



GRADUATE STUDY *at*



RICE

Rice's Department of Religion, founded in 1968, offers a research program dedicated to describing and analyzing all forms of religion and religious behavior with a wide variety of philosophical, historical, social-scientific, theological and literary methods. Our select Ph.D. program boasts significant financial support, training in specific religious traditions and methodologies, apprentice experience and a faculty deeply involved in scholarship of international scope while remaining attentive to the intellectual projects of individual students. One of the benefits of work within a small, well supported and distinguished department is the ability to tailor the program to meet the needs and interests of each student. Requirements for the Ph.D. degree reflect this unique dimension of the training offered.

The general "map" and specific curricular, apprentice, research and writing requirements of the Ph.D. program are as follows:

**Graduate Areas of Concentration.** The Department of Religion practices a wide variety of methodologies on a wide variety of historical subjects. As with any department, moreover, our faculty offers certain strengths or areas of concentration that are especially suited for advanced graduate training. These include African Religions, African-American Religions, the Bible and Beyond, Buddhism, Contemplative Studies, Islam, Jewish Thought and Philosophy, Modern Christianity in Thought and Popular Culture, Gnosticism-Esotericism-Mysticism and Psychology of Religion.

**Course Work.** Fifty-four credits of course work (18 courses) are required for the Ph.D. (36 credits, or 12 courses, for those coming in with a relevant M.A. or M.Div.). The department recognizes and embraces the fact that the study of religion is an interdisciplinary project that requires forms of knowledge and methodologies from different intellectual traditions. We thus encourage each student to take course work outside the department. However, no more than one-fourth of all credits counted toward the Ph.D. in religion will be accepted from other departments. This does not preclude a student, of course, from exceeding this credit requirement.

**Department Seminar.** Two department seminars are required and usually are taken during the first two years of the student's career. The seminars will generally draw most of their required readings from the bibliography for the first qualifying exam, which all students are required to take (see below).

**Language Training.** All Ph.D. students are expected to pass reading exams in two secondary research languages, that is, two languages in which modern scholarship is written. These languages are to be determined by the student's graduate advisor. These exams must be taken during the first two to three years of the program, that is, during the student's course work and before the qualifying exams. All students also are expected to obtain proficiency in the language(s) of their primary sources for their dissertation research and scholarly career,

## GRADUATE PROGRAM IN RELIGION

RICE UNIVERSITY

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FOR ADMISSION  
IN 2015

whatever those may be. Normally, the student's dissertation advisor and committee will determine the status of this linguistic proficiency.

**Apprentice Experience.** In return for their annual stipends, all students are expected to perform modest tasks for the department and/or individual faculty. First-year students normally provide assistance to the department coordinator in the main office. Second- through fifth-year students are expected to work a minimum of five and a maximum of seven to ten hours a week for a particular faculty member as a research assistant. Students are strongly encouraged to approach these apprenticeships as real and integral parts of the mentoring process and as essential to their graduate education.

**Second-Year Review.** As a means to ensure the proper progress and development of each Ph.D. candidate and the overall quality of the program, the graduate advisor will solicit a five- to ten-page report from each second-year student in the spring semester and hold an hour oral interview with each student and two other appropriate faculty members.

**Qualifying Exam Petition.** The student will petition to take a set of four qualifying exams. Exams one and three are standard, with fixed bibliographies. However, students must list exams two and four and explain in brief the logic for taking them, that is, how they fit into the general trajectories of the student's research agenda. This process also includes presentation of bibliographies for exams two and four. These bibliographies must be developed in consultation with appropriate members of the faculty.

**Qualifying Exams.** The qualifying exams typically are taken during the spring of the fourth year. Students are not allowed to substitute research papers in place of exams. The qualifying exams will be four in number: 1) Methods and History of the Discipline, required of all students; 2) one exam dedicated to a particular religious tradition; 3) one exam dedicated to a particular methodology or theoretical orientation; and 4) one thematic concentration exam selected by the student in

consultation with his or her advisor. Normally, the qualifying exams are taken over a two-week period. The exam structure breaks down as follows:

1. Methods and History of the Discipline
2. Traditions
  - African American religions
  - African religions
  - Biblical religions
  - Buddhism
  - Christianity
  - Hinduism
  - Islam
  - Judaism
  - New Age and New Religious Movements
3. Methodological Foundations
  - Comparative religious ethics
  - Gender theory
  - History of religions
  - Philosophy of religion
  - Psychology of religion
  - Religion and the social sciences
  - Scriptural interpretation
  - Theology
4. Thematic Concentration

**Dissertation Proposal.** The dissertation proposal typically is advanced in late summer of the fourth year or early fall of the fifth year, that is, soon after the completion of the qualifying exams. With the consultation and cooperation of a dissertation supervisor and at least two other dissertation committee members, the dissertation proposal must be submitted to the department in a standard written form. After a discussion with the dissertation committee members open to the entire faculty, the committee will render a decision of "approval and proceed," "approval pending revisions" or "disapproval." If the latter decision is reached, the proposal may be rewritten or a new proposal advanced.

**Dissertation Defense.** Once the dissertation committee (chaired by the dissertation advisor) is comfortable with the product, the student will publicly defend his or her dissertation with the full committee present. One of four assessments may be rendered: "approval with distinction," "approval," "approval pending revisions" or "disapproval." If revisions are made, and approved by the full committee, the student will be eligible for the degree.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Opportunities may be available for Ph.D. candidates to teach undergraduate courses in the department. Opportunities to teach courses in local colleges and universities also may arise. Limited funds are available for Ph.D. students to attend conferences to present their research. The department encourages these and other efforts to prepare students for academic careers.





## FACULTY/CURRENT RESEARCH

**Elias Bongmba.** Harry and Hazel Chavanne Chair in Christian Theology and Professor of Religion. Ph.D. (1995) University of Denver, Iliff School of Theology. Dr. Bongmba's current research focuses on African religions. He is the author of *The Dialects of Transformation in Africa* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2006) and *Facing a Pandemic: The African Church and HIV/AIDS Crisis* (Baylor University Press, 2007). He is also president of the African Association for the Study of Religion.

**Marcia Brennan, Ph.D.** is Professor of Art History and Religion at Rice University. She received her Ph.D. in the History of Art and Architecture from Brown University. Her research engages modern and contemporary art history and museum studies, comparative mysticism, and the emerging field of the medical humanities. She is the author of several scholarly books, including *Curating Consciousness: Mysticism and the Modern Museum* (MIT Press, 2010); *Flowering Light: Kabbalistic Mysticism and the Art of Elliot R. Wolfson* (Rice University Press, 2009); *Modernism's Masculine Subjects: Matisse, The New York School, and Post-Painterly Abstraction* (MIT Press, 2004); *Painting Gender, Constructing Theory: The Alfred Stieglitz Circle and American Formalist Aesthetics* (MIT Press, 2001, 2002). In addition to her work at Rice University, Marcia Brennan serves as an Artist In Residence in the Department of Palliative Medicine at the M. D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. Her experiences in this clinical context represent the subject of her latest book project, *Words Beyond Words: Finding Language at the End of Life* (forthcoming from Intellect Books, U.K. and the University of Chicago Press).

**Niki Clements.** Watt J. and Lilly G. Jackson Assistant Professor of Religion. Ph.D. (2014) Brown University. Dr. Clements specializes in Christianity in late antiquity, asceticism and mysticism, religious ethics, and theories and methods in the study of religion.

**David Cook.** Associate Professor. Ph.D. (2001) University of Chicago. Dr. Cook has recently published *Classical Muslim Apocalyptic* (Darwin Press, 2002), *Contemporary Muslim Apocalyptic Literature* (Syracuse, 2005), and *Understanding Jihad* (California, 2005). His current research includes origins and historical development of Islam, apocalyptic traditions, and revolutionary social movements in Islam and contemporary radical Islam.

**April D. DeConick.** Isla Carroll and Percy E. Turner Professor of Biblical Studies and Chair of Religion Department. Ph.D. (1994) University of Michigan. Professor. Ph.D. (1994) Univer-

sity of Michigan. Dr. DeConick is a scholar of New Testament and Christian Origins whose research and classes focus on the study of early Jewish and Christian literature in their historical contexts. Her research revolves around questions of gnosticism, esotericism and mysticism within formative Christianity. She has published widely on these themes, including her two-volume commentary on the Gospel of Thomas: *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas* (T&T Clark, 2005) and *The Original Gospel of Thomas in Translation* (T&T Clark, 2006). This two-volume set is a continuation of the work on the Gospel of Thomas she began in her earlier monograph, *Seek to See Him: Ascent and Vision Mysticism in the Gospel of Thomas* (Leiden, 1996). She also has been instrumental in explaining mystical traditions in the Gospel of John in her publication, *Voices of the Mystics* (T&T Clark, 2001). Her recent publication, *The Thirteenth Apostle: What the Gospel of Judas Really Says* (Continuum, 2008) was the first to challenge the National Geographic Society's version of the Gospel of Judas and its modern interpretation of Judas as a good guy and Gnostic hero. Most recently, she has completed her book, *Holy Misogyny: Why the Sex and Gender Conflicts of the Early Church Still Matter* (Continuum, 2011), where she brings into play all of the early Christian opinions on sex and gender without regard to their canonicity in order to understand why the female was subordinated, abandoned and erased from the traditions. Her work on the Gnosticism continues in *The Ancient New Age: How Gnostic Spirituality Revolutionized Religion*.

**Claire Fanger.** Assistant Professor. PhD (1994) University of Toronto. Dr. Fanger is a medievalist whose research interests include the intellectual history of magic, medieval cosmology and epistemology, dreams and visions, and representations of human modes of access to the divine. She edited the essay collection *Conjuring Spirits* (Penn State University Press, 1998) and is currently finishing a sequel to this volume, *Invoking Angels*. She also is working with Nicholas Watson on an edition, translation and study of the *Liber florum celestis doctrine*, a work including prayers, images, vision, and autobiographical materials by 14th-century Benedictine John of Morigny.

**Matthias Henze.** Isla Carroll and Percy E. Turner Professor of Hebrew Bible and Early Judaism. Ph.D. (1997) Harvard University. Watt J. and Lilly G. Jackson Associate Professor in Biblical Studies. Ph.D. (1997) Harvard University. Dr. Henze authored *The Madness of King Nebuchadnezzar*, supplements to *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 61 (1999), and *The Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel*, *Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum* 11 (2001). His current research includes the Hebrew Bible and the history of

biblical interpretation with an emphasis on apocalyptic literature, the Dead Sea Scrolls and Syriac literature.

**Anne C. Klein.** Professor. Ph.D (1981) University of Virginia. Dr. Klein's focus is on Indian and Tibetan Buddhist thought and practice. Her books span the Geluk, Nyingma and early Bon traditions, as well as cross-cultural work on the feminine. She increasingly incorporates a contemplative studies perspective in teaching and scholarship. Her books include *Knowledge and Liberation: Tibetan Buddhist Epistemology in Support of Transformative Religious Experience* (Snow Lion, 1989) (recently translated into Russian and Chinese); *Meeting the Great Bliss Queen* (Beacon:1995), *Path to the Middle* (SUNY: 1994), *Unbounded Wholeness: Dzogchen, Bon, and the Logic of the NonConceptual*, with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche (Oxford University Press: 2007) and most recently, *Heart Essence of the Vast Expanse: A Story of Transmission* (Snow Lion: 2010). Currently, she is translating a contemporary Tibetan work on Dzogchen by the late Khetsun Sangpo Rinpoche, as well as short works by Jigme Lingpa for a book on his influence in Tibet, and developing a monograph, *The Knowing Body*.

**Jeffrey J. Kripal.** J. Newton Rayzor Professor of Religion. Ph.D. (1993) University of Chicago. Dr. Kripal's research focuses on the history of religions, the comparative erotics of mystical literature and the history of Western esotericism from ancient Gnosticism to the New Age. His recent books include *Authors of the Impossible: The Paranormal and the Sacred* (Chicago, 2010), *Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion* (Chicago, 2007) and *The Serpent's Gift: Gnostic Reflections on the Study of Religion* (Chicago, 2007).

**Brian Ogren.** Anna Smith Fine Assistant Professor of Judaic Studies. Ph.D. (2008) Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Assistant Professor. Ph.D. (2008) Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Dr. Ogren is a scholar of Jewish Mysticism whose research focuses on the early Modern European context. He is the author of *Renaissance and Rebirth: Reincarnation in Early Modern Italian Kabbalah* (Brill, 2009). He is interested in the flow and reception of knowledge amongst variegated intellectual communities and both the individual and collective formation of identity. He is currently working on kabbalistic notions of cyclical time on Jewish mystical notions of the self.

**William B. Parsons.** Professor. Ph.D. (1993) University of Chicago. Dr. Parsons' research is in psychology of religion and mysticism. His publications include *The Enigma of the Oceanic Feeling* (Oxford University Press, 1999) and *Religion and Psychology: Mapping the Terrain* (Routledge, 2001) and *Mourning Religion* (Virginia, 2008).

**Anthony B. Pinn.** Agnes Cullen Arnold Professor of Humanities and Professor of Religious Studies. Ph.D. (1994) Harvard University. Through an interdisciplinary and comparative analysis, Dr. Pinn's recent research projects have attempted to explore the "quest for complex subjectivity" as the fundamental nature of black religion. His most substantive presentation of this research interest is *Terror and Triumph: The Nature of Black Religion* (Fortress Press, 2003). In it and other projects he is currently developing, he gives attention to the importance of the body as the primary site of religious wrestling and formation.

**John M. Stroup.** Harry and Hazel Chavanne Professor. Ph.D. (1980) Yale University. Dr. Stroup specializes in the history of Christianity, especially the Reformation and its European heritage; church-state relations; Protestant and Catholic political theology; and the prehistory of "New Age" spirituality in cultural criticism.

### CAMPUS VISIT

We encourage you to visit Rice at any time for a firsthand look at the department and the beautiful, tree-lined campus near the heart of historic Houston. During your time here, you will not only visit with faculty but also be hosted by graduate students from whom you can learn more about life and lifestyles in Houston. In the meantime, feel free to contact any of the graduate students listed at the end of this publication with questions you may have about the department or the university.

### ADMISSION

The graduate program accepts a limited number of qualified students. A distinguished undergraduate record and high scores on the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) are essential, and an advanced degree in the humanities is desirable. Within the limits of available funds, fellowships and scholarships are awarded to qualified students. As part of their training, students usually assist the department in such areas as teaching or library work.

### RECENT GRADUATE STUDENT PLACEMENTS

**Grant Adamson.** Post-doc, Program in Writing and Communication. Rice University, Houston, Texas.

**Torin Alexander.** Assistant Professor of Religion, St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota.

**Ata Anzali.** Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies, Middlebury College, Vermont.

**Nathan Carlin.** Assistant Professor, J.P. McGovern M.D. Center for Humanities and Ethics at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, TX.

**Jonathan Chism.** Director of Path to Freedom, St. John's Downtown Church; Adjunct Professor of History at Lone Star College.

**Stephen C. Finley.** Assistant Professor of Religious Studies and African American Studies, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

**Margarita Guillory.** Assistant Professor of African American Religion, University of Rochester, New York.

**Derek Hicks.** Assistant Professor of Religion and Culture, Wake Forest School of Divinity, Winston-Salem, North Carolina

**Andrea Jain.** Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis, Indiana.

**Daewoong Kim.** Lecturer, Dept of Comparative Cultural Studies, University of Houston; Instructor, Biblical Hebrew, ETeacher Co., Tel-Aviv Israel.

**Chad Pevateaux.** Visiting Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, St. Mary's College of Maryland.

**Matthew Schunke.** Assistant Professor, Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville, Illinois.

## ABOUT RICE AND HOUSTON

Rice is a leading American research university—small, private, and highly selective—distinguished by a collaborative, interdisciplinary culture and a global perspective. Only a few miles from downtown Houston, it occupies an architecturally distinctive, 285-acre campus shaded by nearly 4,000 trees. State-of-the-art facilities and laboratories, internationally renowned centers and institutes, and one of the country's largest endowments support an ideal learning and living environment.

The university attracts a diverse group of highly talented students and faculty with outstanding graduate and professional programs in the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, engineering, architecture, music, and business. With just 2,374 graduate students and 3,708 undergraduates, it offers an unusual opportunity to forge close relationships with eminent faculty scholars and researchers and the option to tailor graduate programs to specific interests.

Houston offers all the expected educational, cultural, and commercial advantages of a large urban center, and more. It's home of the Texas Medical Center, the largest concentration of medical schools, hospitals, and research facilities in the world, as well as several other universities. Rice has cooperative programs with the University of Houston, Baylor College of Medicine, the University of Texas Health Science Center, and Texas Southern University. Houston is one of the



few U.S. cities with resident companies in all four major performing arts—drama, ballet, opera, and symphony. It also boasts a museum district featuring exhibits of national and international prominence.

As urban as it is, Houston also is a surprisingly green city. Houstonians enjoy the outdoors in more than 300 municipal parks and 120 open spaces, and many frequent the beach at Galveston Island, only a 45-minute drive away. Other short trips include Austin, the state's capital, and historic San Antonio, both of which are a little more than three hours away.

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

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April DeConick, Department Chair  
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Houston, Texas 77005  
E-mail: [reli@rice.edu](mailto:reli@rice.edu)

### HOW TO APPLY

Students must submit the following materials with their completed application form no later than January 15.

- Transcripts from all colleges and universities attended
- Four letters of recommendation from faculty who are familiar with the applicant
- Results of the GRE, taken within the last three years
- If English is second language, test scores from the Test of English as a Second Language
- Writing sample
- Application fee of \$70

### CURRENT GRADUATE STUDENT CONTACTS

The following religious studies graduate students can also answer questions about religious studies and student life at Rice:

Sravana Borkataky-Varma  
Hindu Tantra : Religion, Gender, and Sexuality  
[sb23@rice.edu](mailto:sb23@rice.edu)

Biko Gray  
African American Religion  
[bmg2@rice.edu](mailto:bmg2@rice.edu)

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Rice University homepage:  
[www.rice.edu](http://www.rice.edu)

Rice University Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies homepage:  
[graduate.rice.edu](http://graduate.rice.edu)

Graduate Student Association homepage:  
[gsa.rice.edu](http://gsa.rice.edu)

City of Houston homepage: <http://www.ci.houston.tx.us>  
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