

10-13-1969

New Religious Studies is under way at University of Montana

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Recommended Citation

University of Montana--Missoula. Office of University Relations, "New Religious Studies is under way at University of Montana" (1969). *University of Montana News Releases*. 5189.
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NEW RELIGIOUS STUDIES
IS UNDER WAY AT UM

MISSOULA--

A new Department of Religious Studies has been launched this fall in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Montana.

One room on the third floor of the UM Fine Arts Building has been remodeled into several offices to house the new department, including three new faculty members.

One, Dr. Ray L. Hart, is professor and chairman of the department. Dr. Hart was formerly associate professor of philosophical and systematic theology and director of graduate studies in theology at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tenn.

Dr. Robert W. Funk, also appointed to a professorship on the Missoula campus, has been professor of New Testament and Hellenistic Studies and chairman of the Graduate Department of Religion at Vanderbilt.

Lane C. McGaughy, who was instructor of theology at Vanderbilt Divinity School from 1967-69, has assumed his new appointment as research associate and instructor in religious studies at UM.

McGaughy, the latest to join the department, received his bachelor's degree from Ohio Wesleyan University in 1962 and a Bachelor of Divinity degree from Drew Theological Seminary in 1965. He was student minister at Methodist churches in Delaware and New Jersey prior to his / ^{Vanderbilt} appointment. He expects to receive his doctorate in New Testament studies from Vanderbilt in 1970.

Fall course offerings in the new program at UM include "Introduction to the Study of Religion," a two-quarter sequence course, and "Parables of Kafka and Jesus."

Another course, "The Bible in the American Tradition," is planned for winter quarter, while two courses, "Contemporary Theology" and "Paul," are forecast for spring quarter 1970.

The decision to include the department at UM came last spring following more than a year's study by the administration and committees of the UM faculty.

Said Dr. Hart, "We are very satisfied with the turnout at registration. About 185 students registered for the introductory course and 65 students enrolled for the parables course."

Dr. Hart said the department will have two main functions--the transmission of information from the volume of literature in world religion, and the sensitization to application of religious studies to personal existence.

Emphasis will be on the religious traditions that inform modern western and nonwestern cultures, and the American cultural situation in particular.

"UM is a good place for such a department," said Dr. Hart, "because of professional mobility and modern transportation."

He said consultants have urged UM to develop a model department of religious studies for state universities and colleges in various regions across the U.S.

He continued, "UM is following the trend of the times. Since the early 1960s religious studies have been emerging from seminaries and university divinity schools to become part of regular university curricula.

"At UM, the student of religion ideally will be afforded critical distance from his own religious tradition" said Dr. Hart.

"We expect to add two or three faculty members a year until the department reaches full strength of 10-12 faculty members," he said. "Then we will be able to offer the master's and doctoral degrees when library sources become available.

"When the faculty reaches between six and seven members, we will be able to offer a bachelor's degree with religious studies as a departmental major," Dr. Hart said.