December 15, 2008

Proposal for an Undergraduate Interdisciplinary Minor in Religious Studies

College of Humanities, University of Utah
2008-2009

I. Action

This is a proposal for the creation of a new stand-alone interdisciplinary Minor in Religious Studies to be housed in the College of the Humanities. If accepted, the new Minor will replace an existing Minor in Religion and Culture developed under the auspices of the Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies (CLCS) program in the department of Languages and Literature. Since the department of Languages and Literature has already put into place an administrative structure to advise students enrolled in its CLCS Religion and Culture track, the future Minor in Religious Studies will benefit from this structure (website, advising, and directorship).

In recent years, the study of religion has moved to the forefront of many academic conversations. Its cultural, social, and political functions have been at the heart of much recent scholarship. An article by Harvard Professor Diana Eck (*Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 75/4), founder and director of the Pluralism Project since 1991, starts with the following observation: "The past decades have been challenging for the study of religion. I would sum up two of those challenges written in neon: religious extremism and religious pluralism." Identifying three spheres—scholarly, civic, and theological—where religious phenomena need to be addressed in a responsible way, she then encourages academics in the critical study of religious pluralism as well as all forms of religious identities. This academic approach should be directed at uncovering the positive side of current religious changes and creating new courses where students have a place to explore this growing social and cultural reality. On the other hand, Professor Steven Prothero in his most recent book, *Religious Literacy* (HarperOne: 2007) makes the case for re-instituting into the Liberal Arts curriculum courses that would provide college students with basic foundational knowledge of various religious traditions in order to train them to be conversant in the world at large. This current proposal takes the first step towards creating at the University of Utah a forum where students can study religion in an academic and critical way in order to be better prepared to work and live in a world that is increasingly shaped by religious pluralism and traditions.

Based on the institutional and intellectual strength and richness of our campus, this proposal envisions a program of study that is highly interdisciplinary and competitive with similar programs at similar institutions. Electives are divided into four groups –Text & Literature, Theory & Methodology, Art, Culture, & Society, and World Religions—that will allow students to organize their curriculum in a meaningful way and encourage them to take classes across several disciplines as well as colleges. As a Minor, the current proposal seeks to encourage the exploration of religion as a major element of various disciplinary

conversations. At this stage it does not pretend to offer students a full-fledged specialization in religious studies, but rather allow them to investigate the study of religion from several angles and eventually spark their interest in pursuing a graduate degree later on in their academic career.

A. Program of Study and Basic Requirements:

The program of study draws entirely from existing course offerings in 13 departments or programs (English, History, Communication, Philosophy, Languages & Literature, Political Science, Social Work, Sociology, Anthropology, Art & Art History, Theatre, Health Promotion & Education, and the Middle East Center) spread across five colleges (Humanities, Social & Behavioral Science, Social Work, Fine Arts, and Health). Other departments, such as Film, Psychology, and Music, could at a later date join the set of participating departments were they to schedule courses pertaining to the study of religion.

Students must complete a minimum of 18 credit hours divided into a 3-hour capstone senior seminar to be taken at the end of their curriculum and 5 courses selected from the four distributions listed below:

- Distributions (15 credit hours):

Students are required to complete at least 3 credit hours in each of the following distributions and they are required to organize these 4 courses around either a tradition or a specific cluster of disciplinary approaches: (1) Text and Literature, (2) Theory and Methodology, (3) Art, Culture, and Society, (4) World Religions.

In addition, these courses must be at the 3000 level or higher, must be approved by the committee, and must be distributed among at least 3 departments.

- Sample of eligible courses:

This list represents a sample of courses that have been taught on a regular basis. Each one of them has been included on this list based on an evaluation process that included syllabus, bibliography, and contents. One of the important administrative tasks linked to the new Minor consists in surveying courses and updating the existing list of electives every semester. This task is already done for the CLCS Religion and Culture track.

(1) Text and Literature:

-C LIT 4920 Early Christian Literature
(SP ’08 Schmid) (SP ’09 Schmid)
-MID E 4261 Biblical Hebrew: Poetry
(SP ’02 Lenowitz) (SP ’06 Lenowitz) (FA ’08 Lenowitz)
-MID E 4130 Qur’anic Studies
(FA ’04 Weiss) (SP ’08 Weiss)

(2) Theory and Methodology:

C LIT 3620 Theory and Methodology in the Study of Religion
(FA ’08 Schmid) (FA ’09 Schmid)
-PHIL 3810 Existentialism
(SP ’00 Haanstad) (SP ’04 Haanstad) (FA ’06 Haanstad) (FA ’07 Haanstad) (SP ’09 Crowe)
-PHIL 3600 Philosophy of Religion
(SP ’02 Reed) (FA ’03 Firmage) (FA ’04 Crowe) (FA ’05 Firmage) (SP ’06 Crowe) (SP ’08 Crowe)
-SOC 3040 Sociology of Religion
(FA ’07 Page) (SP ’08 Page) (SU ’08 Page) (FA ’08 Page)

(3) Art, Culture, and Society:

-ANTH 6171 Myth, Magic & Religion
(FA ’05 Loeb) (FA ’06 Loeb) (FA ’07 Loeb) (FA ’08 Loeb)
-ARTH 3200 Renaissance Europe
(SP ’03 Bauman) (SP ’03 Bauman) (SP ’05 Bauman) (FA ’08 Muller)
-ARTH 3250 Baroque Art in Europe
(SP ’00 Muller) (SP ’05 Anderson) (FA ’06 Muller)
-H EDU 4350 Personal Resiliency
(SP ’06 Olsen) (SP ’07 Richardson) (SP ’08 Richardson)
-SW 6623 Spirituality in Social Work
(SU ’05 Derezotes) (SU ’06 Derezotes) (SU ’07 Derezotes) (SU ’08 Derezotes)

(4) World Religions:

-ANTH 4139 Native American Religion
(SP ‘03 Fritz) (SP ’04 Fritz) (SP ’05 Fritz) (SP ’06 Fritz) (SP ’07 Fritz) (SP ’08 Fritz) (SP ’09 Fritz)
-HIST 3040 Medieval England
(FA ’04 Moreira) (SP ’07 Moreira) (SP ’08 Moreira)
-HIST 3090 Reformations: Europe in Turmoil
(SP ’99 Armstrong) (FA ’01 Armstrong) (SP ’03 Armstrong) (SP ’04 Armstrong) (SP ’05 Armstrong) (SP ’06 Peters) (SP ’07 Michelson) (SP ’08 Michelson)
-MID E 4510 Introduction to Islam
(FA ’08 Slugett)
-MID E 4152 Islamic Mysticism
(FA ’01 Qutbuddin) (SP ’06 Weiss) (FA ’08 Weiss)
-PHIL 3610 Religions of India
(FA ’04 Chatterjee) (FA ’05 Chatterjee) (SP ’09 Chatterjee)
PHIL 3640 World Religions
(FA ’07 Crowe) (SP ’08 Crowe) (FA ’08 Crowe)
-POLS 3420 Islam and Politics
(FA ’03 Yavuz) (FA ’04 Quinn) (SU ’05 Yavuz) (FA ’05 Yavuz) (FA ’08 Yavuz)

- Capstone Senior Seminar (3 credit hours):

C LIT 4990 is currently designed as a senior seminar for students who major in either track of the CLCS program. One section of this senior seminar will be open to students who minor

in Religious Studies. For the first few students enrolled in the new Minor, this seminar will be taught as independent studies; as the number of students grows, the course will be developed as a seminar. Aware of the fact that students are likely to build their Minor retroactively rather than plan it in advance, the senior seminar will give them an opportunity to reflect on the experience they acquired in the courses they chose to take.

B. Advising and Admission to the Minor:

Administratively, the enrollment of students and the subsequent paperwork linked to their Minor will be centralized in the Department of Languages and Literature through its Academic Coordinator. Advising will be conducted by the Committee on Religious Studies, made up of one representative from each of the 12 departments involved in the Minor, under the auspices of the College of Humanities. It is assumed that most student advising in the early years will be done by the Director of Religious Studies, Muriel Schmid. As the Minor grows, it is expected that the advising of students from different departments will be done by the faculty member from that department currently sitting on the Committee. Students considering declaring the Minor will be required to meet individually with the Director of Religious Studies in order to discuss the constitution of their program. They will be encouraged to do this as early as possible in their undergraduate career, though it is to be expected that some students will also construct a Minor after they have taken a number of eligible courses. All students declaring the Minor will meet with their advisor two semesters in advance of their graduation date, as required by the University's graduation procedures. As the program evolves, other departments might be added to the set of participating disciplines, and these departments would also have a representative on the Committee.

C. Administration of the Minor:

The Minor will be housed in the College of Humanities, will be interdisciplinary in nature, and thus will be independent of any particular department. The Committee on Religious Studies will be responsible for overseeing and evaluating the Minor, under the auspices of the College of Humanities. The Committee will approve all changes to the program, monitor the lists of approved courses, and assess the effectiveness of student advising. The Committee will meet once every year to evaluate the program as a whole and to decide upon any broad changes. The Committee will also meet in a timely manner to consider any additions to the program, such as an expansion of the set of participating departments and courses, in order to meet University and College curriculum committee deadlines. The Committee will have overall responsibility for maintaining the quality of the Minor and addressing the concerns of students as they may arise. The current Committee is made of the following faculty members: Prof. Benjamin Crowe (Department of Philosophy), Prof. David Derezotes (College of Social Work), Prof. Laurence Loeb (Department of Anthropology and Middle East Center), Prof. Isabel Moreira (Department of History), Prof. Sheila Muller (Department of Art History), Prof. Vincent Pecora (Department of English), Prof. Margaret Toscano (Department of Languages and Literature), and Prof. Hakan Yavuz (Department of Political Science).

D. Submitting New Courses for the List of Electives:

A list of courses approved in advance will be posted on a Religious Studies website before the beginning of each semester (a similar web page is currently maintained on Languages & Literature's home page under its CLCS Religion and Culture track: http://www.hum.utah.edu/languages/?pageId=2201). These lists will be archived on the website by semester and year for the use of both the Program and students. Every effort will be made before the beginning of each semester to contact instructors of courses where course content may vary considerably from semester to semester in order to determine if the scheduled course meets the Religious Studies criteria. Students may also petition the Committee for approval of a course not on the list. Students will need to submit the course syllabus with their petitions. They will be encouraged to do so at the beginning of the course, but they may do so at any time afterwards with the caveat that not all such petitions will be approved.

The list of approved electives will be updated every semester and take into account new and regular courses that are offered in the participating colleges and departments. In order to be approved as an elective for the Religious Studies Minor, a course will need to incorporate one of the four following emphasis:

1. Thematic direction:
   The course treats a relevant theme to the study of religion in a specific tradition, a specific genre, or a specific time period. Themes such as death, creation myths, representations of hell and paradise, prayer or sermon as a literary genre, mysticism, sacrifice, etc., would be considered relevant.
2. Methodological direction:
   The course discusses various methodological and theoretical models in any given discipline and opts to include a significant section of its material on theories and methodologies that pertain to the study or religion such as, hermeneutics, religious paradigms, ritual and performance studies, myths and symbolism, cultural studies, etc. For a good overview of the theories of religion and the questions they raise, see Daniel Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion*, Oxford University Press: 2007.
3. World Religions:
   The course focuses on one or several cultural traditions and includes a discussion of religious elements in dialogue with other cultural artifacts.
4. Disciplinary direction:
   The course studies religion, including but not restricted to religious identity, religious practices, religious behavior, or religious history from a specific disciplinary approach in a similar existing courses such as sociology of religion or philosophy of religion already work.

Students requesting the transfer of credits and courses taken in other institutions will have to provide a syllabus for each course along with bibliographical references. To be accepted, courses taught at other higher institutions must fit the academic mission of a Liberal Arts curriculum as defined by a research-one state university.

E. Selected Faculty by Departments:

Faculty members listed below are not necessarily trained in the study of religion and/or teaching a course that incorporates religious elements; however, every person listed on this proposal has agreed to support the development of such a program on this campus.

Languages and Literature:

- Eric Laursen – 581-6013 – eric.laursen@utah.edu – LNCO 1400—Associate Professor, Russian Section and Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies Section.
- Harris Lenowitz – 581-5291 – harris.lenowitz@gmail.com – LNCO 1400—Professor, Hebrew Section, Affiliated w/Middle East Center.
- Joseph Metz – 581-7620 – j.metz@mail.hum.utah.edu – LNCO 1400—Associate Professor, German Section and Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies Section.
- Muriel Schmid – 581-5439 – muriel.schmid@languages.utah.edu –LNCO 1400—Assistant Professor (Lecturer), French Section and Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies Section, Affiliated w/ Honors College.
- Margaret Toscano - 581-4768 – Margaret.Toscano@utah.edu – LNCO 1400—Assistant Professor, Classics Section, Affiliated w/ Honors College.
- Bernard Weiss – 581-5401 – Bernard.weiss@utah.edu – LNCO 1400—Professor, Arabic Section, Affiliated w/Middle East Center, Director of Undergraduate Studies Middle East Center.

English:

- Mark Matheson – 581-3677 – mark.matheson@english.utah.edu - LNCO 3500– Associate Professor (Lecturer), Affiliated w/ Honors College
- Jacqueline Osherow – 581-7947 – j.osherow@english.utah.edu - LNCO 3500– Professor.
- Vincent Pecora – 581-3393 – v.pecora@utah.edu - LNCO 3500 – Gordon B. Hinckley Professor of British Literature & Culture, English Department Chair, Director British Studies Program.
- Maeera Schreiber – 581-7478 – M.Shreiber@english.utah.edu - LNCO 3500 – Professor.
- Kathryn Stockton – 581-5286 – Kathryn.Stockton@english.utah.edu - LNCO 3500 – Professor, Director of Gender Studies.

Philosophy:

- Deen Chatterjee – 581-8705 – d.chatterjee@philosophy.utah.edu – CTI Humanities Building 402– Associate Professor.
- Benjamin Crowe – 585-7292 – bcrowe@philosophy.utah.edu – CTI Humanities Building 402– Assistant Professor (Lecturer), Affiliated w/Honors College.
- Leslie Francis – 581-3489 – francisl@law.utah.edu - CTI Humanities Building 402– Professor, Department Chair and Alfred C. Emery Professor of Law, S.J. Quinney College of Law.
- Eric Hutton – 581-7320 –elhutton@philosophy.utah.edu— CTI Humanities Building 402– Assistant Professor, Affiliated w/Asian Studies Program, Affiliated w/Honors College.

Communication:

- George Cheney – 585-5918 –george.cheney@utah.edu –LNCO 2400– Professor, Director Peace and Conflicts Studies Program.
- Leonard Hawes – 581-7648 –leonardhawes@gmail.com – LNCO 2400– Professor.

History:

- Colleen McDannell – 581-4749 – colleen.mcd@utah.edu - CTI Humanities Building 310– Professor, Sterling M. McMurrin Professor of Religious Studies.
- Emily Michelson – 581-6566 –emily.michelson@history.utah.edu - CTI Humanities Building 310– Assistant Professor, Affiliated w/Honors College.
- Isabel Moreira – 581-7636 – isabel.moreira@utah.edu - CTI Humanities Building 310– Associate Professor.
- Glenn Olsen – 581-8026 – Glenn.Olsen@utah.edu – CTI Humanities Building 310— Professor, Affiliated w/Honors College.
- Bradley Parker – 867-6135 – bradley.j.parker@utah.edu - CTI Humanities Building 310– Associate Professor, Affiliated w/Middle East Center.
- Paul Reeve – 585-9231 – paul.reeve@history.utah.edu - CTI Humanities Building 310–Assistant Professor.
- Peter von Sivers – 581-8073 – peter.vonsivers@utah.edu - CTI Humanities Building 310– Associate Professor, Affiliated w/Middle East Center.

Art History:

- Sheila Muller – 581-7010 – sheila.muller@art.utah.edu - Art Building 161– Professor.

Social Work:

- David Derezotes – 585-3546 – david.derezotes@socwk.utah.edu – SW 301— Professor.

Health Promotion:

- Glenn Richardson – 581-8039 – glenn.richardson@health.utah.edu – HPER N 200— Professor.
- Amanda Smith – 581-8114 –aj_sm10@yahoo.com– HPER N 200—Associate Instructor.

Political Science:

- Benjamin Judkins – 581-6711 – benjamin.judkins@poli-sci.utah.edu –OSH 252— Assistant Professor.
- Hakan Yavuz – 585-7986 – hakan.yavuz@poli-sci@utah.edu –OSH 252—Associate Professor.

Anthropology:

- John Fritz – 957-4916– fritzjo@slcc.edu–WS 102—Adjunct Assistant Professor.
- Laurence Loeb – 581-8535 – laurence.loeb@anthro.utha.edu –WS 102- Associate Professor, Affilaited w/Middle East Center.

- Lars Rodseth – 581-4185 – lars.rodseth@anthro.utah.edu –WS 102—Associate Professor.
- Eva Wasilewska – 581-6251 –Mruczec@aol.com- WS 102—Associate Professor (Lecturer).

Theater:

- Jerry Gardner – 581-4396 - jerry.gardner@utah.edu – PAB 206—Associate Professor, Department Chair.
- William Parkinson – 585-5236 – taichiyoga@hotmail.com – PAB 206—Adjunct Instructor.

Sociology:

- Theresa Martinez – 581-5712 – theresa.martinez@soc.utah.edu - BEH S 304 Associate Professor, Assistant Vice President for Academic Outreach.
- Frank Page – 581-3075 – frank.page@soc.utah.edu - BEH S 429 – Adjunct Assistant Professor.

II. Need

It is common knowledge that the study of religion has long been an established and respected area of inquiry at the world's major universities. In America, this has been largely true, however, only at the great private universities, many of which had religious foundations. Harvard, Yale, and Columbia, for example, all continue to have thriving Divinity Schools, and Comparative Religious Studies is a long established discipline throughout the Ivy League. By contrast, public universities, in large part due to the nature of the Jeffersonian split between church and state in America—a split that religious studies programs often explore in some detail—have largely eschewed any contact with the subject of religion. The consequence of this historical fact is that students at America's public universities have often found themselves at a distinct disadvantage whenever religion enters the scholarly discussion of nations, international affairs, terrorism, globalization, and what Samuel Huntington notoriously described as the “clash of civilizations.”

A recent survey conducted by the American Academy of Religion shows (see annexed letter by Prof. Timothy Renick) that an important shift has occurred in the past few years and large state universities are now opening departments and programs in the study of religion. This shift indicates that in the current political, social, and cultural environment, if coming generations of students, likely to be increasingly interested in the global world, are to be properly educated, the study of religion needs to be an intrinsic part of their education. Like many other flagship institutions, the University of Utah must begin building curricular structures that can serve students’ intellectual needs. The creation of a Minor in Religious Studies is, to be sure, a very small first step, especially in the light of what the great private universities have already achieved. But it is a necessary first step, around which a more substantial and far-reaching program in Religious Studies can be constructed.

In the larger Salt Lake City Valley, several institutions of higher education have now developed such a Minor: Utah Valley University, Utah State University, and Westminster

College. In developing its own course of study in the field of Religious Studies, the University of Utah would thus take its place in this important space for dialogue already occupied by Utah's other institutes of higher learning.

The College of Humanities at the University of Utah has encouraged and witnessed over the past few years the development of numerous interdisciplinary programs. This marks a turn in the Humanities towards the interaction of distinct disciplinary approaches. It does not mean that there will no longer be specific disciplinary methodology; it does suggest, however, that disciplines are as much defined by their methodology as they are by thematic perspectives. The interdisciplinary programs housed currently in the College of Humanities can be divided into two main categories: a few are centered on geo-cultural identities (Asian Studies, Latin American Studies, and British Studies); others favor what we can call a thematic approach (Peace and Conflict Studies, Environmental Studies). The interdisciplinary program in Religious Studies clearly falls into the second category and is therefore conceived on the same premises and principles.

The current program in CLCS is tied to a single department and doesn't allow students to Minor in Religious Studies as such. The range of perspectives represented by the Humanities, Social Science, Fine Art as well as other Colleges is crucial for providing a balanced and deep curriculum. Therefore, an independent, interdisciplinary program will be better suited to help the University of Utah develop a strong program in the study of religion. An interdisciplinary program in Religious Studies will foster the academic study of religion within a comparative approach. The comparative approach will be developed on two levels: content and methodology. First, students will be asked to take classes that introduce them to more than one religious tradition; secondly, students will become familiar with several methodological perspectives. By fostering the development of comparative and interdisciplinary studies, the College of Humanities supports and encourages the University broader vision of internationalism and cross-cultural studies.

III. Institutional Impact

The Minor will require no institutional support beyond what is currently provided. The Minor is built around currently taught courses as well as an existing program, and will make use of new courses that come on line by normal departmental initiative. No new faculty members are required at this time, though it is hoped that an expansion of offerings in Religious Studies might occur in departments like Psychology, Music, and Film. The Minor has been constructed so that there should be no net migration of SCH to any one department, and hence no financial gain or loss for any one department.

IV. Finances

In conclusion, since the Minor is composed of existing courses taught currently employed faculty, there is currently no need for additional financial resources.