



CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

Kate DeConinck '08

Religious Studies, English



Q: What made you decide to major in religious studies?

A: Coming to Connecticut College, I had not thought of majoring in religious studies. I associated religion classes with frumpy old men who preached about damnation and sin. But to fulfill a requirement, I took "Religion and Terrorism." I soon realized that religious studies were not only interesting but also extremely relevant in the modern world.

Q: What were your classes like?

A: I never found a religious studies course that I disliked. "Religion and the Discontents of Modernity" taught me to think about religion in more philosophical terms. I spent a semester doing an independent study on religion and the media with my adviser.

Q: Did you study abroad?

A: In fall of 2006, I studied abroad in Rome. We were housed right next to the Vatican, and my courses included "Eastern Christianity" and "Children of Abraham." Last summer, I did a College-funded internship at the Pluralism Project, a non-profit organization that works to map the religious diversity of the United States.

Q: What are your career plans?

A: I am now applying to graduate programs in religious studies. Ultimately I would like to become a journalist with a background in religious studies or, possibly, a professor of religious studies. No matter where I end up, I know that Connecticut College has prepared me well for the future.

Religious Studies

Overview

Religious studies is a traditional component of liberal arts education. But there is little traditional about the religious studies major at Connecticut College. You will study the sacred texts of Western scriptural tradition. You will also compare and contrast them with the tenets of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism and newer religious movements such as Mormonism, Rastafarianism and cults. You may follow our track on religion in the United States, in which you look at American religious phenomena from mainstream beliefs to Scientology. You will also have the opportunity to focus on the study of contemporary religion and on the connections among race, ethnicity, gender and religion.

Personalized Study

You will have many ways to expand your understanding of the religious studies major, on and off the campus. We take great pride in the close interaction between religious studies majors and their professors. Many students pursue specific topics of interest through independent studies with faculty. You may choose to serve on our very active student advisory board. In recent years, it has organized a series of lunches with the faculty and has invited its own speakers to campus. In your senior year, you may apply to be a preceptor for our classes or research an honors thesis. Recent thesis topics have included the Christian pop-rock movement and the role of prison chaplains. Off campus, our majors pursue internships with groups such as the Pluralism Project at Harvard University and accompany our professors on trips to destinations such as Israel.

Interdisciplinary Opportunities

You might bring an international aspect to the major by applying for the certificate program of the Toor Cummings Center for International Studies and the Liberal Arts. Or you might explore the connections between religion, public policy and community engagement through the certificate program of the Holleran Center for Community Action and Public Policy. The religious studies department works closely with the College's Center for the Comparative Study of Race and Ethnicity. In 2008, the Center's student-led seminar explored how society might memorialize the war on terror. The Center's students worked with architectural design students at the College and presented their ideas at a spring symposium that featured playwright Anna Deavere Smith, Holocaust scholar James Young, and Betty Chen, the director of design, planning design and development for the Lower Manhattan Development Corp.

After Connecticut College

Some students come into religious studies focused on their own religious traditions, with a long-term goal of pursuing ordination. While that is certainly an option, you will be encouraged to study religion as broadly as you would any other major, such as sociology or history. You will learn to explore complex issues from different intellectual, ethical and intercultural perspectives, and you will hone the skills of analysis and problem solving. With this preparation, our majors find success in many venues, from graduate programs to studying and teaching religion, to varied careers in law, government, business and many other fields.

Faculty

Roger Brooks, *Elie Wiesel Professor of Judaic Studies; Dean of the Faculty*
B.E.S., University of Minnesota; Ph.D., Brown University
Judaic studies; rabbinic law; Mishnah and Talmud

Eugene V. Gallagher, *Rosemary Park Professor of Religious Studies; Faculty Fellow, Mankoff Center for Teaching & Learning*
B.A., La Salle University; M.A., Ph.D., University of Chicago
History of religion; new religious movements (Waco); New Testament and early Christianity; Western scriptures and traditions

Lindsey B. Harlan, *Professor of Religious Studies; Chair of Religious Studies Department*

A.B., Occidental College; M.T.S., M.A., Ph.D., Harvard University
History of religions; Hinduism; religion and gender; heroic traditions

David Kyuman Kim, *Assistant Professor*
B.A., University of Rochester; M.Div. & Th.D., Harvard University
Philosophy of religion; religion and critical theory; religion and political theory; modern and contemporary religious thought; human agency; moral philosophy and ethics; religious theory; Asian-American studies

Sharon Portnoff, *Assistant Professor of Religious Studies*
Ph.D., M.A., Jewish Theological Seminary; M.Ed., Harvard University;

B.A., St. John's College
Modern Jewish thought; Holocaust theology; Dante

Sufia Mendez Uddin, *Assistant Professor of Religious Studies*
B.A., Colgate University; M.A., Clark University; Ph.D., University of Pennsylvania
Islamic studies; religion in South Asia; women and religion; religious identity politics

Tennyson Wellman, *Visiting Assistant Professor of Religious Studies*
B.A., University of Delaware; M.A., Syracuse University; Ph.D., (in progress) University of Pennsylvania
Comparative religions, ancient Greek religion, early Christianities and Judaisms

Selected Courses

Holy Books: The Western Scriptural Tradition; Religion in the United States; Women, Religion, and Modernity; Christ and Christ Figures; Religion and the Discontents of Modernity; Islam and the United States; Fundamentalisms; Muslim Women's Voices; Jewish Ethics; Religion and the Spirit of Politics; Cults and Conversion in Modern America; Pilgrimage; The Holocaust and Theology

About Connecticut College

Connecticut College is a highly selective residential liberal arts college with 1,900 students from all over the country and the world. The academic program offers 43 majors in the arts, sciences, social sciences, humanities and other interdisciplinary programs. Students engage with dedicated faculty and each other to create a vibrant social, cultural and intellectual community in which learning is valued for its own sake — and individuals' diverse perspectives enrich the experience of all.

WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH A MAJOR IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES?

Richard Callahan, Jr. '90

Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Earned a Ph.D. in religious studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Thyra Briggs '92

Vice president of admission and financial aid at Harvey Mudd College in Claremont, Calif. Formerly dean of enrollment at Sarah Lawrence College.

Tim Young '92

Physician specializing in rehabilitation after traumatic brain injury. Earned his medical degree from Tulane University School of Medicine. Member of the U.S. Rowing Team from 1993-1996; won a silver medal at the 1996 Olympic Games.

Jesse Fink '05

Pursuing a master's degree in theological studies at Harvard Divinity School. At Connecticut College, studied the role of religion in martial arts. Also did an independent study on Hamas beyond its terrorist operations.

Anne Confer '06

Pursuing a master's of divinity degree at Harvard Divinity School. Research interests include 20th-century religion and theology in Germany, youth and young adults in contemporary mainline Protestantism, and religion and public life.

Rose Golder-Novick '07

Fulbright Fellow in German studying the renewal of the Jewish community in Germany and the conflict between German-born Jews and immigrant Eastern European Jews.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT
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