

GUSTAV NIEBUHR
Associate Professor of Religion and the Media

313 Tolley Humanities Building
Syracuse University; phone: 315-443-5723
E-mail: rgniebuh@syr.edu

The following serves as a summary of the teaching, research/writing and service activities that I have pursued at Syracuse University since I joined the faculties of the College of Arts & Sciences and the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications in January 2004. I have valued the opportunity to blaze an interdisciplinary path, focusing on both the academic study of religion in America, which I believe vital to an understanding of our national culture and politics, and the nurture and practice of excellence in journalism, which I consider crucial to sustaining democracy.

TEACHING:

I have taught seven different courses: three in the College of Arts & Sciences, three in the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications and one (a graduate-level seminar) in the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. (*The five courses marked with an asterisk* were designed by me as instructor.*)

College of Arts & Sciences:

1. **American Religious Diversity** REL 241* (Fall '04, Fall '05 and Fall '06): Course examines historical and contemporary religious pluralism. Lectures and class discussions; midterm and final; each student required to write and present a researched biography of a major religious figure and discuss his/her contribution to religious diversity. *Enrollments:* 12 in '04; 36 in '05; 48 in '06.
2. **Religious Issues in American Life** REL 242* (Spring '07, Fall '07, Fall '08): Course focuses on contemporary questions involving religion and society in the United States (i.e., what is the place of religion in politics; how has the Supreme Court regarded religious disestablishment; how have Americans wrestled with questions of religious belief and evil in the world since 9/11). Lectures, discussions; several short papers; midterm and final. *Enrollments:* 34 in Spring '07; 41 in Fall '07; 42 in Fall '09. *Note: This course serves as the gateway to the new Religion and Media Minor, established with a grant from the Carnegie Corp. of New York, described below.*
3. **American Religions and the News Media** REL 343* (Spring '04, Spring '05, Spring '08, Spring '09): Course built around critical analysis of how issues involving religion intersect with other major areas in American life (i.e., politics,

the arts, law, business, sports, etc.). Lectures, discussions; eight short papers; midterm and final paper. *Enrollments*: 36 in '04; 34 in '05; 44 in '08; 39 in Spring '09. *Note*: This course, re-vamped from earlier design, now serves as capstone to *Religion and Media Minor*.

Newhouse School of Public Communications:

1. **Reporting NEW 305** (Fall '05, Spring '07, Spring '08, Spring '09): Lectures and discussions on essentials of reporting and newswriting: establishing sources, effective interviewing, gathering pertinent details, finding helpful documents, writing with flair and color. In Spring '07, joined with other reporting 305 class, editing class, news photography and graphics classes to create special edition of *The Student Voice*, "Whose Neighborhood Is It, Anyway?" on relations between students and permanent residents in residential area east of Syracuse campus. A similar project, on immigrants in Syracuse, is underway this semester. *Enrollments*: 14 in '05, 15 in '07, 15 in '08; 16 in '09.
2. **Public Affairs Reporting NEW 405** (Fall '04, Fall '06, Fall '07, Fall '08): Lectures, discussions, occasional field trip in course designed to teach students nuts and bolts of real-world beat reporting by covering town boards or school districts. Nineteen written assignments required, including memos and news stories on beats; stories assigned by professor and an extensive, final project. *Enrollments*: 15 in '04; 16 in '06; 14 in '07; 15 in '08
3. **Special Topic: Reporting on Religion, Spirituality and Moral Issues NEW/RTN 530*** (Spring '05, Spring '06): *Co-designed and co-taught with Professor Barbara Fought. Course emphasized skills in reporting and writing/broadcasting, along with basic knowledge, in subject area that grows ever more prominent. *Enrollments*: 21 in '05; '14 in '06.

Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs:

1. **Religion, Media and International Relations PSC 700.2/REL 600.2/NEW 600.1/IRP 700.2*** (Spring '08) *Co-designed and co-taught with Professor Mehrzad Boroujerdi, Political Science Department and director, Middle Eastern Studies Program. Course features critical analysis of the role that religion and news media coverage of religion play in creating public perceptions and foreign policy options in international events. Lectures, discussions. Extensive readings. Weekly papers and final paper. *Enrollment*: 13. *Note*: Course is designed as feature of project on religion, media and international affairs, funded by Luce Foundation, described below.

GRANTS FROM FOUNDATIONS/ PROGRAMS DEVELOPED:

Working with colleagues at Newhouse and Maxwell, I have successfully applied for two major foundation grants focused on religion and the news media that together are worth \$620,000, an amount increased by the university for one of the grants by \$125,000.

1. **Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2006-2009.** Professor Mark Obbie (Newhouse magazine department) and I applied for and were awarded a \$250,000 three-grant under Carnegie's Curriculum Enrichment Initiative, a program intended to involve journalism and communications students more fully in the academic study of issues and topics that they are likely to encounter in their careers and about which they will be expected to inform a broad public. Carnegie awarded the grant in mid-2006, at which point Chancellor Nancy Cantor announced that the university would increase the amount with a 50 percent match--\$125,000. Professor Obbie and I have divided the grant equally, he to create a media and legal studies program, I to create a new **Religion and Media Minor**. The latter, housed within the Religion and Society Program in the College of Arts & Sciences, was approved by the University Senate in March 2007. Its gateway and capstone courses are described above in the section on teaching. In addition, the minor's funding provides for a special Religion and Media lecture, given by a specially-invited speaker, each semester. *The following, written for the course catalogue and the minor's brochure, is a brief description of the philosophy behind the minor and the latter's purpose and requirements:*

Interdisciplinary in its offerings, the minor incorporates more than 25 courses from within 10 departments and programs. While the minor is open to any SU student, it is designed specifically to guide students in journalism and related fields toward an essential understanding of religious traditions and major issues involving religion that they are likely to encounter in their careers.

The Religion and Media minor is built on the premise that religion is a vital part of life in the U.S. and many other nations. Debates about society and politics -- about which the news media is expected to inform the public -- often cannot be fully understood without reference to religious ideas, organizations and movements.

Requirements: 18 credits of coursework at least 12 of which must be taken in courses numbered at the 300-level or above; a 200-level gateway course: Religious Issues in American Life; a 300-level capstone course: Religions and the News Media; and a course in a religious tradition.

2. **Luce Foundation, 2006-2009.** Together with Professors Tazim Kassam, chair of the Religion Department, and Mehrzad Boroujerdi, I was awarded a \$370,000 grant to develop a program examining the relationships of **Religion, Media and International Relations**. In addition to sponsoring regular lectures, and planning a symposium on Islam and the Media, the program encourages faculty to incorporate

elements related to these subject areas into existing graduate courses, to develop new ones and to write case studies. In Spring '08, Professor Boroujerdi and I began co-teaching the graduate seminar, described above in the teaching section. The seminar includes students in Maxwell, Arts & Sciences and Newhouse.

RESEARCH AND CREATIVE WORK WITHIN PROFESSION

Within my interests in American religion and the news media, I have written a book for commercial publication, a chapter in another, an article published in a political science journal, public radio commentaries and postings on a blog carried by two national news media.

1. **Book:** *Beyond Tolerance: Searching for Interfaith Understanding in America*. Based on extensive interviewing and historical research, published by Viking Press, August 2008.
2. **Book chapter:** "A Relationship of Overlapping Conversations," in *Quoting God: How Media Shape Ideas about Religion and Culture*, by Claire H. Badaracco, ed. (Baylor University Press, 2005).
3. **Book forward:** for *Changing Boundaries: The Best Religion Newswriting*, Debra A. Wagner, ed. (Seabury Press, 2005).
4. **Academic articles:**
 - a. "All Need Toleration: Some Observations about Recent Differences in the Experiences of Religious Minorities in the United States and Western Europe," in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 612, July 2007, pp. 172-86.
 - b. "Mormonism and Media Studies," unpublished paper presented at annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, Philadelphia, Nov. 20, 2005; special topics forum: What the Study of Mormonism Brings to Religious Studies.
 - c. "Site Visits from a Journalist's Perspective," *Religious Studies News*, American Academy of Religion, October 2004.
5. **Internet writing:**
 - a. Regular panelist for "On Faith," blog about religion and current events, published weekly by www.washingtonpost.com and www.newsweek.com, hosted by Sally Quinn, senior writer at the Post and John Meacham, editor of Newsweek, since November 2006.
 - b. Guest editor, religion and politics section, www.beliefnet.com, June and July 2008.
 - c. Author, "The Interfaith Movement," for E-Journal USA, published at www.america.gov by U.S. State Department, Aug. 19, 2008.
 - d. Guest panelist on religion and politics, "Talking Faith," blog at www.america.gov, October and November 2008.

6. Radio and print news commentaries:

- a. Commentaries for National Public Radio's "*All Things Considered*," since 2004.
- b. Op-ed in *The Boston Globe*, "Religion's Big Tent," Sept. 4, 2004.

7. Broadcast interviews:

- a. *The Tavis Smiley Show*, Public Broadcasting System, Los Angeles, August 2008.
- b. *Fora.tv*, Internet broadcaster, San Francisco, August 2008.
- c. *The Diane Rhem Show*, National Public Radio, September 2008.
- d. *Global Journalist*, National Public Radio, discussion of Muslim hajj to Mecca, December 2008.

8. Public Speeches (selected):

- a. "*The Problem with Toleration*," Chautauqua Institution, Chautauqua, N.Y., lecture delivered in Amphitheater during week on religion in America, Aug. 6, 2008.
- b. Speeches associated with book tour, following publication of *Beyond Tolerance*: Newton, Mass., Free Library; All Saints Episcopal Church, Pasadena, Calif.; Grace Cathedral, San Francisco; Buffalo, N.Y., Public Library; Union Theological Seminary, New York, N.Y., National Cathedral, Washington, D.C. (The latter a formal speech in sanctuary on Sept. 11, as the cathedral's memorial to the occasion.)
- c. "*Gandhi for Today's World*," Asia Society, New York; moderated public conversation with composer Philip Glass and society president Vishakha Desai, April 23, 2008.
- d. "*What are the Primary Issues Confronting the Religious World Today?*" Massachusetts Institute of Technology, MIT Interfaith Dialogue Program, Cambridge, Mass., Dec. 6, 2007.
- e. "*Nineteenth Century American Religious Diversity*," Oneida Community Mansion, Oneida, N.Y., Sept. 26, 2006.
- f. "*Religious Diversity, Religious Freedom and the News Media*," Chautauqua Institution, Chautauqua, N.Y., opening lecture delivered in Amphitheater during week on same theme, July 31, 2006.
- g. "*Is 'Tolerance' a Social Good?*" The Jack and Lewis Rudin Lecture, Auburn Theological Seminary, New York, N.Y., May 9, 2006.

- h. “*Beyond Tolerance*,” The Stuber Lecture, Colgate Rochester Crozier Theological Seminary, Rochester, N.Y., May 12, 2005.
- i. “*Ethics and Journalism*,” The Pettigrew Faith-in-Action Seminar and Business Ethics Luncheon, Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, May 11, 2005.
- j. “*Religion and the News Media*,” Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Technology and Culture Forum, Cambridge, Mass., May 5, 2005.
- k. “*Prospects for Religion and Academic Study*,” Futurist Forum at Emory University, Atlanta, Ga., April 8, 2005.
- l. “*Religion, Controversy and the Election of 2004*,” Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, N.Y., Oct. 13, 2004.
- m. “*The Spin Zone: Trust in the Media*,” Yale University Divinity School, Sarah Smith Conference on Moral Leadership, New Haven, Conn., Sept. 17, 2004.
- n. “*Muslims in American Civic and Political Life*,” (panel moderator), Social Science Research Council, Washington, D.C., Sept. 11, 2004.

SERVICE TO UNIVERSITY

1. Public lectures and symposia:

As **director of the Religion and Media Minor**, I have established a regular, once-a-semester lecture on campus. On October 11, 2006, the **Rev. Thomas J. Reese, S.J.**, a fellow at Woodstock Theological Seminary at Georgetown University and one of the nation’s leading commentators on the Roman Catholic Church spoke on “*The Pope, Islam and Other Topics of Religion in the News*.” On March 28, 2007, **Professor Stephen Prothero**, chairman of Boston University’s religion department and author of the *New York Times* bestseller, “*Religious Literacy*,” spoke on “*Religious Literacy: What Every American (and Every Journalist) Needs to Know—But Doesn’t*.” On Nov. 14, 2007, I brought **Professor Randall Balmer**, professor of American religious history at Barnard College and frequently quoted commentator on religion and politics, to Syracuse to speak on “*God in the White House: How Faith has Shaped Politics from JFK to George W. Bush, Hillary Clinton and Beyond*.”

As **director of the Religion and Society Program** since June 2004, I have brought nationally-prominent figures from academia and journalism to campus to speak about the cross-roads of religion and other fields. These have included **Christine Brennan**, *USA Today* columnist and broadcast commentator, to speak about religion and sports (March 2007, an event planned with Professor Phil Arnold); and **Amy Sullivan**, an editor at *The Washington Monthly* and broadcast commentator on religion and national

politics (March 2006). In addition, in March 2005, I organized a symposium on the place of religion in the 2004 elections whose participants included the **Rev. Richard Land**, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission; the **Rev. Barry Lynn**, executive director of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State; **Professors John Green** of the Ray Bliss Institute of Applied Politics at the University of Akron and **Corwin Smidt** of the Henry Institute at Calvin College; and three journalists, **Barbara Bradley Hagerty**, National Public Radio, **Adelle Banks**, Religion News Service, and **Deborah Caldwell**, www.beliefnet.com. The previous semester, Fall '04, I arranged presentations on specific religious groups and the upcoming election by **Tom Roberts**, editor, The National Catholic Reporter, and **Salam al-Marayati**, executive director, the Muslim Public Affairs Council.

As **co-director of the Luce Project in Religion, Media and International Relations**, I invited **Dr. Douglas Johnston**, a former U.S. Assistant Secretary of the Navy, and president and founder of the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy in Washington to speak on "*Faith-Based Diplomacy: Bridging the Religious Divide*," on Nov. 8, 2007. I invited **Rami Khouri**, director of the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut," to speak on Middle Eastern politics on Nov. 13, 2007, under the title, "*Free at Last! Free at Last! Allahu Akbar, We Are Free at Last!*"

2. **Director, Muslim Cultures Summer Program, SU Abroad:** Appointed to position to administer and teach section of summer program in university's London Centre. Initial program held in summer 2008, in which I taught third and final section; asked to take over as acting director in August and complete grading, then re-organize program with SU London administrative staff for new launch in May-July 2009.
3. **Chair, Search Committee for Executive Director, Imagining America:** February to May 2007. For national executive search, I arranged and chaired meetings of nine-member committee, drew up agenda, made sure advertisements for position were circulated nationally, presided at interviews of final candidates, called for votes and served as communicator with university administration. At end of search process, committee unanimously recommended one of finalists, who accepted the position when the university extended an offer.
4. **Student academic advising:** Since June 2004, I have served as academic advisor to students majoring and minoring in the Religion and Society Program in the College of Arts & Sciences. It is a group that has ranged in number from seven to 17. In addition, I have served as a **first-year advisor** to students in Arts & Sciences in the academic years 2005-2006 and 2007-2008. In each year, I have had about 15 first-year students as advisees. (In 2005, I also served as a Summer

advisor to 15 first-year students whom I also taught in a six-week Fall '05 **First-year Forum class** within Arts & Sciences.)

5. Collaboration with other faculty:

- a. With **Dean Thomas V. Wolfe** and several chaplains at Hendricks Chapel, I planned a two-part discussion on First Amendment's religion clauses, as part of **Professor Charlotte Grimes'** series, "It's Your First: A Celebration of the First Amendment," at the Newhouse School. During the event, held September 25, 2007, I moderated a conversation with **Professor Bill Wiecek** of Syracuse's Law School on the non-establishment clause, and participated in a panel discussion on freedom of conscience.
- b. I joined with **Professor Robert Thompson** of Newhouse in a public discussion of "Religion and Popular Culture" at LeMoyne College, April 17, 2007. The event was arranged by University College in collaboration with LeMoyne as part of "Religion, Culture and Society" program.
- c. In 2006-07, I worked with **Associate Dean Sue Wadley**, College of Arts & Sciences, and **Professor Tazim Kassam**, Religion Department Chair, to establish new **Muslim Cultures Program** at SU Abroad's London Centre. We traveled to London in July 2006 to visit possible sites and interview local Muslim figures with potential to help in program's educational aims.
- d. Joined as a panelist, with **Professors Amy Falkner and Peter Moller** in event at Syracuse Stage, co-sponsored by the Newhouse School, "Marriage: Does It Really Matter? History, Politics, Religion, Culture & Law: The Syracuse Symposium on Marriage," on Sept. 19, 2004.

6. Work with university administration:

- a. I contributed, at her request, written material for **Chancellor Nancy Cantor's** dedicating Farraday House in London as SU Abroad's new London headquarters, January 2006.
- b. I served as a speaker and workshop leader at two events related to the university's collaboration with the Chautauqua Institution: a panel on religion in America at Lubin House on April 13, 2005, and a conference, "Chautauqua in London," that brought together prominent American and British Christians, Muslims and Jews at the Ismaili Muslim Centre, Nov. 15-17, 2005.
- c. With **Professor Micere Githae Mugo**, chair of the African-American Studies Department, and **Dean Cathryn R. Newton** of the College of Arts & Sciences, I

accompanied **Chancellor Cantor** to a conversation with Susan V. Berresford, president of the Ford Foundation, in New York City, on possible grant funding for Syracuse projects, on Sept. 21, 2005.

- d. I served as a panelist at **Chancellor Cantor's** inaugural symposium, "Universities and Moral Responsibility: Respecting Humanity at Home and Abroad," on Nov. 5, 2004, in Goldstein Auditorium.

SUMMARY OF CAREER PRIOR TO SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

I spent two years in academic research and two decades in newspaper journalism. In the latter, I devoted 16 years to a new field of reporting, covering the intersection of religion and public life. I pursued stories in every region of the United States, as well as in East Asia, Central America, Cuba, Europe and Southern Africa.

Previous professional experience:

Princeton University, December 2001 to December 2003.

I was a **visiting fellow/scholar in residence** at the Center for the Study of Religion, where I did research in American religious diversity and interfaith collaboration, supported by a grant I had received from the Ford Foundation.

The New York Times, June 1994 to December 2001.

I was recruited as a **national correspondent** to write news, feature and analytical articles on religion and American life. In the course of my work there, I received nearly 700 by-lines. Among the stories I covered were the intersection of religion and politics in the 1996 and 2000 presidential campaigns; two visits by Pope John Paul II to the United States; the mass suicides by Heaven's Gate and the Solar Temple; and September 11 attacks and their aftermath. I also covered stories about religion in England, the Netherlands and Zimbabwe.

The Washington Post, October 1992 to May 1994.

I worked as a **national staff writer**, reporting news about religion, a beat that included covering the federal government's siege of the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas, in 1993, the ordination of women as priests in the Church of England and the recurrent mixing of religion and politics in the Clinton White House.

The Wall Street Journal, July 1989 to September 1992.

I was recruited to work as the Journal's first **staff writer** to focus on religion in America, an assignment that allowed me to cover the emergence of American Muslims as religious force; the struggle among religious organizations over the ordination of gays and lesbians; and several court battles over church-state issues. I also wrote breaking business news stories for Dow Jones Wire Service.

I earlier worked as a religion reporter for *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* (1986-89); and a news reporter for *The Times-Picayune*, New Orleans (1984-86); *The Berkshire Eagle*, Pittsfield, Mass. (1980-84); and *The Arlington (Mass.) Advocate* (1977-78).

Education:

I hold a master's degree in modern history from **Oxford University**, 1980, and a bachelor's degree in history from **Pomona College**, Claremont, Calif., 1977.

Awards:

- a. *Honorary doctorate in humane letters*, Elmhurst College, Elmhurst, IL. 1997.
- b. *Distinguished Writer Award*, Presbyterian Writers' Guild. 2000.
- c. *Religious Liberty Award*, Associated Baptist Press. 1997.
- d. *Templeton Religion Writer of the Year Award*, Religion Newswriters Association. 1993.
- e. *Supple Memorial Award*, Religion Newswriters Association. 1993, 1991 and 1988.