

# Religious Studies



## UPCOMING EVENTS

**November 3, 2016**  
Fall Flannery Lecture  
Speaker: Amy Leivad, Associate Professor of Theology, University of St. Thomas  
Cataldo Hall, Globe Room  
6:30 PM/ FREE & Open to all

## STUDY ABROAD

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RELI 382  
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(509) 313-6782

## What Can I Do With A Religious Studies Major?

A major in Religious Studies, like other humanities majors, gives students the skills that employers say they want most: the ability to think and research, to speak and write clearly, and to work with diverse groups. Beyond that, however, religious studies majors have an understanding of key issues in personal life and society, and a commitment to making the world a better place. In addition to going on to graduate school in a variety of disciplines, they gain jobs in business, government, non-profits and charitable organizations, law, social services and education, among other areas.

## Faculty Spotlight

*Welcome New Faculty*



### Kevin Vander Schel

After receiving his Ph.D. in systematic theology from Boston College, Dr. Vander Schel taught Christian ethics at Villanova University and now joins the Religious Studies Department at Gonzaga University. Initially, Dr. Vander Schel became interested in religion while satisfying his religious core requirements during his undergraduate but came to find religious studies more fascinating than he had ever anticipated. With the guidance of his teachers, he was introduced to ideas and questions that would linger in his mind long after class had ended. He describes this honest inquiry as tremendously rewarding. Dr. Vander Schel believes that studying religion is an opportunity to explore real and pressing questions about what it means to believe or practice one's faith in the contemporary world. During this fall semester he looks forward to teaching Political Theology and Theological Anthropology both of which focus on shifting attitudes within modern theology. He views the study of theology as an opportunity to cultivate an inquiring and reflective faith, which he hopes to express through his classes at Gonzaga.



### Brian Siebeking

Although originally geared toward politics and international relations, Professor Siebeking developed an interest in Religious Studies through an enlightening semester abroad in Egypt, thus shifting his focus to the Middle East. After living in the Middle East as well as serving in the Iraq War, Professor Siebeking became committed to seeking reconciliation and justice between the Middle East and the West. In pursuit of these aspirations, he went on to complete an MA in Arab Studies at Georgetown University and later a Ph.D. in Religious Studies, with a concentration in Islamic Studies, at the University of Virginia. His favorite course he has taught is Islamic Mysticism because it gives him the capability to direct students in an exploration of Islamic spirituality that usually contrasts the popular media. With our society becoming more religiously diverse, Professor Siebeking believes Religious Studies education is needed now more than ever, because it helps us develop practices of good citizenship, social justice and solidarity. Looking ahead, Professor Siebeking is developing a course centered on the Quran, which should debut in the Fall of 2017.

FALL  
**16**

# A Heavenly Place to Live

*Francis Youth Institute: Summer 2016*

The Francis Youth Institute for Theology and Leadership inspires high school youth to consider vocations in theology and ministry in service to the church, the human community, and our common home.



A \$294,415 grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. established the Institute at Gonzaga University as part of Lilly Endowment's High School Youth Theology Institutes initiative, which seeks to encourage young people to explore theological traditions, ask questions about the moral dimensions of contemporary issues and examine how their faith calls them to lives of service.

This summer, I was honored with a position as a peer mentor for the first annual Francis Youth Institute at Gonzaga, inspired by the message of Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home*, and coordinated by Religious Studies faculty, Dr. Joseph Mudd and Dr. Anastasia Wendlinger.



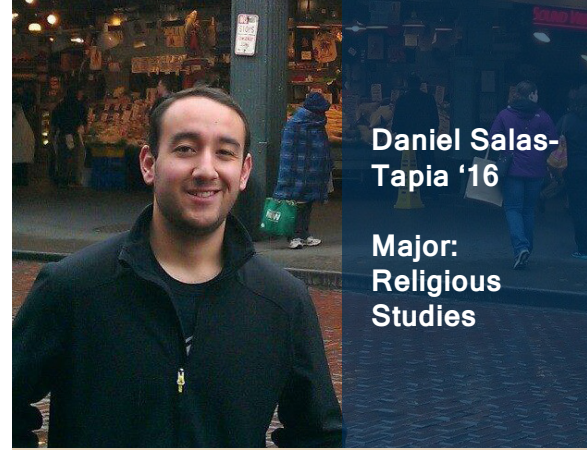
Alongside the twenty inquisitive and kind high school students attending the institute, I received diverse opportunities to meditate on my inherent connection and vocation to the world each day. In the Jesuit way, our schedule allowed us to first, contemplate and then, act. I was reminded that sustainability, food

justice and equality should not be separated from our faith.

In the afternoons, we embarked on adventures in Spokane that would allow us all to interact with the world around us and cultivate a spirituality that recognizes the sacred beauty of the Pacific Northwest.

This week reminded me of the deep gratitude I have for my Jesuit education and the ways in which I can live in response to this gift. By the end of the week, we were sent out to look for God in all things with new eyes, and to work for social and ecological justice in our communities.

*By Megan O'Malley ('17)*



**Daniel Salas-Tapia '16**

**Major:  
Religious  
Studies**

## Q & A with 2016 Flannery Award Winner

**What was your favorite religious studies course?**

My favorite religious studies course was Dr. Starbuck's Hebrew Bible, which I took as a senior. The best part about the course was the theme of right relationships vs. dysfunctional ones and how this paradigm is manifested in all facets of life.

**What drew you to religious studies?**

Although I have gone to Catholic school since I was young, it wasn't until college that my classes began to look at the various doctrinal complexities of various faith traditions and their socio-political implications. I realized that in our interconnected and culturally diverse world one must maintain a degree of interreligious competence in order to master relationship-building and establish dialogue.

**What have you been involved in at GU?**

I have worked for various offices including the Payne Center for Leadership Development, the Office of Sponsored Research & Programs, and the Office of Admissions.

**What's next after graduation?**

I recently accepted an offer of admission to the M.A. International Relations program at San Francisco State University. I hope to someday work for an international non-profit or a NGO such as the UN.

**How has your major impacted you?**

With my religious studies major, along with my Jesuit education as a whole, I am able to reflect on every religion and culture that I have explored in order to more fully engage the next person and/or ideology. My major has fostered in me a desire to seek out even more diversity.