Dear Students, Alumni, and Friends of the Department,

It’s been an eventful few years here at 4 Glebe St.

We continue to offer students a lot of personalized educational opportunities. For example, every year for the past five or six years, one Religious Studies major has interned with the Charleston Interreligious Council, a local non-profit that brings different religious groups together for dialogue and mutual understanding. And last summer, some lucky RELS students went to India with Dr. Bjerken and Dr. LeVasseur. Dr. Lowe hopes to lead a RELS trip to Haiti in summer 2021.

And of course, we continue to offer regularly scheduled free public lectures by top scholars from around the country. This newsletter lists some exciting upcoming lectures...

For more information, follow us on Instagram or on Facebook. And always feel free to stay in touch with any of your favorite professors...

Elijah Siegler
Professor and Chair

Dr. Elijah Siegler
Professor and Chair of Religious Studies

Happy Fall Y'all
Faculty and Staff News

Since the last newsletter, Religious Studies has said hello to new faculty and staff, and celebrated promotions and renewals, and bid fond farewells to esteemed faculty who retired after many years of service to the college and RELS department.

**Assistant Professor, Dr. Lenny Lowe** joined the college in Fall 2017 after receiving his Ph.D. from the Uni. of North Carolina – Chapel Hill. Dr. Lowe’s areas of expertise include the history of Global Christianity, Pentecostalism, Vodou and other religions of the Caribbean, anthropology of religion and ethnography. Dr. Lowe lived, taught and researched religion in Haiti for many years. He hopes to lead a Study Aboard there Summer 2021.

**Adjunct Faculty, Dr. Jeremey Fisher** joined the department in the Fall 2019. This fall Professor Fisher successfully defended his Ph.D. dissertation at the Uni. of Virginia – Charlottesville. Some of Dr. Fisher’s research areas are Social and Political Philosophy/Theology, Secularism and Atheism, and Philosophical and Religious Ethics. This fall, he is teaching Intro to World Religions, and in the spring his Approaches to Religion courses will focus on religion and protest.

**Administrative Assistant, Veroncia Butler-Byrd** came to the department in April 2017. Ms. Butler-Byrd received her B.A. degree from the Uni. of Memphis in African/African-American Studies, has 20+ years experience as an administrative/accounting professional, and was the admin for the Chemistry/Biochemistry department here at CofC.

**Visiting Assistant Professor, and CofC alum (97), Dr. Todd LeVasseur** was promoted to Director of Environmental Studies in July 2015. Then in July 2016, he became director of the QEP program on Sustainability Literacy.

**Assistant Professor, Dr. Matthew Cressler, Senior Instructor, Professor Louise Doire, and Dr. Lowe** successful completed Third-Year Review and renewal as Senior Instructor respectively. In all cases, the Department Evaluation Panel was impressed with their stellar accomplishments in the classroom and their service to the College.

The RELS department also said goodbye to three outstanding professors and scholars. In 2017, **Dr. Margaret Cormack** retired and moved to Iceland fulltime. In 2018 and 2019, two more giants of our department retired—**Dr. June McDaniel** (who still resides in Charleston) and **Dr. Lee Irwin** (who moved to Berea, Kentucky). All three of our recently retired senior colleagues were productive scholars, dedicated teachers, and valued colleagues; we miss them all!
ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Dr. Michael Altman (‘06) and his wife Emily (‘06) met and fell in love while both majoring in Religious Studies at CofC. The career paths they took after graduation couldn’t be more different. Dr. Altman is a newly, tenured faculty member in Religious Studies at the Uni. of Alabama, and Ms. Altman is a doula and lactation consultant. Husband and wife both respect and acknowledge how majoring in religious studies helped them develop skills needed to excel in their chosen occupations. Here are a few words from them about their experience, and how they still rely on those lessons learned 13 years ago.

Dr. Altman:
“Between the two of us, I think the effect of my RELS degree is the one that’s obvious. I went on to get a PhD and now I work in a religious studies department. But what I think is less obvious is how much my time in the department at C of C prepared me for this career. I read Russell McCutcheon’s work as an undergrad and now I work a few doors down from him in our department here. The kind of religious studies that the department at C of C does, asking questions about power, authority, culture, and social formations, prepared me to ask those questions as I moved on to grad school and the professoriate. I discovered religious studies at the College and the department put me on the path toward the career I enjoy now.”

Mrs. Altman:
“Currently, I work as a birth doula and lactation consultant, providing non-medical support to pregnant, laboring, and nursing mothers and babies. My RELS degree has been a huge help for me as I have found my own career path. Religious Studies taught me critical thinking and communication skills that I use in my career as a birth doula. But even more importantly, Religious Studies taught me how to learn new things quickly. That was so helpful when I decided to pursue training in birth work. Religious studies is more than just learning about world religions, it’s learning how to work with difference, learn new skills, and interpret the world around you. I use that everyday.”
October 2019

8th  Religious Studies Open House
10th  Christian Forgiveness As Incarnational: Turning to the Black Existential Experience in the Era of Hate with Dr. SimonMary Aihiokhai (University of Portland). Opening session for the Black Catholic Theological Symposium
25th  Last Day for Students to Withdrawal with a “W” from Full Semester
28th  Registration for Spring 2020 Begins
31th  The Discomfort of Things: Materiality, Agency and Demons in Spiritual Warfare with Dr. Sean McCloud (UNC-Charlotte)

November 2019

7th  Boston's Hidden Sacred Places: An Illustrated Lecture with Dr. Wendy Cadge (Brandeis University)
8th  A Question of Membership: A Guided Discussion with Dr. Wendy Cadge and Dr. David Slucki (CofC)

December 2019

2nd  Last Full Day of the Semester
3rd  Reading Day
4th  First Day of Final Exams
11th  Last Day of Final Exams
14th  Fall 2019 Commencement
## RELS Spring 2020 Course Offerings
(and Courses Taught by RELS Faculty)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>CRN</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Meeting Days</th>
<th>Meeting Times</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RELS101.02</td>
<td>21193</td>
<td>Approaches to Religion: Pilgrimage to Sacred Places in North America, India and Tibet</td>
<td>TR</td>
<td>1215-130</td>
<td>Bjerken</td>
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<td>RELS101.03</td>
<td>23220</td>
<td>Approaches to Religion: Messiahs &amp; Messianic Movements</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>200-315</td>
<td>Huddlestun</td>
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<td>RELS101.04</td>
<td>21324</td>
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<td>MW</td>
<td>400-515</td>
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<td>RELS101.05</td>
<td>23221</td>
<td>Approaches to Religion: Religion and Protest</td>
<td>MWF</td>
<td>900-950</td>
<td>Fisher</td>
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<td>RELS101.06</td>
<td>23222</td>
<td>Approaches to Religion: Religion and Protest</td>
<td>MWF</td>
<td>1000-1050</td>
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<td>RELS105.01</td>
<td>20736</td>
<td>Intro to World Religions</td>
<td>MWF</td>
<td>1100-1150</td>
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<td>1050-1205</td>
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<td>RELS115.01</td>
<td>21999</td>
<td>Religion in Society: Black Religion and Black Nationalism</td>
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<td>140-255</td>
<td>Cressler</td>
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<td>RELS120.01</td>
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<td>Religion, Art, and Culture: The Bible and Modern Culture and Media</td>
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<td>Sacred Texts of the East and their Modern Meanings in the West</td>
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<td>Theories in Study of Religions</td>
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<td>140-255</td>
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<td>RELS248.01</td>
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<td>Self and Society in Chinese and Japanese Religious Traditions</td>
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<td>900-950</td>
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<td>Black Religion and Black Nationalism: From Slave Rebellions to #BlackLivesMatter</td>
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<td>HONS381.09</td>
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<td>Cults and Conversion in Modern America</td>
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<td>140-255</td>
<td>Gallagher</td>
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**SPRING 2020 REGISTRATION BEGINS 10/28/2019!!!**

**CONTACT YOUR ADVISOR.**
Everyone can be a philanthropist to the College of Charleston. Gifts to the Religious Studies Foundation account are vital to supporting student study abroad, internship opportunities, and travel to attend professional conferences. Most importantly, your annual gift gives us the ultimate flexibility-to seize opportunities that will advance the mission of the school and address unforeseen challenges faced by faculty and students as they arise.

Your investment is the ultimate vote of confidence in everything Religious Studies at the College of Charleston stands for and everything it can become.

To make an online donation please click on the link [http://religiousstudies.cofc.edu/giving/index.php](http://religiousstudies.cofc.edu/giving/index.php), select “other” in the designation section, then indicate that you want to contribute to the Religious Studies Fund (R434) in the comments section.

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**We Would Love to Hear from You!**

The Department of Religious Studies at the College of Charleston has educated students since 2005. We would love to hear what those students are up to now. Let us know about the exciting professional and personal milestones you’ve reached since leaving the College. You can email Dr. Siegler or Ms. Butler-Byrd with the details at sieglere@cofc.edu or butlervc@cofc.edu.

**College of Charleston**

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