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## Program Overview

Graduate students in Religion in America examine the history of religious thought, cultures, institutions, movements, symbols, performances, and lived religious experience in the Americas. Students may also consider aspects of religious life in the contemporary Americas from an historically informed perspective.

The Religion Department's graduate curriculum provides students with a grounding in theory and method in the study of religion with courses that foster conversation across the fields of concentration within the department.

Courses within the Religion in America subfield, such as American Religion to 1865 and Religion in Modern American History, introduce students to the history and historiography of the field. Other courses address topics in the field, including: Religion and Sexuality in America; The Social Gospel in America; African American Women and Religion; The Visual and Material Cultures of American Religion; Race, Religion, and the Harlem Renaissance; American Religious Utopias and Communitarian Experiments; Religion; Religious Authority in America.

We encourage students to take courses in other departments and programs that support their primary research focus or to gain background in other areas to support future teaching or other career goals.

Graduate students in Religion in America may also earn certificates in African American Studies, Environmental Studies, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Latin American Studies, Media and Modernity, or Urban Policy.

## Graduate Program

# Religion in America

## Faculty

### Wallace D. Best

Professor of Religion and African American Studies

Best is a specialist in African American religious history with research interests in Pentecostalism, religion and literature, religion and sexuality, and Womanist theology. He is the author of *Langston's Salvation: American Religion and the Bard of Harlem* (NYU, 2017) and *Passionately Human, No Less Divine: Religion and Culture in Black Chicago, 1915-1952* (Princeton, 2005).

### Seth Perry

Associate Professor of Religion

Perry's research interests include print culture, American religious history broadly, and the creation of individual religious authority. He is the author of *Bible Culture and Authority in the Early United States* (Princeton University Press, 2018).

### Judith Weisenfeld

Agate Brown and George L. Collord Professor of Religion

Weisenfeld is a specialist in African American religious history with research interests in religion, film, and popular culture, women, gender, and sexuality, religion in cities, and religion and race. She is the author of *New World A-Coming: Black Religion and Racial Identity during the Great Migration* (NYU, 2016), *Hollywood Be Thy Name: African American Religion in American Film, 1929-1949* (California, 2007) and *African American Women and Christian Activism: New York's Black YWCA, 1905-1945* (Harvard 1997).

## Special Features

The weekly Religion in America Workshop brings together graduate students, faculty, postdoctoral fellows, and scholars invited from other institutions to discuss works-in-progress. Recent visitors include Elizabeth Fenton, Terrence Keel, Jennifer Graber, Zareena Grewal, Sarah Imhoff, Kathryn Gin Lum, Lerone Martin, Robert Orsi, Elizabeth Pérez, and Daisy Vargas.

The subfield sponsors additional guest lectures and conferences. Recent conferences include:

- Race and Religion in American History
- Race and Religion in the Americas and the Atlantic World
- Religion and the American Normal
- Sexuality and Religion in America
- Space, Time and Religion in Early America

## After Princeton

Recent graduates of the Religion in America program hold tenure track positions at Dartmouth College, Kalamazoo College, Saint Louis University, San Francisco State University, Transylvania University, and the University of Southern California. These and other graduates have also held visiting positions at a range of colleges and universities, in addition to post-doctoral fellowships. Yet others are using their degrees outside of the academy and are employed in non-profit work.

The Director of Graduate Studies and the Religion in America faculty work together to support students in finding positions, and the Graduate School and the Center for Career Development provide additional resources for exploring careers.

## Degree Requirements

All degree candidates are expected to have a reading knowledge of the two modern foreign languages most appropriate to their fields of concentration.

After completing two years of coursework, students complete the General Examinations, which consist of four units. Two of these systematically cover American religious history and historiography from colonial contact to the twenty-first century. The third examination takes the form of a paper that demonstrates facility with primary sources in light of the historiography of a particular period. The fourth General Examination is a historiographical and methodological essay that takes on a critical problem or question in the field and is intended to establish the groundwork for a dissertation prospectus.

For the dissertation, students devise an area of research in consultation with faculty.

Normally, all graduate students serve as Assistants in Instruction at some point in their careers, leading precept discussion sections in undergraduate courses and grading student work. The Department views such experience as integral to the professional development it offers. It also encourages graduate students to give lectures in appropriate undergraduate courses taught by members of the faculty.

Recent dissertations include:

- On Earth as it is in Heaven: Spiritual Racialization and the Atlantic World Economy of Salvation in the Colonial Americas
- Lifeblood of the Parish: Men and Catholic Practice in Williamsburg, Brooklyn
- A Loftier Race: American Liberal Protestants and Eugenics, 1877-1929
- The Production of Judeo-Christianity in New York City Public Schools: Religion, Race, and Moral Education, 1950-1969
- "Is That Religion?" The Jazz Profession and Afro-Protestant Cultural Representation