaches suited to observe, measure, compare, and analyze religion's many manifestations. It also likely represents a recognized cultural need to complicate student impressions of what religion and religious practice entails to promote critical thought about issues pressing on the larger culture in

more sophisticated and useful ways.[40]

Theory and method courses, of course, appear in other forms within a curriculum as well. Two specific options popular in religious studies programs often get shorthanded as the "of" and the "and." For example, one might see in a course catalog "Sociology of Religion" or "Religion and Gender Studies." Clearly, these options tend to focus on methodology and cross disciplinary lines.[41] The question of what distinguishes these courses from the studies about religion happening in other departments can prove tricky. Some programs welcome such courses into their own curricula, such as how East Carolina University offers elective credit for courses taught in Anthropology, Classics, English, History, Philosophy, Psychology, Sociology, and Women's Studies. Others, like the University of Arkansas, go so far as to craft a Religious Studies minor from courses taught in areas such as Anthropology, Art, History, Humanities, Jewish Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, Philosophy, Political Science, and Sociology. Increasingly, however, religious studies scholars engage in this work and courses resulting from it remain in house because how religious studies scholars use the disciplinary tools can vary.

Take inquiry into religion from the perspective of Psychology. Such courses appear in numerous Psychology departments under various titles. Lee June's "Issues in Psychology: Psychology of Religion and Spirituality" at Michigan State University provides one example. His Fall 2015[42] syllabus says:

> This course describes the psychology of religion and spirituality, both historically and contemporarily. Utilizing primarily a lifespan approach (childhood through the older years), it will examine how psychology, as well as biology, views religion/spirituality and religion/spirituality's influence and impact on humans and society.

In June's construction, religious/spiritual behaviors can be characterized as part of a human developmental phases grounded in factors from biology to socioeconomic status to geography. While his readings feature some "classic" texts on the study of religion from a psychological perspective, such as William James' *The Varieties of Religious Experience,* and he requires a reflective essay on a book selected from a list that includes works by Freud and Jung among others, the emphasis in June's course remains firmly on psychology. Consideration of how the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* speaks about religion/spirituality, and readings from the *APA Handbook of Religion, Psychology, and Spirituality* on topics such as the neurophysiology of spiritual experience or "healthy" and "unhealthy" practices/manifestations of religion/spirituality, stress the disciplinary perspective, with religion and spirituality providing the subject matter alone.

In religious studies, the use of theoretical frameworks in psychology as a tool to analyze human religious behavior tends toward somewhat different emphases. Martie Reinecke at the University of Northern Iowa, for instance, teaches a course entitled "Why We Believe" (REL 4130). The Fall 2011 syllabus says that she "prefer[s] to engage students deeply in an express instance of the psychology of religion rather than in a 'survey' of varied approaches to the psychology of religion." As a result, the class centers on "the emergence of the capacity for religious belief in children" and deals with three distinct groups of psychoanalytic theorists: "scholars who closely follow Freud, 'object relations theorists' who

comprise the British school of psychoanalysis, and 'Lacanians' who comprise the French school of psychoanalysis." Using this work as a foundation, she then proceeds to explore witches, monsters, and evil in the adult world, with stress on the formulation of symbols and their influence on religious belief and ritual practice. She concludes with philosopher Richard Kearney's work on the cultural unconscious and the human capacity and process to deal with death, trauma, and terror. In short, she moves away from description and diagnostics and toward theorizing human religious experience.

Although directed quite differently, Wade Clark Roof's "Religion and Psychology" at the University of California at Santa Barbara in Fall 2010 also moves away from diagnostics or the practice of psychology as it relates to the religiosity of people. Somewhat like June, Roof focuses on how religious expression shapes the development of a person, but he chooses a more individual emphasis. He says, "This is a course on the 'inner life'—described variously as the 'soul,' 'mind,' or 'psyche.'" The focus is on humanistic psychology—on questions of identity, meaning, and the complex connections between religion, culture, and everyday life." That assessment does not mean to imply an approach less rigorous from the point of view of psychological theories. Indeed, the reading assignments include Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Viktor Frankl, Abraham Maslow, and Erik Erikson among others. The course does, however, assume a more phenomenological frame of reference. For instance, in considering Freud's understanding of religion as expressing a need for protection or an illusion, the focus on Roof's "key question" is less on Freud or his foundations. Instead, Roof asks, "Do you really know yourself?" Likewise, when studying Erickson or Life-Cycle theories, he poses the query, "How am I evolving and why?" Many of Roof's readings also come from this descriptive place, as with Tom Beaudoin's *Virtual Faith: The Irreverent Spiritual Quest of Generation X*. In the Foreword to the book, Harvey Cox describes Beaudoin's methodology in this way: "He drank in their songs, watched their MTV, and accompanied them around the Internet."[43] Roof appears to follow suit by asking students to utilize "self," or at least their immediate culture, as the material for analysis of religion and/or spirituality.

Here, the traditional humanities orientation of what Roof aims toward contrasts to the social science impulse of many method-and theory-based courses in religious studies. While religious studies scholars, like Rahimi above, want to see religious studies as having feet in both camps, there is a strengthened presence of social scientists within the field who push strongly against its traditional and ongoing humanities orientation. One of the notable points of tension between the two rests in the relationship between descriptive and explanatory tasks. As Schilbrack notes, "Some social scientists argue that it is only when one goes beyond the descriptive stage and 'crosses the bridge' to ask critical explanatory questions that one begins a properly academic study of religion."[44] If those critical questions *must* be shaped by social scientific disciplines remains an open question.

Method-and theory-driven courses accomplish more, however, than applying insights from other academic disciplines to the study of religion. A look at another of Martie Reinecke's syllabi demonstrates how they function to provide a lens into contemporary issues of concern and address descriptive and explanatory tasks simultaneously. In her Spring 2014 course on Religion and Society at the University of Northern Iowa, she takes

on "Violence and Religion in a Time of Terrorism" using René Girard's idea of mimesis. The class proceeds in the following manner:

> In this course, we will look first at key texts in René Girard's theory of mimetic violence. Subsequently, we will turn to religion and explore the sacred narratives of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in order to understand the phenomenon of scapegoating and mimetic violence within the context of these major Western faith traditions.

To pull together these two worlds, she turns first to Bruce Chilton's scholarly application of Girard in *Abraham's Curse: The Roots of Violence in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. At that point, she says:

> We will move on to examine religious terrorism, linking our reflections with our previous explorations of mimetic theory and scapegoating by reading the works of a psychologist of religion (James W. Jones). Finally, with Richard Beck, we will focus closely on one feature of a sacrificial worldview that regularly features in terrorism: purity and impurity.

This sequence of material not only provides students with tools for thinking about religion and possible ways religion connects to both violence generally and terrorism specifically, but it also lays bare the practice of academic scholarship in religious studies.

On this last point, Reinecke wants the student to "enhance your understanding of how scholars who engage in the academic study of religion think." Thus, she promises that "throughout the semester you will be introduced to 'tools' of analysis of central importance to them. You will grow in awareness of these tools and take preliminary steps toward using these tools in your own reflections." Recognizing that reading technical academic work can challenge undergraduates unaccustomed to this type of writing and unfamiliar with terminology specific to a field, Reinecke assists learners in developing the "intellectual skills of reading, comprehending, analyzing, and evaluating" by providing study questions for each unit of reading. These questions assist students in grasping the reading material and aid them in recognizing connections between how one describes what happens in the world and possible explanations for those events. According to the syllabus, students not only discuss these questions in class, they also complete them partly as homework and, on occasion, during group work in class. In this way, "the goals, methods, and evaluative components of this course emphasize using content rather than simply acquiring it."

The courses discussed here represent only a small fraction of what happens in religious studies departments in terms of method and theory, from the utilization of feminist and gender analysis, to explorations of pop culture, to studies in the relationship of religion to science or law or politics. Depending on the interests of a faculty member and the needs of an institution, the list of possibilities could go in many directions. And again, while methodological and theoretical concerns have always animated text- and traditions-based coursework, the multiplication of perspectives in the academy and their utility for the study of religion over the last fifteen to twenty years has altered the landscape of the field. In fact, Deal and Beal, in their book *Theory for Religious Studies,* specifically contend of more recent, postmodern work that "students of religion must enter into dialogue with these

new perspectives or risk becoming irrelevant, unable to address the questions and issues concerning religion and culture that are now animating the academy."[45]

These courses do not arrive without controversy. As Hughes points out, "the deconstructive nature of some of this work and the fact that it is often uncomfortably pointed at colleagues in the field"[46] makes contentiousness inevitable. Ongoing divisions between humanists and social scientists (not to mention natural scientists) in the academic study of religion make the life of a scholar in the field interesting in these days and times.[47] Indeed, according to some practitioners, including social scientists, the focus on critique can displace the study of religion itself.[48] How these debates will play out in religious studies programs on public university campuses remains to be seen. But the nature of this work also raises issues of the relevance between what happens in the classroom and the purposes of an education in a public institution. Departments and programs must assess who they serve and how best to build curricula for their constituencies. One example might be asking if the "one and done" student needs to problematize the study of religion and consider the tools for its study in the same way as a major. Another comes in thinking about if programs with graduate student populations forefront method and theory differently than programs with undergraduates alone. Or, similarly, if programs with an undergraduate major focus on method and theory differently than programs with only a minor or just a handful of classes. Similar questions, without doubt, can (and should) be posed for all classes taught in a program. The debates about method and theory in the field in this time and the reflexive impulse that accompanies this work bring them to the fore of how the field communicates its work to students and to other, broader, audiences.

EXPERIENTIAL COURSES

While undergraduate and graduate professional programs frequently provide practical, active-learning, experience-based courses to give students access to specific job-related environments, the role of these courses in traditional undergraduate higher education, particularly in the humanities and social sciences, often remains limited. As Lawson notes, "Experience-based education itself has long been a part of the curricula of schools of medicine, education, engineering, and the natural sciences, but this pedagogical approach has been less prevalent in other parts of the university curricula."[49] Some of this resistance comes from varying definitions of what constitutes "experience." It could designate activity-based learning either inside or outside of a classroom. It might mean crediting people for prior learning or employment activities that relate to the degree sought. But the core of the objection to these efforts in the humanities and social sciences often rests in what Jonathan Neem articulates in his article on Competency-Based Education. He writes, "Liberal education should be seen as experiential learning for the mind."[50] For him and many other faculty members, "the purpose of liberal education—unlike vocational education—is not to train but to change people, and this takes seat time … Fostering students' curiosity about the world requires that they be immersed for a part of their lives in an environment that treats intellectual inquiry … as the highest goal."[51]

Nonetheless, as David Kolb writes in his 2014 book, "there is a growing group of educators—faculty, administrators, and interested outsiders—who see experiential education

as a way to revitalize the university curriculum and to cope with many of the changes facing higher education today."[52] Credits associated with experiential education can vary. Short-term study abroad, service learning, internship, and immersive learning options all provide, in some way, the opportunity for students to explore directly the relationship of what they read and study to the world and can encourage engaged citizenship. They also hold out innovative possibilities to meet institutional priorities and missions. These efforts could, in fact, formulate part of a university's response to calls for graduates to emerge with job-related skills and broader experience outside of the traditional view of campuses as "ivory towers." But these courses can and do serve pedagogical purposes beyond vocational preparation, and that will comprise the focus of this section.

Many universities, for instance, claim that their students will graduate with improved global understanding. The option to engage in travel-related courses can contribute to that effort. To illustrate, the University of Minnesota includes among its six "guiding principles" that it "assists individuals, institutions, and communities in responding to a continuously changing world," or, as the mission statement itself says, students prepare for "active roles in a multiracial and multicultural world." The religious studies program's site about study abroad demonstrates consonance with these outcomes by encouraging students to choose one of the available options and thereby to "prepare … for a life of engagement as an effective global and local citizen … gain confidence … personally and professionally [and] forge international friendships." Likewise, West Virginia University states as its mission that it "will deliver high-quality education, excel in discovery and innovation, model a culture of diversity and inclusion, promote health and vitality, and build pathways for the exchange of knowledge and opportunity between the state, the nation, and the world." In an essay on a three-week study abroad experience in Japan with religious studies students from WVU, Alex Snow writes of his group achieving many of these goals. He says, "They have been pushed to consider issues of spirituality, history, gender, language, and food incredibly foreign to them all. They have dealt with the prescience of politics … struggling to understand the complexities of war, geopolitics, and religion."[53] And Alyssa Beall, his co-leader, speaks of the lasting impact of such journeys when she says, "Study abroad experiences don't end when the trip does. Over the last three years I've stayed in contact with the majority of students and have seen repeated instances where a three-week trip has changed the direction or focus of a student's studies."[54] Such alterations might include additional language study, returning to a country for further work, or doing other short- and/or long-term courses in different locations.

International courses often function to bring a select topic to life and thereby push students to see firsthand what their reading (and web surfing) present in mediated forms. For instance, Benjamin White taught "The Birth of the Early Church: Study Abroad to Greece" in Summer 2016 for two weeks. He described the class as an "immersion experience" designed to: "illumine various aspects of the New Testament; provide a real sense of the geography and history of early Christianity; heighten awareness of the pagan world in which Christianity was born; and help … understand the history and culture of Greece." Similar courses previously traveled to Turkey and Greece (2013) and Italy (focus on Rome, 2014). Lacking a syllabus, what the students did to prepare or to earn a grade

remains unknown. The assumption undergirding these classes, however, remains clear. Physically encountering what ruins that remain, taking in the geography and climate of a locale as well as the distances between sites, and living, even if briefly, in another space with variances in languages, food, and customs, shakes up the typical learning environment and provides students with new perspectives personally and academically. It might be as simple as the relationship of an agora to a port or seeing the ways in which worship of various deities tended to happen in proximity to one another that prompts insights into the stories told in a text and furthers comprehension of how a tradition grew and developed.

Experiential learning, of course, does not require international travel. The Religious Studies major at Humboldt State University, for example, offers a variety of workshops "as a way of encountering religious life first-hand." They say of their program that "Religious Studies maintains relationships with various religious communities in Northern California who provide opportunities to receive introductory teachings and participation in religious practices as a sort of field work experience in the study of religion. (sic)" These one-unit courses typically require a weekend somewhat proximate to the university. Although unable to locate a syllabus online for one of these occasions, the promotional description makes clear the general parameters. Organizational meetings occur prior to the time on site. One would anticipate overviews of the logistics, expectations, codes of conduct, and the like would occur here. While "most require a simple writing response after the event," that would presumably demand student reporting and reflection, "usually there is very little reading or homework required." That might seem, on the surface, contrary to an academic effort, but the program says, "The emphasis is on participation and involvement with community members, ritual life, teachings from within the community, and so forth." This set-up corresponds with accreditation requirements that calculate experiential learning credit via intensive contact hours.

The examples of this program available from Fall 2015 demonstrate the "fit" of these courses into the academic major as more than simply a cool add-on. The opportunities that term included a Buddhist retreat, as well as visits to Zen and Orthodox Christian communities, and an event to engage with Sufi Mysticism. Combining experience of the material culture at a given location, listening/viewing of specific practices such as dharma talks, sunset vespers, meditation, dance, and mindful eating practices, students "see" the traditions actualized and learn from practitioners. Moreover, these options integrate effectively into a 30-hour major that subdivides into four parts: Introduction; Religion in Tradition; Religion in Myth, Culture, and Experience; and Senior Seminar. Of the nine units required in the major under Religion in Myth, Culture & Experience, a minimum of one and a maximum of three units come from these experience-based options. It is also easy to imagine how these visits enhance the fifteen units required under the Religion and Tradition heading. Indeed, the department web page highlights this aspect of its work on its homepage under a bold heading, "Special Features of Our Program." As stated in the description of the major: "Students will master phenomenological approaches to the understanding of religious and cultural variation, enabling them to engage diversity directly, with both generosity and justice."

Community-based initiatives, including classes constructed on the service-learning

model, provide another avenue for experientially based education. The University of Wisconsin Eau-Claire Service Learning web site offers examples of possible projects for students by major. Under Philosophy and Religious Studies, it reads: "Volunteer with organizations that provide conflict resolution and mediation; organize a community service group; participate in Alternative Winter Break activities with the Ecumenical Religious Center; develop a website for a religious congregation; work with a consortium of religious organizations on a social issue." As with internship opportunities within the field of religious studies, faculty at public institutions must consider the relationship between academic credit and work at faith-based organizations. Missouri State University, in fact, produced guidelines to address just this issue.

This document sets out to make clear that student placements serve the mission and purpose of the department, and not the reverse. They say, "In April 2002, the Citizenship and Service-Learning Oversight Committee and staff developed guidelines for partnerships with faith-based organizations. These guidelines were based, in part, upon the philosophy of the Missouri State University's Religious Studies department." To state the problem for a state institution directly: "The Religious Studies department seeks to develop educated persons rather than promote religion." While acknowledging that "faith-based organizations can provide rich learning environments for students in service-learning courses," these faculty-generated guidelines intentionally limit student activities in such placements by prohibiting engaging in religious instruction or worship, conducting worship services, constructing or operating or maintaining facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship, performing any form of religious proselytization, or participating in any activities with a clear political bias.

These considerations pop up more often than one might expect. For instance, Samaritan's Purse, a Christian humanitarian organization run by Franklin Graham with assets around $300 million dollars, makes available local and international internship opportunities (which include stipends). But all employees of the organization, including interns, must not only affirm, but also adhere to the organization's Statement of Faith. Indeed, in describing the intern experience, they say: "Whether at our international headquarters in North Carolina or in one of our field offices around the globe, young professionals will experience the intricate workings of an international non-profit while being a part of the greater calling to help impact the world in Jesus' Name." Likewise, internships exploring ministry opportunities sponsored by denominations often require students to engage in sectarian activities. A "Taste and See Ministry Pastoral Internship Program" sponsored by the North Carolina Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church illustrates the point. A 10-week opportunity includes a stipend and housing, while functioning to "expose the interns to the breadth of pastoral ministry and give them hands-on experience in a variety of areas under the guidance of a clergy mentor." Faculties will often be asked to approve academic credit for such work and must, in the absence of any university guidelines, determine the appropriateness of such.

These examples point out the difficulties academic religious studies programs at state universities encounter when setting out to allow or to promote student learning outside of the traditional classroom. Fred Glennon, Professor and Department Chair at the private

and religiously affiliated Le Moyne College in Pennsylvania, explores this issue in his piece "Service Learning in Religious Studies: Educational or Transformational?" He asks, "By incorporating service learning, does a Religious Studies professor or department run the risk of undermining an academic approach to the study of religion, with its emphasis on tolerance and neutrality (value laden terms themselves), by connecting students with committed practitioners who advocate particular religious perspectives and values?"[55] Faculties, as noted, will debate this issue. Glennon, however, reaches a conclusion based on his investigation of the literature as well as a survey of religious studies professors. He writes, "As a pedagogical tool, service learning does not simply aid the intellectual development of students; it also contributes to their moral development and to the well-being of the community." For programs in a traditional humanities paradigm, such an outcome can look desirable. But Glennon adds, in acknowledgment of the kinds of discussion among faculty with differing perspectives, the following: "Moreover, it is a form of experiential education, suggesting that experience is critical in the educational process, something that many, that adopt an objective epistemology, distrust."

The use of service learning, internship, and other experiential coursework, then, requires thoughtful consideration of a program's goals and the student outcomes that a faculty wants to achieve. But it also demands attentiveness to the profiles of the students a program serves. As seen in the examples provided, experiential learning can require intensive appropriations of time not readily available to some students who must work or commute or handle family obligations. Likewise, not every student will have the financial resources to travel or to take off work for participation in activities outside of the classroom. Nonetheless, the ongoing transformation of higher education puts "real-world" experiences and skills front and center of what an education should provide. The discussions in religious studies about if or how to provide these opportunities consistent with a faculty's understanding of the academic study of religion and what it entails will continue to be lively.

CONCLUSIONS

Without question, an institution's bureaucratic processes set broad parameters for a religious studies faculty to operate within when offering classes and building curricula. Approvals required for structuring a major or minor, catalog descriptions, or the inclusion of a course in a curriculum for programs like University Honors, General Education, Women's Studies, Freshman Seminar, or the like, along with demands to pre-establish and, sometimes, commit to shared learning objectives and/or outcomes can all function as boundaries. The idiosyncratic nature of the classroom, however, peeks through in the study of syllabi. Teaching faculty, at least at present, tend to enjoy significant leeway in determining how a course proceeds by choosing readings, determining activities, setting assignments, and utilizing approaches in line with their own academic interests and training. But a second level of norms, those unique to the field, also tend to exert influence over what occurs in a classroom. Established by tradition and inculcated in graduate education, what constitutes an area of study and the resources available for instruction can remain quite fixed over time.

As seen above, classes in religious studies frequently veer in the direction of requiring students to work with primary texts to understand how traditions develop, to draw

comparisons between different religious traditions, and to consider how best to approach the study of religion. Moreover, studying texts not only offers students familiarity with documents that are cultural touchstones, but also ideally helps build skills in reading/observation, analysis, and reflection, and provides a richer understanding of the human experience in varied times and locations. Even when the study of texts does not dominate, experientially oriented activities serve similar ends. These foci continue to situate the field firmly within the humanities, however troubling that positioning may be for some faculty in today's educational environment.

This discontent does not necessarily arise from criticisms of the humanities outside of the university. But it is not unrelated to the critiques of persons like Khosla or Tobak, discussed above. In fact, Aaron W. Hughes of the University of Rochester observes: "At a time when the Humanities are constantly under assault for their relevance in the modern university, we might find it unsurprising that many want to make Religious Studies into a science by studying it from the perspective of cognition, evolutionary biology, and the like."[56] He goes on to press the case by saying, "There are many real politically expedient reasons to study religion in this manner—ones based on institutional prestige, access to funding, graduate students, and so on."[57] If, indeed, the public university is to be a secular university and the study of religion is to continue on a trajectory consistently leading away from theological studies, then this impulse seems reasonable.

It also, likely, is a response to institutions using the number of seats filled and the total of students graduated as metrics for determining program success, not to mention the pressure to produce a thriving major. The struggle to fit into the larger public university environment and to find connections for meaningful interaction with other programs can propel faculties to stay close to familiar academic approaches. Indeed, as seen in this chapter, the power of tradition remains firmly intact. Classroom instruction continues for the most part, particularly on the undergraduate level, to center around a humanities orientation. It is not just that programs laud this aspect of their work, as seen in the missions outlined in Chapter One, but it is that the coursework fits into that paradigm within university structures and curricula that have not changed significantly even as the environment for higher education has shifted. What that orientation will mean for the longevity of these programs in the public university, only time will tell. But if concerns about the utility of such degrees persist, or if legislators limit the time and money students can spend if choosing to enroll in such programs,[58] then the shape of religious studies may well undergo dramatic change.

Chapter Three

INTRODUCTION

For scholars teaching religious studies today, the question of how one communicates the discipline also must include in what format or mode. The words of Jonathan Z. Smith in his book *On Teaching Religion,* when he puts forward his primary goal as a teacher, prove helpful here. He says, "What, above all, I want the students to know is that matters are always more complex than they first appear, and that this is liberating rather than paralyzing."[1] This advisory to students about the simplicity of a façade masking the gnarly nature of reality also holds for faculty teaching in contemporary higher education. Indeed, right from the outset in his reflections, Smith highlights the byzantine qualities of university administrative demands on classroom practice by calling attention to the fact that faculty members alone rarely determine how many or even what courses they teach, the number of students permitted to enroll, much less the place, timing, or the mode of instruction of those courses.[2] Instead, institutional needs and protocols "made within a complex context of institutional and programmatic (or departmental) constraints"[3] shape these decisions.

Today, with rapidly changing ideas about what constitutes a classroom and the pressures on faculty to adapt regularly to the new normal, the bureaucratic challenges around instruction can often feel overwhelming. Perhaps that is why a fanciful imagination of the classroom, one that separates what happens within its confines from the complex conditions of institutional life, persists. Steven Delamarter describes this magical, even mythical, place of work, saying,

> Our primary frame of reference in education has been the lecture-based ideal: a face-to-face course in which the professor consistently delivers a stimulating lecture that is brimming with content, which all the students find totally absorbing. Students come prepared, ready to contribute to discussions, and engage other students with respect and humility. Every day professors and students bring their "full authentic selves" to the teaching and learning process. Time spent for quizzes and exams is always completely justified, of course, because students learn so much by taking them. And students are confident that the grading system used to assess their work provides an accurate picture of their knowledge and learning.[4]

While many instructors aspire to create such idyllic spaces, different realities always have and still do impinge on this picture. The cavernous hall with hundreds of students, some prepared and some not, listening (or playing a videogame, updating social media, or texting) to riveting (hopefully!) lectures and allowed to speak only in a discussion section run by a graduate teaching assistant might provide the lone option for many seeking an introduction to the idea of religion at larger public universities. Maybe, or even likely, the

class—whatever its size—gets taught brilliantly by a woefully underpaid contract instructor who works without any other institutionally sponsored benefits such as health insurance, access to campus amenities, or grievance rights. This instructor may not be able to interact with students on campus at other times (or in subsequent semesters if the funding runs out) thanks to no office space, or an inability to come to campus on non-teaching days due to the other employment obligations necessary to generate a living wage.[5] Moreover, in this position, a faculty member might shy away from controversial conversations in order to stay off of the chair's radar and secure the next contract. Perhaps the student experience comes in a "flipped" classroom, where preparation for class via video instruction or readings posted online sets up, if the assignments are completed, meaningful discussion or practical problem solving in the face-to-face meeting times. The learning space might involve on-site community service, or instruction in an international or an internship setting that demands more than activity "tourism." The classroom could take virtual form, with students and the professor interacting asynchronously across multiple locations and even time zones. Or "virtual" might mean several different learning communities gather at varied locations, connected with each other in specially equipped rooms that simulate the face-to-face classroom experience.

For faculty members, navigating this plethora of instructional options amid the institutional pressures current in academia today might appear daunting, but it does not have to feel hopeless. The opportunity to formulate creative educational opportunities in forms heretofore unimagined exists if predicated on solid assessment of the conditions at a given institution and realistic evaluation of future possibilities. Too often, however, and especially in periods of rapid change or threat to the status quo, the conversations about what might represent the best pedagogical options bog down in ways that block all interested parties from determining good paths forward. No single issue typifies this problem more directly than conversations about the place of technology in instruction and, specifically, online learning.

This chapter, then, focuses on examining modes of instructional delivery as yet another avenue to understand how religious studies faculties at public institutions define and carry out their missions amid the complicated terrain of higher education. "Mode of instruction" here will serve as the catch-all for the place of technology in instructional practice, but with a focus on online learning.[6] In doing this work, one cannot ignore that the tone of these conversations can get emotionally fraught. But examining the learning options offered speaks to how a department or program envisions its work, specifically addressing who the curricula seek to serve and what educational goals can be attained (meeting a general education requirement, developing a set of named skills, obtaining a major, etc.).

This discussion must also acknowledge the fact that decline in tenured and tenure-track positions alongside the corresponding rise in the number of non-tenure-track instructors[7] alters faculty life at today's colleges and universities. Indeed, it makes Smith's comments about the position of instructional personnel in a complicated matrix of institutional pressures and concerns assume greater urgency. Without doubt, contingent faculty experience the ups and downs of the inconsistent reality Smith conjures more directly than tenure-track and tenured faculty. At least at many institutions, the latter get some

voice over curriculum decisions, their course preferences, and mode of delivery (including meeting days and times and classroom space, when appropriate). The conversation about these issues in terms of the use of technology, however, orients the instructional role yet again. Technology shifts the function of faculty more generally as instructional materials and instructional options mushroom in the information age. The real possibility of self-paced learning modules with automated and learner-specific feedback run through open-source platforms will allow many institutions to reconsider the place of faculty in the instructional process. The specter of many faculty losing what little autonomy they maintain at present in the realm of academic instruction, and thus ceding their primary institutional function, demands examination because it reflects the significant and sweeping changes overtaking higher education.

To think about these issues, the chapter begins with an exploration of the rise of online learning and a consideration of how technology changes the higher education experience more broadly. It then continues to the history of online instruction of religious studies, with specific focus on how select religious studies programs are proceeding in this arena. While nodding to the traditional battle lines in this debate about quality of instruction, the main concern here will be the impact of technology on the identity of students and faculty and what those changes look like in the instructional space. It will conclude with how technology redefines learning interactions in the contemporary higher education environment regardless of mode of instruction. The questions raised in these dialogues about what components comprise a classroom and what defines learning will prove crucial to any assessment of the future of religious studies in the public university. Older debates about the place of online instruction in higher education and the relatively slow adaptation of religious studies faculty to this world do continue as will be noted. But characterizing the conversation in these terms misdirects attention in today's environment. A new set of challenges for faculty such as adaptive learning courseware, the use of Artificial Intelligence features such as Virtual Learning Assistants, and more savvy media-rich interactions with students,[8] move well beyond whether a program or a class should go online. The impact of these capabilities on what "faculty" means will thread through this examination.

THE "ISSUES" WITH ONLINE INSTRUCTION

Anyone following the trends in higher education over the last 15 to 20 years knows about the debates over technology-driven learning and their pitched qualities. In these conversations, questions about faculty autonomy and job security get shaped to evoke emotional reactions. "Will online classes make professors extinct?" CNN queried in 2013.[9] Likewise, a PBS NewsHour Extra video on the creation of edX asked, "Will online courses replace classrooms?"[10] In the same year, The Atlantic posted this question: "Will Free Online Courses Ever Replace a College Education?"[11] The language of these headlines tends to imagine faculty as little more than a component part, and perhaps not a necessary one, in an industrialized instructional machine. In brief, these queries generate faculty fears about not only the pedagogical implications of online instruction, but also whether this mode of delivery holds the potential to eliminate the need for their labor alltogether, or at least to reduce the number of positions available and perhaps place those remaining jobs on

contract status. Without doubt, these reports ask questions such as if a traditional campus setting might become obsolete, if textbook companies and/or Open Resource developers will become more content providers and usurp the role of faculty in shaping instruction, and if technology can build systems that perform basic course delivery functions better, faster, and cheaper than the cost of faculty. To untangle this morass and see through some of the hype and the hysteria evoked demands at least a brief consideration of how the current state of technologically aided education came to be as it is before moving on to the ways technology has impacted religious studies education to this point.

Elliot King and Neil Alperstein's book on online instruction succinctly captures the trajectory of technological innovation in higher education and makes clear that the landscape of education has shifted. They write,

> Traditionally, the gathering of scholars and students in one place represented the very heart of higher education. But over the next decade, every institution will have to develop a strategy reflecting the technology-based world in which we live. And once that strategy is in place, every institution will have to learn to develop and implement, along with other new and emerging technologies, online educational programs in response to the growing pressure from many quadrants within society, not the least of which are internal to institutions of higher learning.[12]

They could not be more direct. While not specifying *how* technology will change the parameters of learning at a given institution, King and Alperstein understand that the ways in which people access information, the declining ability of many individuals to live apart from families and/or assume a significant debt burden, and the needs of society for more flexible learners engaging with institutions at various interval to build different skills all will be influential in the future.

The path to change always gets marked with mixed successes. Already, the rise (and, in some cases, fall) of many troubling for-profit institutions of higher education and the flashy appearance (and equally flashy decline) of MOOCs—Massive Open Online Courses—demonstrate some of the high-profile experimentations in this arena. Or one might look to the emergence of institutions like Western Governors and Southern New Hampshire Universities, and the acquisition of Kaplan by Purdue University, as attesting to a changing landscape in not-for-profit online education. Public universities also have skin in the game, as in the case of Arizona State University, for instance, and the demonstration there of a traditional academic culture adopting and adapting to significant infusions of technology-based course options.

In assessing the eventual impact of such efforts, no one gets served well by jumping immediately to the most frightening possible futures. Technology does not have to equate to an evil that must be resisted at all costs. For instance, few would question the myriad of improvements technological innovation brings to the way institutions of higher education operate. From a student's application to their matriculation, graduation, and beyond, technology shapes the collegiate experience. Processes such as tracking tuition payments and financial aid, as well as student support services like registration, advising, or early intervention, all enjoy the benefits of increased automation Few applicants miss waiting

by the mailbox for the "big envelope" signaling acceptance into a chosen school, and not many students long for a day of standing in lines snaking through gymnasia to register for classes. Degree mapping programs now assist students and advisors in navigating layers of requirements and marking off every required box without an oversight that can extend a student's graduation date. In the classroom, these changes often take on a positive tone as well. Faculty gladly embrace the convenience (and paper saving) of posting material such as syllabi and course readings online, or even the ease of testing electronically or uploading assignments to a central site. The availability of a world of visual and auditory resources in usable formats enhances exploration of places or experiences across the world, and typically without library checkouts of limited and dated options or pushing AV carts loaded with barely functional equipment through crowded hallways. Most instructors do not look fondly back to the days of blue book exams, also known as handwriting decoder tests, when crisp, clean electronic essays that can be checked for spelling, grammar, and plagiarism with ease exist. Still, the "vision" of the campus experience and the traditional, non-technological classroom as sacrosanct proves, for many, harder to dislodge. And the objections to change typically focus on how learning happens.

Mark Edmundson, a professor of English at the University of Virginia, sums up the supposed "magic" of the face-to-face course to the exclusion of other possibilities in a 2012 *New York Times* op-ed. He writes, "A truly memorable college class, even a large one, is a collaboration between teacher and students. It's a one-time-only event." For Edmundson, online education falls short, and this conclusion rests in the very nature of knowledge acquisition. He continues, "Learning at its best is a collective enterprise, something we've known since Socrates. You can get knowledge from an Internet course if you're highly motivated to learn. But in real courses the students and teachers come together and create an immediate and vital community of learning." Note his emphasis on the adjective *real*. Online cannot succeed as a venue for education in Edmundson's estimation because it fails to replicate the authenticity of sitting in a classroom. As a result, he positions online education as always coming up short of sparking that emotive key. He continues, "A real course creates intellectual joy, at least in some. I don't think an Internet course ever will. Internet learning promises to make intellectual life more sterile and abstract than it already is—and also, for teachers and for students alike, far lonelier.[13] Here, Edmundson posits technology as an alienating intervention that prohibits faculty and students from engaging in the work of learning which, for him, depends on the construction of a collaborative community only available in actual, physical proximity to one other.

Reducing the pedagogical equation to this single standard, however, oversimplifies what Jonathan Z. Smith labeled as complex issues about faculty labor, institutional practices, and the questions of what circumstances and settings produce the learning outcomes a faculty member, a program, or a college/university seeks. For instance, producing pedagogical delight in a face-to-face classroom depends on matching the right activities and learning strategies to the course objectives, size, and campus ethos. Large lecture courses demand different faculty strengths—instructional and performance—from the small seminar, for example. Obviously, the types of interaction that happen within these distinct spaces vary. Still, instructors and students alike walk into these varied face-to-face settings with long

track records of both positive and negative experiences, and thus with skills honed to make them successful. By contrast, newer and less familiar technologically driven educational environments require careful attention to the structural concerns (asynchronous or synchronous, cohort or open enrollment, class size, technical proficiencies and support, etc.) in addition to focusing on pedagogy. The newness, the varied qualities of equipment, and the rapidity of changes in platforms to mount such efforts and tools to use in them, means adapting might be a bit more uneven.

In addition, the "live" environment cannot transfer precisely into an online world, meaning that course objectives and activities will also change in alignment with the campus or program's support of non-traditional learning and according to the facility of both teachers and students in working with the available media. Merely attempting to duplicate the face-to-face environment often fails not only in the estimation of online detractors, but also in the assessments of online faculty and students. Expecting the virtual environment to be something other than what it is and not using it to take advantage of the strengths of the available technologies inevitably fails. For instructors unfamiliar with the terrain and potential of learning in these media, a cold disconnection from students might stand out. For students accustomed to the pace and structure of regular course meetings, the self-motivation might prove difficult to master. Yet other faculty find it appealing to create learning opportunities rooted in the ways students experience the world today, from streaming video to gaming to social media to assistive technologies. And other students not only feel drawn to these ways of learning, but also to the flexibility of schedule and place afforded them.

Today, no matter what the level of resistance some faculty might feel to online education, the promise of this technology certainly captures the attention of administrators as they confront the changing demography of potential students, manage resource issues facing their institutions, and respond to public criticisms of higher education.[14] Consequently, for faculty discussing the impact of technology on the religious studies classroom, it helps to remember the wisdom Smith offered. Educators work in complex and complicated environments intermixing institutional concerns and constraints with what happens in the classroom. In seeking to create a bridge to the needs of students unable to commit to a campus-bound experience, or to be better served by a different educational paradigm, the faculty member wanting to survive pushes back where necessary, but also acclimatizes. The latter means bringing not only considerable subject expertise to the table, but also a wealth of pedagogical experience that works to incorporate new technologies meaningfully into existing educational structures and, when required, to change the structures for better alignment for the kinds of learning that technology permits and encourages.

A BRIEF AND SELECTIVE HISTORY OF ONLINE INSTRUCTION IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

For educators in academic religious studies, fully online options took hold more quickly in seminaries and divinity schools as opposed to undergraduate institutions. This trend follows logically, given the demographics of the population seeking graduate, professional studies to prepare for a career in religious service. While some undergraduates move

directly from their collegiate experience into advanced ministerial studies, the average age of students at many divinity schools trends into the upper 20s or low 30s. Additionally, figures now approximately five years old but still holding steady, demonstrate that "an overall decline or stagnation in every age group except 50- to 64-year-olds" in theological school student bodies. "Unlike other age groups, enrollment among this older cohort has risen steadily since at least 1991. In 2012, there were more than 14,000 men and women aged 50 to 64 enrolled in ATS member schools."[15] This population, one-third of whom are women, often cannot move families or leave a job for multiple years to complete a program of study on a traditional campus. Online education bridges that gap.

In materials about its online degrees, Gordon Conwell's seminary addresses just this issue:

> For many people the idea of putting their lives on hold to attend seminary seems impossible. Their churches need them, there is Kingdom work to do, and they have families to support. Attending seminary is something they only dream about, but never seriously consider.
>
> For these working adults there is an option. Just as Paul used the technology of his day, the letter, to instruct and encourage, seminaries are using the Internet to deliver high-quality theological education. Through improvements in instructional technologies and multimedia, online learning has become a viable option for you to earn your seminary degree online.

Additionally, a few common promises in the promotional materials of many online divinity school or seminary programs seek to allay concerns about the quality of such options. For instance, Southern Seminary pitches that its online courses come from "the same world-class faculty that teaches on campus." In other words, students enrolled online receive instruction via a different modality, but from faculty central to the mission of the institution rather than hired specifically to handle this curricular component. Likewise, the idea that one learns as much from in-person interaction with other students and from time on the campus environment receives attention. To this point, Luther Seminary advertises that "DL [Distance Learning] students develop vibrant relationships with fellow cohort members, holding one another accountable spiritually, relationally, and academically. Supported by colleagues in your cohort and in your local community, you will develop your pastoral identity and imagination." Moreover, successful completion of this program, like many others, requires a limited number of intensive campus visits.

For religious studies undergraduates at public universities, the trend toward fully online or even hybrid courses unfolded more slowly, and quite unevenly. Some institutions, like Arizona State University, made an early, significant commitment to competing in an online marketplace over and against the powerful push of for-profit institutions as well as a handful of other not-for-profit institutions. That decision followed naturally, given that the university deliberately styles itself as a model for the New American University. Its charter reads:

> ASU is a comprehensive public research university, measured not by whom we

> exclude, but rather by whom we include and how they succeed; advancing research and discovery of public value; and assuming fundamental responsibility for the economic, social, cultural and overall health of the communities it serves.

This desire to reach out to more, specifically to more non-traditional, students made online education a good institutional fit. In fact, the school states its goals for 2016 and beyond include enrolling 100,000 students in distance and online degree-seeking programs.

Their materials reiterate familiar promises about quality. "Our custom-designed degree programs and courses are delivered online by the same award-winning faculty who teach on-campus" is the lead on the "Course Experience" page, which goes on to specify these faculty include "Nobel laureates. Pulitzer Prize winners. Fulbright scholars." The claim of excellence extends to expectations regarding the instructional format of courses and the generation of an authentic learning community:

> Unlike a standard online lecture, ASU's online courses are highly interactive, engaging each student and ensuring the subject matter is fully understood. This structure also facilitates interaction with the highly recognized faculty on campus and classmates to encourage learning through collaboration.

Additional Support Services also exist, including enrollment counselors, academic advisors, and success coaches who comprise "a personalized student support system for information, advice and encouragement." To address potential student need for Community outside of the classroom, a range of clubs offers online membership and a network of social media outlets provides a virtual circle of fellow students for connection.

Somewhat uniquely for public universities, students may complete a Bachelor's Degree in Religious Studies at Arizona State University without setting foot on the campus. Achieving that outcome means the institution mounts enough courses for the major, as well as to meet General Education requirements in areas like English, Math, and the Sciences, and the requisite second language at the intermediate level. A complex course map demonstrates to the prospective student how to manage such a goal in a total of 10 "terms." As for Religious Studies, in Fall 2016, the online program (available only to fully online students) listed ten courses beginning on August 18 and ending on October 7. Another thirteen courses start on October 12 and run through December 2. Fifteen different faculty offer these twenty-three total classes, one of whom holds the rank of Associate Professor in the Department of Religious Studies, one titled "Principal Lecturer," five identified as "Faculty Associates," four designated as "Instructors," three appearing to be current doctoral students, and who remains unidentified. A total of 1,259 student "seats" operated at 76% capacity—with some courses exhibiting extraordinary success. In two sections of Buddhism, for example, with 115 seats, only three remained open; 110 seats in Witchcraft & Heresy fell only twelve short of full.

The commitment at ASU to online education also extends to the on-campus student. Twenty-eight of the 106 Fall 2016 courses on the Tempe schedule appear as "iCourses" (open only to on-campus students who might prefer an online option). Removing, for the sake of clarity, the twenty-five non-regular meeting courses ("thesis," "dissertation," and the like) from that 106 total, and excluding the three courses at the 500 and 600 levels,

takes the complete number of courses on the schedule down to 78. That means that 36% of the course offerings to undergraduate on-campus students in Religious Studies occur online. A second measure gives a different perspective. Excluding the two hybrid classes (which the previous accounting credited as face-to-face), 14.5% of the total seats available in the department go to online offerings. More important, these fully online courses share a similar enrollment profile to those offered face-to-face. While 20% of the online seats remain unfilled, 22% of the face-to-face seats stay open. Further, among the twenty-one faculty teaching fully online courses, three hold the title of Associate Professor and three Professor, providing evidence of commitment to this enterprise by the tenured faculty.[16]

Florida International University also demonstrates a lively online religious studies program with the Fall 2016 schedule listing seventeen sections of twelve different courses taught online by a strong mix of full-time faculty, emeritus faculty, adjunct faculty, and even a designated online instructor.[17] These courses, at least initially, served the existing student population. Taking classes online, however, entails an additional fee, listed as $160 for the fall of 2016 and $174 for the spring of 2017. This financial model conforms to Florida law, according to FIU statements. More significantly, it made possible the development of many technology-based programs in the early days of online education by encouraging departments to develop an online profile via a return of some of the dollars generated directly to the College/School (and often to the department). These funds also allowed for stipends to be paid to faculty developing courses and underwrote items such as ongoing training, acquisition of learning resources for a course, proctoring, and other student support services. Proceeding according to this model can serve as a form of quality control for the courses developed by assuring faculty interaction with technology professionals and access to necessary resources. Seats provided in Fall 2016 ranged from twenty to sixty per course, with most topping out at a course limit of twenty-five (463 seats available over seventeen classes calculates to an average of twenty-seven seats per class). With 399 seats occupied, students fill 86% of the available spots. Most of the courses carrying special designators students must fulfill in general education registered at or near capacity, with the more specialized classes seeing the lower enrollments, as one might anticipate.

Other programs in Religious Studies take a minimalist approach to online education. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, for instance, lists six offerings in its "Carolina Courses Online."[18] These options range across various topics, and most often instruction comes from current or recent graduate students in their doctoral programs, making available important teaching experience in a newer mode of instruction. To teach in this format, faculty must attend seminars to understand the medium more fully. Further, undergraduates enrolled for academic credit in online courses toward a degree in the College of Arts & Sciences are required to comply with a policy that went into effect on July 1, 2014. It places a fixed and firm maximum of twenty-four hours of credit (through UNC-Chapel Hill alone). Students cannot substitute an online course from another university, even within the UNC system, if they want an online experience. Additionally, when seeking academic credit, full-time undergraduates can only enroll in one online course per regular semester. Further, within any given department, a student seeking a major or minor can only complete two online courses for credit and no self-paced courses count in

that tally. The policy also forbids first-year first-semester students from enrolling (other than in special circumstances) and it does not allow first-year students matriculating in the fall to enroll in a course the previous summer for credit.

Clearly, while offering some online options, the preference at UNC-Chapel Hill remains for students on campus to enroll in face-to-face courses, particularly in the case of undergraduates pursuing a major or minor. This sentiment for the traditional classroom surfaced years earlier in a 2007 report of a Distance Learning Task Force. At that time, the group concluded that "distance education sponsored by UNC-Chapel Hill is most appropriate for students with professional careers who seek graduate or professional licensure, certificate or degree programs."[19] With regard to undergraduate education, the task force expressed less comfort with online offerings, here categorized as reaching out to students not immediately proximate to campus. One of the principles emerging from their work stated:

> Distance Education is likely to be most effective when it includes regular interactions with instructors and is enhanced by face-to-face instruction. For these, and other reasons, distance education is not the optimal way to educate traditional UNC-Chapel Hill undergraduates."[20]

As observed, this lack of ease extends to online options for the on-campus student as well. The subsequent 2014 policy indicates a marginal degree of comfort at best to undergraduates fulfilling credits toward graduation. The limited number permitted unequivocally communicates that online functions as a supplementary feature to the Carolina education. Moreover, requiring that those courses be developed and taught at UNC demonstrates a concern for quality control, implying that perhaps learning standards elsewhere might prove less rigorous.

Likewise, at the University of Georgia, a note on the departmental homepage indicates that the program participates in the Georgia state system's Independent and Distance Learning Program. For the fall of 2016, however, only one course in religious studies appears in the online listings. On the introductory level, it features a mere 25 seats and lists as its instructor a lecturer who also teaches on campus. Enrollment appears open to any student who does not have previous credit for the face-to-face version. This limited model of participation likely reflects a decision not to dedicate significant faculty resources to this mode of instruction, but the rationale for making this choice (financial, pedagogical, lack of interest by students or faculty) remains unknown. The trend here, however, resembles that of many religious studies programs at public universities. If offering any courses at all online, the numbers tend to stay small. No consistent study of the factors contributing to such decisions exists, although many universities leave such decisions to the faculty unless making a substantial effort to build online and, as a result, providing paid encouragement for programs to develop and run such courses.

When thinking about why religious studies programs choose not to develop a significant online presence, a good number of obstacles come immediately to mind. For instance, without significant university investment, it becomes difficult for any program in any discipline to take on such a task. The non-pedagogical challenges could include

outlays for provision and maintenance of appropriate equipment and other infrastructure needs, such as reliable learning management systems and providing faculty with non-standard-issue equipment or software to build and conduct coursework. Instructors often require professional design assistance to develop and offer a first-rate online class, and both faculty and students need quickly available technical support to ensure the smooth operation of either asynchronous or synchronous activities. Faculty governance and contract documents must undergo appropriate modifications to address questions about workload, credit hour production, evaluation standards, office hours, eligibility for teaching awards, and possibly even faculty residency (and thus the requisite service requirements that come with departmental membership). Intellectual property issues also loom large. If, for instance, a faculty member develops a course and materials (notes, learning objects, videos, tests, etc.), the questions of who "owns" these items and who can use them pops up. Campus regulations vary in accordance with state laws and local precedent.

With such a complex series of factors in play, the stories of how technologically adept religious studies programs (or even simply courses) have emerged in the public university setting and what factors shaped those choices vary. However, an element common to the lack of a significant presence in this environment at the undergraduate level may rest in the fact that religious studies programs are among the smaller units on campus at a public university (even at flagships). Few majors can be read as insulating the field from the pressures to build programs that would provide only a minimal return. As McPherson and Bacow note, "Asynchronous online courses are attractive to institutions because of their low marginal cost and their potential to expand markets substantially by offering credit-bearing courses to students in distant locations."[21] Additionally, they also might allow these institutions a method to improve time-to-degree by solving issues with enrollment limitations at a physical site.[22] Without the theological draw specific to institutions like Liberty University, where students seeking "to delve deeper into the Word of God or gain more qualification in … ministry," the rationale for religious studies programs investing in an online component to reach an audience of potential majors can be lacking. Nonetheless, as online degree options multiply, online courses in the academic study of religion—even as a part of a general education—assist programs working to hit SCH targets. These efforts could also help faculty interact more effectively with community learners in continuing education initiatives. And, as discussed in Chapter Five, interdisciplinary collaboratives, aided by technology, may be part of the future of religious studies.

In religious studies, as in all higher education, the growing popularity of and reliance on online options, as well as the emergence of new technologies to aid instruction in any context, all demand thoughtful consideration of what constitutes the learning experience a faculty sets out to provide. While a significant body of literature now exists documenting the outcomes of online vs. traditional modes of education, as well as more successful pedagogical strategies in technology-rich environments, an intense debate nonetheless continues about the effectiveness of new modalities for information acquisition, critical engagement, and ability to generate meaningful expression.[23] As with any teaching, instruction via technology must wed what an educator wants to achieve not only to what a specific tool allows, but also to the basic profile of the students in a program, to departmental or college norms about

teaching and learning at a specific institution, and, increasingly, to what can be assessed as constituting achievement. Further, in technologically aided education, the almost constant changes in what is available render definitions of "best practices" a moving target at best. And one must note the frequent need for "outside" expertise to translate the potential of the available technology to those without significant experience in it requires educators to negotiate good pedagogy with a fuller set of players. After all, these course designers and technical gurus cannot and should not be expected to understand the range of what faculty in various programs on a university campus want to enact in a specific course within a given field of study, much less advise on pedagogical technique.

In the end, however, these discussions always come back to faculty members and students. Instructors learn a good deal about teaching and about professorial identity from the faculty they encounter in their own educational histories. For the large majority of educators today (thanks to generational norms), the exemplary influences worthy of replication came out of face-to-face environments. To learn to adapt what one does in the classroom to a technologically-defined environment demands considerable commitment in time to building proficiencies as well as to understanding a new pedagogy. Students also enter these "classrooms" differentially skilled with equipment, learning managements systems, software, apps, and the like, not to mention lacking experience with what it means to put forward one's self as a "virtual" learner. In fact, getting everyone on common ground starts by rethinking identities for both faculty and students, including the unlearning of old habits and deliberately developing new ones.[24] Exploring how programs, faculty, and students steer through these issues will help demonstrate both the strengths and the limitations of technologicallyaided modalities for learning.

FACULTY IDENTITY IN A WIRED WORLD

Instructor decisions about professional identity, or what being present in the classroom "looks like," shape all learning environments. Institutional context might determine some of the norms. Policies or entrenched practices, for example, could dictate form of address from students toward faculty members and vice-versa. The same goes for standards of dress, requirements for office hours, and basic rules of professional conduct. If, for instance, a faculty member routinely misses class sessions, an institution's faculty handbook likely outlines sanctions. But universities have, traditionally, given faculty significant leeway to determine how best to structure the learning environment, including discretion regarding self-presentation and comportment.

Without question, technology alters the interaction between students and faculty. Some of these changes relate directly to instructional persona and presence. When, for example, students accustomed primarily to the traditional classroom arrive in an unfamiliar learning space, they bring expectations from that setting with them. The role of the professor, after all, comes across readily in face-to-face learning. Students show up in the assigned classroom at the set time and "Professor X" awaits. Lecture, discussion leadership, making assignments, giving tests (or the pop quiz!), and responding to questions all make clear who assumes the primary responsibility for setting the learning agenda, communicating information, and assessing the work. In spite of the fact that variation exists depending

on course size and type and the practices of the faculty member in charge, the basics "feel" well established. In the virtual classroom, however, such interactions get mediated technologically. Instructors must navigate professional presence in environments that might be synchronous or asynchronous, shaped by a particular learning management system, and perhaps even with some learning resources already established and not open for change. Interactions between professors and students, for example, might be via video chat, email, text or social media. With the ubiquity of handheld devices and instantaneous communication, determining the parameters for responsiveness can prove challenging for both faculty and students.

Not surprisingly, given the dominance of the face-to-face model of learning, much of the research on online education, as with other technologically driven options, highlights the importance of instructor presence.[25] For religious studies professors, this element often proves essential. As the Walvoord study on introductory courses in religion showed, students frequently register for these courses expecting interaction, and specifically interaction regarding beliefs and values.[26] So if guidance by and exchanges with trained professionals constitutes the desirable classroom experience, determining how to achieve this goal in a virtual medium becomes a central question.

One common approach, "designing online courses around the Community of Inquiry framework (Simunich, 2014)," claims to result in "purposeful choices that can facilitate increased teacher-student interaction, promoting increased instructor presence in online courses."[27] In sum, this method functions to establish both faculty and students as "real" and multi-dimensional persons in the virtual environment by creating the conditions for a meaningful exchange not only about the subject matter at hand, but with the various perspectives each person brings to that space. Walking through some of the "how-tos" regarding faculty presence and role in an online course demonstrates that faculty can and do address these issues meaningfully.

Online professors in asynchronous courses often nod to the traditional classroom and its norms by providing a brief video greeting to students at the outset of a course or using an interactive video application such as Flipgrid. This one small element establishes presence by showing a face to those enrolled, letting them hear a voice, and, ideally, providing some hints about the personality sitting on the other end of the computer. The faculty member reminds students that they exist not as Siri or Alexa or Cortana, not as an information repository. As automated as some elements of the course can seem, this one element can communicate that someone stands ready to do more than monitor the progress of a course. A trained and qualified faculty member is present with them. Instructors also commonly require students to post images or videos of themselves in return to kickstart the "getting to know you" process. Here students mimic the familiar norms of social media, and they might even discover commonalities with others that will be of benefit for team projects or study groups. For faculty, this opening exercise not only establishes hints of student personalities, but also can gauge class members' levels of investment with a subject, potential conflicts with time zone or other commitments, or even determine useful pedagogical approaches. If, for example, several students mention they enjoy streaming certain types of movies, then the professor might consider incorporating film to illustrate key concepts. Likewise,

if the course demands a video presentation for a grade, asking for a video introduction can serve as a low stakes assessment of student skills with that task.

Presence also gets mediated via accessibility. Students need to know that a real person will respond to the equivalent of a hand raised in class, needing to catch a minute before or after a session, or making use of office hours. At Florida International University, for example, all religious studies syllabi reviewed include a section entitled "course Communication." Daniel Alvarez at FIU tells students in his Intro to Religion that "Communication in this course will take place via Email." By contrast, Erin Weston instructs her Magic and Religion students (both in the area with her contact information as well as in the body of her syllabus) to use Blackboard's messaging system.[28] Given that the immediacy of handheld devices with time-lag coming across as inattention, many instructors opt to state directly the length of time before students might anticipate a reply. PJ Levesque at California State University Fullerton writes in his Spring 2015 Introduction to the New Testament syllabus: "Email responses are normally returned within 12 hours (seven days a week). I normally check Email periodically from 8 am to 8 pm daily. Please resend if you do not receive a response within 24 hours, and leave a voicemail." This degree of specificity helps facilitate what will constitute connection. Virtual office hours can also appear, if a faculty member or an institution deems them useful. A variety of familiar technologies now make such interactions possible face-to-face including Skype, Facetime, Google Hangouts, and Zoom.

Good course design also intentionally structures accessibility by putting the professor into the instructional space both as a provider of content *and* as someone with whom students engage. From the earliest days of online learning, video presentations often characterized instruction. The choice to replicate the traditional lecture (45 minutes or so), however, can read to students as unimaginative, dated, and distant. In fact, the critiques of the forays by elite universities into MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses)[29] often begin here. This set-up tilts decidedly in one direction—the dissemination of information goes out, but not much else comes to the student from a faculty member. As Dan Butin writes,

> MOOCs cannot be compared to traditional courses. Yes, they may replace and/or supplement existing courses, but they are fundamentally different. And that difference is exactly the kind of interactivity—of engagement, feedback, grading—that is at the heart of the give and take of deep learning in higher education. Without such engagement, MOOCs might as well be (and have been compared to) the correspondence courses of the 1800s or your local public radio or TV station. It's just information transfer; not true knowledge development.[30]

Indeed, even the massive face-to-face lecture course generally includes smaller discussion sections or the opportunity for a student to pose the occasional question. A good professor will also respond to the "feel" of a room, gauging students' responsiveness and adjusting accordingly. Online, this work requires instructional effort even when elements of a course are "canned." Professors must monitor, for example, how students access content, ask for feedback (even via simple rating systems), and make changes as necessary.

Much of the research into successful instructional outcomes using online video follow

what Hibbert reports from a smaller study:[31] Shorter-duration clips keep students' attention more so than longer presentations. Providing video to clarify key concepts, highlight core material, and offer memorable insights allows students to access the expertise of a faculty member in a more digestible format. Moreover, embracing brevity means that generation of new material (to respond to current events, say) proves easy. The professionally produced Khan Academy or Crash Course efforts demonstrate the concept, as well as exhibit a range of video options other than the "talking head," from narrated visuals, screencasts that include motion such as a pointer or a problem being solved on a whiteboard, simulations of activities, or even interviews.[32] Some video might include the professor's face (solely or in addition to other content) to emulate "live" conversation cues for listeners, others might not. Notably, these resources do not have to come from the faculty member of record to be useful. FIU's Daniel Alvarez course, for example, includes video from several religious studies faculty members talking about their area of specialty.[33] Formats can vary, but these videos all function to bring the professor, and her or his expertise, to the student.

The feedback mechanisms also construct instructor presence in an online course. This effort encompasses both monitoring student attendance and assessing student progress. Initially, the former might not seem important, but the self-motivated nature of online learning often combines with the complexity of students' life situations to touch off problems with successful course completion. Engaged faculty can easily spot these trends and address them.[34] Most frequently, this process works similarly to a face-to-face learning experience: the instructor notes if a student fails to appear regularly or to complete assignments. Technology, however, eases the workload. Learning management systems track every sign in and are readily available to the instructor of record. Additionally, courses structured with regular assignments and participation activities also make such behavior apparent. Once noted, the faculty member who dispatches a quick check in with a student, or alerts campus systems designed to do that work, can diagnose a problem before it gets out of control. This mechanism can also assess the need for academic or other support. In fact, the online environment managed well at the university level bolsters the work of the faculty member in this endeavor. Filtering specific analytics provided by the learning management system through a predictive model for student success can alert a faculty member to students who might require additional attention or for whom academic intervention might alter outcomes.[35]

Assessing student work, as in the traditional classroom, remains a powerful link between the faculty member and a student in terms of shaping learning. While some persons envision online learning as completely mechanized, a well-constructed class takes advantage of the many assessment options available and makes visible the faculty member's responsiveness to students. For larger sections that rely on quizzing, most testing modules allow for the professor to load response feedback to exam questions that can release immediately upon completion of an exercise or after the examination closes. In this way, a student knows when reviewing a completed quiz not only what got scored as correct or incorrect, but also can see an explanation of the correct answer and perhaps even references to where to seek out further information in the reading/viewing. Some systems even connect to further learning objects on a topic. Of course, subsequent questions can then be

handled in personal interactions as well. For papers, presentations, or other assignments, instructors might respond via rubric or upload marked documents, or both, much as in the traditional classroom. Here, however, the online environment shows off advantages. During the drafting stages of a project, or in conferences about how to improve a graded work, conferencing tools such as Zoom provide for the possibility of conversation with simultaneous file sharing. Instead of an instructor simply making comments on a static draft, interactive editing in Google Docs, accessing work products in stages, or seeing the work of comments of peer reviewers or support personnel such as tutors, can all identify where improvements can be made and provide a faculty member with a record of how a final edition was developed.

This model of online education, far from removing the instructor, instead focuses on intensive faculty involvement. Pedagogically, setting up an online course and letting it run without an engaged professor would work only for a handful of highly motivated students and would, as the critics note, focus solely on delivery of information rather than promoting analysis and processing of materials. At best, it would correspond roughly to the lecture hall with several hundred students in attendance and perhaps a discussion section (here, too, graded by assistants and not the professor). As noted above, however, religious studies programs typically stress discussion and interaction more suited to smaller classes. Effective teaching that emulates those features online, then, demands significant investment of faculty time not only in setting up the course, but also in learning to work in a classroom that does not operate within traditional time and space boundaries. Managing presence so that teaching does not become a 24/7 job becomes the larger challenge.

The handling of discussion forums demonstrates the point. Although many faculty see these course elements as a student space, assignments here present an opportunity for faculty-student interaction.[36] For instance, Carrie Duncan's Jesus in Myth, Tradition, and History syllabus at UNC says: "In general, I prefer to leave the discussion in your hands, so my posting activity will be fairly limited." Pedagogically, Duncan explains that she sees "the limited role of the instructor in the discussion to be a distinct advantage of online courses" because "in the classroom, discussions often rely upon the consistent input of the instructor, while online courses provide the opportunity for students to manage the discussion themselves." For Duncan, the professorial role revolves around keeping the class on track. She tells the students: "Generally I will check in the middle of the week to stir the pot and make any necessary clarifications and then will post on Sunday afternoon to wrap up some of the week's points, clarify some points, and, at times, offer some additional thoughts or suggestions." In this way, she manages expectations of students who might want her feedback, although she goes on to underscore her availability by email for any specific questions or issues.

The University of Rhode Island's guide for managing online discussion recommends a slightly different emphasis, one supported by multiple research studies including their own. "Students told us that for online discussion to be effective and engaging they need ... instructor presence! They want you to not only participate, but also to help push the discussion to the next level." Professorial interaction done well prevents discussion from bogging down, makes certain the key points of the material receive attention, demonstrates

nuanced reflection, connects units of study, and provides opportunities to commend student insight in a manner other than grading. Significantly, reminding students that the professor not only assesses work, but also is open to talking to and learning from students shifts the classroom dynamic. Students become aware that their insights matter and they learn what it means, and what it requires, to engage with a subject-matter expert.

Other interactive options exist. The pervasiveness of social media outlets and student familiarity with their use renders these tools attractive to some instructors. Desired outcomes include more student responsiveness thanks to facility with a given interface as well as the inclusion of a wider circle of commenters. For instance, McCutcheon and Touna used a Facebook page for their Spring 2010 seminar (which met face-to-face) on The Politics of Religious Authenticity. In the course description, they say: "The course has a group page on Facebook where class discussion will be posted and continued, with the involvement of people at other schools." While the course description does not specify the identity of these "others," and the links to the syllabus and page no longer work, the description remains intriguing. The option of extending the classroom to embrace both faculty and students across the lines of multiple campuses could yield some intriguing conversations. But the use of social media also presents challenges.

In her online courses, Nisha Malhorta, a tenured instructor at the Vancouver School of Economics, observes some of what she learned about successfully employing a technology like Facebook. She notes, on the positive side that "Facebook groups resemble an online café … allowing students to (a) chat in real-time, (b) discuss in virtual-time, and (c) share materials through straightforward file upload." But she also issues two important warnings: "A Facebook page creates a public presence online. Anyone on the Internet, even those that don't have a Facebook account, can view this page. By default, comments can be viewed by anyone on the Internet (Pineda)" and "Students tend to be concerned about their online persona—saying something unintelligent is a big concern for them. (Selwyn) As a result, they are less likely to participate on a Facebook page than a closed group."[37] Her caution about student privacy concerns reminds faculty that they must understand how "public" technologies work and how, as an administrator for the course interactions on those sites, manage any uses appropriately. More intriguingly, she raises questions about what kinds of interactivity are appropriate to a professional space. In seeking to make their presence "real" or "authentic" to students, faculty might step on to more troubling ground by employing media that also communicate personal, non-school-related content. If classified as reporting personnel by Title IX, faculty might be privy to information about a student that crosses those lines. Additionally, for faculty at public universities, any form of public expression in a professional capacity can be considered a job record and may be subject to Freedom of Information requests. These records could fall under academic regulations about speech as discussed in Chapter Four as well.

Still, accessing a more familiar technology might not only promote connection to a faculty member, but the most useful features of social media can broaden how one defines what constitutes a teaching interaction. The immediacy and rapidity of these tools on handheld devices proves particularly useful. Lee Gilmore, for instance, in his Summer 2014 Religion & Political Controversy Course at San José State University, required students to

follow him on Facebook and Twitter "in order to receive timely content from these & other media sources." His updates avoid the clunkiness of a posting on a course page, sending out a class message, or emailing, while students get a glimpse of the professor working in real time, and see how an academic effectively uses these tools in a professional context. Other possibilities might include live tweeting or Facebook live videos of events or visits to religious communities, where permitted, any of which could transform what could be an isolated student experience into one marked by connection. The list of possibilities gets bounded only by the imagination of the professor.

When professorial interaction gets mediated through technology, the decisions about self-presentation typically become more intentional and the choices about how to manage presence require more consideration than is necessary in a structured face-to-face setting. The University of Hawaii orientation for online teaching faculty takes this issue on directly, noting different approaches to making faculty presence visible and to demonstrating personality. The basic assumption undergirding these guidelines, however, affirms that humanity takes precedence over technology. For example, the site says:

> Students need to feel that the teacher is present, listening and contributing to their learning through feedback, validation of ideas, constructive criticism and class management … Allowing your own personality to show in your online contributions and facilitation is a good way to enable students to see you as a 'real' person rather than an entity behind a screen.

The automation of learning, or the idea that a faculty member generates a course and lets it run automatically with little additional effort or concern, gets explicitly rejected. Instead, the qualities sought in these directives posit technology as a means of connection or a modality for extending the classroom experience beyond its physical borders. The more pressing concern becomes helping online faculty become aware of how face-to-face models of instruction still set the standards for instructor demeanor and practice. Indeed, none of these ideals of online education see technology as usurping the instructor's role.

How that might change in the future, even the near future, remains, however, an open question. Adaptive technologies, for example, are emerging as a promising instructional resource. That is, instead of putting the burden for content delivery and any requisite adjustments to student needs solely on the faculty member, these tools use "predictive modeling, learning analytics, and the latest research in brain science, cognition, and pedagogy"[38] to adjust curricular materials to the specific learner. While likely more suited to STEM disciplines and large-format courses, and demanding (at this time) a sophistication that might limit development to resource-rich universities cooperating with private industries, the shift in the professional identity of a faculty member here also becomes clear. Likewise, and far more pressing, the materials packaged by professional publishers, as well as those produced on a campus but made more widely available or classed as OER (Open Educational Resources),[39] change up what constitutes teaching. Who creates course content, certifies the acquisition of skill or knowledge, or confers a credential all can change. Content consultancy or freelance course development, for example, could become a primary avenue of employment. Faculty working with students at institutions,

then, could potentially become less common and those who remained might focus more on coaching learners in applications of knowledge rather than on content delivery. For now, however, faculty in these courses and institutions sponsoring their work have taken seriously building courses and programs that adapt what instructor presence means and what it represents into these newer formats. The remaining issue to be considered, then, becomes how technology shapes what it is to be a student.

STUDENT IDENTITY IN A WIRED CLASSROOM

Just as faculty identity shifts with the use of classroom technologies, so, too, must students adjust their expectations of what role they assume in newer modes of education. Philip DiSalvio, Dean of the College of Advancing and Professional Studies at the University of Massachusetts Boston, states the situation plainly: "Students must be willing to change their way of learning. The cliché of the sage on the stage is gone. In an online learning setting students are more responsible for their learning and consequently must be prepared for that responsibility."[40] To consider his assessment, both practical and pedagogical realities must come into focus, as evidenced in this section. But the burdens do not fall on students alone. Institutions and faculty also must assist in easing this transition for learners accustomed to the face-to-face environment. Making clear what students need to bring to the table, communicating strategies for navigating the material and the format, and creating support structures to lend aid when necessary all help ensure both student retention and success in classrooms shaped by new technologies.

A learner's obligation in a technologically rich environment begins with clarity on the tools to be utilized and who provides them. In the online arena, student responsibility begins with equipping their own "classroom." Instructors (with the support of institutions), must set the tone here, and course syllabi often go beyond typical information about goals, textbooks, assignments, grading, and class policies, and include sections on technical requirements and the skills demanded to do the work.[41] Unfortunately, at many institutions this information comes in boilerplate form from various university offices. As a result, it can get lengthy, as well as overly technical and drenched in legalese. After all, there can be a need to address questions about what hardware, software, apps, and social media are employed, how to use them, where to get support, policies governing their appropriate academic use, and the like. But protracted documents with links for additional verbiage rarely get read carefully in any format and are perhaps easiest to ignore online. For most students, this information looks like a lengthy service contract where one quickly clicks "I Agree" to get down to business with little, if any, attention paid to the details. However, the minutia matters. Subsequent trouble in the course due to insufficient or outdated hardware, lack of the right software, limited access to a good broadband connection, or the inability to use a learning management system can follow.[42] In short, a smartphone or even a tablet might not be the best tool for navigating these technically mediated courses.

To encourage student familiarity with the instructional context and forestall problems, schools sometimes produce video guides[43] or other forms of "basic training" for enrolled learners. Interactive check lists for assessing both student temperament and savviness with technology, for example, can also be useful.[44] Faculty members can step in as well.

Quizzing students or providing a worksheet[45] on requirements at the outset of a course can aim toward at least minimal awareness of the technical competencies necessary for navigating material. But it should be noted that this level of student preparation works contrary to the notion that, with little effort, any student can receive an education from any place in the world. For learners expecting an educational environment that demands nothing out of the ordinary from them, this gap can be problematic.

That gap extends into other imaginations of what elements constitute the technology-mediated classroom. Institutional marketing initiatives too often promote the idea that an online education offers students "flexibility"[46] and will not be difficult to incorporate into one's life.[47] Instructional designer and online teacher Papia Bawa observes that this advertising works but can take an erroneous turn. Since "face-to-face presence is not required," students can assume that "an online platform will be less demanding on time, will require less effort to manage workload, and will not disrupt the learners' lifestyle."[48] What gets lost in such characterizations is the fact that without significant self-discipline, success cannot follow. Indeed, lacking the traditional prompts of a scheduled time and place, adjusting one's activities to complete tasks on deadline can become daunting for students accustomed to a more passive learning persona.

As in any classroom, faculty assistance helps with the necessary adjustments. Good course design can anticipate and alleviate some of the problems that arise. Layout of a course site, for instance, ideally shows the student the totality of the work to be accomplished for the term on day one, including every graded assignment and its assessment criteria. At this point, as West and Shoemaker indicate, choices can follow: "The learners could actually work ahead and submit assignments in advance if allowed to do so. This is often a preferred route for nontraditional students who are working hard to balance school, work, or family responsibilities."[49] Another common approach to navigating the new structure and establishing necessary learning habits for good outcomes comes in establishing specific course rhythms. Levesque, for instance, sets the due dates for all assignments (quizzes, workbooks, postings, etc.) on Sundays at 11:55 p.m. and thus alleviates the need for students to remember any other timing sequence. Similarly, Duncan builds interactive participation into her courses and makes sure her assignments support that goal via consistent deadlines. She writes, "Your first post of the week must be made by Wednesday at midnight (EDT) and the second by Sunday at noon." This timing never changes and thus allows students to plan their schedules accordingly. Such timing sequences replicate, in some way, the pattern of a regular meeting schedule and thus bow to traditional learning structures as opposed to eliminating or revolutionizing them.

Providing insight into the pedagogical methodology also generates a helpful environment for this "new and different" student. Sometimes, simply making clear the instructor's purpose assists the learner in determining how to tackle a course component. For example, Prea Persaud says on the syllabus for her Spring 2017 Introduction to World Religions at the University of Florida that she uses weekly quizzes to assure comprehension of the material covered in reading, discussion, and lecture. Moreover, her students get left on their own with their books and notes available during testing, as opposed to completing the work in a proctored environment. To control for students who might be tempted simply

to look up information instead of mastering it through study, Persaud issues the following instruction (emphasis hers): "The quiz is timed, so it is necessary for you to know all the material prior to starting the quiz ***(i.e., there will not be enough time to look up each answer in your notes, so you should prepare as if your notes were not available to you)***. You will have 10 minutes to complete each quiz." In this way, students see that her goal for testing is not to assess their skills in locating information. Accordingly, when working through material, they can shape their efforts to achieve that result.

In other instances, professors might reveal to students how their work relates to a specific learning outcome. Again, this practice helps clarify what ends an assignment serves. For example, on her Fall 2016 syllabus for The Human Religious Experience at George Mason University, Susan E. Bond links course goals to each unit on the schedule. Thus Week 8 labels the topic under consideration as Scripture, Symbols, and Rituals in Islam. The assignments include a reading on approaching the Qur'an, a video on the Hajj, completion of a blog assignment, and, from some of the students (assigned by alphabet), a report on a visit to a mosque. Bond says these activities move the student toward three goals: the ability to interpret the symbolic language of the major religious traditions; skill in comparing and contrasting the practical and active elements of religious ritual and worship that "tie and bind" individuals to community and divinity; and the application of literal, moral, and allegorical interpretive approaches to reading sacred texts. By allowing students these "peeks under the hood" of her course design, Bond signals to them not only *how* to approach the materials, but also makes clear what they can carry away upon successful completion of the assignments. Ideally, this approach adjusts the student emphases in the course from merely achieving a specific grade, for example, and toward acquiring and/or honing specific knowledge and abilities.

Reconceiving the student role in the online world also demands reflection on how to define what constitutes "support" (outside of the technical realm) for a learner positioned apart from a traditional campus. If Edmundson is right and learning happens in community, then how to mitigate feelings of isolation from other students and/or to establish connection between the course and a student's life needs attention. As seen previously, interactive discussion often becomes the mechanism to effect, and online religious studies courses tend to feature this element as a primary component. Familiarity and ease with social media might even make such interaction more appropriate for students who understand communication as primarily driven by technology. Other activities can link in-class material to the locations where students live. For instance, Bruce Grelle, in his Spring 2015 Religion in American Public Schools Course at California State University, Chico, assigns a final project where the students must take a field trip to a local religious site after doing research on a particular tradition. Working either on their own OR in a team, this assignment accomplishes multiple goals. It features an up-close look at a tradition the class explored in action. It demands students perform and present research. Most significantly, it shifts the burden for learning to the student; no mediator explains what a learner sees and experiences in this exercise. Instead, students must take the knowledge they have gained and apply their insight to what unfolds on the visit. But it also draws the student out of their home and into their community. The relevance of the course to lived experiences becomes clearer in

this assignment, even as it reminds the learner that they are connected to other people and not solely reliant on an electronic device for encounters with this material.

A fundamental shift in the student relationship to a faculty member emerges here. The online context not only draws, but caters to a significant number of non-traditional, adult learners.[50] To expect docileness, the simple absorbing of whatever the instructor puts out there, from a college-level student who brings significant life and employment experience to the table, misunderstands not only this population, but the nature of learning as well. In his writing on adult education, theorist Paolo Freire observed many years ago that the "banking" concept, where teachers narrate information and students function as little more than receptacles, inevitably falls short of authentic learning. He writes, "The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world. The more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them.""[51] In such a climate, no interrogation of the knowledge being accessed and norms that produced it can happen, no new understandings of the world can be generated. By contrast, when a diverse group of students brings their individual expertise and their located knowledges to the learning environment, teachers can engage those students, and students can engage one another, as authentic learning partners.

Without doubt, this adjustment asks students to assume a far more self-directed posture in the classroom. They must be willing to dive not only into the material that shapes the fundamental core of a given subject area, but also to apply critical insight and bring that learning alive in their lives and communities. Creating space for this type of student changes the role of teacher as well. David Vishanoff says in his writing on his own pedagogical journey, "I am slowly learning to let their questions and interests shape the questions I ask in class."[52] Assignments that reflect such a stance follow. For example, Jack Turner's Fall 2017 online Comparative Religion course at the University of South Carolina offers the choice of completing a paper built around "the student immersing themselves in a religious tradition of their choosing." Instead of being focused on receiving transmissions of information, student generated experiences in a community become the knowledge and form the basis for critical reflection. In constructing these experiences, students and faculty together push the boundaries of what might be known. The learning also builds connections to a subject that might continue after completion of a course or, at least, the skills to engage in similar processes in the future.

More self-directed students need faculty members in the role of a mentor,[53] or one guiding (but not directing) the learning experience. This role demands a significant investment of time and energy from students and instructors. Christopher Chacon, at California State University Fullerton, illustrates the point. In his Fall 2014 Introduction to Christianity online course, he required students to email him four times during the term. The messages sent served as both a "check in" and a "reflection" on the learning material, but the assignment also functioned to demonstrate skills in professional communication. Notably, this type of assignment opens dialogue between student and professor regarding the student's well-being in the course. This highlighting of faculty supportiveness toward

a student's development at an early stage in her/his academic career can establish the learning environment as one marked by collaboration. But it demands work. The syllabus, after all, includes the following note: "Mr. Chacon will send a reply to all Email reflections and include an update on your progress." Assuming a class size of 45 (the Fall 2017 cap), that would be 180 emails over the course of the term with a full complement of students enrolled. That total would be in addition to the other scheduled feedback mechanisms and any additional informal communication launched as the result of such interaction. On the surface, as in the final grade assessment, this activity might seem rather insignificant. In an entry level, General Education course, however, geared to a population that might feel distanced from faculty attention and support, this work creates moments of personal connection. It assures students that their instructor "sees" them. And it does what Russell Olwell, an associate dean in the School of Education and Social Policy at Merrimack College, defines as mentoring. He writes that discussing "course topics, ideas or concepts with a faculty member outside of class … [and reviewing] academic performance with a faculty member … form the core of what we call mentoring at the college level, [and they] are recognized as one of the keys to long-term student success."[54]

The online environment provides a good test case of changed understandings of what constitutes the student role thanks to the mediated nature of the interactions between students and faculty as well as the largely adult and non-traditional student audience. But if the question of how technology shapes the student role comes to the forefront in online education, the impact on other types of classrooms must also come into play. Because without question, technology changes how people access and process information. With handheld devices poised to link students directly to vast stores of knowledge at the push of a button, what students require from the classroom experience itself comes into focus.

REDEFINING EVERY CLASSROOM

Online teaching of religious studies, however, whether synchronous or asynchronous, by no means corners the market on the use of technology in the classroom. In his work, Michael Geoffrey Brown reports,

> Instructors are increasingly incorporating online tools into face-to-face teaching approaches, such that these sorts of instructional blends are forecasted to become "the new traditional model" (Ross & Gage, 2006, p. 168; Norberg et al., 2011 and Watson, 2008). As of 2010, 2/3 of students enrolled in degree seeking programs in higher education had received instruction with online tools (Radford, 2011). Results of a recent survey by the Higher Education Research Institute report that nearly half of the instructors surveyed were using online tools to supplement face-to-face instruction of undergraduates (Eagan et al., 2014).[55]

From the simple practice of posting syllabi online, to click-in or scan-in attendance, to making classroom announcements, to posting readings/audio/video, to administering quizzes, to receiving student assignments, the advent of electronic options eases basic classroom management tasks. Instructors also take advantage of an array of materials to enhance learning such as streaming video or images that bring alive different cultural

worlds and practices or "live feedback" during lectures, presentations, or films. Items once dependent on trips to the library, requiring familiarity with the card catalog or with calling up journal volumes or other media in the reference room, or taking a trip to the rare book and manuscript collections, now can be held literally in hand. Thus, classroom tasks such as comparison of distinct versions of documents, including ancient versions, happen almost instantaneously on screen. The driving question is not so much if technology is in the classroom, but rather how to employ these various technological options effectively to generate learning opportunities.

In many places, technology can function as an "add on" to traditional instructional strategies; in others, a "flipped" classroom emerges as the norm where technology effects the transfer of information outside of class and the in-person component focuses on discussion and problem solving. But like online education, as Education Professor Seema Arif summarizes, "It is not just use of technology or innovation but 'reinventing student teacher relationships' through technology and innovation that is best source of engagement and thus 'best practice." She goes on to argue that, "in order to indulge in this best practice, sometimes we may have to give lead to our students and involve them in teaching and learning activities as partners."[56] Johan Loeclx, an AI researcher, points to one possibility of what such a partnership might entail when he concurs that, "the role of teaching in the classroom will probably evolve from 'chalk and talk' teaching towards tutoring, where the role of the teacher moves from transmitting knowledge to inspiring and facilitating and mediating discussion, teamwork, and collaboration."[57] Instructors utilizing technological mediation in the classroom take up this mantle by making the focus of interactions with learners activities that promote achieving depth of understanding and the application of specific skills.

Take, for instance, the pervasive practice of asking to students "post" on a discussion board about assigned readings prior to in-class consideration of the material. Garry Sparks' Fall 2017 section of The Human Religious Experience at George Mason University uses this technique. He says on the syllabus (all emphases his):

> By no later than 9:00am prior to either Tuesday's or Thursday's class each week you must post at least a paragraph (a minimum of a few of sentences) response (critical insight(s) or question(s)) germane to the respective assigned reading(s) for that week's material. While you may bring in your thoughts on readings already discussed in class in any given posting, each posting must at least focus on a reading (or readings … your choice) which have ***not*** yet been discussed in class. As the semester unfolds these weekly postings may/should also include replies to your classmates' comments.

Pedagogically, he seeks to transform what happens in class from information transmission into more thoughtful analysis. He says: "Class sessions will provide additional information on a week's topic to help you further think about and understand what you have read, but class will not merely repeat what is in the readings." The outside preparation will also be the basis for both announced and unannounced class work including quizzes, small-group work, and even engaged reading assignments that serve to teach critical reading skills.

Clearly, technology does not have to be utilized to achieve such an end. Seminar formats always pushed in this direction. Rodney Duke at Appalachian State University, for example, adds this personal note on his syllabus for Biblical Interpretation: "I see teaching, ideally, as 'causing' learning to take place … In a seminar-type class such as this one, one of my goals is to cause students to become self-learners. That is why I am placing responsibility on the class members to learn outside of class [to] and to teach one another in class." Technology, however, can aid in making such an effort come to life. Lynn Huber and Dan Clancy suggest that teaching biblical interpretation can be enhanced when students engage with artistic or musical renderings of a text. They use Genesis 1:26-27 as a model and supplement with works by Chagall and images from medieval manuscripts, to reveal "the complex ways in which an image reads a text" and how "it can be illuminating to show more than one image interpreting the same text as a way of highlighting how texts yield multiple meanings."[58] Ready access to a variety of option for such exercises provides instructors an opportunity. Instead of lecturing about how interpretations get formed and communicated within a given context, they can engage students in working through examples of how it happens and in recognizing that images (and thus interpretations) do not necessarily communicate across cultures or generations. Given the "wired" nature of the modern classroom, students can search out additional examples and lead the conversation in directions the instructor may not anticipate.

In each of these illustrations, however, faculty continue to exercise significant control over what constitutes the topic under consideration and how the work within the classroom will unfold. Indeed, many faculty members would argue that this set-up proves necessary at the undergraduate level. In an age where religious studies professionals decry American's religious illiteracy,[59] or where religiosity itself is on a rapid decline among college students,[60] the classroom remains a kind of last bastion to familiarize students with "core" materials and concepts. In this regard, the role of the faculty member as "guide" or "coach" comes to the forefront. The use of these external mechanisms does not supplant traditional teaching. But if that "teaching" happens primarily outside of the classroom space and demands student preparation for the interactive elements to work and to make the step that Duke wants to see of students teaching one another, the construction of the various elements requires significant consideration. That is precisely what an instructor must do when generating a course. Cynthia Brame at Vanderbilt University's Center for Teaching suggests strategies such as incentivizing and assessing student preparation.[61] For example, online quizzing, worksheets associated with the reading and viewing, as well as posting or blogging can provide students with earned points (even if only for completion), while also providing an instructor with valuable feedback about the level of student comprehension of core content.

An example from a "flipped classroom" shows the process in action. Richard Newton blogged about his pedagogical foray into this world in a lower-level, general education Comparative Religions course at an urban public university. After students prepare with short videos, reading, and a study guide that focuses on terms, concepts, and makes space for their own questions, they come to class. In describing the face-to-face experience, he writes:

> I divide in-class time between review and experimentation. Students work in small groups to review their study guides, answering each other's questions. We take up any remaining issues as a class. Personally, I answer questions as a last resort. Students have each other, library privileges, and web-enabled devices to get answers. I put my two cents in only after deeming that the asker has sufficiently invested in trying to find the answer on his or her own.

In this way, he affirms what Neil Morris, the director of digital learning at the University of Leeds, argues comprises the far more urgent need of students in today's learning environment. He says faculty must help learners to "cope with the massive amounts of information that needs to be searched, refined, categorised, and understood."[62] In short, as learners get inundated with data on religion via the internet and social media, from their own communities, in pop culture formats, in addition to juggling more traditional sources, building critical facility in sorting it all out and determining perspective/biases and assessing its academic soundness becomes a central task for educators. By doing that work in Newton's course under his watchful eye, students begin not only to gain basic knowledge about a tradition and how scholars do the work of analysis and comparison, but they also learn how to search out that information and evaluate the sources that provide it.

The interest in using technology creatively among scholars is, without doubt, growing. THATCamp (The Humanities and Technology Camp) at national AAR and SBL sessions, for instance, breaks down into various sessions that Talk (group discussion around a topic or question of interest), Make (collaborative working sessions with a product outcome), Teach (instruction in skills) and Play (experiment with various technologies) to generate enthusiasm about what might be accomplished in the teaching of religion with technology. Other dedicated panels at local and national meetings provide demonstrations of techniques or exercises designed to be applicable to various teaching settings.[63] For teachers whose schooling preceded the use of modern technologies, these sessions become an opportunity to think about the classroom in new ways, whether on campus or extending beyond the traditional bricks and mortar buildings. For all teachers, they provide important assistance in keeping current, given the rapidity with which new instructional tools emerge, by aiming to engage students accustomed to accessing the world via technology as well as to anticipate how the need to understand and use various technologies will be necessary skills post-graduation.

CONCLUSIONS

Course delivery has always been more complicated than most persons without experience in the classroom, and/or with some involvement in program administration, realize. In writing about her experience as both a faculty member and a department chair, Ann Burlein says: "Administration has given me a different sense of how hard it is to teach and administer a curriculum (from the content of courses to outcomes assessment) that is interesting or compelling, much less radical."[64] Her statement also hints at why. Campuses, in attempts to demonstrate accountability to their constituencies, place increased emphasis on linking content and outcomes, and outcomes to assessment, and assessment to job-ready skills. In the process, they often (intentionally and unintentionally) circumscribe

the freedom of a professor to probe the edges of a field of inquiry, to challenge traditional norms, or push student comfort levels with an idea. In short, institutional imperatives can make generating authentic learning opportunities difficult. Burlein's observation, considered in this light, hearkens back to Smith's attentiveness to the maze of institutional concerns and constraints exerted on teaching in higher education. Mode of instruction simply adds a new set of complicating factors to the list.

The previous pages have focused on how technologically aided instruction can and does proceed. But this chapter has not dealt with a separate, and also vital, concern. Without doubt, the digitalization of the classroom can allow administrators to "peer over the shoulder" of instructors and analyze the metrics deemed valuable to an institution's goals.[65] For example, it becomes easier to track faculty behaviors such as the provision of a clear syllabus with all the requisite course objectives, outcomes and assessment tools, to examine what types of learning activities an instructor provides (from video mini-lectures to reading assignments), or to evaluate how long it takes an instructor to respond to student questions as well as the turn-around time for grading of assignments. What used to go on "behind closed doors" becomes more public. These tools perform similar functions with respect to students. Faculty and administrators can assess how often a learner engages with a course, the completion rate of assignments, and if they are hitting benchmarks for material mastery. And while the use of learning analytics can generate helpful information for a faculty member in determining if and where additional intervention might be needed for a class or for select students, this mechanization of learning can, as Burlein suggests, get in the way of pushing more difficult boundaries that might require working less methodically and more creatively.

Remember Smith, however, also asserted that as an educator, "What, above all, I want the students to know is that matters are always more complex than they first appear, and that this is liberating rather than paralyzing." In considering the adaptation of various technologies to higher education, this maxim also holds. Yes, the potential applications can be quite frightening with regard to what becomes possible to envision in terms of classroom dynamics, employment trends, and what constitutes learning, but there is still a tremendous liberative benefit that can result from conversations about the pedagogical possibilities and the challenges to achieve them. Critical dialogues about what constitutes learning and how to construct conditions for the advancement of knowledge in a variety of different types of classrooms have sprung up in recent years. In an era when scholarship and publications had eclipsed institutional service and, to a somewhat lesser degree, teaching as the defining hallmark of a faculty member, the debates about the use of technology in the classroom (or, indeed, the development of a "virtual" classroom) has reinvigorated consideration about the faculty role and teaching practices.

If, as Burlein contends, religious studies classrooms should be about offering students a "broader understanding of the diverse kinds of force that religion can exercise in their lives and worlds,"[66] then this conversation is long overdue in the field. Moreover, if the world students experience gets communicated to them largely via technology, then engaging the same in the classroom, even to the extent of using technology to form the classroom, seems a reasonable pedagogical maneuver. But the adaptation of faculty and

students to new formats must not only deal with the challenges to identity and learning outlined here. Increasing recognitions of the segregated nature of social media[67] and of the resources available on the internet[68] raise questions already pertinent to university campuses: if fostering diversity is central to the mission of education and why as well as how that diversity can be realized. That topic forms the foundation of the next chapter.

Chapter Four

INTRODUCTION

Teaching religious studies in today's higher education environment inevitably means stepping into a potential political maelstrom. If the issues around the practice of religion did not generate enough contentiousness on their own, the correlation of discussing such controversial topics in a university setting where, as Ellen Hazelkorn suggests, a decline of the social compact that binds a university to its public[1] has taken hold, creates a difficult bind for many faculty members and programs. In fact, the widespread critique of the university from many quarters, but most pointedly from conservative media, think tanks, and legislators, finds root in issues fundamental to the academic study of religion. How to define and understand diversity, for instance, stands out among the chief points of complaint about institutions of higher education and offers an interesting launching point for an examination of the contemporary landscape.

George Leef[2] articulates a common refrain from the political right about diversity initiatives on campuses in a recent *National Review* opinion piece. He asserts,

> Colleges and universities prattle on endlessly about their "diversity" programs: racial preferences for certain students, preferences for hiring faculty with the right ancestry, course offerings meant to appease diversity zealots, and so on. This fixation is justified on the grounds of "educational benefits" that supposedly flow from having a more diverse campus. That notion has been repeated so often that hardly anyone questions it.[3]

Leef's examples, even though cast in the negative, highlight some of the difficulties public university campuses face when attempting to realize commitment to creating access for all people who want an education. His focus falls initially on demographic or structural or compositional diversity. Weighting admissions and monitoring hiring to address past segregation by gender, race, and ethnicity (and, increasingly, economic status) as well as to create more of a "real world" pluralism has been and continues to be controversial as well as regularly disputed in the courts.[4] But Leef also takes exception to curricular and "cognitive" diversity, or the assumption that differences in perspective and information processing styles (which may or may not be predicated on gender, ethnicity, race, or similar factors[5]) enhances learning and enriches campus life.

Yet campuses still tend toward advancing the notion that diversity, in many guises, matters. Aaron Thompson, whose work as a sociologist explores the impact of diversity in higher education, offers a list of why, including (but not limited to) increasing one's knowledge base, promoting creative thinking, enhancing social development, and preparing students to work in a global society.[6] Recognizing value in interacting with people who

see the world and its problems differently, and engaging in discussions where divergent points of view get aired and evaluated, should, or so the argument goes, change not only individuals, but should also push at institutional practice and societal norms. Jonathan Alger, President of James Madison University, puts it this way: "Why should we care about equity and diversity? I think a big question for all of us in higher education is: Are we going to be engines of opportunity for students of all backgrounds, or are we going to reinforce and exacerbate the inequalities that exist in society?"[7] He then proceeds to talk about diversity as a social and moral, an economic, and an educational imperative.

Yet focusing on campus diversity as essential to the educational process remains controversial. According to some commentators, the problem rests in perceived changes to the meaning of the term. W. Lee Hansen, Emeritus Professor of Economics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, writes:

> For many years, diversity referred, and still does, to efforts to increase the campus representation of "targeted" minorities, meaning African Americans, American Indians, Hispanics/ Latinos, and South East Asians. But in the last decade, campus leaders have given the word a new and expanded meaning. It now refers to an ever-growing list of "differences" among groups of students that are "protected" under current diversity plans and programs.[8]

He then adds, "Protected from what? Protected from being the object of 'hate/bias incidents' and 'microaggressions.'"[9] This definition of diversity has loosed a firestorm of criticism (and mocking) of schools for their perceived "coddling" of "snowflake" students,[10] and for the "victimhood culture" that can result from campus sensitivity to complaints of bias.[11] It has also has ignited a debate about the erosion of speech rights on campuses. Writing in *The Atlantic*, Greg Lukianoff, president and CEO of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), and Jonathan Haidt, social psychologist at New York University Stern School of Business and the director of Heterodox Academy, claim, "Something strange is happening at America's colleges and universities. A movement is arising, undirected and driven largely by students, to scrub campuses clean of words, ideas, and subjects that might cause discomfort or give offense."[12]

This critique gets directed to classroom practices as well as how universities handle campus protests over invited speakers in lecture series, as guests of student clubs and organizations, and at events such as convocation and graduation.

The politicization of diversity-related concerns, moreover, often happens in a context of positing campuses as hostile to conservative faculty and students.[13] While much of the evidence for such a claim remains anecdotal, a more recent study supporting this contention comes from Langbert, Quain, and Klein. These researchers looked at the voter registration of professors in Economics, History, Journalism/Communications, Law, and Psychology at 40 universities. Even with caveats about registration not being equivalent to ballots cast, or a meaningful correlate to how one sees the world, they found it possible to propose that the voting pattern of Democratic to Republican on campuses today likely is 10:1.[14] Their work appears to underscore the findings of the 2014 HERI (Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA) report which found: "In 1990 … 42 percent of professors identified

as 'liberal' or 'far-left.' By 2014, that number had jumped to 60 percent."[15] Ironically, conservative voices often opposed to diversity admissions and hiring make fascinating use of arguments in favor of diversity to posit this political/ideological gap as problematic. A recent article cites both Carol Swain, professor of political science and law at Vanderbilt University, and Shelby Steele, the Robert J. and Marion E. Oster Senior Fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution:

> "Cocoons" and ideological "bubbles," as Swain calls universities today, do not prepare students ideologically for the world outside those spaces—a world where there will be "fewer people that are going to be willing to engage in the political correctness" and fewer safe spaces, she says. Steele adds that university classrooms should offer opportunities for students to discover ideas and opposing points of view, and not places for professors to "preach" their own politics.[16]

Without doubt, these conversations have an impact on the classroom and on campuses. In fact, regular reporting and social media can take institutional squabbles, even personnel issues, viral within hours.[17]

Much of the furor around these issues in higher education, however, does not focus on religious studies, although it does correlate in some ways to common-place accusations about a general bias against Christians on campus.[18] Academic religious studies programs are in no way immune from these critiques and must function within this context.[19] This chapter will, from this starting point, explore how religious studies programs conceptualize diversity and actualize those visions. Examination of what markers programs use to define diversity (given their size and purpose) receives attention as does the complex relationship of those choices to faculty hiring practices and the ways in which these decisions shape a student body. Attentiveness to issues of diversity in classroom management, particularly as related to discussion, also will be explored. The speech rights of faculty members and students receives close attention, and will extend into the place of religious studies in controversial campus conversations. Again, persistent and growing criticisms of the university from varied publics make this consideration timely and offer important contextualization for this effort.

COMPOSITIONAL DIVERSITY IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Public universities seek a diverse student body for a variety of reasons, including the fact that institutions must abide by Educational Opportunities discrimination laws.[20] To understand more fully (and less in terms of legality) what the realization of diversity means in a higher education setting, Kristin Tsuo, a policy intern at the Century Foundation, offers a useful guide. She writes, "Diversity in higher education is often framed in three ways: structural diversity, or the composition of the student body; classroom diversity, or curricula about and interactions between diverse people in the classroom; and informal interactional diversity, or the interactions among students of different backgrounds outside the classroom."[21]

The rationale for pursuing compositional diversity started out as basic equality of access. In 1965, 38.7% of the students enrolled in postsecondary education in the fall term were women, despite a near equal split between men and women in the population. By 1975, women comprised 45% of matriculating students and in 1979, at 50.9%, a barrier was

crossed. Today, women outnumber men in higher education, in 2014 comprising 57% of the total of postsecondary enrollment in the fall term.[22] Attracting and retaining men in the current climate proves challenging, but not because of issues of discrimination.[23] Other changes also stand out. In 1976, 83.4% of students enrolled in undergraduate education in the fall semester were white; by 2014 that number had dropped to 57.2%. The percentage of African-American ("Black") students went from 10.2 to 14.5 (with a peak just over 15% in 2011) and what was once known as Asian/Pacific Islander from 1.8% to 6.1% Asian and 0.3% Pacific Islander. Hispanic enrollments went from 3.8% to 17.7%.[24]

Faculty at public institutions, thanks to the sheer number of students enrolling, see these changes on their campuses. The National Center for Education Statistics reports that "in 2008, some 73 percent of the 18.4 million U.S. college students attended public institutions … About 81 percent of Hispanics and 78 percent of American Indians/Alaska Natives attended public institutions, [compared to the] percentages for White (73 percent), Blacks (68 percent), and Asians/Pacific Islanders (75 percent)."[25] Institutions that draw regionally, of course, experience changes in line with the population of their area. It should also be noted that these figures measure diversity by race/ethnicity, but do not account for other markers such as the number of adult ("non-traditional") students coming back to school either for a first degree or to retool for a changing employment market,[26] or for distinctions in socio-economic class.[27]

The growing importance of compositional or structural diversity among students in assessing the work of an institution can be seen in the rankings and ratings of various schools. One example comes in *U.S. News & World Report's* "diversity index." Their calculus "factors in the total proportion of minority students, leaving out international students, and the overall mix of groups….. Students who did not identify themselves as members of any of those demographic groups were classified as non-Hispanic whites."[28] College Factual takes a different approach, calculating their diversity rankings by considering three factors, "the ethnic makeup of the student body, the geographic representation among students, and the gender makeup of the study body."[29] These indices, simplified into rankings, make it possible for students to take a quick, convenient look at how different schools stack up if one places value on attending school with a varied student body. But making these comparisons also demands a careful look at what data receives emphasis when calculating the placement of an institution and would, ideally, prompt a closer look at how an institution's admissions policies function to support its stated goals in constructing a matriculating class. Of some interest, the *New York Times* now compiles a College Access Index based on commitment to economic diversity.[30] The same caveat about examining how they construct their listing holds.

Religious studies programs in public institutions might see the demographic composition of their classes change in accordance with institutional emphases, but only a handful speak about their own diversity efforts as reflected in their students, or tout the varied population of their larger geographical context as related to their work. The program at George Mason University, however, does both. In describing their Religious Studies BA, the web site says, "The department offers cross-cultural perspectives on religion. Mason, with its diverse student body, is an ideal environment in which to undertake such study.

Likewise, the Washington, DC area offer rich opportunities for encounters with a variety of religious institutions and faith communities." And one cannot help but appreciate the University of Central Arkansas, located in Conway, Arkansas (population 65,300 in 2015) whose religious studies program site states, "We live in a diverse and pluralistic world where religious faiths exist not in isolation from one another, but in close proximity and contact. Even in Central Arkansas, the mixing of religious cultures is not a future possibility, but a present reality." Overall, programs may not call attention to this aspect of their work because tracking demographic figures for students enrolled in religious studies courses falls outside of institutional reporting requirements. But perhaps this lack turns up because the snapshot of graduates in the field looks problematic from the standpoint of diversity. Religious studies programs award degrees to white and male students in numbers out of synch with overall undergraduate enrollments.

In 2015, Data USA reports that 68.2% of religious studies degrees went to students identified as White. That figure compares to 9.8% Black, 8.1% Hispanic, 7.6% unknown, 3.1% Asian, 0.5% Native, and 0.1% Hawaiian students.[31] To determine if these figures hold once public institutions are broken away from private (as well as what the figures for gender would look like, which trend in religious studies overall toward men 54/46) would need more complete analysis. But it must be noted that for programs that "endeavor to educate our students, university, and the communities it serves about the diversity of religious traditions and the influence that these traditions have on our political, social, and creative lives" (University of Texas, Austin), this profile of majors could, potentially, impact what issues get raised and how discussions proceed in the classroom. Further, as feeders for graduate programs, future knowledge production as well as priorities within the field would feel the impact if diverse demographics do, in fact, make an academic difference.

Many programs, however, do advertise diversity in their faculties. The University of Colorado Boulder, for instance, speaks of their "research-dedicated faculty who bring teaching to life with diverse experiences and unique perspectives." They go on to say, "Our faculty is interdisciplinary, international, and experimental." The University of Georgia touts their "superb faculty and students from varied backgrounds with impressive credentials and academic records, as well as diverse specialties, interests, and professional experiences." Or, more simply put, the University of Iowa announces: "The Religious Studies faculty is highly diverse." Marybeth Gasman, Professor in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania, suggests why composing a faculty with these concerns in mind might make have an impact on the educational process. She writes,

> Having a diverse faculty—in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion—adds greatly to the experiences of students in the classroom. It challenges them—given that they are likely not to have had diversity in their K-12 classroom teachers—to think differently about who produces knowledge. It also challenges them to move away from a 'white-centered' approach to one that is inclusive of many different voices and perspectives.[32]

Asabe Poloma, Executive Director at the Institute for Recruitment of Teachers at the Phillips Academy, confirms this assessment, arguing that while "all students can benefit

from the mentorship and cultural knowledge a teacher of color can bring to the classroom, teachers of color are more likely to share the cultural, linguistic, and other forms of cultural capital wealth familiar to students of color from similar backgrounds." Moreover, she contends the presence of a more diverse faculty permits "students of color to 'see themselves' reflected in the professional realm of education as teachers, principals, college professors, and university deans and administrators."[33] Instead of focusing solely on subject matter diversity, the recruiting of students into the field comes into focus.

In fact, available statistics indicate that doctoral programs in religious studies might not produce candidates helpful to addressing issues with structural diversity in faculty hiring. Examination of two data sources regarding who graduates and who seeks employment illustrate the point. The Humanities Indicators of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences notes:

> Given the relatively small number of doctoral degrees conferred each year in the discipline (about 225), small changes in the number of graduates in any particular category can create substantial changes in the trend lines. The share of traditionally underrepresented minorities earning religion degrees had been trending downward until a burst in 2014 lifted the share from 6.4% to 11.4% (Indicator II-25f). The 2014 level was close to the high of 11.7% recorded in 2006, but those two years were unusual. The median share over the 1995–2014 time period was 7.8%.[34]

Surveys conducted by the American Academy of Religion from 2004-2012 of job candidates registering with the Employment Information Services Center at the Annual Meeting confirm this finding. As the primary initial screening point for many institutions seeking to make a faculty hire, at least until the advent of Skype and Facetime, these surveys provide a glimpse into the available candidate pool. The percentage of interviewees who identified as White/Euro-American remained in the 80-88% range every year. The male to female average hovered generally around the 60/40 mark. It must be acknowledged that response rates on the survey varied, even dropping significantly in some years. For instance, 47.5% completed forms in 2004-2005, 47.7% the following year, then 35.3%, 31.2%, 23%, 32%, 32%, 37%, and 26%. Nonetheless, the data still points toward a possible liability. Hiring candidates that would contribute to structural diversity from such a group would prove difficult, even if trends are shifting.

To explain the deficit, one could easily list off a series of possible factors including, but not limited to, the dismal job prospects for religious studies doctoral graduates,[35] the conditions of advancement in the profession favoring scholars living in traditional households, and the overburdening of minority faculty members with tasks such as filling curricular and committee service gaps.[36] Campus climate issues can also dissuade candidates from pursuing opportunities.[37] However important all of these considerations may be, they fall outside of the focus of this book. What matters here is that many religious studies programs appear to place value on structural diversity in their faculties and yet, by traditional measures, might be struggling to achieve it.

As indicated, the impact of that lack could be profound for both an individual institution and for the field itself. Again, Gasman argues,

> Having a diverse faculty strengthens the faculty and the institution as there is more richness in the curriculum and in conversations taking place on committees and in faculty meetings. A diverse faculty also holds the university accountable in ways that uplift people of color and center issues that are important to the large and growing communities of color across the nation.[38]

If Gasman's point holds, these findings can make a difference in an era where faculties must tackle issues such as how claims of religious liberty can intersect with employment law, healthcare, and discrimination, the relationship of religion to violence, and address contemporary issues such as the targeting of bible study attendees at the Mother Emmanuel church in Charleston, South Carolina, the rise of anti-Semitism, immigration as it relates specifically to Muslim majority countries and fear of terrorism, or white nationalists marching on university campuses as in Charlottesville. A demographically diverse faculty (not to mention a varied student body) would bring different insights to the table in professional considerations and in the classroom.

In the 1960s, when candidates that could bring structural diversity to a campus were truly rare, religious studies programs started to define diversity via two curricular markers: offering courses studying a range of different religious traditions and utilizing a variety of methodological approaches.[39] This conceptualization can elide structural diversity, traditionally defined as an emphasis on composition of a student body and/or a faculty with an eye to demographic diversity, with curricular diversity. And it continues into the present. Charles Kimball, for example, writes of the University of Oklahoma's efforts: "The curriculum involves a two-pronged academic exploration of 1) different religious traditions (e.g., Native American, African, and other indigenous traditions, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Baha'i, etc.); and 2) different approaches to the study of religion (historical, social, political, intellectual, philosophical, scientific, literary)." Or one might look at Towson University's program page which says, "Religious studies, as an academic endeavor, focuses on varied religious traditions that figure prominently in the development of human culture." They then proceed to tell students, "Through coursework, you will investigate religion from its psychological, sociological, anthropological, artistic, ethical or metaphysical dimensions." This two-fold emphasis not only reflects how the field itself grew from its Christian-focused early days toward a more inclusive understanding of religion as a phenomenon expressed in a variety of times and places, but also how scholars adopted and adapted tools from a variety of academic disciplines to accomplish their work.

The benefits of these definitions deserve praise. Faculties with distinctive interdisciplinary interests on varied subject matters came together[40] and, to some degree, modeled how varied academic methodologies can promote the exploration of ideas or topics outside of traditional confines. But bringing such a wide-ranging vision of the study of religion to life on a public university campus can prove challenging given that most programs tend toward the smaller side. Where breadth of expertise, either methodological or subject area, within a field serves as the signifier for diversity, larger programs with more significant enrollments, graduate students, and funding, possess an advantage in hiring area specialists.[41] A brief comparison demonstrates the point. The University of California at Santa Barbara substantiates its claim to be "the largest religion department in the University of California

system and one of the most diverse religion departments in the world" by detailing the extent of their faculty, the personnel available via connections forged with other departments and institutions, and the range of course offerings such experts make possible. They write, "With an internationally recognized faculty of twenty-three professors, two permanent lecturers, and more than twenty affiliates and visiting scholars, the Department prides itself on both the breadth and depth of its course offerings and programs." Fall 2017 courses live up to that declaration with an array of topics available to students such as Islam in the West; Judaism, Christianity, Islam; Introduction to Native American Religion; Zen Buddhism; Jewish Mysticism; Religions of Tibet; Introduction to Religion & Politics; Religious Approaches to Death; Hebrew Bible/Old Testament; Christian Reformation; and Religion and Film, among others. More specialized options include Catholic Studies Topics; Islamic Philosophy; a Seminar in Social Ethics; Yoga, Alchemy, Tantra; Reformist Shi'ism; and The Politics of Veiling in Modern Egypt. The program also makes available instruction in Arabic, Hindi, Biblical Hebrew, Persian, Turkish, Sanskrit, and even offers a course in Reading Tibetan Buddhist Texts in Tibetan.

Likewise, the University of Virginia lists thirty-five tenured or tenure-track faculty on its web page. This abundance of resources allows for offering of coursework in subjects as diverse as classic texts of rabbinic Judaism and African diaspora religions of the Caribbean and Latin America. Spring 2018, in fact, lists seven unique courses in Buddhism alone at the undergraduate level, and that list does not include Zen and Popular Culture. This wealth of resources also permits the employment of multiple experts who explore distinctly different aspects within a given tradition or region, or whose work connects via the era analyzed or perhaps by approach. For example, Ahmed H. al-Rahim identifies his areas of research and teaching as "the intellectual traditions of medieval Islamic civilization." For him, this work includes "how the classical religious traditions of Islam inform the modern ideologies of political Islam or Islamism, in the Middle East and South Asia." His interests potentially overlap with Shankar Nair who explores "the religious and intellectual history of the Indian subcontinent, particularly as it relates to broader traditions of Sufism and Islamic philosophy, Qur'anic exegesis, and Hindu philosophy and theology (especially Advaita Vedanta and other forms of Hindu non-dualism)." One might see some correspondence with the teaching and scholarship of Cynthia Hoehler-Fatton whose study of gender and religion in East Africa includes work with Islam, or with either John Nemec, and his studies Indian intellectual and cultural history focused on South Asia, or with Sonam Kachru, who looks at the history of philosophy, specifically Buddhist philosophy in South Asia.

More modest-sized programs, like Michigan State University, still stress the necessity of breadth. But they list only seven core faculty, five visiting faculty, and six faculty with emeritus status. Nonetheless, their Fall 2017 listings feature a solid and varied course lineup with topics such as Exploring Religion; Introduction to Biblical Literature; Introduction to Religion & Nonprofits; The Sound of World Religions; Religion in America; Philosophy of Religion; Magic and Mysticism; Christianity; East Asian Buddhism; Islam; Buddhism in South Asia; Jewish Mysticism; and Religion and Leadership. Or one might look at the University of Montana, where religious studies exists within "Global Humanities" and offers "an interdisciplinary and internationally oriented Program." Still, the structure of

the major pushes students toward thinking of religion broadly by requiring at least one course in Near Eastern/Mediterranean and one in South or East Asian traditions, as well as a course on Theory and Method in Religion. That set up applies even though their total of four faculty, including one at the rank of lecturer, listed only three religious studies courses in Fall 2017: Buddhism, Comparative Ethics, and Hinduism.[42] As a result, most of their upper division offerings in religious studies get taught less often, and they reach out to other departments, permitting students to count select Native American Studies and African-American Studies classes toward the major, for instance.

Smaller programs feel a pressure because they need faculty to service "core" courses for their university and generally lack graduate student teaching assistance even for larger sections. These circumstances can detract from the ability to provide specialized offerings. At Radford University, for instance, the Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 schedule indicates that the program largely sustains itself via General Education. Four courses (out of 13 total choices) fall under the Humanities rubric of the core—Introduction to Religion, Survey of World Religions, Sacred Texts of the West, and Survey of Religious Experience. All students at the University must choose at least one class from this list. Among the five faculty listed in religious studies (including one with emeritus status), all active instructors teach these popular options. That distribution of resources means that beyond the introductory level, each individual faculty member covers vast swaths of territory. Kay Jordan offers Religions of India and China and Japan, while Paul Brian Thomas handles the entire biblical tradition and the Qur'an. Advanced opportunities for faculty to pursue specialized research in the classroom prove less common.

None of these features, however, necessarily means that students enrolled in these programs failed to get a "diverse" educational experience, either in terms of the courses taken or, notably, in conversation within the classroom. Indeed, the smaller program setting frequently proves advantageous for the latter. Sitting in larger core courses with students from a variety of majors across campus broadens the circle of conversational partners for students interested in religion. Likewise, many smaller programs advise, or at least indicate the possibility, of a double major. Indiana University of Pennsylvania, for instance, says,

> In our bachelor's degree program in religious studies, you explore the phenomenon of religion in daily life. In the process, you may also discover new career options, as our nonsectarian method of study enables you to develop critical thinking skills that lead to a deeper comprehension of world and national cross-cultural events. It's also an ideal choice if you are contemplating a double major or a minor.

(See also California State University Northridge, Clemson University, or the University of Iowa). Again, completing a second major means holding up religious studies to another disciplinary perspective and thinking through the issues raised from the perspective of another field of study.

But whether real structural inequities in the compositional diversity of the field remain unchallenged because of this veneer of curricular diversity deserves closer examination. The 2017 report from the American Council on Education's Center for Policy Research and Strategy on the status of women in higher education found that men outnumbered women

on the faculties of four-year public institutions with tenure systems 55.9% to 40.6% and that gap widened more at Master's granting institutions, and widened yet further at universities with Doctoral programs. And among full-time faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, 54.7% of the Professors were white men, compared to 25.9% white women, 2.2% black men, 1.4% black women, 2.1% Hispanic men, 1.2% Hispanic women, 7% Asia/Pacific Islander men, 2.3% Asia/Pacific Islander women, 0.2% American Indian/Alaska Native men and 0.1% of women in that category. The Associate and Assistant levels fare somewhat better with white men at only 40.5% of the Associate total and 31.8% of the Assistants, but women outnumber men only at the Assistant, Instructor, and Lecturer levels.[43] And men at every rank outearn women in every institution type except for two-year private schools.[44] While these figures do not reflect religious studies specifically, there is no reason to assume that the field differs in favor of women or minorities given the demographic trends in humanities instruction,[45] as well as the already-established data regarding majors and job candidates in the field.

The relationship between structural and curricular diversity, however, shows up most clearly in the classroom. Tackling subjects that push students to think about issues not often seen in their own environments and thus outside of their experience opens the possibility for some learners to experience intellectual as well as emotional discomfort. Conversing with colleagues who see the world and a variety of issues from different perspectives also can produce such a result. Negotiating these difficult moments can prove tricky in any circumstance, but in an era where hot topics abound, the practices of discourse often permit disdain for adversarial viewpoints, and social media can open the classroom to outside eyes and commentators, instructors often find the challenges amplified.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES, CONTROVERSY, AND THE CLASSROOM

A now dated, but still useful, resource from The Center for Faculty Excellence at the University of North Carolina opens its section on "Teaching Difficult Issues" with this statement:

> Controversy, conflict, and disagreement are integral elements of college teaching, and all instructors must anticipate controversy and plan to use it productively. Teachers usually expect particular subjects to elicit debate in their classes (e.g., evolution, racism, welfare policy), but all topics are potentially controversial, since students enter college with particular social, political, philosophical, and religious perspectives that may conflict with the material in their courses.[46]

Few religious studies professors would disavow this assessment. One need not look far to find assignments or topics of discussion that arouse strong feelings. Ellen Posman and Reid B. Locklin rightly say that "religious issues can, in fact, be some of the most divisive of our time."[47] Jill Crainshaw and Bill Leonard, in their edited encyclopedia on hot-button issues in religion, extend that statement from the present back to any era in American history. To illustrate their argument, they include topics from civil rights to abortion, abolitionism to televangelism, Zionism to the Nation of Islam.[48] There is no doubt that given many students enter the learning environment with strongly held points

of view and/or religious commitments, the study of religious communities, institutions, persons, ideas, literature, practices, etc., can quickly escalate into classroom conflict.

In fact, many religious studies courses start from a place of contestation because of the presuppositions of the field itself. As discussed previously, many of these programs identify the purpose of the their work not only as knowledge about various practices or the acquisition of tools for critical inquiry into the study of religion, but also as, in the words of the mission statement on the East Carolina University webpage, to "promote awareness of and respect for diverse perspectives on religious and non-religious questions in order to develop responsible citizenship in a pluralistic society." Here, the terrain gets tricky. What constitutes valuative terms like "respect" and "responsible" can touch off debate. In this regard, the presumptive neutrality that marks the field, especially in public institutions, comes under scrutiny. The web page of the program at North Carolina State University says, for example, "Rather than approaching religions from the standpoint of believers, Religious Studies investigates these complicated traditions of beliefs and practices from a neutral perspective."

That felt need to continue making a distinction between religious studies and theology, as well as to sit easily in a state university upholding the Constitutional mandate to steer clear of establishing any one religion, likely echoes here as it does at the University of Minnesota. Their site puts forward the idea this way: "Religious studies focuses on the academic study of religion. It aims to understand religion, not to promote or undermine any religious perspective." But the question of if it excludes explicitly religious points of view lingers. The University of Iowa might be more circumspect, but asserting that religion "is a profound expression of our commonality and our diversity … [and] deserves to be studied carefully, critically, and open-mindedly, especially within the context of public education" also skirts the edges by raising questions about the potential conflict between religious faith and open-mindedness. This work happens, moreover, within larger conversations about what constitutes diversity.

Many religious studies professors realize that tendency of the field to distinguish between teaching religion and teaching about religion can exacerbate what the Walvoord Study labelled "the Great Divide"[49]—students enrolling in religious studies courses to understand different religious viewpoints and to explore their own faith, while faculty aim to teach critical thinking skills and show, at least at secular institutions, little concern for developing student's morality or ethics. Indeed, many professors address this issue on the syllabus or in the first course meeting. Robert Kraft, for example, on a Spring 2003 syllabus at the University of Pennsylvania on The English Bible writes, "The focus will be especially historical and 'secular' (this will not be a 'sunday' (sic) school type class), but without ignoring literary and religious perspectives." Or in a course description page circulated by the religious studies program at UNC Greensboro for Spring 2012 classes, Eugene Rogers includes among his list of reasons "Why you should not take this course" (meaning "Modern Problems of Belief"): "You think of it as Sunday School," "You want to prove your faith by butting heads with 19th C. critics of religion," "You want to be in a homogeneous group where everyone thinks alike and is pious," and "You intend to write sermons for postings and papers." These statements, often humorous in nature, recognize

that students often enter religious studies classrooms with limited understandings of what the academic study of religion entails and what they do know about religion typically gets shaped by religious communities.

In some instances, statements alerting students to the material relevant to the course reads much like a content warning label. Take Susan Cohen's Fall 2012 Religion, Conflict and Politics course at the University of Montana. Under Course Policies, she writes (all emphases hers):

> This is a course about religion and the relationship between religion and politics. This is ***NOT*** a class that teaches religious doctrine or that is taught from a religious perspective. We will be examining religion, politics, and religious-political conflict in ***an academic and secular setting***, and all religions, religious beliefs, and religious interpretations of events, texts, and politics will therefore ***be open to questioning, examination, interpretation, criticism, and discussion.*** An open mind and a willingness to examine new ideas and new methods of understanding the history of religions and the development of religious traditions are essential. ***This class is not a forum for expressions of personal theology.***

For instructors, such statements construct the groundwork for handling religiously informed perspectives when they surface in the classroom. Foregrounding these issues in the current political climate, however, can be interpreted as an anti-religious bias, necessitating clarity from faculty members about what constitutes diversity and how that will be realized in the course offerings and the classroom.

A quick look at a few syllabi illustrates how faculty plan for and address such eventualities. Bart Ehrman, for example, in his Spring 2014 New Testament Syllabus at the University of North Carolina, writes:

> As you may have already inferred, it is not one of the goals of the class either to convert you to a particular religious point of view or to provide ammunition for your assault on the religious views of others (e.g., a pestiferous roommate). It will not, therefore, be taught from a confessional perspective.

Such a statement does not, however, mean that the topics he explores remain locked in history, apart from contemporary concerns, or that he fails to consider multiple distinctive interpretive possibilities, including those informed by faith commitments. Ehrman, in fact, includes three recitations as part of the student's final grade in the course that "will take the form of class debates on a controversial topic in the field" and his assignment list confirms his intent. He asks the class to explore whether the apostle Paul's views of women were oppressive, if Paul and Jesus advocated fundamentally different religions, and if the New Testament condemns modern practices of homosexuality. These items almost certainly invite religiously motivated points of view into the conversation. The role of women in the contemporary church, of course, remains contested for many Christians, from Roman Catholics to Southern Baptists. Indeed, the power (or lack thereof) of women in the United States and other countries whose cultures have been or are being shaped by Christianity remains contentious in terms of, for a few examples, family law, cultural

roles and expectations, and equal pay. The same kind of negative influence on members of the LGBTQI communities certainly would come up in any debate, as would issues like ordination and marriage. In short, controversy would not be difficult to find.

Although lacking the full instructions for the project, Ehrman makes clear his goals for the course on his syllabus. Students, for example, should be able to "speak intelligently about the contents and message of each book of the New Testament," "understand why interpreters differ so broadly in their interpretations of them," and "advance … [their] own views (about history, religion, politics, or life as we know it) with greater precision and persuasiveness." With this assignment, Ehrman teaches how to do that work academically, even if it touches on personal beliefs. He requires students learn to assess and evaluate information, build well-supported arguments, and, by using student judges, weigh in on what makes a compelling presentation. Another twist also intrigues. Ehrman instructs, "For the debate you are participating in, you are to write a paper arguing for the side you are arguing against in the class debate itself." In brief, students must explore a topic from different vantage points, even if they do not agree with the premise. Exercises like this one can demonstrate how multiple interpretive options can appear well founded even when diverging from one another. In short, the assessment of "right" and "wrong" gives way to more or less cogent argumentation, better or worse rhetorical technique, stronger or weaker supporting evidence.

The clash of diverse viewpoints inherent in this work means that classroom management proves key. Understanding student sensitivity to topics under discussion might demand setting up ground rules for interaction. Whitney Bauman, for example, in his Fall 2014 course Religion and Queer Theory at Florida International University lays out basic norms for his "community of learners." Because discussion will often revolve around how "queer theory places an emphasis on the historical construction of religious ideas, values, and beliefs and their effects on human identities, bodies and the rest of the natural world" as well as "queer histories" and "contemporary issues of GLBTQ identity and religion, such as understandings of family, marriage, and GLBTQ clergy," he realizes that student discussion might get difficult and even painful. To address these concerns, he informs students that he might use smaller groups to facilitate discussion (thereby reducing the stakes of speaking out). He further highlights an expectation of confidentiality, the need for trust and respect, as well as maintaining awareness of others in conversation.

In the current environment, how instructors approach difficult subjects gets complicated by media conversations about "trigger warnings" and "safe spaces." The former phrase itself, borrowed from work on PTSD or post-traumatic stress disorder, functions as shorthand for some form of external stimuli "that can bring to life memories of the traumatic event, causing the traumatized individual to relive the trauma."[50] Feminist bloggers adopted and adapted the term and it became commonplace as a type of content warning in online communications. When posts contained material about a topic such as sexual assault or eating disorders, for instance, alerting readers who might be sensitive via a quick shorthand functioned somewhat like a "spoiler alert." The presence of such a marker warns off readers who do not want to access the specifics of the content that follows. But the "trigger warning" stands apart with its mental and emotional health concerns and acknowledgment that

respect for the experiences of others might shape conversations on troubling issues.

Feminist communities discuss amongst themselves the usefulness and necessity of such labels.[51] The strident public disputes over trigger warnings, however, started with the transfer of this language out of the online community and to the college campus. The attention of a broader public led to concerns that these notices evidenced an overly zealous political correctness within campus cultures run amuck.[52] The argument against their use often asserts they exist to cocoon students from the hard realities of life.[53] Less reactionary critics worry about their possible subversion of authentic intellectual debate and the impact of any mandates to use such could exert on academic freedom.[54] For all of the media attention around the Fall 2016 letter to freshman at the University of Chicago saying that the campus did not support such warnings,[55] a 2015 report from the National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) based on a non-scientific survey indicated that "fewer than 1% of survey participants reported that their institution had adopted a policy on trigger warnings."[56] The questions that such practices raise, however, divides faculty who disagree over how to manage classroom dynamics when diversity is at issue.

In religious studies, some instructors do opt for a "content warning" (apart from those directed toward what constitutes the academic study of religion itself) approach on syllabi. This effort more closely resembles the advisory ratings on movies. Caryn Tamber-Rosneau, for instance, in her Fall 2016 syllabus on Religion and Film at the University of Houston, adds the following after the course goals:

> Disclaimer: *Please be aware that some of the films viewed and/or discussed in this course may contain offensive subject matter (such as controversial religious practices, critical views of religious traditions, scenes of violence, sexual content, ethnic stereotypes, offensive language or attitudes, etc.) and should not be taken as representative of the values of either the instructor or the Department of Comparative Cultural Studies. Note that all films are chosen based on relevance to the topics and goals of the course. You are advised to register for this course only if you are 18 years of age or older and able to deal with potentially offensive subject matter.*

Such an alert provides students with the opportunity to examine the list of films under consideration and to determine whether to remain enrolled in the course. They can, coincidentally, also function to assist students who might be survivors of a trauma by opening an avenue to alert a professor about potential difficulties prior to an assignment. At that point, instructors might provide an accommodation, if warranted, or help students access resources for support. One might not, for example, want to require a student to watch and critically analyze (spoiler alerts) *Manchester by the Sea* if that individual has a personal history with a tragic fire or *The Accused* if that person had been raped. Finally, these statements also serve as a layer of protection against any possible student complaints about the class activities or classroom environment. Such disclaimers, however, do not skirt difficult issues or modify the learning activities planned in the course.

These strategies might be seen as corresponding to the creation of a "safe space," also a much used but little understood concept. At its core, "the safe space is an educational metaphor for designing classrooms that address difficult or tension-filled learning encounters

(Boostrom, 1998; Holly & Stiener, 2005; Mayo, 2010)."[57] The purpose rests not in avoiding painful and often charged conversations, but rather in establishing a structure that permits diversity of thought, does not exclude or dismiss any point of view out of hand, and allows for exploration and examination without fear of judgment or censure. Beth Berila writes, "The idea behind such language is usually to educate people on respecting others, avoiding stereotypes, and learning how to listen."[58] Indeed, Bauman's rules move in that direction. For instance, with respect to confidentiality, he says, "I expect that students will respect one another's privacy in this course." Disclosures about one's sexuality, gender identity, family situation, or perhaps history of abuse, assault, rape will remain within the classroom—an important lesson in an age of social media or on the confines of a college campus with its often tightly knit social circles. Likewise, he provides guidelines for considering one's speech: not dominating the conversation, allowing and even encouraging others to speak, not jumping to conclusions about a classmate struggling to express a difficult idea, and always remaining cognizant of not intentionally showing disrespect to others.

Making clear such expectations, and reinforcing them in practice, however, does not guarantee safety. As Berila observes, "In any given classroom, people in a transformational learning process will likely say or do something that turns a space 'unsafe.' She characterizes this moment as a hallmark of "truly authentic difficult dialogues."[59] So if, as Brian Clearwater of the University of California at Northridge says on his Fall 2017 syllabus for Religion in America, "respectful discussion and inquiry are at the heart of the academic enterprise," then ensuring the safety of every member in the routine interactions within the class would prove impossible.

But, as seen previously, outlining expectations of how communication will proceed can set a tone. Thus Clearwater writes, under the heading "Respect for Diversity," that

> Meaningful and constructive dialogue requires mutual respect, willingness to listen, and tolerance for opposing points of view. Classroom and online discussions, like any academic discourse, should follow university norms of civility and effective communication. Debates should challenge ideas—not individuals who hold opposing views.

Or Stephen Finley, in his Spring 2013[60] syllabus for a course exploring the religious thought of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. at Louisiana State University, sets forth a "Note on Classroom Culture and Etiquette." He makes clear, "this course will demand vigorous debate and critique of religious ideas and approaches." But in this mix of religion, race, and politics, Finley understands that respect toward peers who come from distinct vantage points, as well as toward other "religious cultures and perspectives," will prove essential. He shows concern for religious belief getting in the way of those goals and thus instructs students not to proselytize or to use the space to work out their private faith concerns. Observing these lines, however, can become tricky in the estimation of some commentators.

For example, Alan Levinovitz, Assistant Professor of Religion at James Madison University, questions drawing a line between the academy and faith with respect to issues of diversity. Writing in *The Atlantic* says:

> Although trigger warnings and safe spaces claim to create an environment where everyone is free to speak their minds, the spirit of tolerance and respect that inspires these policies can also stifle dialogue about controversial topics, particularly race, gender, and, in my experience, religious beliefs.[61]

For Levinovitz, the discussion of contentious issues includes allowing students to voice their religious beliefs without fear of censure. He argues that "modern, secular, liberal education is supposed to combine a Socratic ideal of the examined life with a Millian marketplace of ideas … In theory, this will produce individuals who have cultivated their intellect and embraced new ideas via communal debate—the kind of individuals who make good neighbors and citizens."[62] Thus, when Ehrman and Finley make careful distinctions between academic work and faith, and request that students not approach the topics for purposes of faith, they could be read as diverging from Levinovitz, who holds that students must be allowed to speak from the perspective of their religious background or belief. Bauman, too, would be implicated, as his concerns for remaining cognizant of others might be read as infringing on another student's free expression.

The questions, then, go beyond writing syllabi. How instructors should prepare for and handle tough discussions and the utility of specific guidelines to guide engagement remains an open question. In their work exploring faculty approaches to issues of race in the teaching environment, Pasque, Chelser, Charbeneau, and Carlson identify five basic strategies instructors employ: "not in my classroom"; avoid and minimize; defuse, deflect, and divert; turn conflict into a learning opportunity; and surfacing underlying or covert conflicts for learning.[63] Adoption of one option does not necessarily exclude others. In fact, their study suggests that no one strategy applies to every situation. "When handled well, classroom conflict can create the dissonance essential for significant learning, permit new and different voices to be heard, clarify important differences, raise issues to a level and place where they can be seen and addressed, and provide students with models for creative engagement and problem-solving."[64] Yet the potential for students to remain unwilling to articulate positions due to fear of censure or for conversation to devolve into conflict suggests to the authors that faculty wading into these waters benefit from specific training as to how to set the stage for these discussions to happen and moderating conversation once they are underway. A different example shows how to accomplish these twin goals.

Susanna Boxall at the University of California Chico declares outright in her Spring 2014 Women and Religion syllabus: "Religion is a sensitive topics [sic]. We will ask difficult questions—and the answers we come up with may shake some of us to the core. So, be prepared to be uncomfortable." Since the class, according to its outline, will discuss issues such as sexual abuse, norms about women's bodies and human sexuality, as well as bans on Muslim headscarves and the status of women in Islamic law, she understands the potential for some students to "feel deeply bothered." Boxall could plan to explore the topic of women in religion historically. She could proceed to relate information descriptively. Instead, she generates a course that contextualizes the subject of women in religion politically via topics such as Origins of Western Patriarchy; Hinduism: Between Beauty and Militancy; and Fundamentalism: Polygyny and Heterosexism. These labels suggest a deliberate attempt to push some buttons. Moreover, she identifies the style of the course as "participatory"

and requires students "to come to class prepared to offer an informed opinion on the ideas portrayed in the readings" because "learning is not a spectator sport." Again, as Pasque et al. note, "By surfacing or creating tension and conflict, and by challenging students to confront the differences between their own experiences and worldviews and those of others, or between their understanding of social phenomena and the empirical reality of the environment, cognitive dissonance and its resolution can lead to new understandings of self and others."[65]

To help find the right tone for the classroom, Boxall issues a brief note on conduct that reads much like others already mentioned: "Although I want everyone to feel free to express his/her perspective on any issues, no one will ever launch a personal attack on a fellow classmate (or instructor), and no one will ever use hurtful, vulgar or inflammatory language against a peer." That strategy might yield an important result. Berila maintains that faculty need "to teach students how to have honest, compassionate, challenging dialogues in fraught moments in which they do not feel entirely safe, because that is how it happens in the 'real world.'"[66] Attempting, then, to alert students to think about incivility in the dialogue sharpens awareness both of how one speaks and what one hears. Pinpointing the range of acceptable speech puts students on the alert to attend not only to their own words, but also to the words of others even when directed at another classmate. Responsibility for the dialogue thus extends to all. The burden of policing interactions, however, remains not just on the individual student, but also on the judgment of the faculty member. Boxall adds, "Still, if you are deeply bothered by something that is said in class, or you feel that your voice is not heard, please speak up (or come talk to me after class)." The instructor maintains a special role and must exhibit an openness to hear feedback on where and how it may fail and to act accordingly to adjust the parameters as necessary. In fact, Boxall also notes that "rude, violent, and/or disruptive behavior … may result in disciplinary action."

Levinovitz makes much the same point, although he provides no guidelines for shaping the process.

> The communal aspect of the debate is important. It demands patience, open-mindedness, empathy, the courage to question others and be questioned, and above all, attempting to see things as others do. But even though academic debate takes place in a community, it is also combat. Combat can hurt. It is literally offensive. Without offense there is no antagonistic dialogue, no competitive marketplace, and no chance to change your mind.[67]

Too much control of speech, however hurtful, he argues, will produce a closed circle where people of like mind only speak to one another, and the process either becomes hopelessly polarized or disingenuous in its appearance of tolerance. Part of the educational process becomes more than simply supporting diverse viewpoints as a way of making inroads into the traditional dominance of a white, western, male, socio-economically advantaged perspectives. Instead, the classroom becomes a place where division can help students learn to recognize their own assumptions, identify and engage with the assumptions of others, figure out what differences generate conflict and why, and practice speaking persuasively to others. Unlike Boxall, however, he does not worry about the tenor of the conversations.

Instead, he claims that "if respect requires refraining from attacking people's identity, then the only respectful discussion of religion is one in which everyone affirms everyone else's beliefs, describes those beliefs without passing judgment, or simply remains silent."[68]

Online discussion, of course, raises distinct challenges in terms of facilitating difficult conversations among a diverse student body. Fortunately, however, many of the same strategies used in the traditional classroom still apply. If the course requires discussion for success, student motivation typically begins with making this element a substantial part of the final grade, setting forward clear expectations for how conversations will proceed, and establishing criteria for assessment.[69] Just as in face-to-face classrooms, issues will arise as students will encounter challenging material as well as persons who see the world differently. Therefore, as graduate student and education blogger Heather VanMouwerik points out, "Big or small, a statement about proper online communication sets the tone for the rest of your course."[70] Susan Shaffer in her Fall 2013 syllabus for Religion and Film at the University of Florida follows that principle when she writes:

> Our subject matter often goads deeply seated convictions. Posts are a platform for both your scholarly plume and your informed opinions; as such, respect for your interlocutors is of utmost importance. Disrespectful or mean-spirited comments will not be tolerated in written posts or in classroom discussion.

Likewise, DiBernardo says: "Respect each other's ideas, feelings and experiences." To achieve that end, he tells students, "Be courteous and considerate. It is important to be honest and to express yourself freely, but being considerate of others is just as important." The necessity of the topic likely stems from problematic online conduct such as trolling[71] or cyber-bullying.[72] While much of this troubling posting behavior occurs because of the anonymity or the detachment of online interactions, factors not often relevant to online academic courses, instructors and institutions still find it helpful to address problems that arise out of not being able to read tone or non-verbal cues that often clarify what a "speaker" might mean or difficulties with handling complex topics in this format. Indeed, many universities produce guidelines under the rubric of "Netiquette" that instructors can reference or post.

The University of Wisconsin Stevens Point, for example, offers a template for building an online syllabus. Section Five outlines Netiquette (with citations for the sites from which these standards were adapted). The opening sets the stage: "Netiquette is a set of rules for behaving properly online." Their list of rules includes: no dominating, no offensive language, no "shouty" all caps, avoiding overuse of emojis/emoticons, and avoiding slang. But, this template goes further, reading "Your instructor and fellow students wish to foster a safe learning environment. All opinions and experiences, no matter how different or controversial they may be perceived, must be respected in the tolerant spirit of academic discourse." The concept of creating a safe space for discourse again balances with freedom of expression. But, as with other learning environments, the question of what constitutes respect comes to the fore. In this model, as in previous examples, remaining focused on the ideas and not the person expressing them creates the dividing line: "You are encouraged to comment, question, or critique an idea, but you are not to attack an individual."

Gerald Marsh, in the Fall 2016 Life, Death, and Sex course at Arizona State University, inserts an additional item for consideration. He sounds a familiar refrain by telling students that they "must maintain a cordial atmosphere and use tact in expressing differences of opinion." Then, however, he adds, "Inappropriate discussion board posts may be deleted by the instructor." For free speech advocates, this practice sounds alarm bells. Learning management systems allow professors (and university officials) considerable leeway regarding student work, including the possibility of editing or deleting student posts (and, in many, signing in as the student to make edits). Records of all such actions exist in the data logs and often will be recoverable from technical support personnel if the instructor is blocked from reversing any deletions. But, as Renate Prescott of Kent State University suggests, making determinations to take such an action requires judgment and caution. She writes, "When incivility occurs, instructors have to figure out whether the student's incivility is intentional or whether the student has written an unintentional remark out of ignorance or naiveté."[73] Pedagogically, a gentle inquiry from the professor (or from other students, for that matter) can clarify. "Did you mean to say … ?" or perhaps, "Could you help me understand your point?" assumes that a student simply might not fully understand how a comment reads and, once prodded, will quickly resolve any unintended offense. The student might even request that a troubling post be removed.

Even with intentional insults or attacks directed toward other students or the professor, the policy Marsh outlines raises significant questions about the First Amendment Rights of students. Since the mass murder at Virginia Tech, institutions rightly stand on guard for signs of mental health issues or students, voicing of violent intent. Codes of Conduct and specific policies about the use of technology often come into play in these situations. But Marsh informs his students that they "are entitled to receive instruction free from interference by other members of the class." This language echoes the 1969 *Tinker* decision from the United States Supreme Court.[74] In that ruling, "the Supreme Court found that a state's interest in maintaining its educational system can justify limitations on students' First Amendment rights to the extent necessary to maintain an effective learning environment."[75] But a school must establish that any prohibitions around the expression of an opinion must function "to avoid substantial interference with school discipline or the rights of others."[76] That standard, for one example, covers threats of violence.[77] One might also entertain, in the online environment, that personal attacks, stalking, or bullying could be curtailed.

But Marsh, like Boxall, raises the stakes. He writes, "An instructor may withdraw a student from the course when the student's behavior disrupts the educational process per Instructor Withdrawal of a Student for Disruptive Classroom Behavior."[78] Where the rights of a student to expression end and the rights of others to the education promised by the institution free from undue interference begins often comes down to other institutional regulations and processes. With free speech controversies much in the news, universities are struggling to define these lines.[79] Even though the activities currently in the headlines are typically centered on students shouting down speakers in campus forums rather than in the classroom,[80] the concerns radiate outward.[81] Polling at Yale University, for instance, found that "42% of students (and 71% of conservatives) say they feel uncomfortable giving their opinions on politics, race, religion, and gender" and that this "self-censorship becomes more

common as students progress through the university."[82] Similarly, a national survey in Fall 2017 found that 53% of students thought that a college should "create a positive learning environment for all students by prohibiting certain speech of expression of viewpoints that are offensive or biased against certain groups of people" as opposed to "create[ing] an open learning environment where students are exposed to all types of speech an viewpoints, even if it means allowing speech that is offensive or biased against certain groups."[83]

If institutions place value on diversity as part of the educational process, and if that value derives from engagement with persons of differing perspectives, then finding ways to help learners navigate difficult topics meaningfully with one another represents a significant challenge. In the religious studies classroom, even at a secular, public university, the combination of students coming into that space as adherents of a given religious tradition combined with the subjects under scrutiny amplifies the likelihood of discussion including perspectives shaped by religious belief. None of the syllabi cited expect student to check their religious commitments at the door, just as no policy would prohibit a student speaking from the perspective of one's ethnic background or gender identity if one chose that option. To do so would, inevitably, fail.[84] When issues that touch on the concerns of various communities come up in the classroom, allowing for authentic encounters with difference and assisting contestation that respects and yet interrogates distinctions even on these most fundamental issues becomes the responsibility of the faculty member. It does so precisely because when religious studies functions as part of a liberal arts education, it "prepares [students] to deal with complexity, diversity, and change."[85] Ideally, then, what happens in the classroom will transfer into more helpful conversations in communities and in the nation about this aspect of our diverse lives. Or, as Michelle Lelwica, Professor of Religious Studies at Concordia College, claims, "Educational practices that help our students approach difference with curiosity, understanding, respect, and appreciation are crucial for their responsible participation in a diverse but deeply interconnected world."[86]

THE PLACE OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY CONTESTATIONS

Events on a campus, or in the local or national or international community, can and do bring issues related to diversity, namely living in a multicultural United States, into the classroom. Several recent high-profile incidents on or near college campuses, however, have prompted some religious studies faculties to make public statements that deserve consideration in conversation about the impact of diversity on college campuses and the place of religious studies in addressing these issues. Indeed, exploration of what these statements communicate, to whom, and for what purpose, may signal a more activist faculty profile emerging.

A letter from the faculty of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of California, Davis dated February 6, 2017, addresses "acts of intimidation, exclusion, and hate" at the Davis Islamic Center, the Tarbiya Center in nearby Roseville, and at the home of a Muslim family in the town of Davis. The incidents mentioned include vandalism, anti-Islamic graffiti, and the deposit of a package of pork meat on the doorstep of a Muslim home. The faculty writes,

> As educators, we often hear our students speak of their fears and the fears they have for their friends and family, and we will not remain silent in the face of their anxiety. The Department of Religious Studies stands in solidarity with all our community members.

This proclamation of voicing support and "standing with" clearly departs from the value-neutrality that often marks academic religious studies. It is not as if the program did not know what Luís León observes: "The field of religious studies is inherently political, and it too has real implications in real worlds."[87] The UC Davis web site, after all, asserts "it is impossible to open a newspaper, listen to the radio, or watch television without being bombarded by the debates about the religious and ethical dimensions of medical care, sexual behavior, interpersonal violence, large-scale war, capital punishment, and a host of other issues that fiercely divide the public both in this country and abroad." But this faculty chose not only to advertise the importance of studying religion in "creating educated, thinking individuals who are prepared to participate responsibly in our complex society," their letter demonstrates commitment to showing what such citizenship looks like in practice.

"Standing with" does not designate passivity. This faculty, however, acts by stressing its function to educate, and thus extends this invitation:

> We offer our faculty as a resource for any person or group interested in discussing religion and public policy and the long history of religious conflict across the globe. We will come to your community to speak with you, and we welcome the opportunity for dialog.

From the vantage point of the mission of a public university, this invitation ought to be welcome and embraced. The University Mission Statement includes, in fact, the following claims: "UC Davis extends service to the region, state, nation and the world in many forms." No doubt some would question the nature of what "dialog" means in this context. The issue of whose voices and whose anxieties, or whose "agenda" gets heard regularly get posed by conservative, some would say extreme, commentators.[88] These reactions to the university and its faculty, moreover, carry political weight in the age of Donald Trump. But this faculty speaking publicly about contemporary, controversial issues in their community likely extends to doing so in their classrooms as well. They certainly seem amenable to sponsoring campus activities for this purpose. An October 2017 talk by lecturer Thor Harris paired Confucius and the Confederacy and the issue of public memorials. Similarly, Sarah Pike of UC Chico visited in April 2017 to present about environmental protests as rites of grief for just two illustrations of what the department faculty seek to make available.

UC Davis does not stand alone. The faculty at the University of Virginia issued an Open Letter on August 14, 2017 in response to the rally of white supremacists on their campus and in their community. As at UC Davis, this faculty puts forward their bond and commitment to people experiencing harm, saying, "We stand in solidarity with the victims of these events and with those who courageously resisted the hate groups and their virulent messages; we stand with the community of Charlottesville and with all those at who hate continues to be directed." Speaking in this manner means again assuming

some responsibilities related to their profession. Thus, in addition to denouncing the violence and terror, they summon their voices as scholars of religion (and ethics more broadly defined), saying,

> We must not hesitate to name and condemn the intimidation, terror, and violence that convulsed and profaned our city and university this weekend. We consider the groups who organized and participated in the "Unite the Right" rally to be hate groups. We do not take their views to represent a legitimate, alternative political perspective: they are dangerous, and they perpetuate what is universally condemned by all the world's religions and ethical systems. We feel morally compelled to call out those who afflicted our community with their night-time mob on the University's Grounds and with their violence on our city's streets the following day.

This statement corresponds to the web page description of "Who We Are" which says that "The Department vigorously engages the lived reality of religious life" as well as one of the three purposes in the University Mission Statement which claims that they are defined by "our unwavering support of a collaborative, diverse community bound together by distinctive foundational values of honor, integrity, trust, and respect."

But they also understand the necessity of taking actions beyond making statements and in accordance with their mission and expertise. Given that the events that transpired included the chants "Jews will not replace us," evocations of Nazi philosophy with "Blood and Soil," as well as "White Lives Matter" and any number of racist and homophobic shouts at individuals, they wrote, "We cherish the diversity of our student body and commit ourselves to supporting students who are targeted by hate groups." The nature of this support includes not only availability to students on a personal level, but also a promise to create "new initiatives." The page of responses designed to address the issues around the events of that weekend represents one avenue. Writing, lectures, and community forums begin this work. But as faculty members Martien A. Halvorson-Taylor and Kurtis R. Schaeffer indicate, "Now comes the harder work of living into it."[89]

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the essay by Halvordon-Taylor and Schaeffer calls attention to "some of the unintended consequences of postmodernism, in which all perspectives, in this case bigoted and vile ones, could claim equal validity." They then conclude, "This yields a moral relativism that we cannot countenance."[90] Neutrality, in their estimation, fails to hold students and faculty accountable, not for vague concepts like tolerance or diversity, but for the basic norms of university life: "clear articulation of their claims, the evidence for those claims, and the warrants for treating evidence from particular perspectives." To bring that practice in the classroom, a raft of Spring 2018 courses provide opportunities for faculty and students working together to address the key questions. A course already on the books, "Whiteness and Religion," certainly seems an appropriate venue for the larger issues to emerge. But several special topics offerings including "Theology and Identity," "Religion, Race, and Belonging," to "The Aesthetics of Solidarity," and "God, Money, and Terror" afford an opportunity for academic investigation of the current climate.

These examples of faculty activism around local issues can be multiplied. In the days following Charlottesville, as the discussion about confederate memorials once again became quite heated, the faculty of the Religious Studies program at UNC-Chapel Hill issued a Statement. Dated October 4, 2017, they addressed the controversial Confederate monument on their own campus known as "Silent Sam." After the February 2017 desecration of Jewish gravestones in Philadelphia, the University of Pennsylvania Religious Studies Faculty also issued a statement. They called on "President Trump, and his administration, to denounce these acts, and to pledge that the Justice Department and local authorities will prosecute the perpetrators." Or one might look at the University of Missouri's Religious Studies faculty and their response to the desecration of a Jewish cemetery in Missouri and some anti-Semitic harassment of students on campus. This communication followed on an October 2015 statement about the campus convulsions regarding race.

Political activism among faculty, whether inside or outside the classroom, can result in serious repercussions for both individuals as well as for institutions. Likely no one in higher education, for instance, missed hearing about the case of Steven Salaita, whose Summer 2014 tweets about Israeli military actions in Gaza prior to assuming a tenured appointment at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign resulted in the university rescinding that offer.[91] Even though Salaita's hire in the American Indian Studies program did not directly impact religious studies, the contentiousness of political and human rights discussions concerning the state of Israel, the Palestinians, and United States foreign policy in the region turns up routinely in religious studies classrooms. The delicate line between criticism of the state of Israel and anti-Semitism[92] complicates these conversations, as does, at least in some quarters, the conflation of support for Israel and religious belief.[93]

For faculty, the merging of free speech as a private citizen with concerns about fitness for employment proves particularly chilling. In debating the merits of continuing with the Salaita appointment,[94] the following student objection to his presence on the faculty appeared in the national media:

> "It's about feeling safe on campus," Noah Feingold, a member of a pro-Israel student group, told The Forward. "This is a professor who tweeted that if you support Israel, you're an awful person."[95]

Here, the student equates the personal political views of a professor with an inability to moderate a classroom effectively. Then-Chancellor Phyllis Wise agreed with this perspective on her blog:

> "What we cannot and will not tolerate at the University of Illinois are personal and disrespectful words or actions that demean and abuse either viewpoints themselves or those who express them. We have a particular duty to our students to ensure that they live in a community of scholarship that challenges their assumptions about the world but that also respects their rights as individuals."[96]

Even though nothing about Salaita's tweets was directed at a student, the previously tenured Salaita did not receive the tenured position, was paid an $875,000 settlement by the university in exchange for dropping two lawsuits,[97] and ultimately left academia when

he was unable to secure a suitable appointment.[98]

Free speech concerns here meld with academic freedom, and policy initiatives emerging in the wake of these controversies raise significant questions about speech rights and academic freedom. Faculty, for instance, may not be familiar with university technology policies on most campuses governing the use of social media. To select by one example, the University of Kentucky says the following in its Social Media Policies and Guidelines (and they pre-dated the Salaita case): "The use of social media may blur the lines between personal voice and institutional voice." The university offered, "the following policies to clarify how best to enhance and protect the University, as well as personal and professional reputations, when participating in social media." It then continues to make clear that "employees are accountable for any institutionally related content they post to social media sites" and advises that "on personal sites, identify your views as your own. If you identify yourself as a UK faculty or staff employee online, it should be clear that the views expressed are not necessarily those of the institution."

For faculty, this directive follows from the 1940 AAUP Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, which holds that:

> College and university teachers are citizens, members of a learned profession, and officers of an educational institution. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations. As scholars and educational officers, they should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. Hence they should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution.

The balancing of institutional needs and personal freedoms here should, ideally, permit faculty to speak freely in any environment without fear of job-related consequences, while, at the same time, expecting some cognizance when speaking of one's identification with the university.[99] Although only a "best practice," the policy section does indicate that employees "must follow applicable federal requirements" and "adhere to all applicable University regulations, policies, and procedures."

But questions of how universities adjudicate cases can make things complicated. At the heart of the Salaita case, the question of whether his tweets constituted harassment or discrimination would form the basis on which the administration acted. Policies concerning discrimination and harassment at universities arose to guide institutions in complying with federal, state, and local laws, but sometimes they extend well beyond the legal definitions. As Judith White states in *The Academic's Handbook,* "You are not likely to find a set of rules. You will find definitions of behaviors that are prohibited because they interfere with the academic mission of your institution and its responsibilities as an employer."[100] At the University of Oregon, for example, the University's report on the case of law professor Nancy Shurtz wearing a racially charged Halloween costume at a party in her home (but with students invited), found the faculty member in violation of its discrimination policy. It reads, in part:

> Discriminatory Harassment is defined as any conduct that either in form or operation unreasonably discriminates among individuals on the basis of age, race, color, ancestry, national or ethnic origin, religion, service in the uniformed services (as defined in state and federal law), veteran status, sex, sexual orientation, marital or family status, pregnancy, pregnancy-related conditions, physical or mental disability, gender, perceived gender, gender identity, genetic information or the use of leave protected by state or federal law and that is sufficiently severe or pervasive that it *interferes with work or participation in any university program or activity, including academic activities because it creates an intimidating, hostile, or degrading working or university environment for the individual who is the subject of such conduct,* and where the conduct would have such an effect on a reasonable person who is similarly situated.[101]

The ability of an individual to request redress of an alleged violation, via the University's bias reporting system, initiates a review process that is not well defined.[102] What could constitute a complaint in this system, and who determines standards for intimidation, hostility, or degrading, remains unclear.

Faculty might see such policies as infringements on their academic freedom. Part of the reason for hiring Salaita with tenure, after all, was "the uniqueness of his scholarship on the intersection of American Indian, Palestinian, and American Palestinian perspectives."[103] Thus his tweets, while profane and, to many eyes, vile and anti-Semitic,[104] still fell within the parameters of his professional work. Likewise, Shurtz contended her costume idea came from the memoir *Black Man in a White Coat* by Damon Tweedy. The volume described the experiences of a black man beginning his medical career, and Shurtz asserted she wanted to draw attention to the book and its anti-racist message. But while each of these cases related to employment-related issues, they did not address specifically contested information in a classroom or in an on-campus lecture. Even there, while the courts traditionally have given faculty broad latitude with regard to controversial topics,[105] what issues faculty members might hesitate to raise, given the propensity of these materials to go viral, remains in question.

José A. Cabranes, judge on the 2nd Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals and former general counsel at Yale University, recognizes the political shift regarding concerns about academic freedom in a recent op-ed. In this instance, however, he takes on the political left instead of the political right. He writes,

> Certainly, today's critics of academic freedom rarely deny that professors should be able to write and teach freely. But they nonetheless insist that professors should exercise such liberty in the shadow of other values, such as civility, sex equality and social justice. While these are worthy ideals, they can become tools for suppressing free expression—just as anti-communism once was."[106]

Here he puts forward that the zealousness with which campuses can press sensitivity and respect as a standard toward all members of a community and the importance of civil discourse can, in fact, themselves limit free expression. While Cabranes oversimplifies the

dynamics, without doubt such behaviors have caused a media firestorm and also threaten to impact the classroom and the work of faculty.

The recent attention to the vociferous practice of student speech on campuses has invited more than media notice, it has also brought legislative attention to state universities. Lawmakers in multiple states have passed directives regarding how campuses should deal with both free speech issues and protestors, including the possibility of expulsion for students and serious sanctions for faculty members.[107] How these laws will shape campus free speech rights, and if they will have an impact on faculty voices regarding events related to their areas of expertise, remains to be seen. But policies initially designed to assist traditionally underrepresented groups in the process of changing institutions have become institutional cudgels to curtail the activities of faculty (and students) deemed problematic. And the pressures on the classroom come from both sides of the political spectrum.

CONCLUSIONS

Today's polarized discourse about multiculturalism in America and its impact on our common life certainly finds expression on the campuses of public universities.[108] It should. But the reporting of the contestations, including conservative backlash against diversity initiatives and liberal opposition to speech deemed offensive, opens up questions about the value of diversity in a person's education. Who should have access to a campus and on what basis, what free speech means in an academic environment, and similar issues begin to come to the forefront. While these debates might feel pressing in the current cultural moment, they have been building over the course of the last 50 years. As public higher education became more open to persons traditionally not welcomed to campuses and their voices began to shape knowledge and the academy, such conflicts seemed inevitable. But public colleges and universities embrace diversity not for its own sake, or even, now, because the law requires equal opportunity for student, faculty, staff, and administrative applicants. Diversity remains a core value at institutions of higher learning because these institutions exist to serve the public, and that public is composed of a wide range of people differentiated by factors such as gender, race/ethnicity, and class. The essential bond between a community and a school hinges, in large measure, on what the campus offers in intellectual capital, financial investment, opportunity for social and cultural enrichment, and attentiveness to the needs of all of the people it seeks to reach.

For religious studies faculties, diversity is a given. The academic study of religion not only must wrestle with the complex histories of varying religious groups across time and place, but also with real and powerful difference in practices within communities locally and around the globe. To engage with those currents, faculty make use of a plethora of academic methods and theories, and encourage students to develop a variety of tools for this work. This commitment to a diversity of topics and approaches ideally should promote the development and welcoming of a structurally diverse faculty and student body who engage with one another thoughtfully and respectfully in order to learn from interactions with others who present alternative perspectives and challenge traditional ideas. The complications of these tasks, however, are tied both to the troubling nature of

certain events in a given news cycle and to persistent and often unacknowledged structural biases that can limit who gets included at the table.

Yet in spite of these pressures, religious studies faculty enter classrooms every day and proceed to handle "hot topics," whether they be rooted in the practice of religion historically at some place on the planet or just across the quad. And these faculty do so with students who run the spectrum from strongly religious to unabashedly atheist. Moreover, in the public universities, they do so in communities where issues related to religion often are percolating and tensions can be running quite high. As the environment for higher education changes, religious studies faculties must continually reflect on what constitutes diversity at their institution and if that definition is articulated forcefully enough in the composition of their faculty and student body. It means committing to diversity in the curricular offerings and in the programming and outreach to larger publics. And it means being willing to dive into controversies and to provide tools for engaging with persons and groups holding diverse points of view thoughtfully and constructively, even when discussions become heated and uncomfortable. To do anything less abdicates the service missions of these public institutions and cannot possibly serve the needs of the communities that support them.

Chapter Five

INTRODUCTION

The landscape of higher education in the mid-20th century supported the development and the expansion of academic religious studies programs. It began with an influx of service members returning from the second World War. They came to college campuses thanks to the G.I. Bill of 1944,[1] more than doubling student enrollments[2] in some locations. Flush from this massive expansion of educational opportunity, public educators sought to continue growth trends throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s. In this instance, women and minorities became prime targets for recruitment. With state support of public institutions, these students often could attend school at no (as in the University of California which offered a tuition-free education until the 1970s) or low (as with the University of North Carolina which operates under a constitutional mandate to keep expenses free as far as is practicable) cost. Although this push to educate more people coincided with the advancing of science and technology deemed necessary in the Cold War environment,[3] the infusion of students also allowed for schools to extend their curricular programming in many areas. Indeed, fields of inquiry like academic religious studies began to emerge in new forms, namely moving away from the traditional seminary model and toward a far more expansive understanding of religion and religious practices.

Several key factors helped Religious Studies transform from its Christian-focused roots and flourish in public institutions. Some observers cite the Supreme Court's Schempp decision, where the majority opinion articulated a distinction between studying about religion for knowledge of its nature and functions in various societies and studying a given religion for the purposes of faith development.[4] This conceptualization of academic religious inquiry, however, came not from the justices; it was already well established among scholars of religion. Nonetheless, a judicial stamp of Constitutional approval provided the academic study of religion a convenient recognition of the legitimacy of such inquiry in a modern, publically funded institution.

Additionally, during this period religious studies scholars tapped into a wider interest in cultures and traditions beyond the borders of the United States. Two World Wars, not to mention the conflicts in Korea and Vietnam, situated military personnel in culturally unfamiliar environments. Service men and women brought home their stories, experiences, and interests in life elsewhere, even as the increasing photographic and video news traffic in these regions truly made the world feel smaller for a broader group of citizens. Indeed, by the late 1960s, nightly reports from correspondents in Vietnam brought images of

the land and its people into American living rooms.[5] Moreover, widespread awareness of politics on a global scale and greater interest in other cultures marked American life (see, for instance, the reflection of such in film, literature, art, and music). One could, for example, see Gandhi's emphases on non-violent protest[6] played out in the civil rights marches while the Beatles, a pop culture phenomenon, experimented with the traditional Indian musical instruments and Indian philosophy.

But these conditions, the ones prompting the growth and flourishing of religious studies as a field in the modern public university, belonged to a specific time and place in higher education now long past. The history of the changes from then to now need not receive extensive focus here.[7] But the nature of the economic shift gets summarized neatly by Christopher Newfield, Professor in the Department of English at the University of California at Santa Barbara, in his scathing and somewhat frightening assessment of the higher education landscape, *Unmaking the Public University: The Forty-Year Assault on the Middle Class.* He maintains that

> By 2005 or so, it had become impossible to ignore the sense of crisis that hung over the American college and university. It had become hard to see higher education in terms other than crisis, and harder to capture its situation in other than crisis terms. Campuses had become habituated to worried talk about money, and the less money they had, the more they talked about it … Humanities faculties were particularly afflicted, and carried a list of problems in their heads.[8]

As traditional funding sources, like legislatures, offered less support for the expanded and expansive reach of universities, many programs felt the crunch. While one might expect a crisis environment to necessitate the generation of immediate and long-lasting solutions, Newfield indicates the exact opposite with his characterization of many campuses becoming "habituated" to the problems. Thus, many smaller units, like religious studies, continued finding ways to survive and, occasionally, to thrive. As noted, positioning courses well within General Education, partnering with other minor players on a campus, starting a graduate program, or addressing global crises all provided avenues to maintain faculty lines and to initiate, retain, or build a campus profile. Rarely, however, did religious studies faculties rethink the mission and purpose and place of academic religious studies on the campuses of public universities.

The higher education landscape today, however, makes this rethinking a difficult, but necessary, challenge. While fear of a degree or a program being curtailed because of not generating enough credit hours, or a failing to graduate enough majors, or not having a clear vocational outcome associated with the degree, certainly pressures faculties, the demographic and institutional changes coming in the near future represent a far more pressing concern. To consider some possible new directions, this chapter opens with a brief section on the new landscape of higher education and the characteristics of millennials who now are the emergent leaders as well as the consumers in this world. These trend lines will prompt an examination of newer models of educational delivery focused on tackling persistent challenges to life in the 21st Century and potential places within them for the academic study of religious worldviews and communities. This rather brief treatment of a complex

subject does not mean to suggest a ready panacea exists for religious studies programs in public universities. It also does not delve into the associated range of problems faculties face in shaping such challenges, from the decline in tenured and tenure-track lines, to the rising number of contingent and other low-wage faculty with no or limited benefits positions, to the erosion of faculty control of curricula, and the like. Nor does this focus on select types of educational options mean to argue one size fits all circumstances. Rather, the suggestion here will ideally serve to ignite larger conversations among faculty, students, administrators, and local communities about how to proceed with public education in this time and this place in a way that meets the needs these universities seek to serve. In brief, it seeks to pull together the preceding discussions of the health of religious studies programs, how and in what modes religious studies can be taught, and how the field speaks to difficult issues of public concern.

RELIGION, INSTITUTIONS, AND MILLENNIALS: THE NECESSITY FOR NEW MODELS OF EDUCATION

Not only do the conditions that produced the founding and growth of modern academic religious studies programs in public institutions no longer exist, but the imagination most people have of a college experience also does not match the reality of most undergraduates in the United States today. A residential model for 18-to-22-year olds straight out of high school and focused solely on their education no longer defines collegiate life.[9] In fact, between 2012 and 2016, the total number of students studying strictly on a physical campus dropped by more than 1 million, or 6.4 percent.[10] An increase in the number of "adult" learners also deserves note. In 2015, for instance, 60% of all students enrolled in degree-granting postsecondary institutions were 22 or older. If that bottom limit goes to 25 and over, the figure shifts, but it moves to a still startling number of 41%.[11] Online learning also ushers in change. A recent Babson Survey Research Group report found that 31.6% of all students take at least one distance course. Moreover, that number has increased every year for the past fourteen and "public institutions command the largest portion of distance education students, with 67.8 percent of all distance students."[12]

A significant upward trend in dual enrollment students pressures the traditional educational system as well.[13] Earning college credit while still enrolled in high school, often through a community college, means students arrive on campus with multiple competitive advantages that include less need for remedial work, improved college readiness, a greater likelihood to complete a postsecondary degree, higher college GPAs, and a faster track to degree completion.[14] While data tracking for these students remains largely on a state or even local, rather than a national, level for these students, the kinds of challenges they represent to traditional educational formats and schedules comes through in a brief look at North Carolina. More than 100 Early College High Schools, cooperative efforts between secondary and postsecondary institutions, have established themselves across the state. Thanks to a comprehensive articulation agreement, most of the courses these students take qualify for transfer to a four-year institution. Further, over 40% of the graduates of such programs complete an AA or an AS degree while still in high school, and this achievement fulfills general education requirements in any of the state's public institutions

(barring specific requirements of a given major). In addition, students who complete the AA or AS may apply to a four-year school either to enter as a first-year student OR as a transfer student. But perhaps of the greatest significance, most of these institutions employ a non-traditional project-based curriculum. These circumstances will, without question, challenge religious studies programs that depend on General Education or core courses to generate student credit hours and attract majors. They will also push the learning models university-level religious studies courses utilize.

While considering demography, a few words about "millennials" also become important. This generation, consisting of persons born roughly from 1981 to 1997, is, at present, the largest population demographic in the United States.[15] Further, they constitute the most diverse generation in U.S. history (43% non-white) and the best educated (34% have a bachelor's degree or better). Given these numbers, one could easily have anticipated that their advance, alongside the decline of the Baby Boomers, would usher in educational change. For religious studies programs, however, one feature of this group stands out. Millennials are also the least religious generation. "They attend church less often, pray less often, doubt the existence of God more and think religion is less important than any other generation in history."[16] In fact, "when it comes to religion, Millennials' views have become markedly more negative over time, with 55% of Millennials surveyed by the Pew Research Center rating churches and other religious organizations as having a positive impact on the country compared to 73% of young people responding to the same question five years ago."[17]

According to New York University Professor of Sociology Michael Hout, this pull away among millennials from religiosity likely emerges from a constellation of related issues, and not simply the nature of religion itself or the current cultural climate in the United States. For example, the tendency of people in this demographic category to delay or altogether avoid marriage and children might relate to less religiosity because they do not conform to a long-standing pattern of people affiliating with religious institutions as a part of raising a family. Similarly, the uncomfortable relationship with faith communities in this age group could connect to a broader distrust of established entities. In fact, Hout notes that "general Social Survey data on confidence in the leadership of major institutions show that younger people particularly are not as enamoured as older adults when it comes to institutions like the press, government and churches."[18] That list, by the way, includes higher education as well.[19]

Within religious studies programs on public university campuses, however, none of these statistics should necessarily sound alarm bells. Although personal interest in religion might be receding in the United States, thus attracting fewer students into courses on account of their previous experience with religious education curricula such as Sunday School, religious practice and devotion around the world continues on a steady course. The Pew Religious Landscape noted in 2015, "The number of religiously unaffiliated people, also known as religious 'nones,' is increasing in places such as the United States and Europe, and we project continued growth. Globally, however, the opposite is true: The unaffiliated are expected to *decrease* ***as a share of*** the world's population between 2010 and 2050 (from 16% to 13%)."[20] Add in religion's historic impact across time and place and its on-going

role in the lives of no less than two-thirds, and somewhat greater than three-quarters, of all Americans between the present and 2050, and the justification for continued study appears clear.[21] In short, the place of religious studies as part of a university-level education does not need to be threatened by a lack of relevance in people's personal belief systems or a lack of trust in religious institutions.

When considering all of these data, the question about the future of religious studies might better be posed not *if* religion matters, but *how* a new generation of scholars, with different perspectives and approaches, will change the field and what concerns new generations of students will bring to the study. Even more, one must consider how the shifts in the nature of higher education will influence instruction in the academic study of religion.

To explore the relationship between these issues requires acknowledging that the traditional campus-based educational model with face-to-face lectures and seminars likely will not remain the standard educational option for many students. Moreover, online learning in its present form likely does not provide the only, or even the best, alternative. Indeed, writing for TechCrunch, Danny Crichton observes: "The next wave of education innovation won't come from dumping technology on the problem. Instead, it will come from deeply engaging with people and empowering them to make learning all their own."[22] The language here intrigues. Most university undergraduate programs of study proceed initially by stressing core skills in writing, quantitative literacy, scientific inquiry, and some form of introduction to the study of the humanities and/or the social sciences alongside a collection of area requirements designed to provide students a broad-based footing for conducting one's life as well as for meaningful civic engagement. A major then builds on this foundation with a deep investment in a particular area of inquiry. Faculties, however, set the requirements constituting the core in so-called "general" education as well as determine the essential topics for majors to learn within their program of study. Moreover, instructors, whether in general education or the major, typically define course goals in consonance with current trends and understandings of discipline or field. Students might choose (or, in some cases, design) a major, but the basic outline of their educational experience rests in faculty determinations about what comprises a course of study leading to a degree.

This model, however, is increasingly losing its appeal. Relevance, one primary marker in making learning one's own, often means something else for persons in this generation (and the generations that follow). Adam Miller, a business executive writing in *Fortune* on the challenges of understanding this shift in the workplace, confirms that

> Millennials place great importance on social causes and sense of purpose—and they define that purpose two-fold. The first is self-purpose; how do they fit into the organizational puzzle? How is their work relevant? … The second aspect is the purpose of the company. How does the company relate to the wider world, and what good does it contribute? Does the company's concern with social responsibility match theirs?[23]

Public institutions of higher education ought to see opportunity here. If students are indeed looking to find ways to address issues of consequence and looking to institutions to gauge their commitment to the same and, perhaps, to leverage the resources to

accomplish such work, then newer models of education offer some hopeful directions for embattled programs.

In early 2016, MIT made headlines with the announcement that Christine Ortiz, the dean of graduation education, would step down in order to create a new educational initiative. Press reports indicated that this vision of a residential research university would function outside of the traditional degree system and would forego majors, classrooms, or lectures as well as classifications like undergraduate or graduate students. Instead, it would revolve around a problem-based model that affords students the opportunity to do basic and applied research, focus on start-ups, and participate in projects.[24] While sounding radical on the surface, many universities already offer, on a smaller scale, something quite similar in their design-thinking start-up labs.

Tim Brown, CEO of IDEO (a design and consulting firm), often receives credit for popularizing the concept of design thinking in the business environment. A short explanation from Jeffrey Tjenda illustrates the basics. He argues that the culture of most entities becomes mired in "managing value," or maintenance of what defined their success, as opposed to encouraging awareness of changing needs and an openness to trying not only the new, but also the out of the ordinary. He writes,

> Because how they are bred, a majority of corporations operate with analytical thinking where they are constantly being disrupted by changing trends and consumer values rendering their business obsolete. Think of Kodak's film camera business. This happens because organizations lack value creation capability that would allow them to respond in time. To respond to external change is to innovate. To innovate, businesses must have the capacity to design. To design they need to fuse design internally within the organization to create a culture that fosters creative thinking and actions with design methods and tools designers use.[25]

By contrast, a "human-centered approach" like design thinking looks not to what the institution determines to offer, but rather to what people seek. From this starting place, teams organize and immerse themselves in communities to understand a particular challenge, work together to identify steps to forging a solution, and test out possible responses in prototype. This approach relocates the work of expertise by emphasizing application to particular problems or issues—although by no means excluding pure research or new theoretical frameworks. No doubt, in the business setting, this way of working reveals a deeply consumer-driven bias. When applied to higher education, it can move less in that direction and more toward the benefits of collaborative interaction with various communities.

Given the genesis in the business environment, the toehold to such work on campuses came, not surprisingly, from business schools. In particular, faculties here embraced the entrepreneurial impulse of such thinking, stressing the practical and applied nature of this approach as well as the possibility to make a profit. For instance, at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, the entrepreneurship program started in the 1990s and grew steadily as the recognition that students needed these skills in a new economy took hold. In fact, they extended the entrepreneurship program to non-business students in 2011, in order to "enable all students to gain a greater understanding and fuller appreciation

of the role of entrepreneurs in society especially in the sciences, and arts and (to) assist students in acquiring knowledge and developing attitudes necessary for being a successful entrepreneur in their chosen field of study and career." Technology programs also embraced this impulse. Seeking opportunities to help students and faculty develop and launch new entries into the marketplace from the university itself came into vogue. As a result, tech labs or similar incubators for student creativity began to pop up. Maker Spaces gave students the opportunity to try out their ideas with specialized equipment. For instance, the University of Texas at Austin provides three labs for engineering students to come and make things with items such as 3-D printers, laser cutters, and desktop CNC machines at no charge.

Other campuses, however, saw in these paradigms potential for community engagement. The University of Kentucky, for instance, founded the dLab (Laboratory on Design Thinking) in 2011. It functioned to apply "social science and psychology to better understand design, change, and innovation in organizations." This entity, moreover, serves the larger community.

> Outside partners, such as school districts, state agencies, and consortia engage the dLab on long-term projects, receiving the attention of a team of scholars, students and other experienced designers for a period of time ranging several days to several months depending on the challenge. In these projects, partners are co-designers with dLab staff, students and community liaisons in a process of need finding, brainstorming, and rapid prototyping to create new, powerful solutions to the challenges they face.

This mission includes providing a three-hour undergraduate and graduate course focuses on design thinking in education. More recently, the University of California at San Diego opened their own Design Lab, hoping to integrate its already vibrant research orientation with other disciplines and perspectives. "Our goal is to create an exciting, vibrant design community that pervades the campus, cutting across disciplines, developing cross-campus projects, combining practice with theory, and making UC San Diego a world leader in design theory and integrative programs." They offer a Design Minor, assistantships for students, a lecture series, and a Designer in Residence to facilitate new options.

In considering how to innovate on a scalable model, other universities looked less at students and more at structures and faculty. For example, at North Carolina State University, the Chancellor's Faculty Excellence Program, started in 2011, plans to make 75 new faculty hires in 20 select fields over the course of several years. Those fields include Emerging Plant Diseases and Global Security; Precision Medicine; Digital Transformation of Education; Sustainable Energy Systems and Policy; and Visual Narrative. They operate on the assumption that "society's grand challenges cross the boundaries between academic disciplines" and that creating a truly cross-disciplinary culture will result not only in solutions, but also in improved research and outcomes thanks to thinking across traditional divides. To accomplish this effort, they are rethinking the conditions of faculty appointment, promotion, tenure, research support, and, of course, classroom duties and access to collaborators and assistants in graduate and undergraduate students. How to wed these research initiatives to innovation with the traditional modes of education (classroom time, degrees, etc.) remains a more open question.[26]

It is true that established bureaucratic processes entrench certain ways of conducting institutional life and, as a result, many schools and the programs struggling to survive within them, tend to opt for adaptation rather than press for a new model or models. Such innovation often meets resistance because these models do more than simply add a new component to the curriculum. They find the first steps in rethinking higher education altogether. At Stanford, for instance, the willingness to take what already exists at the d.school (design school) in terms of problem-based learning and consider how it might transform the educational experience is underway. Imagine "instead of a four-year-and-out program with a progressive narrowing of focus, students have a 'mission' instead of a major, and 'loop' in and out of the university throughout their work careers, with punctuated periods of different kinds of learning, and with fact-based expertise giving way to skills-based expertise."[27] Education, in this paradigm, becomes more of a life-long process and depends on emerging needs, as opposed to a predefined course of study that may, or may not, prove ultimately relevant to a post-university life of a student.

Unfortunately, where these initiatives exist, the humanities often get overlooked. In part, the lack of emphasis on directly corresponding job-related skills make the fit more difficult to see. As Dan Edelstein pointed out in 2010, "Humanists do not like to talk about their trade in terms of, well, trade …" But, he then continues, "while we may prefer to think about our teaching and research as residing far from the madding crowd on Wall Street, we also owe ourselves and the public a forceful and convincing explanation of why the humanities are worth fighting—and paying—for."[28] As noted previously, the rationales for studying, even majoring, in the humanities today remain, on the whole, connected to competencies that emerge in traditionally defined classrooms and have general applicability in almost any employment setting. The University of North Carolina at Charlotte, for instance, identifies as one of its learning outcomes that students will "develop transferable skill sets that include reading carefully, writing cogently, speaking effectively, and thinking critically." Likewise, The University of Arizona maintains that "a Religious Studies degree can lead to almost any career" and that "the Religious Studies major prepares students to become independent thinkers and problem solvers in the twenty-first century." But unlike some of the newer possible options, the curricula of many undergraduate religious studies programs function to acquaint students with the production of knowledge in a field that exists only in higher education settings. Further, outside of pursuing advanced graduate or professional degrees in that field or related areas, the work accomplished toward a religious studies degree in most higher educational setting does not open up any network of professional connections for graduates. Nor does it promote a cohesive alumni network to help graduates transition from school into employment via internships or other pipelines.

For scholars trained within the traditional university structures, imagining the academic study of religion (or any of the humanities) in next-generation educational paradigms proves difficult. Some of the problems are predictable. Scholars trained and invested over decades in traditional classrooms, using curricular structures that conform to basic norms within a field, and established professionally in universities with rewards systems geared to performance within a given type of structure, receive no incentives to challenge the status quo. Similarly, as noted above, universities themselves survive as institutions because of the

ability to weather variable conditions and to tweak existing programming and practices rather than transform. It can be a struggle even to acknowledge that changing dynamic, much less to determine if and how to respond. Additionally, when newer models stress practical or applied skills, or "real world" settings and issues, things get complicated fast for the study of religion at a public university. "Application" in the "real world" too often gets equated with vocation or work in a religious community. With the history of the field predicated on drawing a sharp distinction between religion in the academy and religion in practice, any expression of interest in the public arena generally gets seen as too close to this line and, for religious studies, outside of its traditional value neutral stance.

If, however, the need for relevance via real-world and community-focused initiatives defines this generation of learners, and if universities already are responding in other fields of inquiry with community-focused initiatives, what might be blocking religious studies as practiced in public universities (as opposed to in religiously affiliated colleges and universities or seminaries) could be the key question. After all, a recent Lumina report cites malleability in curricular formatting and community-invested learning as key to the future. It says,

> An expanding body of research from the interdisciplinary field of learning sciences suggests that students learn in different ways and at different paces. The deepest levels of student understanding, the research suggests, is best achieved when students have opportunities to connect and integrate knowledge across disciplines, acquire and apply information in the context of the real world, and learn in collaborative settings that rely not just on classroom teachers, but also on multiple sources of expertise. Researchers have suggested that organizing schools and colleges in new ways to reflect these realities may enhance student learning, prompting growing numbers of educators in both K-12 and higher education to explore new, more flexible and more personalized educational strategies.[29]

One of the emerging challenges, then, for religious studies faculties becomes how to rethink the classroom and map traditional learning goals and objectives into new instructional initiatives relevant to learners as well as useful and comprehensible to evaluators and other publics. Innovation in religious studies demands creative thinkers willing to take risks that help community leaders account for how religion functions in their setting and how persons associated with and committed to a given tradition might be mobilized to work towards solving persistent and pressing issues.

COMMUNITY-ENGAGED RELEVANCE AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES

A design thinking model holds out some intriguing possibilities for undergraduate religious studies programs at public universities. Indeed, at larger research institutions, the incorporation of the academic study of religion into interdisciplinary research clusters already is underway. One might immediately think of Emory University's Religion and Public Healthcare Collaborative that brings together faculty from Public Health, Nursing, Law, Theology, Medicine, Religion, Sociology, and Anthropology to understand and explore the complex relationship of religion to topics such as safe water in rural communities,

contraception, bullying, and public health ethics. Likewise, the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale "is engaged in exploring religious worldviews, texts, and ethics in order to broaden understanding of the complex nature of current environmental concerns" and "recognizes that religions need to be in dialogue with other disciplines (e.g., science, ethics, economics, education, public policy, gender) in seeking comprehensive solutions to both global and local environmental problems." While each group produces cutting edge research, puts on conferences and lecture series, gathers and disseminates resources for a variety of groups, and offers students the possibility of earning unique collaborative degrees, the focus remains primarily on graduate-level research and education.

Smaller universities, and public institutions, with more of a focus on the classroom and undergraduates, however, are also starting to think about new models. Religious studies scholars, in fact, could be great partners in some of these initiatives. For example, in schools with a significant footprint in a city or region, building and maintaining effective ties to a community often proves essential to their mission as well as their survival. A 2014 Brookings Institute op-ed by Bruce Katz, *How Universities Can Renew America's Cities,* noted that young workers valued life in the city and encouraged "smart university presidents" toward "un-anchoring from their traditional campuses and expanding into the cores of cities."[30] That un-anchoring can also work in smaller towns and rural communities. Providing opportunities for local governments, nonprofits, school systems, or local businesses to partner with teams of undergraduate students and faculty to tackle local issues holds out the possibility of a different model for what higher education looks like and how a university relates to its community.

Various possibilities for structuring such work exist. Many religious studies programs already employ faculty who employ problem, or project-based learning in their classrooms, or various other kinds of newer learning strategies. One might, for example, reference Ken Derry's experimentations in his Religion and Film courses[31] or Troy Troftgruben's decentered approach to teaching biblical studies.[32] Service learning and other types of community-based work also have long been a part of some religious studies curricula, as described by Scott Seider in his study of a program at Ignatius University (and with considerable reference to similar immersion efforts elsewhere)[33] or the work of Jennifer Reed-Bouley and Eric Kyle discussing how to structure service-learning experiences in schools focused on social justice and racial reconciliation that deal with social inequality, namely racism and white privilege, without replicating or reinforcing the same.[34] But many of these alternative pedagogies emerge out of private, often religiously affiliated, institutions. Religious studies programs at public universities face different challenges. As Carol Harris-Shapiro chronicled regarding her 2001 service-learning course at Temple University, constructing such an effort in that setting requires struggling with issues such as "what would constitute 'service' in a religious setting?," "*how* students would process their experiences," and what she describes as her own sense of "disciplinary helplessness." That is, the tricky lines between religion and theology start to emerge again as part of a larger discomfort between how the academic study of religion relates to its current practice and practitioners.

Even then, experimental pedagogy practices in a few discrete classrooms differs from the radical shift in how education might proceed as promised with design thinking

or other interdisciplinary approaches to community issues. Imagine, for instance, a two-year, year-round, community-based curriculum situated within an interdisciplinary collaborative focused on a specific issue or community need. Undergraduates who have demonstrated proficiency in or completion of traditional General Education requirements could apply and, instead of moving into a traditional major, students would work with faculty and community leaders to frame an approach to a project or projects designed to address particular need. They could then proceed as a team to define the parameters of the work, construct an approach to address some aspect(s) of the problem, determine benchmarks, and generate assessment criteria. Depending on the topic, student learning might occur via more traditional routes such as reading necessary background materials or developing research tools and theoretical models. Perhaps they would need to create budgets, raise funding, or write grants. Establishing relationships with a constituency being served or communicating with a variety of audiences in different media might be required. But working with appropriate faculty and community leaders, they would be able to determine how academic resources can and do apply toward real world issues, gain skills in functioning on a collaborative team, and bring the work of a university out of the realm of pure research and into action.

Religious studies faculties can and should be a part of such interdisciplinary teams tackling persistent problems on a local, national, and even global scale. In fact, if religious studies faculties take seriously what their programs say about themselves, that the study of religion matters because "people act out of their religious beliefs every day,"[35] that "religion is a central component of human society, shaping politics, law, history, economics, science, the arts, and more"[36] and that "debates about the religious and ethical dimensions of medical care, sexual behavior, interpersonal violence, large-scale war, capital punishment, and a host of other issues … fiercely divide the public both in this country and abroad,"[37] then religious studies scholars will inevitably be a key component in interdisciplinary analyses of societal issues, governmental policies, and even the ethics and concerns about certain types of scientific research.

Students working in interdisciplinary collaborations would not "major" in Religious Studies, but they would engage with faculty trained in religious studies to reflect on how religion works, drawing on traditional skills in the field such as critical analysis of texts, practices, and history. They would consider the way in which traditions generate meaning, deploy power, and shape community. They would explore how various methodological approaches can open up new avenues to understanding a problem, and then they would also have the opportunity to work with faith leaders, religious non-profits, and religiously motivated people in all walks of life to effect change or to make a difference on a specific issues.

To press the idea of an alternative postsecondary experience further, perhaps students in such a paradigm would not earn grades and thus not emerge or "graduate" with a degree and a transcript. Instead, team members could build individual showcase portfolios to demonstrate learning. Inclusions might consist of specific products a student contributed to the team's work, student reflections on the project, and assessments of that student's efforts from faculty and local leaders. In place of a GPA, graduate programs and employers could see what the student accomplished, and references would move beyond the pro forma

statements about the potential of a student to excel in a given circumstance to evaluations based on specific interactions and tied to the benchmarks and assessments of the project. In a related vein, the student working in this paradigm would have generated a network of contacts with a community. Choosing to settle in an area and continue the work with people they know and who have seen them in action could give projects more longevity. Indeed, graduates might return again and again to the university as leaders to develop new initiatives or to revamp processes when required.

A less ambitious approach to such project-based work might emerge out of traditional departments. Instead of choosing classes from a list of available courses based often on a melding of faculty interest with time slots on a student schedule, a student could choose to work on an issue or a related series of issues from multiple perspectives in conversation with different faculty members and student partners. A college, for example, might support identification of a set of issues around which various programs develop problem-based curricula: climate change impacts on specific human populations, forging sustainable solutions to hunger in a community or a region, assessing ways to address gun violence, or addressing challenges related to immigration. Students might construct, as the result of their work with various faculty, a specific proposal to address some aspect of the problem being studied and prepare it for implementation post-graduation or even as an entrée into a graduate program where actualizing the project would be required to earn the advanced degree.

The specifics of any given iteration of problem-or project-based learning would, of course, depend on local circumstances and the mission of an institution. No single model will fit every circumstance. But the moment for change is upon the field. In a recent blog post about graduate education in religious studies at the University of Alabama, Russell McCutcheon wrote: "So if we take a break from assuming that our job, as faculty members, is to replicate ourselves and, instead, decide that our job is to help our students develop autonomous lives and careers of their own making, putting their hard-won skills to work, then how might we rethink graduate education in the study of religion?"[38] His point, about helping to bring the study of religion into the 21st century and thinking about how to reconceptualize the field in order to broaden the possibilities of what a program seeks to accomplish, applies to undergraduate education as well.

The program model of the 1960s and 1970s worked for that time. It moved the study of religion into a broader frame and built programming that fit into how public universities understood their work. As the university itself changes, however, so must the programs that comprise it. While a more project-based and/or problem-based effort is only one of many possibilities, the advantages of providing practical skills aimed at addressing issues of significant import to the lives of people in a community, and of working directly with persons who practice religion at a time when the distance between the religiously devout and the academy can be seen as quite vast, has tremendous potential to transform the field.

CONCLUSIONS

When tackling issues confronting the academic study of religion in the 21st century, history offers hope. After all, religion has always been part of higher education in America,

whether it be because of the need for an educated clergy, due to the profound influence of Christianity in America, or simply thanks to the global, human questions religions around the world address. Even though the academic study of religion extends back several hundred years, the field in its current formation traces its history to the 1960s. This strange combination of a long-term presence alongside being a relatively newly emergent area of inquiry in today's university should, theoretically, indicate that scholars focused on the study of religion understand how to recognize transformative moments and make changes.

But such an ability can get stultified in the structures of the modern university. While institutions of higher education exist, by definition, to generate and advance knowledge, and are designed to prepare people for informed participation in various communities and the world, too often they remain mired in tradition compounded by bureaucracy. As a consequence, persons working within an institutional culture can experience a remarkable lack of nimbleness in making adjustments to their efforts as circumstances warrant. Lloyd Armstrong, Provost Emeritus and University Professor Emeritus at the University of Southern California, observes:

> The resistance to change seen in higher education is, in general, quite similar to that seen in most organizations. Major disruptive change that leads to new business models typically produces new definitions of value and quality that most successful traditional organizations are unwilling to embrace as valid, even when they can see that customers increasingly prefer the new value offerings.[39]

He then continues to attribute the struggle with change to financial considerations, obstacles raised by internal constituencies, and normal human behavior. While some readers might react against his application of a business paradigm to the work of education, Armstrong recognizes that the university itself is a business and that complex interactions between stakeholders—in this case faculty, staff, students, trustees, alumni, legislators, regulators, and the public—shape these institutions. His work also, helpfully, maps out the emotional terrain that marks attempts to shift from "the way things have always been done" to embrace the future. It is, in fact, this reluctance to transform that can lead to program elimination.

To put it another way, religious studies programs, like most humanities fields and disciplines, have not adjusted to the changing climate in higher education. The current model, at least for the humanities, is broken because the modern university itself is broken. As Justin Stover argues in a provocative piece, "To talk about the crisis of the humanities is to consider the survival of the university itself."[40] Indeed, he looks at the education today and concludes:

> The contemporary university is a strange chimera. It has become an institution for teaching undergraduates, a lab for medical and technological development in partnership with industry, a hospital, a museum (or several), a performance hall, a radio station, a landowner, a big-money (or money-losing) sports club, a research center competing for government funding—often the biggest employer for a hundred miles around—and, for a few institutions, a hedge fund ("with a small college attached for tax purposes," adds one wag).[41]

How, or even if, one can resist this conceptualization of an educational institution is the pressing question. Because to embrace it and try to adjust to it means merely to stave off the inevitable. If the humanities, and religious studies with them, are to survive, it is not tinkering with a program that will do it. It is radically rethinking what the university itself is and how the humanities exist at its core.

Ideally, then, this chapter at least throws a conversational gambit out for conversation. What might result from faculties talking about the issues remains to be seen.

Endnotes

NOTES FROM INTRODUCTION

1. James L. Price, "Religion in the Liberal Arts," *Duke Divinity School Bulletin* 27, no. 1 (February 1962): 20.
2. Price, 20.
3. The relationship between the University and the United Methodist Church varied over time. Most recently, in 2016 the election of Duke's trustees by the church (even if it was just approval) was stopped. Adam Bayer, "Methodist Church's role in electing University Trustees ends this year," *The Chronicle*, (September 22, 2016), http://www.dukechronicle.com/article/2016/09/methodist-churchs-role-in-electing-university-trustees-ends-this-year.
4. Price, "Religion in the Liberal Arts," 19.
5. Price, 19.
6. Price, 23.
7. Price, 22.
8. See Price, 17-18.
9. Price, 22.
10. See School District of Abington Township, Pennsylvania v. Schempp, *Justia: U.S. Supreme Court*, https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/374/203/case.htm. This ruling dealt with the constitutionality of religious practices in the public schools such as requiring the recitation of the Lord's Prayer or reading of biblical texts at the beginning of each day, regardless if students could be excused from such activities. The distinction made in a concurring opinion by Justices Goldberg and Harlan between teaching about religion and the teaching of religion, as well as support in Justice Clark's majority opinion for studying comparative religion objectively, became a mantra for many religious studies professors in higher education.
11. See, for example, Leslie C. Griffin, "'We Do Not Preach, We Teach': Religion Professors and the First Amendment" (2000), *Scholarly Works*, Paper 717, https://scholars.law.unlv.edu/facpub/717/.
12. Troy Organ, "A Defense of Religion in Liberal Arts Education," *Journal of Bible and Religion,* 31, no. 3 (1963): 233.

13. Organ, 234.
14. Organ, 235.
15. Organ, 236.
16. Organ, 236.
17. "All links were current at the time of writing. Web pages, however, are a dynamic form. Any broken links are due to web page updates post-composition of this manuscript."
18. Sophie Gilbert, "Learning to be human," *The Atlantic*, (June 30, 2016), https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2016/06/learning-to-be-human/489659/.
19. Russell T. McCutcheon, "Critical Trends in the Study of Religion in The United States," (May 2017), Department of Religious Studies, University of Alabama: 1 https://religion.ua.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/mccutchtrends.pdf.
20. McCutcheon, 2.
21. James Turner, *Religion Enters the Academy: The Origins of the Scholarly Study of Religion in America*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011): 56.
22. "Postcolonial thinkers in particular have shown how most definitions of religion explicitly or implicitly build on Christian assumptions … It would seem that Christianity has cast a shadow on the study of religion, and it has proven very difficult to shake off this Christian legacy." Marianne Moyaert, "Christianity as the Measure of Religion? Materializing the Theology of Religions," in *Twenty-First Century Theologies of Religions: Retrospection and Future Prospects*, ed. Lizabeth J. Harris, Paul Hedges, and Shanthikumar Hettiarhchi, (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2016): 246.
23. See, for instance, Thomas Tweed's 2015 AAR Presidential address where he outlines "our disagreements about the scope of the academic study of religion: our divisive internal AAR debates between humanistic and scientific approaches, between scholarship alone or advocacy too, and, most of all, between theology and religious studies." "2015 AAR Presidential Address Valuing the Study of Religion: Improving Difficult Dialogues Within and Beyond the AAR's 'Big Tent,'" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, (June 2016), Vol. 84, No.2: 287-322.
24. Steven Pinker, "Less Faith, More Reason," *The Harvard Crimson*, (October 27, 2006), http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2006/10/27/less-faith-more-reason-there-is/.
25. Elaine Howard Ecklund, *Science vs. Religion: What Scientists Really Think.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010): 91.
26. Bernard Iddings Bell, "Universities and Religious Indifference," *The Atlantic Online*, (September 1932), http://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/issues/95nov/warring/indiffer.htm.

27. American Academy of Religion, "The Religious Studies Major and Liberal Education," *Liberal Education,* Vol. 95, No. 2 (Spring 2009), https://www.aacu.org/publications-research/periodicals/religious-studies-major-and-liberal-education.
28. Scott Jaschik, "Humanities Majors Drop," *Inside Higher Education,* (June 5, 2017), https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/06/05/analysis-finds-significant-drop-humanities-majors-gains-liberal-arts-degrees.
29. Michael Lipka, "Millennials increasingly are driving growth of 'nones,'" Pew Research Center, (May 12, 2015), http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/12/millennials-increasingly-are-driving-growth-of-nones/.
30. Phil Davignon, "Faith Based Higher Education and the Religiosity of Christian College Students," (PhD diss., Baylor University, 2014), https://baylor-ir.tdl.org/handle/2104/9060.
31. John Kerry, "We ignore the global impact of religion at our peril," *America: The Jesuit Review*, (September 14, 2015), https://www.americamagazine.org/issue/religion-and-diplomacy.
32. Aislinn McNiece, "Madeline Albright discusses challenges ahead in religion, peace, and world affairs for Berkley Center Anniversary," Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University, (April 14, 2016). http://sfs.georgetown.edu/madeleine-albright-discusses-challenges-ahead-religion-peace-world-affairs-berkley-center-anniversary/.
33. Organ, "A Defense of Religion," 233.

NOTES FROM CHAPTER 1

1. American Academy of Religion, "Religious Studies Major."
2. American Academy of Religion, "Religious Studies Major."
3. Data USA is a project initialized in 2014 to visualize public US Government data on critical issues such as industries, job skills, and education. See https://datausa.io/about/.
4. This figure includes degrees at all levels, but more than 80% are bachelor's degrees.
5. "Philosophy & Religious Studies," Data USA: accessed February 22, 2017, https://datausa.io/profile/cip/38/.
6. "IPEDS is … a system of interrelated surveys conducted annually by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). IPEDS gathers information from every college, university, and technical and vocational institution that participates in the federal student financial aid programs. The Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, requires that institutions that participate in federal student aid programs report data on enrollments, program completions, graduation rates, faculty and staff, finances, institutional prices, and student financial aid. These data are made available to students and parents through

the College Navigator college search Web site and to researchers and others through the IPEDS Data Center." https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/Home/AboutIPEDS.

7. CIP codes, developed by the National Center for Education Statistics (part of the U.S. Department of Education), function as a taxonomic scheme. The number 38, for instance, represents Philosophy and Religious Studies, with 38.00 indicating "Philosophy and Religious Studies, General." 38.02 serves to indicate "Religion/Religious Studies," but gets further subdivided.
    - 38.0201) Religion/Religious Studies
    - 38.0202) Buddhist Studies
    - 38.0203) Christian Studies
    - 38.0204) Hindu Studies
    - 38.0205) Islamic Studies
    - 38.0206) Jewish/Judaic Studies
    - 38.0299) Religion/Religious Studies, Other.

    Other options also exist. For instance, 39 covers "Theology and Religious Vocations" with subcategories for topics such as Bible/Biblical Studies, Missions/Missionary Studies and Missiology, Religious Education, Religious/Sacred Music, etc.

8. Data USA: Religious Studies, accessed February 22, 2017, https://datausa.io/profile/cip/38/#institutions. To retrieve the information, "religious studies" must be searched, the 4-digit CIP option selected, and "Institutions" as well as "2015" chosen.

9. These codes can further sub-divide into six figures, but those categories are more useful to graduate programs or for explicitly religious programs rather than public undergraduate education.

10. Self-described as a "Christian academic community" that "develops Christ-centered men and women with the values, knowledge, and skills essential to impact the world," Liberty University's Philosophy of Education maintains that "education as the process of teaching and learning, involves the whole person, by developing the knowledge, values, and skills which enable each individual to change freely. Thus, it occurs most effectively when both instructor and student are properly related to God and each other through Christ." Liberty University (March 7, 2014), http://www.liberty.edu/index.cfm?PID=6899.

11. GCU identifies as a "Christian college with a biblically rooted mission." The school further says, "As a missional community, GCU has the unique opportunity to welcome students, faculty and staff from all walks of life, some of whom may experience Christianity for the first time at the university. As a Christian university, we integrate faith, learning, work and service in an effort to honor God in all that we do, and we encourage others to join us in these endeavors." Grand Canyon University, accessed February 22, 2017, https://www.gcu.edu/about-gcu/christian-identity-and-heritage.php.

12. Cairn says, "We want our students to live an intentional life of obedient service to Christ. Students are led and inspired by professors who take biblical integration seriously." Cairn Univeristy, accessed February 22, 2017, https://cairn.edu/why/.

13. If, however, one searches what Data USA identifies as "Religious Studies" with a 6-digit CIP code, the main campus of the University of Virginia comes in third behind Liberty University and Cairn—and only 5,798 degrees are counted. Data USA, accessed November 3, 2016, https://datausa.io/profile/cip/380201/. Again, the user must search for this information. No direct access to the data page is possible.

14. "Now in its second century, Yeshiva University is the oldest and most comprehensive educational institution under Jewish auspices in America. It is an independent university that ranks among the nation's leading academic research institutions and, reflecting the time-honored tradition of Torah Umadda, provides the highest quality Jewish and secular education of any Jewish university in the world. Since its inception the University has been dedicated to melding the ancient traditions of Jewish law and life with the heritage of Western civilization, and each year we celebrate as future leaders make YU their home." Yeshiva University, accessed February 22, 2017, https://www.yu.edu/about.

15. Data USA: Religious Studies, accessed February 22, 2017, https://datausa.io/profile/cip/3802/#institutions. See note 8 for how to search the database.

16. College Navigator, University of Virginia–Main Campus, IES, NCES (National Center for Education Statistics) accessed February 22, 2017, https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/?s=VA&l=93&ct=1&ic=1&id=234076.

17. A research project at Appalachian State University in the Spring of 2017 found that only about 20% of all public universities in the country offered "Religious Studies" degrees to undergraduates, and that those degrees came in varied forms (Religious Studies, Philosophy & Religion, Interdisciplinary Studies, etc.) This work was done by students in the REL 4700 Capstone course and the database developed is not published.

18. Robert K. Gustafson, "Religious Studies in a College Curriculum: Why Bother?" *Perspectives in Religious Studies*, vol. 14, no. 2 (1987): 117.

19. E. Ann Matter, "The academic culture of disbelief: Religious Studies at the University of Pennsylvania," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religio*n Vol. 7 No. 4 (1995): 383-392.

20. See Rick Seltzer, "The Philosophy of What Makes a University," Inside Higher Ed (June 14, 2016), https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/06/14/questions-raised-about-cuts-liberal-arts-programs-western-illinois.

21. Jessíca Jiménez, "UC Berkeley discontinues religious studies program," *The Daily Californian*, (March 5, 2017), http://www.dailycal.org/2017/03/05/uc-berkeley-discontinues-religious-studies-program/.

22. It would be helpful, for instance, if the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature worked with institutions to build a comprehensive database tracking items such as the number of students enrolled in religious studies courses (perhaps broken down by subject area), information on majors (and double majors), numbers of graduates from programs and their next placement, and faculty data such as the number of tenured/tenure-track lines, adjuncts per term, etc.

23. Wendy Doniger, "The repression of religious studies," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, (2016): 6.

24. Harvard University, established in 1636, for instance, was "initially established to provide a learned ministry to the colonies." "Academics: Mission, Vision, History," Harvard College, https://college.harvard.edu/node/175406. Likewise, the College of William and Mary began when "on February 8, 1693, King William III and Queen Mary II of England signed the charter for a 'perpetual College of Divinity, Philosophy, Languages, and other good Arts and Sciences' to be founded in the Virginia Colony." "History & Traditions," William & Mary, http://www.wm.edu/about/history/.

25. "Early Curriculum," The Carolina Story: A Virtual Museum of University History, University of North Carolina, accessed November 3, 2016, https://museum.unc.edu/exhibits/show/davie/page1793.

26. See "Daniel Coit Gilman and Johns Hopkins University," from the Early Developments in Physiology and the Rise of Experimental Psychology course offered by Edward Kardas at Southern Arkansas University. Early Developments in Physiology and the Rise of Experimental Psychology, Southern Arkansas University - Magnolia, http://peace.saumag.edu/faculty/kardas/courses/HP/Lectures/gilmanjhu.html , last modified March 30, 2011.

27. Ernest W. Saunders, *Searching the Scriptures: A History of the Society of Biblical Literature*. (Chico, CA: Scholar's Press, 1982): 6, https://www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/SearchingScriptures.pdf.

26. "About the Department," Department of Religious Studies, University of North Carolina, (n.d.). https://religion.unc.edu/about/about-the-department/.

27. Diana Fritz Cates, " History of the Department of Religious Studies," Department of Religious Studies, University of Iowa, (June 30, 2015), https://clas.uiowa.edu/religion/about/history-department-religious-studies.

30. Russell T. McCutcheon, "Reinventing the Study of Religion in Alabama: A Study." *The Council of Societies for the Study of Religion Bulletin*, Volume 33, Number 2 (April 2004): 27.

31. Charles Y. Glock, "Remembrances of Things Past: SSSR's Formative Years." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 39(4) (2000): 423.

32. "History of the Department," UC Santa Barbara, (n.d.). http://www.religion.ucsb.edu/history-of-the-department/.
33. Linell E. Cady, "Religious Studies and the Public University: A Case Study at Arizona State University," *Method & Theory in The Study of Religion* Vol 7, No. 4 (1995): 395.
34. Cady, 397.
35. Cady, 397.
36. Martin S. Jaffee, "Personal Disclosure, Religious Studies Pedagogy, and the Skeptical Mission of the Public University," *The Council of Societies for the Study of Religion Bulletin* vol. 33, no. 2 (April 2004): 29.
37. Jaffee acknowledges that his brief assessment oversimplifies the issues.
38. "Defining the Humanities–A work in progress." Compiled by the Humanities Council of Washington, DC (October 20, 2001): 6, http://www.wdchumanities.org/docs/defininghumanities.pdf.
39. Copies of the original legislation (U.S. Government Publishing Office, September 29, 1965, https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-79/pdf/STATUTE-79-Pg845.pdf) clearly omit comparative religion. But by 1982, a story on National Endowment for the Humanities chair William J. Bennett includes mention of comparative religion (Herbert Mitgang, "Bennett Sets Low Profile for Humanities Agency," *New York Time*s, (May 31,1982), http://www.nytimes.com/1982/05/31/arts/bennett-sets-low-profile-for-humanities-agency.html?pagewanted=all).
40. Humanities Indicators: a project of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences, accessed November 3, 2016, http://www.humanitiesindicators.org/content/document.aspx?i=180.
41. To understand the Schempp case, see the Introduction to this volume, pp. 2-3. Frisna asserts that "when the 1963 Abington Township vs. Schempp decision explicitly recognized the constitutional legitimacy of teaching about religion in public schools, religious studies programs found their way into state colleges and universities." Academic Relations Task Force (1999), Warren Frisna, Chair, "Guide for Reviewing Programs in Religion & Theology." https://www.aarweb.org/programs-services/guide-reviewing-programs-religion-theology. Other scholars will contest this narrative, but no doubt the common standard of Schempp for religious studies in public institutions became teaching about religion as opposed to religious instruction.
42. Johnathan L. Walton, "Why the Humanities Matter to Me!" College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences, University of California -Riverside, accessed November 3, 2016, http://chass.ucr.edu/why_hass/WhyHumanities-Walton.pdf.
43. Jaffee, "Personal disclosure, religious studies pedagogy," 30.
44. Douglas G. Jacobsen and Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen. *No Longer Invisible: Religion in University Education*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012): 31.

45. Robert Wuthnow, "Can Faith Be More Than A Sideshow in the Contemporary Academy?" in Jacobsen and Jacobsen, *No Longer Invisible: Religion in University Education*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012): 31.

46. See, for example, Steven Pinker, "Science is not your enemy: an impassioned plea to neglected novelists, embattled professors, and tenure-less historians," *New Republic* (August 6, 2013), https://newrepublic.com/article/114127/science-not-enemy-humanities.

47. Wuthnow, "Can Faith Be More Than A Sideshow," 37.

48. Wuthnow, 37.

49. "The Scope of the "Humanities" for Purposes of the Humanities Indicators," Humanities Indicators, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, (2018), http://www.humanitiesindicators.org/content/document.aspx?i=180. Other definitions break the Humanities down even more simply. The Georgia Humanities Council says that "the humanities are stories passed from generation to generation to transmit culture. These stories are also known as our history, literature, laws, ethics, religion, philosophy, anthropology, etc." American Academy of Arts, "Defining the Humanities," 4. The Nebraska Humanities Council says simply, "When we ask who we are and what our lives ought to mean, we are using the humanities." American Academy of Arts, "Defining the Humanities," 7.

50. NEA Education and Practice Department, "Global Competence is a 21st century imperative," (2010): 1, https://multilingual.madison.k12.wi.us/files/esl/NEA-Global-Competence-Brief.pdf.

51. Joyce Hwee Ling Koh, Ching Sing Chai, Benjamin Wong, and Huang-Yao Hong, *Design Thinking for Education: Conceptions and Applications in Teaching and Learning*, (Springer: New York, 2015): 33.

52. See, for example, the "About Us" page for the Department of Religious studies at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (https://religiousstudies.uncc.edu/welcome/about-us, (accessed February 22, 2017), speaking about "the academic study of religion in a pluralistic, multicultural, and global context" or "Mission Statement" of the Department of Comparative Humanities at the University of Louisville, (https://louisville.edu/humanities/about-us/mission-statement, (accessed February 22, 2017) which includes a religious studies program and speaks of "expanding the range of scholarly knowledge in western and non-western areas and critically interrogating the dominant discourses in which they are expressed."

53. "Non-tenure-track faculty now account for nearly 70 percent of all faculty members, and three out of four hires nationally are off the tenure track." Adrianna Kezar and Sean Gehrke, "Why Are We Hiring So Many Non-Tenure-Track Faculty?," *Liberal Education*, Vol. 100, No. 1 (Winter 2014), https://www.aacu.org/publications-research/periodicals/why-are-we-hiring-so-many-non-tenure-track-faculty.

54. That is not to say this information lacks value, as seen below. It merely requires greater context to prove useful.

55. Robert Michaelsen, "Reflections on the Graduate Program in Religion," *Journal of Bible and Religion*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Jul., 1962): 228.

56. Michaelsen, 228.

57. Richard Hecht, "William M. Fridell, Religious Studies: Santa Barbara," Calisphere (1994), http://texts.cdlib.org/view?docId=hb5g50061q&doc.view=frames&chunk.id=div00038&toc.depth=1&toc.id.

58. "Smart brought to his scholarly tasks a bi-focal vision—that of a deeply committed Christian, and that of a philosopher. This was reflected in his early academic career which began with posts in the philosophy of religion, and was followed by his appointment as the first H.G. Wood Professor of Theology in the University of Birmingham. Both aspects of this vision were to remain constant throughout his work." "Introduction: A Critical Analysis," in *Ninian Smart on World Religions. Volume 1: Religious Experience and Philosophical Analysis*, ed. by John J. Shepherd (Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2009): xxi-xxii.

59. Cady, "Religious Studies," 395.

60. Cady, 395-396.

61. Cady notes several institution-specific circumstances that permitted this level of growth, 395-397.

62. Cady, 397.

63. Cady, 397.

64. Cady writes, "However difficult to achieve, there was a desire to move away from the fields of expertise that had developed out of the fourfold curriculum of the divinity school in the nineteenth and twentieth century," 397.

65. Ronald S. Hendel, "Mind the gap: modern and postmodern in biblical studies." *Journal of Biblical Literature* vol. 133, no. 2 (2014): 422-443.

66. *David R. Law, Historical Critical Method: A Guide for the Perplexed*. (New York: Continuum, 2012): 26.

67. David F. Farnell, "History of Modern Criticism," in *Basics of Biblical Criticism: Helpful or Harmful? (Second Edition).* in David F. Farnell, Thomas Howe, Thomas Marshall, Dianna Newman, and Edward D. Andrews (Cambridge, Ohio: Christian Publishing House, 2016): 34-35.

68. Hendel, "Mind the gap," 440.

69. The extent of the debate, at least through 2011, gets neatly summarized by Ronald Simkins in paragraph 6 of his article "Biblical Studies as a Secular Discipline," J*ournal of Religion & Society,* Vol 13 (2011): 3, http://moses.creighton.edu/JRs/2011/2011-23.pdf.

70. Neil Elliot, "Occupying My Desk," in *Reading the Bible in an Age of Crisis: Political Exegesis for a New Day*, ed Bruce Worthington (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2015): 77-78.

71. See, for instance, the literature review in Alexander's work: "This bibliographic review is limited to publications related to the development of religious studies as an academic discipline published since 1963, the year when the Supreme Court decision *Abington Township School District v. Schempp* altered the total picture of the study of religion in America by introducing the language which has governed its subsequent development in secular, public colleges, and universities." Kathryn O. Alexander, "Religious Studies in American Higher Education Since Schempp: A Bibliographic Essay," *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 71, No. 2/3 (Summer/Fall 1988, 389): 389-412.

72. Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, "Teaching religion: Refusing the *Schempp* myth of origin," *The Immanent Frame*, Social Science Research Council (August 15, 2016), https://tif.ssrc.org/2016/08/15/teaching-religion-refusing-the-schempp-myth-of-origins/.

73. S. Gravett, M. Hulsether, and C. Medine, "Rethinking the Christian Studies Classroom: Reflections on the Dynamics of Teaching Religion in Southern Public Universities," *Teaching Theology & Religion*, 14 (2011): 163.

74. *Jonathan Sheehan, "Why We Should Teach Theology in the Public University," Religious Dispatches,* (May 9, 2016), http://religiondispatches.org/why-we-should-teach-theology-in-the-public-university/.

75. Warren A. Rod, *Religion and American Education: Rethinking a National Dilemma*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995): 308.

76. Sheehan, "Why We Should Teach Theology."

77. Samuel Joseph Kessler, "Religion and The Public University," *Philosophy & Public Policy Quarterly* Vol 31, No 1 (Spring 2013): 19, journals.gmu.edu/PPPQ/article/download/189/130.

78. To demonstrate, Focus on the Family, a global Christian ministry founded in 1977 by James Dobson, with a wide variety of program and millions of listeners to a weekly radio program, speaks to selecting a college on their website. Some of the material includes the following statements: "the secular university setting is often hostile to the biblical worldview;" "many professors at these institutions tend to present material in a way that denies absolute truth and stands in direct opposition to biblical standards of behavior;" and "we advise students who are less than rock-solid in their faith to seek out a college that's designed to build them up in this area rather than tearing them down." They even provide a list of Christian colleges for potential students to investigate. See, "Choosing a College," Focus on the Family, (2011), http://www.focusonthefamily.com/family-q-and-a/for-teens/choosing-a-college.

79. Warren A. Nord and Charles C. Haynes, "The Relationship of Religion to Moral Education in the Public Schools," *The Communitarian Network*, (September, 1988), https://www2.gwu.edu/~ccps/documents/1998RelationshipofReligion.pdf.

80. Signs of the troubled waters would be the plethora of resources available to college students regarding how to maintain their faith throughout college, frequent news stories on anti-Christian or anti-religious professors, and increased debates on religious liberty on campuses.

81. John C. Sommerville, *The Decline of the Secular University*. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006): 4.

82. Indeed, Sommerville rather presciently observed, "Academic elites are exasperated that our elections and our wars seem to involve religions that they thought were discredited. They may be disgusted that science fantasy excites their students more than science and that our media now seem more interested in the private sphere than in the public sphere of political decision. Populist bloggers have a following to match that of our accredited elites. Academics have been praising diversity and empowerment for some time now, but they can't have meant *this*. How did things get so out of hand?" His comments are applicable to the situation of religious studies faculties who must battle with non-academic voices on a daily basis for attention, much less standing. Sommerville, 3-4.

83. Job Advertisement Data 2015-2016, Society of Biblical Literature and American Academy of Religion, accessed February 22, 2017, https://www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/jobsReportAy16.pdf.

84. Bruce Worthington, "Introduction: Political Exegesis for a New Day," in *Reading the Bible in an Age of Crisis: Political Exegesis for a New Day*, ed Bruce Worthington, (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2015): 10.

85. See, for example, the assessment of Mary Sue Coleman, president of the Association of American Universities and former president of the University of Michigan and the University of Iowa. After years of neglect, public higher education is at a tipping point,» *The Washington Post,* (October 7, 2016), https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2016/10/07/after-years-of-neglect-public-higher-education-is-at-a-tipping-point/?utm_term=.4bee5665f646.

86. Section 1, Article IX, "Education," Section 1, *Constitution of the State of North Carolina,* http://www.ncleg.net/Legislation/constitution/article9.html.

87. "Our Mission," The University of North Carolina System, (2017), https://www.northcarolina.edu/About-Our-System/Our-Mission.

88. Elizabeth City State University, Fayetteville State University, North Carolina A&T State University, North Carolina Central University, the University of North Carolina and Pembroke, and Winston-Salem State University all were founded for the education of minority students. The University of North Carolina at Greensboro was Women's College.

89. Antoinette Flores, " How Public Universities Can Promote Access and Success for All Students," Center for American Progress (September 9, 2014), https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/reports/2014/09/09/96689/how-public-universities-can-promote-access-and-success-for-all-students/.

90. David L. Kirp, "It's All About the Money," *The American Prospect* (May, 21, 2015), http://prospect.org/article/its-all-about-money.

91. David Schultz, "Public Affairs Education and the Failed Business Model of Higher Education," *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, 19:2, ii-vii, (2013), DOI: 10.1080/15236803.2013.12001728.

92. Schultz, "Public Affairs Education."

93. Robert Morse, chief data strategist at *U.S. News & World Report* says that the rankings are based on a formula of fifteen weighted criteria that the publication claims measure academic quality. These criteria include graduation and retention rates, financial resources, faculty resources, alumni giving, and undergraduate academic reputation. Benjamin Wermund, "How U.S. News college rankings promote economic inequality on campus," *Politico* (November 10, 2017), https://www.politico.com/interactives/2017/top-college-rankings-list-2017-us-news-investigation/.

94. Wermund, "How U.S. News."

95. Ryan Craig, "The Problem with College Rankings," *HigherEd Jobs,* (July 15, 2015), https://www.higheredjobs.com/blog/postDisplay.cfm?post=704. In many universities, the funding streams differ for the academic and student affairs missions of the university. At public universities, state-appropriated dollars pay for some of the buildings, equipment, and personnel within student affairs, but many institutions rely on student fees (and rents) or donor dollars for the bulk of their budgets. Total fees can rival in-state tuition in some cases and thus make a university education cost prohibitive for lower income students. Additional user fees for certain services may also be levied, compounding the problem.

96. Hiring contingent faculty on a contract basis, for instance, is a form of outsourcing. Classes get covered, but the university saves funds on salary and benefits by not maintain a permanent labor pool. Another example would be entering into articulation agreements with community colleges to eliminate the need for laborers in General Education courses and some specialized areas. One might also think of partnering with companies who build curricula and then running the courses with only contract faculty and/or graduate students. Likewise, eliminating smaller programs whose output may not meet efficiency standards is the business equivalent of downsizing.

97. Henry A. Giroux, "Can Democratic Education Survive in a Neoliberal Society?" *Truthout*, (October 16, 2012), http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/12126-can-democratic-education-survive-in-a-neoliberal-society#I.

98. Charles Hugh Smith, "The problem isn't student loans, it's the entire higher education system," *Business Insider,* (October 19, 2015), http://www.businessinsider.com/problem-isnt-loans-its-higher-education-2015-1.

99. Jeffrey J. Selingo, *College (Un)Bound: The Future of Higher Education and What It Means for Students*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013): xv.

100. Joe Simonson, "Higher Education: Good or Bad?" *National Review, (July 15, 2017),* http://www.nationalreview.com/article/449508/higher-education-republicans-democrats-disagree-its-value.

101. Tyler Kingkade, "Pat McCrory Lashes Out Against 'Educational Elite' And Liberal Arts College Courses," *Huffington Post,* (February 2, 2013), https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/02/03/pat-mccrory-college_n_2600579.html.

102. Kevin Reilly, Charles Steger, James Barker and J. Bernard Machen, "Do Humans Still Need to Study the Humanities?" *New Republic*, (March 17, 2015), https://newrepublic.com/article/121308/what-purpose-do-humanities-serve.

103. "Degree Completions in the Academic Study of Religion," Humanities Indicators, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, (updated April 2016), https://www.humanitiesindicators.org/content/indicatorDoc.aspx?d=10996&hl=degree+completions+academic+study+religion&m=0.

104. The academic study of religion conferred its largest number of master's degrees on record in 2014 (994), an increase of two-thirds over the 1987 level. Despite the growth in numbers, religion's share of all master's degrees fell over the same time period (from 0.16% in 1987 to 0.12% in 2014) because of faster growth in the total number of degrees conferred. At the doctoral level, the annual number of religion PhDs grew modestly from 1987 to 2014—rising from approximately 175–200 before 1994 to above 225 since 2007. The highest recorded level, 267, was reported in 2013. The growth in the number of doctoral degrees in religion did not keep pace with the general growth in the number of PhDs. The discipline's share of all doctorates dropped from 0.56% in 1987 to 0.34% in 2014. American Academy of Arts and Sciences, "Degree Completions."

105. Kevin Schilbrack, "Report from the Public Universities Chairs Workshop," *Studying Religion and Culture* (blog), Department of Religious Studies, University of Alabama, (May 10, 2016), http://religion.ua.edu/blog/2016/05/report-from-the-public-universities-chairs-workshop/.

106. The American Association of Colleges & Universities' 1998 statement on liberal education reads: "*Liberal Education:* An approach to college learning that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity, and change. This approach emphasizes broad knowledge of the wider world (e.g., science, culture, and society) as well as in-depth achievement in a specific field of interest. It helps students develop a sense of social responsibility; strong intellectual and practical skills that span all major fields of study, such as communication, analytical, and

problem-solving skills; and the demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings." American Association of Colleges & Universities, "Statement on Liberal Education," (October 1, 1998), https://www.aacu.org/about/statements/liberal-education.

107. "Growth, Identity, and Branding in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Alabama: Interview with Russell McCutcheon, Chair, Department of Religious Studies, University of Alabama" *RSN, Religious Studies News,* (March 24, 2016), http://rsn.aarweb.org/articles/growth-identity-and-branding-department-religious-studies-university-alabama.

108. Adrianna Kezar, "Why Are We Hiring So Many Non-Tenure Track Faculty," *Liberal Education,* Vol. 100, No. 1 (Winter 2014), https://www.aacu.org/liberaleducation/2014/winter/kezar.

109. See, for instance, Kelly J. Baker, "Academic Waste," *ChronicleVitae*, (February 23, 2016), https://chroniclevitae.com/news/1301-academic-waste.

110. "The State of the Humanities: Higher Education 2015," Humanities Indicators, American Academy of Arts & Sciences, https://www.amacad.org/multimedia/pdfs/publications/researchpapersmonographs/HI_HigherEd2015.pdf.

111. Worthington, "Introduction," 10.

112. Worthington, 13.

113. Worthington, 11.

114. Worthington, 9.

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118. "The Changing Global Religious Landscape," Religion & Public Life, Pew Research Center, (April 5, 2017), http://www.pewforum.org/2017/04/05/the-changing-global-religious-landscape/.

NOTES FROM CHAPTER 2

1. American Academy of Religion, "The Religious Studies Major and Liberal Education."
2. Vinod Khosla, "Is Majoring in Liberal Arts a Mistake for Students?" Medium (February 20, 2016), https://medium.com/@vkhosla/is-majoring-in-liberal-arts-a-mistake-for-students-fd9d20c8532e.
3. "The Evils of a Liberal Arts Education," FoxBusiness, (November 4, 2015), http://www.foxbusiness.com/features/2015/11/05/evils-liberal-arts-education.html.
4. "Molly Corbett Broad, president of the American Council on Education, told the Higher Learning Commission crowd, 'If the chain of logic [behind learning outcomes assessment] begins from an accountability perspective, the focus is on the institution, and if it is primarily an institutional measure, it is potentially disconnected from how individual faculty members teach. Faculty must own [assessment] and live it in the context of each student,' Broad said, 'Because if faculty do not own outcomes assessment, there will be minimal impact on teaching and learning and, therefore, on student achievement,' which is supposed to be the point, she said." Doug Lederman, "The Faculty Role in Assessment," Inside Higher Education, (May 28, 2010), https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2010/05/28/faculty-role-assessment.
5. Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Introductory Course: Less Is Better," *Teaching the Introductory Course in Religious Studies: A Sourcebook*, ed. Mark Juergensmeyer, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991): 188.
6. See David Tracy's essay "Writing," which concludes, "It seems safe to predict that in the future the former domination of written texts in the study of religion will be challenged (even in the interpretations of scriptural traditions) both by the new information technologies and by the new paths of theory and research opened by the recent scholarly emphasis on writing: the recognition of the materiality of writing, which calls into question all claims for totality; the unveiling of the traces of the silences, conflicts, and power realities in all religious and cultural traditions; the expansion of the range of reflexivity in culture to *all* material objects, not only writing. The new theories of writing call for a more finely wrought hermeneutics of suspicion with regard to all Western historical dualisms: letter and spirit, materiality and ideality, female and male, speech and writing. How strange a sea change the phenomenon of writing now discloses for all contemporary interpreters of religion and culture." "Writing," *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor, (University of Chicago: 1998): 392.
7. "The rationale for recognizing literacy as a right is the set of benefits it confers on individuals, families, communities and nations. Indeed, it is widely reckoned that, in modern societies, 'literacy skills are fundamental to informed decision-making, personal empowerment, active and passive participation in local and global social community.'" *Education for All: Literacy for Life*. 2006 UNESCO Report, (Paris: UNESCO: 2005): 137, http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001416/141639e.pdf.

8. Jeet Heer, "The Post-Literate American Presidency," *The New Republic*, (September 23, 2017), https://newrepublic.com/article/144940/trump-tv-post-literate-american-presidency.
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14. John Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007): 8.
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17. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "The Study of Religion and the Study of the Bible." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (June 1971): 133.
18. Smith, 133.
19. Smith, 140.
20. Katherine E. Hoffman, "Culture as text: Hazards and possibilities of Geertz's literary/literacy metaphor," *The Journal of North African Studies*, Vol. 14, Nos. 3/4 (September/December 2009): 418, http://www.anthropology.northwestern.edu/documents/people/JNAS_14_3_4_Hoffman_published.pdf.
21. Ezra Chitando, "Sub-Saharan Africa," in *Religious Studies: A Global View* (London: Routledge, 2008): 104-122.

22. Many surveys of desirable outcomes of a college education exist. One done in 2014 by the National Association of Colleges and Employers lists the ability to work in a team structure; to make decisions and solve problems; to communicate verbally with people inside and outside an organization; to plan, organize, and prioritize work; and to obtain and process information as the top five. Susan Adams, "The 10 Skills Employers Most Want in 2015," *Forbes*, (November 12, 2014), https://www.forbes.com/sites/susanadams/2014/11/12/the-10-skills-employers-most-want-in-2015-graduates/#1d948b8e2511.

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24. Listings discussed come from Fall 2016. The page changes.

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27. W. Andrew Marcus, "A Message from W. Andrew Marcus, Dean," College of Arts and Sciences, University of Oregon website, accessed December 7, 2018, https://cas.uoregon.edu/deans-message/.

28. Aaron W. Hughes, "Theory and Method in the Study of Religion: Twenty-Five Years On," *Theory and Method in the Study of Religion: Twenty Five Years On (Supplements to Method & Theory in the Study of Religion)* ed. Aaron W. Hughes, (Brill, 2013): 2.

29. Hughes, 2.

30. Hughes, 2-3.

31. William E. Deal and Timothy K. Beal, *Theory for Religious Studies,* (New York: Routledge, 2004), xi.

32. See, for a well-known example, Stephen Prothero, *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know – and Doesn't*, (New York: HarperOne, 2008), also at http://stephenprothero.com/books/religious-literacy/.

33. Eboo Patel, who holds a doctoral degree in Sociology and founded the Interfaith Youth Corp, says, "'How can you live and work in America in the 21st century and know nothing about religion or religious diversity and call yourself educated?' he asks. 'An educated person is someone who can read the New York Times on any given day and have a reasonable degree of context … how can you read [it] with any amount of subtext without having a sense of religious issues.

    'If you know nothing about what has happened with the emergence of Muslim

extremism in East Africa, you will have zero context for the recent U.S. bombing of al-Shabaab training camp in Somalia. And if you know nothing about the role of drones that the United States has used in several Muslim-majority countries, you might not have a sense of the frustration among Muslims ... and if you look at the bestseller list and see Pope Francis' recent book, *The Name of God is Mercy*, and you don't know that most common prayer in Islam, 'In the Name of Allah, the All Merciful, the Ever Merciful,' you might miss the signal the Pontiff is sending the world's 1.6 billion Muslims." Meredith V. Wellmeier, "Why Religious Literacy Matters," Rollins360, Rollins College website (March 16, 2016), https://360.rollins.edu/college-news/why-religious-literacy-matters.

34. Katie Aston, "Sociology of Religion and Religious Studies: Disciplines, Fields, and the Limits of Dialogue," The Religious Studies Project website, (December 22, 2016). http://www.religiousstudiesproject.com/2016/12/22/sociology-of-religion-and-religious-studies-disciplines-fields-and-the-limits-of-dialogue/.

35. Wade Clark Roof, "Religious Studies and Sociology," *Contemporary Sociology*, Vol. 28, No. 5 (Sep., 1999): 522.

36. Roof, 523.

37. *Mark Hulsether's* Fall 2007 syllabus for Theory and Method in the Study of Religion at the University of Tennessee, (http://web.utk.edu/~hulseth/hulsether_503syllabus_F07.pdf) outlines such a class for a first semester Master's core unit. It begins with the classic list of scholars seen in Jacobs' course above, while promising that students will "build a 'critical toolbox' of analytical skills that are needed to thrive amid current discussions of colonialism, cultural difference, postmodernity, cross-disciplinary study, and the intersection of culture and power." In a similar course at the University of Georgia, (here on the American Academy of Religion website, https://www.aarweb.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/Programs_Services/Teaching_Awards/2013/Medine-TheoryandMethods.pdf) Carolyn Medine says "We will do a (much too fast) survey of major theorists, from traditional voices like Otto, Eliade, and Wach, to postmodern voices like Said, Lyotard, and Derrida." The purpose of preparing students at this level through such work receives explicit mention in the Hulsether document. In addition to engaging the field as seen above, he wants, "to help students choose the most productive analytical approaches for accomplishing their goals." Manuel Vásquez's Spring 2012 graduate course at the University of Florida (http://religion.ufl.edu/files/2012/11/MethodTheoryII-2012-rev.pdf), extends this effort to specific practical applications. He seeks "to offer students some hands-on experience in the use of methods and theories in the creation of syllabi, the writing of grant and/or dissertation proposals, and the preparation of articles publishable in scholarly journals."

38. Deal and Beal, *Theory for Religious Studies*, xi.

39. His syllabus states the objectives this way:
    - Enable students to become acquainted with the major theories and

methodologies used in the academic study of religion, especially those formulated by central figures that shaped the development of the discipline of religious studies.

- Facilitate each student's development of an analytical capacity to ascertain, articulate, and evaluate the explicit arguments and underlying assumptions that inform various theories about religion, and to reflect critically on the academic study of religion.
- Help sharpen a range of essential academic skills, including critical thinking, rigorous reading, clear writing, articulate discussion, and nuanced engagement with multiple perspectives.

40. In writing about undergraduate research, Lynn R. Huber and John R. Lanci note that "more than most other fields of inquiry, the study of religion and theology impacts the personal experience of a significant number of our students in a direct fashion ... Work in our field demands that we teach our students to be self-critical, exploring how their interests and social locations shape their research questions and agendas." "Mentoring Undergraduate Research in Religious Studies," *Teaching Undergraduate Research in Religious Studies*, ed. Bernadette McNary-Zak and Rebecca Todd Peters, (Oxford, 2011): 45-46. The same holds true of the classroom. Students typically arrive in classrooms with little experience in critical thinking about religion and little exposure to the process of doing so. In fact, this process rarely takes place in public venues other than university campuses.

41. Sometimes these courses can be tough to spot in curricula because of creative designations (like "Minds, Brains & Religion" at Appalachian State University, instead of "Psychology of Religion") that seek to avoid turf wars with other departments or to "market" courses creatively.

42. A new web site has eradicated previously present documents.

43. Harvey Cox, "Foreword," in Tom Beaudoin, *Virtual Faith: The Irreverent Spiritual Quest of Generation X* (New York: Josey-Bass, 1998), ix-xii.

44. Kevin Schilbrack, *Philosophy and the Study of Religions: A Manifesto*, (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014): 185.

45. Deal and Beal, *Theory for Religious Studies*, xiii.

46. Hughes, "*Theory and Method in the Study of Religion*," 5.

47. Ann Taves, for instance, in the preface to her book on religious experiences, says, "This book is devoted to building some usable, albeit imperfect, bridges linking the study of experience in religious studies, the social-psychological study of the mind, and the neuroscientific study of the brain." She then goes on to add, "I have written this book primarily for humanists and humanistically oriented social scientists … [to] embolden these readers to make greater use of scientific research that is illuminating the complex ways in which the brain-mind is both shaped by and shapes socio-cultural processes. I also hope that this book will be useful to experimentalists who study religion—to help them consider ways in which the

resources of the humanities might enhance their experimental research designs or provide new contexts for testing hypotheses." *Religious Experience Reconsidered: A Building Block Approach to the Study of Religion and Other Special Things*, (Princeton University Press, 2014): xiii

48. See, for instance, Dan Wiebe who argues that "a radical historicist agenda threatens to ignore religion and instead substitute as its object of interest the hidden psychological, social and/or economic agendas of those interested in providing (rational or scientific) accounts of religious practices." Hughes, "*Theory and Method in the Study of Religion*," 13.
49. Larry L. Lawson, "The Economics of Experience-Based Higher Education," *Atlantic Economic Journal* 35, no. 1 (March 2007): 23-31.
50. Johann Neem, "Experience Matters: Why Competency-Based Education Will Not Replace Seat Time," *Liberal Education* Vol. 99, No. 4 (Fall 2013), https://www.aacu.org/publications-research/periodicals/experience-matters-why-competency-based-education-will-not-replace.
51. Neem, "Experience Matters."
52. David A. Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education, 2014): 4.
53. Alex Snow, "Study Abroad, Pedagogy, and 'Expedient Means.'" Spotlight on Teaching, *Religious Studies News*, (May 29, 2015), http://rsn.aarweb.org/spotlight-on/teaching/faculty-led-study-abroad/study-abroad-pedagogy-and-"expedient-means."
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55. Fred Glennon, "Service Learning in Religious Studies: Educational or Transformational?" Le Moyne College website, accessed November 3, 2016, http://web.lemoyne.edu/~glennon/slpaper.htm.
56. Hughes, "*Theory and Method in the Study of Religion*," 12.
57. Hughes, 14.
58. Douglas Belkin and Melissa Korn, "Higher Education Act Proposal Primes Fight Over Future of Colleges," *Wall Street Journal*, (December 2, 2017), https://www.wsj.com/articles/higher-education-act-proposal-primes-fight-over-future-of-colleges-1512216000?mg=prod/accounts-wsj.

NOTES FROM CHAPTER 3

1. Jonathan Z. Smith, *On Teaching Religion: Essays by Jonathan Z. Smith* (Oxford University Press, 2013): 3.
2. To add another layer of complexity, Smith reminds his readers that faculty must determine what they want to achieve in the classroom, compose syllabi, and design course activities unaware of the number of students who might enroll and likely not knowing anything about the backgrounds of these learners or their reasons for selecting that class instead of any other. The student might simply need to check off a requirement, for example, or an individual might find a reasonable enough course that "fits" into her or his schedule, or someone could be making a choice based on a professor's reputation (on campus, in the Greek system, in online reviews). In other words, the composition of a classroom rests on an unknowable mixture of concerns and circumstances that make determining student interest in a topic, preparation/ability to handle the workload, or expectations of the course unknowable in advance. These factors matter to teaching because they demand a faculty member deploy different instructional strategies with each newly constituted group depending on how the class evolves and on what the administrative demands on a program or departmental goals might be paramount at a given time.
3. Smith, *On Teaching Religion*, 1.
4. Stehen Delamarter, et al. "Teaching Biblical Studies Online," *Teaching Theology & Religion* 14, no. 3 (July 2011): 256-283.
5. See, for example, Laura McKenna, "The Cost of an Adjunct," *The Atlantic*, (May 26, 2015), https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/05/the-cost-of-an-adjunct/394091/.
6. When, however, the question of what comprises a "religious studies classroom" reduces to a simplistic shorthand: "face-to-face" vs "online," such a characterization ignores the fact that religious studies classrooms already vary widely across institutions as well as within a single setting. Moreover, they did so long before the advent of more technologically driven learning options. A 300-person class in a large lecture hall differs from a seminar enrolling 10, just as an online course with 40 varies from a 25-person study abroad trip.
7. See Martin Kich "Another Telling Report on the Increase in Contingent Faculty," Academe Blog, (January 7, 2017), https://academeblog.org/2017/01/07/another-telling-report-on-the-increase-in-contingent-faculty/.
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24. No doubt in the early days of online efforts, programs asked faculty largely trained for a lifetime in face-to-face pedagogy both via their personal experience and in their professional lives, to make this transition to online with limited support, constantly changing technology, and little, if any, assistance in matching pedagogical practice to the technology. And because the hold of an idyllic imagination about the classroom and learning remains so strong, many early efforts at online work tried to replicate it in a precise fashion. As a result, professors, as well as students, struggled. These experiences proved instructive. Zawadi Rucks-Ahidiana conducted a useful study that reported, "Instructors identified three key ways in which teaching online was different that made it challenging to create an exact replication of their in-person course"—namely communication, building community, and instructional delivery. Newer models respond more effectively to these challenges and must be considered. Zawadi Rucks-Ahidiana, "Navigating the Lack of Face Time: The Instructor Role in the Online Classroom," *Cases on Critical and Qualitative Perspectives in Online Higher Education*, ed. Myron Orleans, (Hershey, PA: IGI Global, 2014)

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26. Scott Jaschik, "The 'Great Divide' in Religious Studies," Inside Higher Ed., (November 20, 2006), https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2006/11/20/great-divide-religious-studies.

27. Irma Sandercock, "How Important Is Instructor Presence in an Online Course?" Arizona State University website, (October 13, 2014), https://teachonline.asu.edu/2014/10/important-instructor-presence-online-course/.

28. Erin Weston, writes, "Communication in this course will take place via Messages. Messages is a private and secure text-based communication system which occurs within a course among its Course members. Users must log on to Blackboard to send, receive, or read messages. The Messages tool is located on the Course Menu, on the left side of the course webpage. It is recommended that students check their messages routinely to ensure up-to-date communication." Florida International University website (n.d.).

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30. Dan Butin, "MOOCS and Beyond: The Next Stage in the Business Model of The Disrupted University," Higher Ed Gamma (blog), *Inside Higher Education*, (August 22, 2016), https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/higher-ed-gamma/moocs-and-beyond.

31. Melanie Hibbert, "What Makes an Online Instructional Video Compelling?" *Educause Review*, (April 7, 2014), http://er.educause.edu/articles/2014/4/what-makes-an-online-instructional-video-compelling.

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33. For just two of many examples, Lesley A. Northrup, whose scholarship focuses on Myth and Ritual Studies, delivers a short introduction on sacred myth, while New Testament and Christian Origins scholar Erik Larson provides thoughts on Sacred Scripture. By tapping FIU's local experts to illuminate a topic related to a faculty member's training and research, the program also showcases its faculty resources and creates a clever recruiting tool to attract students into other courses.

34. Papia Bawa, "Retention in Online Courses: Exploring Issues and Solutions—A Literature Review." *SAGE Open*, (January 2016). https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2158244015621777.

35. What such an effort entails means looking at a variety of data points such as number of hours a student has completed, GPA, and various demographic indicators along with dynamic data from the course (number of times the course was accessed, posting behaviors, missing grades) and, in the right mix, predicting with remarkable accuracy, students who will not achieve good results.

36. To achieve good online discussion results, several strategies often receive emphasis. First, many instructors divide the class membership into smaller, more manageable groupings. Most learning management systems make these splits relatively easy. Levesque, for example, says, "You will be grouped with approximately eight other

students" for the discussion portion of the course. Depending on the professor, students might remain in the same group throughout a term or vary on some sort of scheduled rotation. In either case, limiting the number of actors in any conversation prevents students from having to wade through too many posts, and produces the possibility of a more in-depth experience.

Second, some professors structure the assignment so that students must interact. In Persaud, Shane, and Batchelor's Spring 2016 Introduction to World Religions, they say of the two required posts per week: "One post will be a reflection to the course readings and/or lectures required for that week. The other will be a response to a fellow classmate. Usually, success here requires a staggered scheduling with a first post due earlier than the response or responses."

37. Nisha Malhotra, "Experimenting with Facebook in the College Classroom," *Faculty Focus,* last modified June 10, 2013, http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-with-technology-articles/experimenting-with-facebook-in-the-college-classroom/.

38. Julia Travers, "What is Adaptive Education?," iAchieveLearning, (March 22, 2017), https://iachievelearning.com/2017/03/what-is-adaptive-education/.

39. Lisa Young, Una Daly, Jason Stone "OER: The Future of Education is Open" August 28, 2017. Educause Review, https://er.educause.edu/articles/2017/8/oer-the-future-of-education-is-open.

40. Philip DiSalvio, "Using Analytics to Drive Online Retention and Success," The evoLLLution, (March 22, 2017), http://evolllution.com/revenue-streams/distance_online_learning/using-analytics-to-drive-online-retention-and-success/.

41. At Florida International University, for example, the religious studies syllabi for online courses uniformly provide links to several university-sponsored resources. What's Required details the technical specifications necessary for a student's computer (with an additional link for testing out specific technical requirements). That page also includes relevant information about and compatibility tests for the learning management system, as well as lists software programs the student should be able to utilize. A policies and rules page covers netiquette, as well as important university policies and academic misconduct specific to online courses, alongside a statement of understanding between students and professors working in this medium. Several links discuss accessibility and compliance with disability services (see ADA Compliance, Accessibility at Blackboard, and a link to the University's Disability Resource Center).

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46. University of Florida website, https://ufonline.ufl.edu/online-advantage/flexibility/; Online Education, University of South Carolina website, http://www.sc.edu/study/academic_overview/online_education/.

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to identify professors who "advance a radical agenda in lecture halls," Professor Watchlist project, Turning Point USA, (n.d.), (http://professorwatchlist.org).

19. The Watchlist, for example, includes Ronald Hendel, at UC Berkeley. Named by a student expressing shock over Hendel's "contempt for religion" and "the fact that he wasn't even trying to be subtle about his narrow-minded academic approach." David Kurz, "Hypocrisy of UC Berkeley liberalism is unacceptable," *The Daily Californian*, (September 8, 2015), http://www.dailycal.org/2015/09/08/hypocrisy-of-uc-berkeley-liberalism-is-unacceptable/. Hendel contends that he simply made a basic distinction between academic and faith-based approaches to the text as part of establishing the work of the course. "Academic study of the bible does not amount to liberal hypocrisy," *The Daily Californian*, (September 25, 2015), http://www.dailycal.org/2015/09/25/academic-study-of-the-bible-does-not-amount-to-liberal-hypocrisy/.

    It should also be noted, even though it is not the subject of this chapter and even though focused differently, similar criticisms come from within the field itself. Timothy Larsen, McManis Professor of Christian Thought at Wheaton College writes: "Scholars ought to be concerned that Christians often report that the academy is a hostile environment." "No Christianity Please, We're Academics." *Inside Higher Education*, (July 20, 2010), https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2010/07/30/no-christianity-please-were-academics. Larsen does not, notably, indict religious studies itself, nor does he argue for the veracity of the assertion. Rather, he calls for an examination as to whether such a common lament can be substantiated and, if so, on what basis. Others, however, identify issues within religious studies. For example, Sheila Greve Davaney, formerly faculty at the Iliff School of Theology and now Program Officer for Religion at the Ford Foundation, observed in 2002, the basic suppositions of the field prove problematic. She says, "The perspective of the academy, epitomized in the secular university, is not a 'view from nowhere' but one that assumes and embraces a secularized and naturalized view of all phenomena and hence, at its core, is not only non-religious but in fact antireligious." Sheila Greve Davaney, "Rethinking Theology and Religious Studies," *Religious Studies, Theology, and the University: Conflicting Maps, Changing Terrain*, ed. Linndell E. Cady and Delwin Brown, (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 2002): 145. And, as Aaron W. Hughes suggests in his work on theory and method, scholars engaged in deconstructive efforts that dismantle the way religious studies was conceived and carried out in generations past could generate friction with traditionalists. "Theory and Method in the Study of Religion: Twenty-Five Years On," *Theory and Method in the Study of Religion: Twenty-Five Years On,* ed Aaron W. Hughes, (Brill, Leiden, 2013): 6. But some commentators, like Luther Martin and Donald Wiebe, lament that even though religious studies ought to be a scientific endeavor rooted in the cognitive sciences, "theology has been, and to a large extent remains, the matrix out of which the academic study religion has emerged." Instead of hostile to the religiously inclined, they posit the field permits too much accommodation to the

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34. Humanities Indicators: a project of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences. "Racial/Ethnic Distribution of Degrees in Religion," (last modified April 2016), http://www.humanitiesindicators.org/content/indicatordoc.aspx?i=10997.

35. The 2017 Jobs Report from the SBL and AAR found: "The total number of faculty positions decreased by 8.6% year over year from AY16 to AY17. Within this percentage, several mixed findings can be highlighted:

    - Postings from research institutions are at an all-time low since SBL and AAR began collecting employment data in 2003.
    - The number of entry-level faculty positions increased by 11.4% year over year from AY16 to AY17.
    - The number of tenure-track faculty positions reached a six-year low
    - The number of postings from baccalaureate institutions is at seven-year high."

    Executive Summary from Job Advertisement Data 2016-2017, Society of Biblical Literature and American Academy of Religion. (2017), https://www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/jobsReportAy17.pdf: 1.

36. As Patricia Matthew says, "We still need to figure out the ways in which the academy is structurally hostile to diversity and how to unpack the unwritten codes that underscore various personnel processes (formal and informal) that make it difficult for faculty of color to succeed." "Preface," *Written/Unwritten: Diversity and the Hidden Truths of Tenure*," ed Patricia A. Matthew (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016): xiv-xv.

37. For example, the University of California at Berkeley undertook an evaluation in Spring 2013 with 13,000 participants (about a 24% response rate) to understand more fully the impact of the university environment on diversity. A subsequent news item on this work begins: "Responding to the initial results of an unprecedented survey of student, faculty and staff experiences at UC Berkeley, Chancellor Nicholas Dirks announced a series of immediate actions to further improve the campus climate for inclusion and diversity." The effort here, as at many universities, includes clearer policies and better training to help faculty and staff become more

sensitive to the needs of diverse communities. Exchange programs, cluster hires, and funding initiatives specifically designed to promote minority recruitment often yield results in making good offers to qualified candidates, while providing specific information to all candidates on community resources across a range of concerns—from schools, to grocers, to social and support groups, to health and wellness options, to places of worship—demonstrates a concern with retaining people once hired. Public Affairs (UC Berkeley), "Results of unprecedented campus-climate survey released," *Berkley News*, (March 24, 2014), https://news.berkeley.edu/2014/03/19/campus-climate-survey-results/.

38. Gasman, "The five things no one will tell you…", See n.32.

39. For instance, the Religious Studies Program at the University of Kansas says (all emphases the author's): "Religious Studies acquaints students with the *diversity* of religious cultures and introduces them to *key methods and theories* employed in their examination as 'religion.'" Likewise, the University of Hawai'i Mānoa: "Our programs are designed to provide students with a *broad knowledge of the world's religious traditions* and the skills necessary for analyzing and understanding their *various* dimensions." The University of Tennessee Knoxville advertises: "Our *multidisciplinary, multicultural* approach includes a *wide variety of the world's religious traditions,* and our *methods* equip students with the skills to analyze and understand the *complex relationships among religion, culture, and society*." Or, in a nutshell, Indiana University Bloomington speaks to its emphasis on diversity this way: "Our faculty studies religious traditions *across the globe*, from Asia to Africa to Europe and North America, from antiquity to the present, and *from a variety of perspectives*."

40. Randall Styers, "Religious Studies, past and present," *Religious Studies and Rabbinics: A Conversation*, ed Elizabeth Shanks Alexander and Beth A. Berkowitz, (London: Routledge, 2018): 29.

41. It also follows that size can translate into a faculty profile more diverse in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, and nationality if the membership sees these characteristics as desirable.

42. They also must, because of the program placement, teach under other rubrics such as Global Humanities, Liberal Studies, and even Allied Health (Medical Ethics).

43. 43 ACE Higher Ed Spotlight: Infographic Brief, "Pipelines, Pathways, and Institutional Leadership: An Update on the Status of Women in Higher Education," http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Documents/HES-Pipelines-Pathways-and-Institutional-Leadership-2017.pdf: 20.

44. ACE Higher ED Spotlight, 9.

45. IES: National Center for Education Studies, Digest of Education Statistics (Table 315.70. Full-time and part-time faculty and instructional staff in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by field and faculty characteristics: Fall

1992, fall 1998, and fall 2003). https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16_315.70.asp?current=yes.

46. Center for Teaching and Learning, UNC, "Teaching Controversial Issues." CTL Publications: For Your Consideration, University of North Carolina. #21, (September 2004), https://www.procon.org/sourcefiles/CTL.pdf: v1.

47. Ellen Posman and Reid B. Locklin, "Sacred Sites and Staging Ground: The Four Guiding Objectives of Civic Engagement in the Religion Classroom," *Teaching Civic Engagement*, ed. Forrest Clingerman and Reid B. Locklin. (Oxford University Press, 2016): 27.

48. Bill J. Leonard and Jill Y. Crainshaw, eds., *Encyclopedia of Religious Controversies in the United States (2nd Edition)*, (ABC-CLIO: 2013).

49. Barbara E. Walvoord, *Teaching and Learning in College Introductory Religion Courses*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008).

50. Sarah Colbert "Like Trapdoors: A History of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and the Trigger Warning," *Trigger Warnings: History, Theory, Context*, ed. Emily J.M. Knox (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017): 10.

51. See, for instance, the variety of resources on the webpage "Currents: Feminist Key Concepts and Controversies," Digital Archive: Victimization and Discourses of Trauma, on journal website for *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, http://signsjournal.org/currents-trigger-warnings/victimization/.

52. Robby Soave, "Trigger Warnings: New Wave of Political Correctness Hits Campuses," The Daily Caller website, (April 3. 2014). http://dailycaller.com/2014/04/03/trigger-warnings-new-wave-of-political-correctness-hits-campuses/.

53. For a more sensitive critique of their use, see Jennie Jarvie, "Trigger Happy," *The New Republic*, (March 3, 2014) https://newrepublic.com/article/116842/trigger-warnings-have-spread-blogs-college-classes-thats-bad.

54. Madeline Will, "Under the gun: Colleges debate trigger warnings," Student Press Law Center Report, Student Press Law Center website, (March 9, 2016). http://www.splc.org/article/2016/03/under-the-gun.

55. Pete Grieve, "University to freshman: Don't Expect Safe Spaces or Trigger Warnings." *The Chicago Maroon*, (August 24, 2016), https://www.chicagomaroon.com/article/2016/8/24/university-to-freshmen-dont-expect-safe-spaces-or-trigger-warnings/.

56. National Coalition Against Censorship, "NCAC Report: What's All This About Trigger Warnings?" accessed November 3, 2016. http://ncac.org/resource/ncac-report-whats-all-this-about-trigger-warnings: 3.

57. "Safe Spaces, Difficult Dialogues, and Critical Thinking," *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*: Vol. 7, No. 2, Article 5 (2013): 2.

58. Beth Berila, *Integrating Mindfulness Into Anti-Oppression Pedagogy: Social Justice In Higher Education,* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016): 139.
59. Berila, 139.
60. Accessed, in part only, on "Course Hero."
61. Alan Levinovitz, "How Trigger Warnings Silence Religious Students," *The Atlantic*, (August 30, 2015), http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/08/silencing-religious-students-on-campus/497951/.
62. Levinovitz, "How Trigger Warnings…."
63. Penny A. Pasque, Mark A. Chesler, Jessica Charbeneau, and Corissa Carlson, "Pedagogical Approaches to Student Racial Conflict in the Classroom," *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* Vol. 6, No. 1, (2013), 1-16, https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/features/dhe-a0031695.pdf.
64. Pasque, et. al., 13-14.
65. Pasque, et. al., 2.
66. Berila, *Integrating Mindfulnessy,* 139.
67. Levinovitz, "How Trigger Warnings…."
68. Levinovitz, "How Trigger Warnings…."
69. Sabatino DiBernardo's Fall 2015 syllabus for Introduction to Religious Studies at the University of Central Florida illustrates the idea. In this course, 44% of the points come from discussion-related assignments. Further, he tells the students that "deadlines for posting to and replying will be specified with each assignment" and "assignments *will not* be reopened once closed." While not providing a rubric or grading scale on the syllabus specifically geared to discussion, he does offer fundamental grading principles. These begin with simple instructions. "Do not use postings such as 'I agree,' 'I don't know either,' 'Who cares,' or 'ditto.' They do not add to the discussion, take up space on the Discussions, and will not be counted for assignment credit." Other instructors, like Yanchao Zhang and Sarah Werner, offer specific word counts in their Fall 2013 Introduction to World Religions course at the University of Florida. They tell students: "Each of your initial posts should be 250-500 words. They should be respectful, well written, and carefully edited and should exhibit your analytical thinking. In addition to your own entries you must read and reply to at least 2 posts from other students (100-200 words)." The length combined with the instruction to adopt an analytical tone provides some clarity regarding expectations. DiBernardo likewise says, "Explore disagreements and support assertions with data and evidence."
70. Heather van Mouwerik, "Stop Feeding the Trolls!: Advice for Teaching Your Students Proper Online Communication," (blog post), Grad Hacker blog, *Inside Higher Ed*, (September 14, 2015), https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/gradhacker/stop-feeding-trolls.

71. "Trolling on the internet or cyber-trolling is online behavior to intentionally anger, hurt, or frustrate someone. It is purposely posting inflammatory messages or comments that are meant to provoke negative emotional reactions." Saif Farooqi, "trolling on the Internet," (blog post) Life and Psychology blog. http://www.lifeandpsychology.com/2016/01/trolling-on-internet.html.

72. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "What is Cyberbullying," Stop Bullying.gov website, https://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/what-is-it/index.html.

73. Renate W. Prescott, "Online Student Incivility: What It Is and How To Manage It," *Transnational Distance Learning and Building New Markets for Distance Universities*, ed. Robert Hogan (Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference, 2012): 91.

74. "Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District," Oyez. https://www.oyez.org/cases/1968/21.

75. Laura Fishwick, "Student Free Speech Rights on the Internet: Summary of the Recent Case Law," ed. Adam Lewin, *Jolt Digest*, (January 12, 2012), http://jolt.law.harvard.edu/digest/internet/student-free-speech-rights-on-the-internet-summary-of-the-recent-case-law.

76. "Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District," Legal Information Institute, Cornell Law School, https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/393/503.

77. According to Fishwick, in determining whether to characterize the student's influence around the school as "substantial disruption," courts show concern with the level of conversations held by other students in class and elsewhere on school grounds, the speech's effects on the administration, and the violent nature of the speech. Fishwick, "Student Free Speech Rights."

78. While the first sentence and last phrase appear to link to policies (and appears commonly on syllabi from the university), the links do not work from the syllabus as searched. After searching other syllabi from the institution, I provided the linked document.

79. On the issue, see Ellie Bothwell, "US free speech tracker aims to 'calm things down'," World University Rankings, *Times Higher Education*, (November 10, 2017) https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/us-free-speech-tracker-aims-calm-things-down and on the cost, see Meredith Rutland Bauer, "The High Cost of Free Speech on College Campuses," *Yes! Magazine* (October 19, 2017) https://www.commondreams.org/views/2017/10/19/high-cost-free-speech-college-campuses.

80. Nick Roll, "2 More Campus Speakers Shouted Down," *Inside Higher Ed, (October 12, 2017),* https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/10/12/speaker-protests-continue-options-punishments-unclear.

81. Cecilia Capuzzi Simon, "Fighting for Free Speech on America's Campuses," *New York Times*, (August 1, 2016), https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/07/education/edlife/fire-first-amendment-on-campus-free-speech.html.

82. *The Economist*, "Free speech at American universities is under threat: but fears of a pandemic of snowflakery are overwrought," (October 12, 2017) https://www.economist.com/united-states/2017/10/12/free-speech-at-american-universities-is-under-threat.

83. John Villasenor, "Views among college students regarding the First Amendment: Results from a new survey,". *The Brookings Institution*, (September 18, 2017) https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2017/09/18/views-among-college-students-regarding-the-first-amendment-results-from-a-new-survey/. It should be noted that these results vary significantly from a Gallup and Knight Foundation Survey in 2016, "Free Expression on Campus: A Survey of U.S. College Students and U.S. Adults", https://www.knightfoundation.org/media/uploads/publication_pdfs/FreeSpeech_campus.pdf.

84. As Robert Wuthnow explains with regard to religious belief, "Religious differences are instantiated in dress, food, holidays, and family rituals; they also reflect historic teachings and deeply held patterns of belief and practice. These beliefs and practices may be personal and private, but they cannot easily be divorced from questions about truth and morality." Robert Wuthnow, *American and the Challenges of Religious Diversity* (Princeton University, 2005): 3.

85. American Association of Colleges & Universities, "What is a Liberal Education?" (n.d.) https://www.aacu.org/leap/what-is-a-liberal-education.

86. Michelle Lelwica, "Religious Diversity: Challenges and Opportunities in the Classroom," *Diversity & Democracy*, (Winter 2008), Vol. 11, No. 1. https://www.aacu.org/diversitydemocracy/winter/lelwica.

87. Louis Leon, *La Llorona's Children: Religion, Life, and Death in the U.S.-Mexican Borderlands,* (University of California, 2004): 14.

88. Mark Bauerlein, professor of English at Emory University, writes of Steve Bannon's attacks on the GOP, that "inclusion" can and is read as an attack on social and religious conservatives as well as American workers." Mark Bauerlein, "GOP doesn't have a clue – but Bannon does," CNN website (October 16, 2017) http://www.cnn.com/2017/10/16/opinions/bannon-culture-war-bauerlein/index.html.

89. Martien A. Halvorson-Taylor and Kurtis R. Schaeffer, "Religious Studies Departments Must be Leaders in Overcoming Racism and Hate," (blog post), Berkley Forum, Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, & Word Affairs, Georgetown University (August 21, 2017) https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/responses/religious-studies-departments-must-be-leaders-in-overcoming-racism-and-hate.

90. Halvorson-Taylor and Schaeffer.

91. American Association of University Professors, "Academic Freedom and Tenure: The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign," (April 2015), https://www.aaup.org/report/UIUC.

92. For example, while the ADL favors the Sharansky test "to determine when anti-Israel criticism crosses over into anti-Semitism: demonization, delegitimization, and when Israel is held to a double standard." The second, probably the most controversial, would hold that critics cannot question Israel's right to exist, the Jewish character of the state, or propose the unqualified right of return for Palestinian refugees. "Response to Common Inaccuracy: Israel Critics are Anti-Semites," Anti-Defamation League website, (n.d.) https://www.adl.org/education/resources/fact-sheets/response-to-common-inaccuracy-israel-critics-are-anti-semites. By contrast, Jewish Voices for Peace has organized efforts to ask the U.S. State Department "to revise its definition of anti-Semitism in order to prevent the charge of anti-Semitism from being misused to silence critics of Israel." Naomi Dann, "Criticism of Israel Is Not Anti-Semitism, *Jewish Voices for Peace,* (May 4, 2015), https://jewishvoiceforpeace.org/criticism-of-israel-is-not-anti-semitism/.

93. See, for instance, Franklin Graham, son of evangelical leader and head of Samaritan's Purse: "'I support Israel,' Franklin Graham said Thursday during the 13th Annual Israel Solidarity Event at the Israeli Embassy in Washington, D.C. 'I support Israel not only because I worship a Jew but because of what the Bible says about Israel and the future of Israel.'" Bob Paulson, "Franklin Graham Speaks at Israeli Embassy," Billy Graham Evangelistic Association website, (May 1, 2014) https://billygraham.org/story/franklin-graham-speaks-at-israeli-embassy/ .

94. Salaita had been offered a contract, provided with moving expenses, and was placed on the teaching schedule. But the University's Board of Trustees had not yet met and voted on the slate of faculty members being appointed. That circumstance gave the university the option to not complete the appointment process. American Association of University Professors, "Academic Freedom and Tenure: The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign."

95. Robert Mackey, "Professors Angry Tweets on Gaza Cost Him A Job," *New York Times*, (September 13, 2014), http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/13/world/middleeast/professors-angry-tweets-on-gaza-cost-him-a-job.html.

96. Christine Des Garennes, "Updated: Wise explains Salaita decision, gets support from trustees, The News-Gazette, (August 23, 2014), http://www.news-gazette.com/news/local/2014-08-23/updated-wise-explains-salaita-decision-gets-support-trustees.html.

97. Jodi S. Cohen, "University of Illinois Oks $875,000 settlement to end Steven Salaita dispute," *Chicago Tribune* (November 12, 2015) https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/breaking/ct-steven-salaita-settlement-met-20151112-story.html.

98. Julie Wurth, "Salaita leaving academia: 'I refuse to tolerate the indignities of a blacklist,'" *The News-Gazette* (July 25, 2017), http://www.news-gazette.com/

news/local/2017-07-25/salaita-leaving-academia-i-refuse-tolerate-indignities-blacklist.html.

99. A slew of cases involving social media demonstrate the stickiness of the issues, especially for contingent faculty members. See, for two recent examples, Jason Green, "Professor fired for calling Hurricane Harvey 'karma' for Trump voters," *The Mercury News* (August 30, 2017) http://www.mercurynews.com/2017/08/30/professor-fired-for-calling-hurricane-harvey-karma-for-trump-voters/and Natalie Musumeci, "Police union wants professor fired over 'dead cop' tweet," *New York Post,* (September 15, 2017) http://nypost.com/2017/09/15/police-union-wants-professor-fired-over-anti-cop-tweets/.

100. Judith S. White, "Anticipating and Avoiding Misperceptions of Harassment," *The Academic's Handbook, Third Edition* (revised and expanded), ed.A. Leigh DeNeef and Craufurd D. Goodwin. (Duke University, 2007): 101.

101. University of Oregon Policy Library, Discrimination and Response Policy, (n.d.) https://policies.uoregon.edu/vol-5-human-resources/ch-11-human-resources-other/discrimination-complaint-and-response.

102. Adam Steinbaugh, "University of Oregon on 'Bias Response Team': Nothing to See Here," Foundation for Individual Rights in Education website, (May 27, 2016), https://www.thefire.org/university-of-oregon-on-bias-response-team-nothing-to-see-here/.

103. Corey Robin, "Reading the Salaita Papers", (blog post) (September 2, 2014), http://coreyrobin.com/2014/09/02/reading-the-salaita-papers/.

104. Cohen, "University of Illinois OKs settlement."

105. Rachel Levison, "Academic Freedom and the First Amendment," Presentation to the AAUP Summer Institute, American Association of University Professors, (July 2007) https://www.aaup.org/our-work/protecting-academic-freedom/academic-freedom-and-first-amendment-2007.

106. José A. Cabranes, "If colleges keep killing academic freedom, civilization will die, too," *The Washington Post*, (January 10, 2017), https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/if-colleges-keep-killing-academic-freedom-civilization-will-die-too/2017/01/10/74b6fcc2-d2c3-11e6-9cb0-54ab630851e8_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.2b7d8f2a7d1a.

107. Lauren Camera, "Campus Free Speech Laws Ignite the Country," *US News & World Report*, (July 31, 2017), https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/articles/2017-07-31/campus-free-speech-laws-ignite-the-country.

108. Michael S. Roth, "From Unruly Hearts to Open Minds," *Inside Higher Ed*, (July 17, 2017), https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2017/07/17/campus-intellectual-diversity-age-polarization-essay.

NOTES FROM CHAPTER 5

1. This bill followed up on traditional governmental support for education, as evidenced in the Morill Act of 1862 and other land-grant initiatives as well as made some form of education accessible to some 7.8 of the 16 million returning WWII and Korean conflict veterans. In fact, "in the peak year of 1947, Veterans accounted for 49 percent of college admissions." US Department of Veteran's Affairs, Education and Training website, https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/history.asp. Peter Drucker, educator and management consultant, credits the G.I. Bill with precipitating a great shift in American life. He wrote in his book *Post-Capitalist Society,* "The G.I. Bill of Rights—and the enthusiastic response to it on the part of America's veterans—signaled the shift to the knowledge society. Future historians may well consider it the most important event of the 20th Century." https://www.drucker.institute/thedx/the-sound-of-progress/.
2. Ryan Katz, "The history of the GI Bill," American RadioWorks, (September 3, 2015), http://www.americanradioworks.org/segments/the-history-of-the-gi-bill/.
3. Kanishka Jayasuriya, "Transforming the Public University: Market Citizenship and High Education Regulatory Practices," *Through A Glass Darkly: The Social Sciences Look at the Neo-Liberal University*, ed. Margaret Thornton, (Canberra, Australia: Australian National University Press, 2014): 92.
4. See Chapter One.
5. Chester Pach, "Lyndon Johnson's Living Room War," *New York Times, (May 30, 2017),* https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/30/opinion/lyndon-johnson-vietnam-war.html.
6. Gandhi was, of course, influenced by American transcendentalist writing. Jean Johnson and Don Johnson, "Thoreau, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr. could do it," Center for Global Education website, (n.d.), https://asiasociety.org/education/thoreau-gandhi-and-martin-luther-king-jr/.
7. Douglas Belkin puts it this way: "For generations, a swelling population of college-age students, rising enrollment rates and generous student loans helped all schools, even mediocre ones, to flourish. Those days are ending." Douglas Belkin, "Colleges Split Into Winners, Losers," *Wall Street Journal* (February 22, 2018):A3. But he may overstate the case. As early as the mid-1970s, increasing numbers of students in the higher education system, in part, made maintaining a low-cost tuition commitment less financially feasible for legislative bodies on both the state and national levels. Those pressures diminished the ability of institutions to continue hiring mass numbers of faculty in various fields in full-time tenured or tenure-track lines. The decline in government support over time alongside shifts in the financial burden to students initiated a slow slog to reconceptualize the benefits of a college education from a public good to a private, individual one. While student loans, funded by the federal government, existed in some form since 1958, the amount of student borrowing increased with a more tuition-driven system and rising student debt followed.

8. Christopher Newfield, *Unmaking the Public University: The Forty-Year Assault on the Middle Class*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2008): 19.
9. Ted Tapper and David Palfreyman, *The Collegial Tradition in the Age of Mass Higher Education*. (London: Springer, 2010): 132-133
10. Jordan Friedman, "Study: More Students Are Enrolling in Online Courses," *US News & World Report* (January 11, 2018), https://www.usnews.com/higher-education/online-education/articles/2018-01-11/study-more-students-are-enrolling-in-online-courses.
11. IES: National Center for Education Studies, Digest of Education Statistics (Table 303.40 Total fall enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by attendance status, sex, and age: Selected years, 1970 through 2026), https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16_303.40.asp?current=yes.
12. Babson Survey Research Group website, "Higher Education Reports: Online and Distance Education," http://www.onlinelearningsurvey.com/highered.html.
13. Jason L. Taylor and Brian P. An, "Improving IPEDS Data Collection on High School Students Enrolled in College Courses," The National Postsecondary Education Cooperative, (September 2017): 4-5. https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/pdf/NPEC/data/NPEC_Paper_IPEDS_High_School_Students_and_College_Courses_2017.pdf.
14. Taylor and An, 6.
15. Richard Fry, "Millennials Overtake Baby Boomers as America's Largest Generation," Pew Research Center website, (April 25, 2016), http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/04/25/millennials-overtake-baby-boomers/. While they are not the college students of the future, they are the undergraduates and graduate students at present, not to mention the professors in the first years of their academic careers.
16. This paraphrases an unpublished paper by my colleague Randall Reed at Appalachian State University. His findings were presented at a campus forum on October 18, 2016, and his conclusion rests on research conducted by organizations such as Pew Research.
17. Kipp Jarecke-Cheng, "Millennials and the Age of Distrust," Engage: Millennials, MediaPost website, (February 27, 2017). https://www.mediapost.com/publications/article/295856/millennials-and-the-age-of-distrust.html.
18. David Masci, "Q & A: Why Millennials are Less Religious than Older Americans," Pew Research Center website, (January 8, 2016), http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/01/08/qa-why-millennials-are-less-religious-than-older-americans/.
19. While confidence in institutions declines among many age groups, a Spring 2017 Harvard University Institute of Politics poll among 18-29-year-olds reported only 20% trusted Congress to do the right thing, compared with 24% to the Federal Government/the President, 39% for the United Nations, 46% for the Supreme

Court, and 50% for the U.S. Military. Earlier iterations of this question revealed problems with the media, Wall Street, the police, and others as well. The assumption that people will function with a standard set of norms and follow common expectations, hallmarks of functioning institutions, represents a real sticking point for millennials, Harvard Kennedy School, Institute of Politics,(Spring2017), https://iop.harvard.edu/youth-poll/harvard-iop-spring-17-poll. Shushok and Kidd observe, "As children and adolescents, they are increasingly insisting that the rules applied to them be 'relevant' to them and justified by the adults around them." Questioning the processes and practices of conventional organizations, then, follows naturally. Frank Shushok and Vera Kidd. "Millennials in Higher Education: As Students Change, Much about them Remains the Same," *Positive Psychology on the College Campus*, eds. John C. Wade, Lawrence I. Marks, Roderick D. Hetzel, (Oxford, 2015): 46.

20. Michael Lipka, "7 Key Changes in the Global Religion Landscape," Pew Research Center, (April 2, 2015), http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/04/02/7-key-changes-in-the-global-religious-landscape/.

21. But if these declines still look bothersome to scholars (and administrators) contemplating the future, one might reference England, where in spite of sharply receding church attendance figures "religion is the fastest-growing A-level subject in all of the humanities, social sciences, and arts, increasing a whopping 110 percent since 2003." Katie Edwards, and Meredith JC Warren, "Is God Really Dead? How Britain Lost Faith in the Church," *RNS: Religion News Service,* (October 29, 2016), http://religionnews.com/2016/10/29/is-god-really-dead-how-britain-lost-faith-in-the-church/.

22. Danny Crichton, "Searching for the Next Wave of Education Innovation," TC (TechCrunch) website, (June 27, 2015), https://techcrunch.com/2015/06/27/education-next-wave/.

23. Adam Miller, "3 Things Millennials Want in a Career (Hint: It's Not More Money)," *Fortune,* (March 25, 2015), http://fortune.com/2015/03/26/3-things-millennials-want-in-a-career-hint-its-not-more-money/.

24. William Navarre, "Dean for Graduate Education to Take Leave, Start New University," *The Tech: Online Edition,* (January 28, 2016), http://tech.mit.edu/V135/N38/ortiz.html.

25. Jeffrey Tjendra, "The Origins of Design Thinking," *Wired,* (April 2014), https://www.wired.com/insights/2014/04/origins-design-thinking/.

26. At present, earning a degree most often depends on students completing certain required coursework in terms most often defined by quarters or semesters, and conforming to mandated guidelines for contact hours (as defined by the Carnegie standards) with faculty members. This data, the student credit hours generated, can also be used to determine faculty workload. Federal financial aid awards link to how many hours a student takes. For some of its critics, this system places emphasis in the

wrong place by equating duration in instruction with student outcomes. Indeed, the Carnegie Foundation itself (the developer of this system) recognizes the problems. In a 2013 report by Elena Silva, she writes, "The Carnegie Foundation has this year embarked on an initiative to revisit the Carnegie Unit. We are exploring whether the Unit, with its current focus on the amount of time students spend in classes with teachers or professors—known in the education field as 'seat time'—should be replaced with a different metric, or set of metrics, that might tell us more about how much student are learning in secondary and higher education." Elena Silva, "The Carnegie Unit—Revisited," (blog post) Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, (May 28, 2013), https://www.carnegiefoundation.org/blog/the-carnegie-unit-revisited/.

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About the Author

Sandie Gravett is a Professor of Religious Studies in the Department of Philosophy & Religion at Appalachian State University. By training, she specializes in Biblical Studies as well as Religion & Culture, holding the PhD in Religion from Duke University. A longstanding interest in administrative structures of universities resulted in directing a Women's Studies Program, chairing the system-wide representative body for the UNC System, and her current work with a colleague on a project about Faculty Employment Rights and Hearing Processes in public universities. When not working, she enjoys travel and a nice bottle of wine!

"Revolutionary changes in the higher education landscape call for sustained reflection on impact of these items on the structures in which academic work in religious studies happens and the conditions of faculty life. The advent of new educational technologies, the needs of more diverse student bodies, and alterations in the relationships between universities and communities also raise questions about how religious studies scholars and the programs they provide will evolve."

Sandie Gravett's book provides a much needed overview of the teaching of religious studies in universities, with a clear delineation of challenges and opportunities for the future. Dr. Gravett assesses the current status of the field within the challenges facing universities in general and humanities in particular as we move into the twenty-first century. Her analysis of the history of the field is insightful and provides a good framework for understanding how we got to where we are now and what the future might hold. She provides a succinct and insightful analysis of the types of courses taught in religious studies programs and how these fare (or not) in new modalities impacted by technological change and digital learning. Dr. Gravett's discussion of the challenges of an increasingly multi-cultural environment, with its religious pluralism, and the possible roles of religious studies scholars and programs, orient the reader toward present complexities and the potential of religious studies to not only survive but add increasing impact in the future.