

jots & tittles

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Department Chair's Greeting

We hope you had a great spring semester! We enjoyed working with you on your spring classes, and we're looking forward to Fall 2023.

Big news for August 2023: We're looking for volunteers to help design a new Philosophy & Religious Studies student lounge for PHRE majors, minors, and friends!

Meanwhile, we've added a **fifth minor** that begins in Fall 2023 (**Science & Values**), we've revised the major to cover both "A" and "E" REAL designations, and we've expanded our other minors: **Ethics**, **Philosophy**, **Religious Studies**, and **Religious-Cultural Literacy for Healthcare Professions**.

Watch for the 2023-2024 Undergraduate Catalog to see the streamlined course options that we've made available.

—Dr. Steven Fesmire, Chair of Philosophy and Religious Studies

Curricular Updates

CUSTOMIZE OUR FLEXIBLE MAJOR

The Philosophy and Religious Studies Major (B.A. or B.S.) fulfills both the **Humanistic or Artistic Expression** Area and the **Cultural or Behavioral Analysis** Area of the REAL Curriculum. Focused on understanding people and the world, both philosophy and religious studies grapple with the biggest questions humans have raised about being human and the nature of reality.

In philosophy courses students learn about the human endeavor in areas of ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics and how various philosophers and thinkers have attempted to address these areas. In religious studies courses students learn about the same topics with an emphasis on how they are addressed by religions.

You'll learn about how philosophical and religious worldviews shape society and inform human behaviors. These topics are introduced in the major's nine-credit core, reinforced in course menus for Thinking About the History of Ideas and Thinking About Social Issues, and expanded in the menu Additional Perspectives in Philosophy and Religious Studies. Take courses from outside the department to examine philosophy and religion in other disciplines, such as History, Sociology, Economics, Public Health, and more.

Students need majors and/or minors to fulfill the **Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning** and **Applied Learning** Areas to complete the REAL Curriculum.



RADFORD UNIVERSITY

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies

www.radford.edu/content/chbs/home/phre.html

Faculty Spotlight on Research

*Oxford University Press will publish Dr. Steven Fesmire's new book **Beyond Moral Fundamentalism: Toward a Pragmatic Pluralism**. Jots and Tittles asked him to share a bit about the book.*

What originally inspired you to write this book?

In 2016 my family and I were in Edinburgh, Scotland during Brexit, then we returned to

Dalton Awards

Dr. Steven Fesmire (Professor of Philosophy) and **Dr. Rick Van Noy** (Professor of English) were named the **2022-23 Dalton Eminent Senior Scholar** award recipients

Read the full story in the Radford News Journal: <https://radfordnewsjournal.com/radford-university-faculty-members-named-dalton-eminant-scholar-award-recipients/Solorpora+que+num+abo>. Xima

Curricular Updates Continued

the U.S. in time for President Trump’s election. During that political turmoil, and its aftermath in the coming years, I struggled for a coherent philosophical response both to right wing rancor and to rising fury among progressives, on and off campuses. To many, including many of my students at Green Mountain College and Middlebury College in Vermont, what I’m calling moral fundamentalism seemed the best way to show moral backbone. Professional philosophers and public intellectuals worried about rising illiberalism on the political right as well as on the left. But in the main ethicists and political theorists continued to debate the single Right way to reason about ethics and politics, even as (to my mind) evidence mounted that the “single right way” mentality itself was a remediable part of the problem.

RU’s Department of Philosophy & Religious Studies celebrates its applied and practical orientation. Is that on display in this new book?

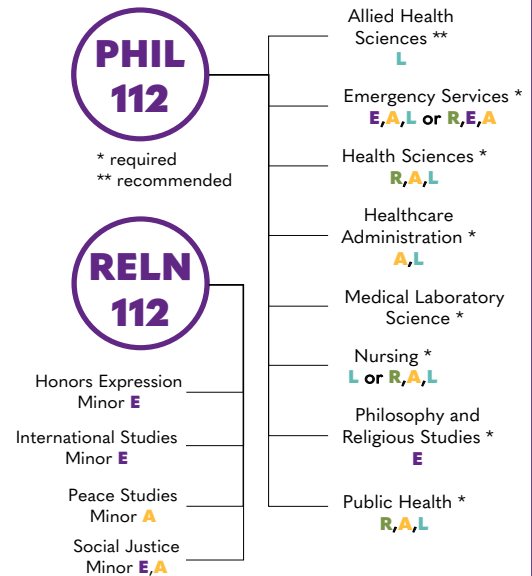
Yes, the book focuses on “wickedly” complex problems in ethics, education, and politics. Even as we confront increasingly complex global problems that demand greater awareness, moral sensitivity, and responsibility, a more popular approach beckons: a stark one-way mentality that assumes those going the right way (“us”) are constantly endangered by others (“them”) going the wrong way. I call this approach “moral fundamentalism,” the habit of assuming that there is an exclusively right way to diagnose problems, along with a single practical solution to any problem.

What’s wrong with moral fundamentalism? Taking a moral stand is still important, right?

Yes, we need moral backbone, but without the closed-mindedness. Moral fundamentalism causes us to oversimplify situations, neglect broader context, take refuge in dogmatic absolutes, ignore possibilities for finding common

A PATHWAY INTO MANY MAJORS

PHIL 112: Ethics and Society is **required in 7 distinct majors**, recommended in the Allied Health Sciences Major, and **counts in at least 9 minors**.



RELN 112: Religions in Culture and Society applies a nonsectarian interdisciplinary frame to explore diverse human cultures, and **counts in at least 6 different minors**.

Student Honors



On Wednesday, April 24, Dr. Paul Thomas inducted Taylor Hill, Kaitlyn Faircloth, and Jonathan Heinritz into Theta Alpha Kappa, the national honors society for religious studies. Not pictured, Meagan Smith (December 2022) who will be inducted this summer. PHRE congratulates these students for their exemplary work in religious studies!

ground, assume privileged access to the right way to proceed, and shut off honest inquiry. In this way, moral fundamentalism—exacerbated by social media silos—also makes the worst of native impulses toward social bonding and antagonism. This depletes social capital and makes it impossible to debate and achieve social goals that we can only achieve together, such as public health, justice, security, sustainability, peace, and democracy.

5 MINORS WITH WIDE RELEVANCE

While you're completing the REAL Curriculum, our minors can round out programs in **R**, **A**, or **L**.

After you've completed the REAL Curriculum, our minors can add work- and life-ready skills and knowledge to enhance any major.

PHILOSOPHY Minor E

Start with PHIL 112 or PHIL 216 or 217

Build skills in critical thinking, written and verbal communication, moral and ethical reasoning and how to analyze and understand arguments.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES Minor E

Start with RELN 112 or RELN 208, 209, or 210

Develop deeper understanding and appreciation for diverse cultures and learn to examine problems from many different perspectives.

ETHICS Minor E

Start with PHIL 112 or PHIL 115

Add career-ready and life-enhancing skills in problem-solving, empathy, critical thinking, moral and ethical reasoning, and cultural competence to your portfolio.

RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY for CARE PROFESSIONS Minor E

Start with RELN 113 or 112

Improve your cultural competence with an enhanced understanding of religion's role in experiences and expectations of care and religion's influence on the healthcare system and care services.

SCIENCE & VALUES Minor R,E

Start with PHIL 115 or ANSC 101, ASTR 120, BIOL 111, CHEM 111, or GEOL 120

Examine social and ethical values that arise from issues in science and technology, and analyze problems such as using A.I. responsibly, climate change, and ethical implications of research.

Department Events

From May 15- May 28 Paul Thomas will be supervising students on **RARE: Appalachia**.

RARE: Appalachia is a domestic study abroad program taking ten students on a multi-week research trip to Southwest Virginia. In addition to conducting their own research projects, students will be introduced to the diversity of Appalachian cultures, geology, and geography.

HUMANITIES DAYS
TUESDAY / APRIL 4
5:30-7:30 PM
Meet at the historical marker at Peters Hall across from Dalton

RELIGION, RACE, AND THE BUILDING OF RADFORD:
a walking tour of selected sites

DR. GEOFF POLLICK / DR. SHARON ROGER HEPBURN / DEMIAH SMITH

On April 4, as part of Humanities Days, Dr. Geoff Pollick led a walking tour of campus and Radford City, assisted by history department chair Dr. Sharon Roger Hepburn

and senior history major Demiah Smith, entitled "Religion, Race, and the Building of Radford: A Walking Tour of Selected Sites." The tour explored the present-day spaces of Radford University's campus and its immediate vicinity in Radford City as a window through time into the complex and interrelated processes of religio-racial institution building. Through the area's development from a remote frontier hamlet called Lovely Mount, to the railroad boomtown of Central Depot, to the regional center of Radford City, religion and race continuously informed social and cultural patterns. Along the tour, participants paused at significant

Department Events Continued

sites where the dynamics of religion and race intersected with institution-building processes through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Some locations included the former location of Lovely Mount Baptist Church on what is now the site of Peters Hall, and Arnheim, the house commissioned by John Blair Radford in the 1830s, and the place where he enslaved some of the congregants of Lovely Mount Baptist Church, who established that community as an independent African American institution after emancipation. Around 18 students and faculty members joined the tour.