

February 12, 2003

Dear Majors and Minors,

As has become my habit, I'm sending out a letter along with the schedule for our upcoming Interim, Summer, and Fall 2003 classes. Before getting to all that, however, you may have noticed some changes in the Department; the classroom has had a make-over and the student/faculty lounge is next on our list. (To notice these changes you'll have to use the lounge, of course, so please stop by and make a pot of coffee.) We are also anticipating a permanent multi-media system being installed in the classroom later this system.

Regarding registration for the upcoming semesters, keep in mind that advising and registration all happen before the Spring break this year, with advising running from **March 3-14**, and call-in and web-based registration from **March 17-April 4**. Your registration packets will be delivered to your advisor, so be sure to make an appointment for advising when you pick up your packets. If you are a double major or minor, and receive advising elsewhere, please consider setting up an advising appointment in our Department as well, to ensure that your program of study is on track and meeting our degree requirements. And finally, if you are a graduating major or minor, it might be a good idea to make an appointment to see me, to ensure that you have indeed met the Department's requirements. (Be sure to bring your degree audit with you.) In some cases, I will produce a memo for the College of Arts & Sciences Registrar's office to ensure that they understand how your courses ought to count toward your major or minor.

As you'll notice on the schedule I'm sending to you, we are offering one Interim course along with two summer courses, *REL 100* and *REL 110* (one section of each being offered in both summer semesters). Although it is likely that most REL majors, as well as our REL and JS minors, have already taken these courses, they do count for Core Humanities credit, so let your friends know that if they are interested they can pick up 3 hours toward their Core Curriculum requirements this summer in our Department. With regard to the Fall semester, you'll notice a new course, *REL 241 American Religious History*, taught by Prof. **Ted Trost**. The course focuses on marginalized religious expressions, such as "slave religion" as well as the more traditional stories (e.g., accounts of the Pilgrims and revivals) that are characteristic of other survey courses. Prof. **Jim Apple** is offering *REL 324 Tibetan Buddhism*; Prof. **Catherine Roach** offers her popular *REL 344 God and Moral Reasoning*; and Prof. **Steve Jacobs** is teaching both his survey of Judaism (*REL 224*) and *REL 347 Jewish-Christian Relations*. Prof. **Gabriele Fassbeck**, who is currently teaching one section of *REL 112 Introduction to the New Testament*, will return in the Fall, offering two more sections of *REL 112*. Finally, along with *REL 100*, I will once again offer the upper-level seminar, *REL 480 History of the Study of Religion*. Apart from teaching in REL this coming Fall, Profs. **Trost** and Prof. **Tim Murphy** are each teaching a course in the Blount Undergraduate Initiative Program. As you know, the Blount Program depends on Departments occasionally to release faculty from their usual Departmental teaching duties, so that they can offer Blount courses; we're pleased that in the coming Fall semester we're able to do this for two of our faculty. As for Prof. **Kurtis Schaeffer**, he's working away on his book and will soon be doing some traveling for his research; visit our web site later this semester to read his periodic "*Dispatches from Lhasa*." And keep in mind that a number of the upcoming courses have been offered in the past; see the "Courses" link on the REL web site ([www.as.ua.edu/rel](http://www.as.ua.edu/rel)) for descriptions and syllabi. And don't forget that we sometimes hold enrollment to zero in our

upper-level courses, so that we can ensure that our own majors/minors get an opportunity to enroll; so be sure to check with the main office if you are trying to enroll.

I also want to let you know about some upcoming events. Apart from Prof. **Willi Braun**, a scholar of Christian origins at the University of Alberta, who will be coming next week to present a seminar for majors and minors on the topic of the historiography of early Christianity (Feb. 19 at 3 p.m. in Student Services 101F), there are two larger public lectures planned for March, with receptions to follow. On March 13<sup>th</sup>, Prof. **George Williamson**, of our Department of History, will lecture on the use of myth in the study of nineteenth-century German history (his talk will be followed by a response from our own Prof. **Murphy**) and on March 31<sup>st</sup> Prof. **Mark McCormick**, a scholar of Hebrew Bible trained at the University of North Carolina's Department of Religious Studies and who works at Stillman College, will be one of our Aronov Speakers. And, with the topic of our Aronov Speakers Series in mind, on March 10 we will host Prof. **Lawrence Powell**, of Tulane University, and Mrs. **Anne Levy**, who will present a program entitled, "Troubled Memory: Ann Levy, the Holocaust, and David Duke's Louisiana." For more information on all these lectures, see the "Events" page at the Department web site.

And don't forget that the Religious Studies Student Association, along with Theta Alpha Kappa (the REL honors society) meets each Wednesday at 5 p.m. in the Department lounge (Manly 212). I hear that a trip to the Birmingham Museum of Art is among their plans for later in this semester.

Finally, as you may have heard, Profs. **Roach** and **Trost** have had a new addition to their family: their second son, **Benjamin**, was born on January 28, 2003, at 5:17 in the afternoon, weighing in at a sturdy 10 lbs 2 oz. If those of you who pull all-nighters before exams have any hints on coping with sleep deprivation, I'm sure they'll gladly entertain your suggestions. And, if you recall, Prof. **Schaeffer** and his wife **Heather** had their first child, a daughter named **Ruby**, just one year ago; I'm pleased to report that Ruby is not only walking but already learning the finer points of Tibetan translation.

Please watch for upcoming news, such as the Department's Honors Day reception in April. Be sure to visit the Department web site periodically, since we're posting some things there that you might be interested to read (such as Prof. **Jacobs's** report from the week-long workshop that he was selected to attend in Washington as well as the names of those recently awarded the Departments Silverstein Fellowship).

I hope you're having a good semester, and please stop by to say hello,

Russell T. McCutcheon  
Chair, Department of Religious Studies