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Education

2002 Ph.D. in the History of Religions, University of Chicago
1993 J.D., University of California at Berkeley, *Order of the Coif* (class rank: 8 out of 300)
1988 A.B. in Philosophy, Harvard University, *cum laude* in General Studies

Professional Experience

2025- Director, LMU Center for Religion and Philosophy
(The Center is attached to the Dr. Carola Black Stiftung für Religion und Philosophie)
2014- Professor for the Theory and Method of Religious Studies, LMU Munich
2013-14 Associate Professor, Department of History, University of Memphis
2006-13 Assistant Professor, Department of History, University of Memphis
2005-06 Postdoctoral Fellow, Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities,
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
2003-05 Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of History, University of Toronto
2001-03 Lecturer, Department of Philosophy, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale
1993-94 Corporate Attorney, Milbank, Tweed, Hadley & McCloy, Los Angeles
1989-90 Legal Assistant, Thelen, Marrin, Johnson & Bridges, San Francisco

Academic Awards

2021 Harris Distinguished Visiting Professor, Dartmouth College
2019 Finalist, AAR Award for Excellence in Constructive-Reflective Studies
for *Sovereignty and the Sacred* (see Publications)
2017 Visiting Professor, University of Turin
2013-14 Joint Tikvah/Senior Emile Noël Fellow, Tikvah Center for Law & Jewish Civilization
and Jean Monnet Center for International and Regional Economic Law & Justice,
New York University School of Law
2008-09 Collaborative Research Grant (with Prof. Winnifred Sullivan), American Academy of
Religion, for “The Sacred/Secular Divide: The Legal Story II” conference
2006-07 Fellow, John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation
2001-02 Committee on Southern Asian Studies Dissertation Fellow, University of Chicago
2000-01 Martin Marty Center Junior Fellow, University of Chicago Divinity School
1999-2000 Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellow, Calcutta, India
1998 Social Science Research Council Predissertation Fellow, Dhaka, Bangladesh
1996-98 Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellow in Bengali
1992-93 Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellow in German
1992 Scholarship to the Hague Academy of International Law from the Ford Foundation Program in
Public International Law at UC Berkeley Law School
1990-93 American Jurisprudence Awards (1st in class or section): Civil Procedure, Contracts, Comparative
Law, International Law, International Trade Law, Law and Modern Social Thought,
Professional Responsibility
1990-93 Prosser Prizes (2nd in class or section): Conceptions of Punishment, Jurisprudence

Publications

Monographs

Sovereignty and the Sacred: Secularism and the Political Economy of Religion. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019.

The Language of Disenchantment: Protestant Literalism and Colonial Discourse in British India. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Semiotics of Religion: Signs of the Sacred in History. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.

Explaining Mantras: Ritual, Rhetoric, and the Dream of a Natural Language in Hindu Tantra. London and New York: Routledge, 2003.

Edited volumes

"Deprovincializing Political Theology." Special issue of *Political Theology* 23, nos. 1-2 (2022): 1-173.

Narratives of Disenchantment and Secularization: Critiquing Max Weber's Idea of Modernity, ed. Robert A. Yelle and Lorenz Trein. London: Bloomsbury, 2021.

Interpreting and Explaining Transcendence: Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Beyond, ed. Robert A. Yelle and Jenny Ponzo. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2021.

Mediation and Immediacy: The Semiotic Turn in the Study of Religion, ed. Jenny Ponzo, Robert A. Yelle, and Massimo Leone. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2021.

Language and Religion, ed. Robert A. Yelle, Courtney Handman, and Christopher I. Lehrich. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2019.

After Secular Law, ed. Winnifred F. Sullivan, Robert A. Yelle, and Mateo Taussig-Rubbo. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011.

Articles and book chapters

"The Invisible Border: The Vanishing Line of Separation between Church and State." In Gary Slater and Lisa Landoe Hendrick, eds., *Ethics Across Borders: Reimagining Religious, Political, and Ecological Divides*. London: Routledge, 2026 (in press).

"What Happened to Sacrifice?: The Case of Thomas Hobbes." In Cristiana Facchini, Girolamo Imbruglia, Vincenzo Lavenia, and Sabina Pavone, eds., *Sacrifice and Sacred Violence: History, Comparisons, and the Early Modern World*, 201-18. Turnhout: Brepols, 2025.

"Secularization: Transformations of Religion and Politics in Western Europe (and the US)." In Michael Stausberg and Katharina Wilkens, eds., *Religionswissenschaft: Aktuelle Annäherungen*, 197-207. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2025.

"Kingship Is Dead, Long Live Kingship: Revisiting Rituals of Rebellion and the Dangers of the Interregnum," *Asdival* 19 (2024): 163-83.

"Blood Lines: Biopolitics, Patriarchy, Myth," *Open Theology* 10.1 (2024); <https://doi.org/10.1515/opth-2024-0011>.

"Do Crowds Need Leaders? Representing the Body Politic after the Decline of Monarchy in Western Europe, from Hobbes to Durkheim," *Political Theology* (published online 05 December 2022; <https://doi.org/10.1080/1462317X.2022.2152180>).

"After Sovereignty?" Author's response to review symposium on *Sovereignty and the Sacred* in *Religious Studies Review* (published online 23 December 2022; <https://doi.org/10.1111/rsr.16262>).

"Deprovincializing Political Theology: An Introduction," *Political Theology* 23, nos. 1-2 (2022): 8-12.

"On Slaves, Aliens, and Other Threats to the Body Politic." *Political Theology* 23 (2022): 482-90.

"Prodding the Leviathan: A Brief Response to Russell Sandberg's Sociology of Religious Law." *Ancilla Iuris* 2022: 93-96 (<http://dx.doi.org/10.26031/2022.093>).

"On Mantras and Other 'Untranslatable' Forms of Religious Language." In *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Religion*, ed. Hephzibah Israel, 189-203. London: Routledge, 2022.

"Hobbes the Egyptian: The Return to Pharaoh, or the Ancient Roots of Secular Politics." In *Sacred Kingship in World History: Between Immanence and Transcendence*, ed. A. Azfar Moin and Alan Strathern, 223-48. New York: Columbia University Press, 2022.

"Exceptional Grace: Religion as the Sovereign Suspension of Law." In *Law as Religion, Religion as Law*, ed. Benny Porat and David Flatto, 173-96. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022.

- “After Sovereignty?” Author’s response to review symposium on *Sovereignty and the Sacred* in the *Journal of Law and Religion* 36, no. 3 (2021): 563-73.
- “Was Aśoka Really a Secularist *Avant-la-Lettre*? Ancient Indian Pluralism and Toleration in Historical Perspective.” *Modern Asian Studies* 56 (2022): 749-75.
- “‘An Age of Miracles’: Disenchantment as a Secularized Theological Narrative.” In *Narratives of Disenchantment and Secularization: Critiquing Max Weber’s Idea of Modernity*, ed. Robert A. Yelle and Lorenz Trein, 129-48. London: Bloomsbury, 2021.
- “History.” In *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion*, ed. Robert A. Segal and Nickolas P. Roubekas, 2nd ed., 289-301. Chichester, Sussex, UK: John Wiley and Sons, 2021.
- “Chastening and Disciplining Comparison: Bruce Lincoln and Oliver Freiberger on the Comparative Method in the Study of Religion.” Review symposium on Bruce Lincoln, *Apples and Oranges* and Oliver Freiberger, *Considering Comparison*. In *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 32 (2020): 482-90.
- “Imagining Sacrifice in Ancient India: A Genealogy of Heesterman’s ‘Broken World,’” in *South Asian Rituals in Archaeological Context: Power, Presence and Space*, ed. Henry Albery, Jens-Uwe Hartmann, and Himanshu Prabha Ray, 19-38. London and Delhi: Routledge, 2020.
- “‘By Fire and Sword’: Early English Critiques of Islam and Judaism as ‘Impostures’ or Political and ‘Unfree’ Religions,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 53 (2020): 91-108.
- “From Sovereignty to Solidarity: Some Transformations in the Politics of Sacrifice from the Reformation to Robertson Smith,” *History of Religions* 58 (2019): 319-46.
- “Protestant (An)aesthetics,” in *Bloomsbury Handbook for the Cultural and Cognitive Aesthetics of Religion*, ed. Anne Koch and Katharina Wilkens, 241-51. London: Bloomsbury, 2019.
- “Frozen Forms: An Inquiry into Magic Words and the Power of Names,” *Lexia* (October 2019): 35-47.
- “Intertextuality, Iconicity, and Joint Speech: Three Dialogical Modes of Linguistic Performance in South Asian Traditions.” In *Language and Religion*, ed. Robert A. Yelle, Courtney Handman, and Christopher I. Lehrich, 57-67. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2019.
- “Religionsfreiheit und die Säkularisierung religiösen Rechts aus der Perspektive eines Historikers.” In *Hat Religiöses Recht eine Existenzberechtigung in säkularer Gesellschaft?*, ed. Burkhard Berkmann, *Kirche & Recht* Beihefte, Band 1 (2019): 113-25.
- “Réflexions sur la théorie sémiotique de *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.” In *Désirs de réforme : Relectures de la Constitution conciliaire sur la liturgie*, ed. Angelo Cardita. Montréal: Les Presses de l’Université de Montréal, 2018.
- “Semiotics and Aesthetics: Historical and Structural Connections.” In *Aesthetics of Religion: A Connective Concept*, ed. Alexander K. Grieser and Jay Johnston, 465-71. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2017.
- “The Peircean Icon and the Study of Religion: A Brief Overview.” *Material Religion* 12 (2016): 241-43.
- “Semiotics.” In *Oxford Handbook of Religious Studies*, ed. Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler, 208-19. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- “European Constructions of Hinduism.” With Lorenz Trein and Joydeep Bagchee. *Oxford Bibliographies Online* (published August 2016; <https://doi.org/10.1093/OBO/9780195399318-0174>).
- “Imagining the Hebrew Republic: Christian Genealogies of Religious Freedom.” In *Politics of Religious Freedom*, ed. Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, Saba Mahmood, and Peter Danchin, 17-28. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015.
- “Secular Blasphemies: Symbolic Offense in Modern Democracy.” In *Profane: Sacrilegious Expression in a Multicultural Age*, ed. Christopher S. Grenda, Chris Beneke, and David Nash, 141-66. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014.
- “Coda and Counterpoint.” Author’s response to review symposium on *Semiotics of Religion: Signs of the Sacred in History*. In *Religion* 44 (2014): 148-63.
- “Spiritual Economies beyond the Sacred/Secular Paradigm: Or, What Did Religious Freedom Mean in Ancient India?” In *Varieties of Religious Establishments*, ed. Lori Beaman and Winnifred Sullivan, 15-32. Farnham, Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2013.
- Review article on Brad Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, symposium in *Church History* 81 (2012): 918-24.
- “Comparative Religion as Cultural Combat: Occidentalism and Relativism in Rajiv Malhotra’s *Being Different*.” Review symposium on Rajiv Malhotra, *Being Different: An Indian Challenge to Western Universalism* in *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 16 (2012): 335-48.

- “Semiotics.” In *Handbook of Research Methods in Religious Studies*, ed. Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler, 355-65. London and New York: Routledge, 2011.
- “Moses’ Veil: Secularization as Christian Myth.” In *After Secular Law*, ed. Winnifred F. Sullivan, Robert A. Yelle, and Mateo Taussig-Rubbo, 23-42. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011.
- “The End(s) of Sacrifice: Mel Gibson’s *Apocalypto* as a Christian Defense of Colonialism.” *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 23 (2011): 82-89.
- “The Trouble with Transcendence: Carl Schmitt’s ‘Exception’ as a Challenge for Religious Studies.” *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 22 (2010): 189-206.
- “Hindu Law as Performance: Ritual and Poetic Elements in *Dharmasastra*.” In *Hinduism and Law: An Introduction*, ed. Timothy Lubin, Donald R. Davis, Jr., and Jayanth K. Krishnan, 183-92. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- “Punishing Puns: Etymology as Linguistic Ideology in Hindu and British Traditions.” In *Religion and Identity in South Asia and Beyond: Essays in Honor of Patrick Olivelle*, ed. Steven E. Lindquist, 129-46. New York, London, Delhi: Anthem Press, 2010.
- “The Hindu Moses: Christian Polemics against Jewish Ritual and the Secularization of Hindu Law under Colonialism.” *History of Religions* 49 (2009): 141-71.
- “To Perform or Not to Perform?: A Theory of Ritual Performance versus Cognitive Theories of Religious Transmission.” *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 18 (2006): 372-91.
- “The Rhetoric of Gesture in Cross-Cultural Perspective.” In “Gesture, Ritual and Memory,” ed. Paul Bouissac, special issue of *Gesture* 6 (2006): 223-40.
- “Law’s Trouble with Images: Fetishism and Seduction from Athens and Jerusalem to Madison Avenue.” In *Images in Law*, ed. Anne Wagner and William Pencak, 267-79. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2006.
- Editor, “The Spaces and Places of Law,” special issue of *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law* 19, no. 3 (2006).
- “Bentham’s Fictions: Canon and Idolatry in the Genealogy of Law.” *Yale Journal of Law & the Humanities* 17 (2005): 151-79.
- “Images of Law and its Others: Canon and Idolatry in the Discourses of British India.” *Culture and Religion* 6 (2005): 181-99.
- “Poetic Justice: Rhetoric in Hindu Ordeals and Legal Formulas.” *Religion* 32 (2002): 259-72.
- “Rhetorics of Law and Ritual: A Semiotic Comparison of the Law of Talion and Sympathetic Magic.” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 69 (2001): 627-47.
- “The Rebirth of Myth?: Nietzsche’s Eternal Recurrence and its Romantic Antecedents.” *Numen* 47 (2000): 175-202.
- “Discord and Concord in Buddhist Perspective,” with Frank Reynolds and Jason A. Carbine. In *Ideas of Concord and Discord in Selected World Religions*, ed. Joseph B. Gittler, 21-58. Stamford, CT: JAI Press, 2000.
- “Mantrasamskara: Tantric Rites for Making Mantras Effective.” *Journal of the Sanskrit Department of Rabindra Bharati University* 9 (2000): 10-25.

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- “European Constructions of Hinduism.” With Lorenz Trein and Joydeep Bagchee. *Oxford Bibliographies Online*, published August 2016.
- “Criticism and Critique (in, among and of Religions).” In *Brill Vocabulary for the Study of Religion*, ed. Robert Segal and Kocku von Stuckrad, 372-78. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
- “Law and Religion.” In *International Encyclopedia of Legal History*, ed. Stanley N. Katz. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- “Mantra.” In *Encyclopedia of Religion, Communication, and Media*, ed. Daniel Stout, 232-34. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.
- “Ritual and Religious Language.” In *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, second revised edition, ed. Keith Brown, 633-40. Oxford: Elsevier, 2005.
- Consultant, articles on Law and Religion, *Encyclopedia of Religion*, second edition. New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005.

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- (With Winnifred Fallers Sullivan.) “Law and Religion: An Overview.” In *Encyclopedia of Religion*, second edition, 5325-5332. New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005.
- “Utilitarianism and J. S. Mill.” In *Encyclopedia of Religious Freedom*, ed. Catharine Cookson, 497-99. London and New York: Routledge, 2003.
- “Mantra,” “Mandala,” and “Tantricism.” In *Banglapedia: National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh*, ed. Sirajul Islam. Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2003.

Book reviews

- Review of Gary Chartier, *Christianity and the Nation-State: A Study in Political Theology*, in *Journal of Religion* (in press).
- Review of Anna Grzymala-Busse, *Sacred Foundations: The Religious and Medieval Roots of the European State*, in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 92.1 (2024): 197–198.
- Review of Vassilios Paipais, ed., *Theology and World Politics: Metaphysics, Genealogies, Political Theologies*, in *Political Theology* 23.6 (March 2022):1-3.
- Review of Peter Jackson Rova, *Devotion and Artifice: Themes of Suspension in the History of Religions*, in *Smart Semiotics*. <https://smartsemiotics.com/fiction-and-disbelief-representation-in-symbolic-behaviour>.
- “Catholic Semiotics.” Review of Domenico Pietropaolo, *Semiotics of the Christian Imagination*. *SemiotiX Review of Books*. <https://semioticon.com/semiotix/2020/09/semiotix-review-of-books-catholic-semiotics/> (accessed 24 March 2021).
- Review of Richard Parmentier, *Signs and Society: Further Studies in Semiotic Anthropology*, in *Anthropos* 115 (2020): 260-61.
- Review of Jakob De Roover, *Europe, India, and the Limits of Secularism*, in *Journal of Religion in Europe* 11 (2018): 102-104.
- “Secularism Reconsidered: Three Approaches,” review of Ari Joskowicz and Ethan Katz, ed., *Secularism in Question: Jews and Judaism in Modern Times*, in *Politics, Religion, and Ideology* 17 (2016): 429-32.
- “Protestant Presuppositions in the Study of Hinduism,” review of Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee, *The Nay Science: A History of German Indology*, in *International Journal of Dharma Studies* 4 (2016): 14-16.
- Review of Robert Orsi, *History and Presence*, in *Religious Studies Review* 42 (2016): 268.
- Review of André Padoux, *Tantric Mantras: Studies on Mantrasastra*, in *Religious Studies Review* 38 (2012): 257.
- Review of Donald Davis, Jr., *The Spirit of Hindu Law*, in *History of Religions* 51 (2011), 183-85.
- Review of Jesper Sørensen, *A Cognitive Theory of Magic*, in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 76 (2008): 527-31.
- Review of Susan Snow Wadley, *Raja Nal and the Goddess: The North Indian Epic Dhola in Performance*, in *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 11 (2007): 347-48.
- Review of Robert Eric Frykenberg, ed., *Christians and Missionaries in India: Cross-Cultural Communication Since 1500*, in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 35 (2005): 681-83.
- Review of Mark C. Taylor, ed., *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, in *Journal of Religion* 80 (2000): 360-61.
- Review of Rebecca Redwood French, *The Golden Yoke: The Legal Cosmology of Buddhist Tibet*, in *Journal of Religion* 77 (1997): 343-44.

Online publications

- “Corporate Veil or Wall of separation?” *The Immanent Frame* (accessed 5/26/2015 at <http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2015/01/22/corporate-veil-or-wall-of-separation/>).
- “Christian Genealogies of Religious Freedom.” *The Immanent Frame* (accessed 4/06/2012 at <http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2012/04/06/christian-genealogies-of-religious-freedom/>).
- “The Semiotics of Religion.” *Semiotix Bulletin* XN-1 (New Series) (2010) (accessed 1/13/2012 at <http://www.semioticon.com/semiotix/issues/semiotix-xn-1-2010>).

Academic Service (Non-Departmental)

currently	peer reviewer for national scientific research funding agencies in Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Israel
2016-	Editorial Board, <i>Method & Theory in the Study of Religion</i>
2012-22	Editor, <i>Religion, Culture, and History</i> book series, American Academy of Religion/ Oxford University Press; member, AAR Publications Committee
2017-2024	Co-editor, <i>Semiotics of Religion</i> book series, Walter de Gruyter publishers
2018	Member, external peer review committee for the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Groningen
2012-17	Steering Committee, Secularism and Secularity Group, American Academy of Religion
2011-13	Editorial Board, <i>Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses</i>
2010-13	Steering Committee, Religion, Colonialism, and Postcolonialism Group, American Academy of Religion
2007-11	Executive Secretary and Treasurer, North American Association for the Study of Religion
2005-07	Executive Council, North American Association for the Study of Religion
2005-08	Chair, Law, Religion, and Culture Group, American Academy of Religion
2002-05	Steering Committee, Law, Religion, and Culture Group, American Academy of Religion

References and additional information available upon request