

Fall 2020 Welcome Newsletter

Hello friends! We hope you and your families are staying well and healthy as we continue to face the challenges of COVID-19.

We are so excited to be getting a strong start to the Fall 2020 semester so far. As we look forward to the months ahead, we wanted to share some of the Religious Studies Program's successes from the Spring 2020 semester in our very **first newsletter!**

Last semester was filled with exciting endeavors and unprecedented challenges. In the face of this pandemic, our students and faculty quickly took on the task of shifting to online courses and have continued to navigate online learning. **Through facing these difficulties together, our community continues to grow stronger.**

We invite you to read updates from our last semester below as we get excited for another awesome semester! **We are grateful for your support and we thank you for being a part of the Religious Studies family.**

Lanier Scholarship for Biblical Excellence

Thanks to the generous support of The Lanier Theological Library Foundation, the Religious Studies Program awarded its second semester of scholarship recipients for the **Lanier Scholarship for Excellence in Biblical Studies** in Spring 2020.

These students were nominated by Religious Studies Faculty for demonstrating excellence in their biblical studies courses. Join us in celebrating these bright students and read their responses on receiving this award.

[Click Here to Read More About the Lanier Scholarship for Biblical Excellence](#)

<p>AUSTIN MITCHELL</p> <p>“With seminary, divinity school, and other graduate programs in my sights becoming increasingly expensive, I am grateful to be supported financially by donors who, like the Lanier family, see the value of contributing to students’ financial stability.”</p> <p>Sophomore, Religious Studies Major</p>	
	<p>JIMMY NGUYEN</p> <p>“I envision a career as a member in the academic community. I hope that our department continues to offer this scholarship to students like me, who have a sincere appreciation for knowledge, truth, and the search altogether.”</p> <p>Junior, Religious Studies Major</p>
<p>TAYLOR SUN</p> <p>“My desire is to be the hands and feet of Jesus as a medical doctor—to heal the sick and mend broken hearts just as the Great Physician did. The Lanier Scholarship for Excellence in Biblical Studies will help ease my financial burden in applying to medical schools.”</p> <p>Junior, Religious Studies Major</p>	

John D. and Allie Lee Orton Scholarship

The Religious Studies program was also able to award a needs-based scholarship last semester thanks to the generosity of the John D. and Allie Lee Orton Scholarship. This was particularly helpful due to additional financial burdens brought on by COVID-19.

[Read More About The John D. and Allie Lee Orton Scholarship](#)

Student Engagement Initiatives

Last semester launched with a successful gathering of students and faculty at the Religious Studies annual luncheon. In addition to this traditional meeting, new student engagement efforts helped foster a stronger culture among our passionate community of Religious Studies students and faculty.



Religious Studies Majors and Minors at the Lanier Theological Library (photo taken February 8, 2020)

Visit to a Lecture at the Lanier Theological Library

Religious Studies majors and minors visited the **Lanier Theological Library** in Houston, TX with Program Director Dr. Christian Eberhart and the Outreach Director Peace Cowen. (see picture above)

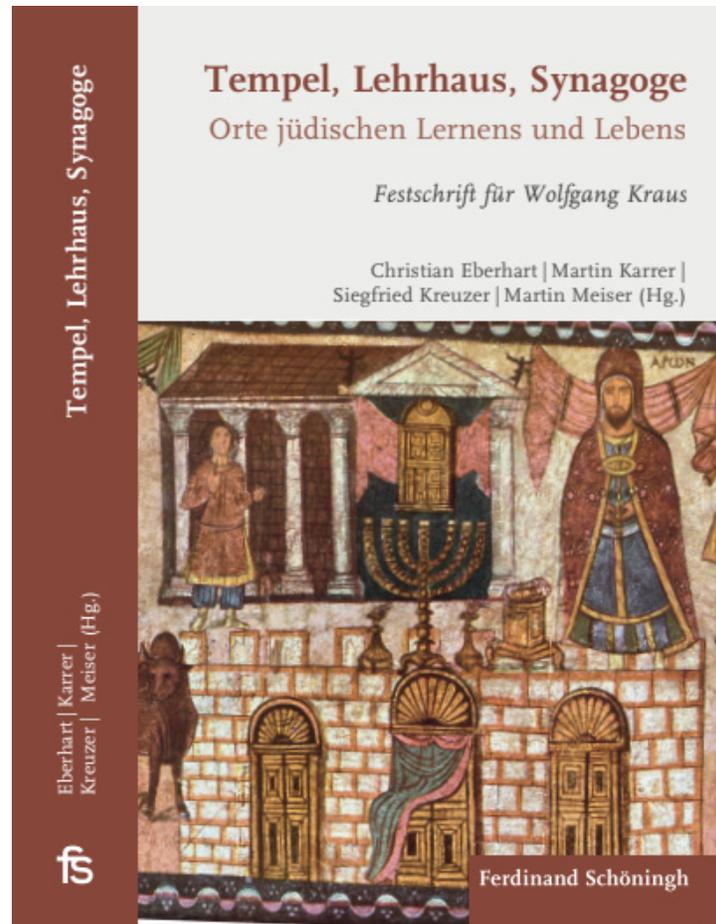
RELS Lunch and Learns

The Religious Studies (RELS) program instituted weekly online “Lunch and Learns” for students and faculty to get together and stay connected amid COVID-19. (see picture below)



Pictured: Dr. Caryn Tamber-Rosenau, Instructional Assistant Professor in Jewish Studies and Religious Studies; Charles J. Schmidt, Religious Studies Lecturer; Peace Cowen, Religious Studies Program Outreach Director; and Dr. Christian Eberhart, Religious Studies Program Director

Research Endeavors



New Publication from RELS Program Director

Dr. Eberhart is editor, along with German scholars Martin Karrer, Siegfried Kreuzer, and Martin Meiser, of the volume “Tempel, Lehrhaus, Synagoge,” published on March 27, 2020 by Brill/Ferdinand Schöningh.

This volume is written in German and investigates the history of the institutions of Jewish learning with specific focus on the development of synagogues. [Read More](#)

Student Research Opportunities

Discussions for the new **“Lanier Award for Biblical Studies”** have begun with hopes of awarding students undertaking eligible independent study opportunities.

Faculty Research Opportunities

The Religious Studies program is also exploring new initiatives for supporting faculty research endeavors. [Learn More About the Faculty Here](#)

Spring 2020 Graduation Update

Though a traditional graduation ceremony was not able to be held due to COVID-19, we are proud to recognize and celebrate the graduation of five Religious Studies Majors last semester: **Fatma Demirtas, Craig Harland, Arya Khadjeheian, Muktha Nair, and Zachary Schwarze.** Congratulations Grads!



A Word From A Graduate

“I appreciate the diverse student and faculty population of RELS at University of Houston. Aside from being able to exchange experiences with classmates, my professors always supported me with their academic assets that they gained over hard work and long years. I cannot thank my professors, advisors, and friends enough who had a role in me completing my degree with a good standing.”

—Fatma Demirtas, Spring 2020
Religious Studies Graduate

Faculty Update

We are excited to welcome three new lecturers to the Religious Studies Faculty this Fall 2020: [Dr. Karen Langton](#), [Dr. Dorothy Dean](#), and [Naamleela Jones](#), as well as Faculty Consultant [Anne Dellisse](#).

Staff Update

New Program Outreach Director

The Religious Studies Program welcomed a new staff member last semester, Peace Cowen, as the Outreach Director.

Her focus is to cultivate student engagement and grow the presence of the Religious Studies program on campus.

[Read More About Peace Cowen Here](#)



Thank You



A Special Thanks to Our Supporters

“With each new semester, I am amazed by the talent and passion of our students and the support and encouragement from our Religious Studies faculty, staff, donors, and friends. I can’t thank each of you enough for your investment in what we do. Your support is very much appreciated. Thank you.”

—Dr. Eberhart, Religious Studies Program Director

[Read More About Dr. Eberhart Here](#)

[**Learn More About Religious Studies**](#)

For the latest updates on the Religious Studies Program follow us on www.facebook.com/UHRELS

