

William Underwood  
[wunderwo@oberlin.edu](mailto:wunderwo@oberlin.edu)

---

## ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

Assistant Professor of Religious Ethics and Critical Thought 2024-  
Oberlin College, Oberlin, OH

---

## EDUCATION

Ph.D. Divinity School, University of Chicago 2024  
Dissertation: “‘The Antitheses of Religion’: Marx, Materialism and the Making of American  
Religious Studies” (*Awarded Distinction*)

M.A. Divinity School, University of Chicago 2017

B.A. Religious Studies, Brown University 2015  
*Magna cum laude*, departmental honors, Phi Beta Kappa

---

## RESEARCH INTERESTS AND TEACHING FIELDS

Modern Religious Thought • History of Christian Thought • Modern European philosophy •  
Philosophy of religions • Continental philosophy and critical theory • Marx and Marxism •  
Religions in the Americas • US Christianity • Evangelicalism • Race and Religion • Religion and the  
Cold War • Materiality, materialism, and material religion • History of the study of religion

---

## SELECTED FELLOWSHIPS, AWARDS, AND GRANTS

Excellence in Teaching Prize 2024  
University of Chicago Divinity School

American Examples Working Group, Selected Participant 2024  
Department of Religious Studies, University of Alabama

Mellon Dissertation Completion Fellowship 2023-2024  
Andrew W. Mellon Foundation/University of Chicago Divinity School

Marty Junior Fellow 2023-2024  
Martin Marty Center for the Public Understanding of Religion  
University of Chicago Divinity School

Prize Lectureship in Critical Race & Ethnic Studies 2023

Center for the Study of Race, Politics, and Culture, University of Chicago

Conference Organizing Grants from: the France-Chicago Center; the Franke Institute for the Humanities; the Karla Scherer Center for the Study of American Culture; University of Chicago Graduate Council; University of Chicago Divinity Students Association 2019

Jerald Brauer Endowed Seminar, Selected Participant 2019  
Martin Marty Center for the Public Understanding of Religion, University of Chicago

DAAD Intensive Language Course Grant 2018  
Goethe Institut, Freiburg i. Brsg., Germany

Graduate Aid Initiative Doctoral Fellowship 2017-2024  
University of Chicago, Divinity School

---

## PUBLICATIONS

### Peer-Refereed Articles and Chapters

“True Americanism in the Godless Institution: Making Religion in Interwar America” in Michael Altman, ed. *American Examples: New Conversations about Religion, Volume Four* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, forthcoming 2025)

### Book Reviews

Review of Matthew Day, *No Bosses, No Gods: Marx, Engels, and the Twenty-first Century Study of Religion* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023) for *Journal of Religion* (forthcoming, 2024)

---

## CONFERENCES AND PANELS ORGANIZED

“Alternative Perspectives on Christian Nationalism,” at *American Society of Church History*, Chicago, IL, January 2025, co-organized with Claire Hautot, Lucia Hulsether, and Charles McCrary

“What’s the Matter? Critical Reflections on the Material Turn,” at *American Academy of Religion*, San Diego, CA, November 2024, co-organized with Jessica Albrecht and Samuel Catlin

“Economies of Violence: Race, Pathology, Capital, Reason,” at *American Academy of Religion*, San Diego, CA, November 2024, co-organized with Zoe Anthony, Kirsten Collins, Matthew Peterson, and Daniel Wyche

“Specters of Marx, Theological and Political,” at *American Academy of Religion*, Denver, CO, November 2022, co-organized with Ryan Bingham, Filipe Maia, Rebekah Rosenfeld and Rafael Vizcaino

*Religion’s Turn: A Chicago Conference in the Continental Philosophy of Religions*. University of Chicago, Chicago, IL, October 2019, co-organized with Samuel Catlin, Ryan Coyne, and Matthew Peterson; keynote address by Hent de Vries

---

## PRESENTATIONS

### Invited Talks and Events

“True Americanism in the Godless Institution: Making Religion in Interwar America” at *American Examples*. University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL, February 2024

“‘We Make and Break Our Gods Daily,’ or, How to Philosophize with a Saltcellar.” Oberlin Department of Religion, Oberlin, OH, December 2023

### Selected Paper Presentations

“The Epoch of Annihilation: On the Formal Violence of Capital” at *American Academy of Religion*, San Diego, CA, November 2024

“In the Name of Lesser Gods: Fetishism and the Dilemmas of Materiality” at *American Academy of Religion*, San Diego, CA, November 2024

“True Americanism in the Godless Institution: Making US Religious Studies in the First Red Scare” at *American Academy of Religion*, San Antonio, TX, November 2023

“‘The Flesh Profiteth Nothing’: Materialism and the Christian Question,” at *American Academy of Religion*, Denver, CO, November 2022

“The Religion of Criticism” at *Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy Annual Conference*, College Station, TX, October 2022

“Religious Studies Without Guarantees” at *The Fetish, and Other Ghosts*, University of Indiana, Bloomington, IN, April 2022

“‘On the Jewish Question’: Marx at the End of Reason” at *Jewish Studies Workshop*. University of Chicago, Chicago, IL, February 2020

“The Turn at 20: Continental Philosophy of Religions and the Academic Study of Religion” at *Religion’s Turn: A Chicago Conference in the Continental Philosophy of Religions*. University of Chicago, Chicago, IL, October 2019

“Audre Lorde against the Phenomenologists” at *Ways of Knowing*. Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, October 2017

---

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

### Primary Instructor

### *Oberlin College*

Religion and Social Change	Spring 2025
Religion and Abolition from Slavery to the Prison-Industrial Complex	Spring 2025
Religion, Reason, and Empire	Fall 2024
Is Another World Possible? Utopianism and its Discontents	Fall 2024

### *Elswhere*

Race, Religion, and Emancipation (University of Chicago)	Spring 2023
Introduction to Philosophy of Religion (University of Rochester; Groveland CF)	Summer 2022

### **Teaching Assistant**

Sacred Mushrooms and Spirit Molecules (University of Chicago)	Spring 2021
Introduction to the Study of Religion (University of Chicago)	Fall 2019

### **Pedagogical Training**

Certification in the Craft of Teaching in the Academic Study of Religion, University of Chicago Divinity School	2022
Course Design and College Teaching, Chicago Center for Teaching	2021
Principles of Teaching Writing, University of Chicago Writing Program	2018

---

## **ACADEMIC AND INSTITUTIONAL SERVICE**

Steering Committee Member	2024-2026
Cultural History of the Study of Religion Unit American Academy of Religion	
Divinity School Career Advising Intern UChicagoGRAD, University of Chicago	2021-2022
General Manager, Grounds of Being: The Divinity School Coffee Shop University of Chicago Divinity School	2017-2019, 2021
Coordinator, Philosophy of Religions Workshop Council for Advanced Studies, University of Chicago	2018-2020

---

## **RESEARCH LANGUAGES**

English (native), French (advanced), German (advanced)

---

## **PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS**

American Academy of Religion (AAR)  
Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (SPEP)

## **PROFESSIONAL REFERENCES**

Ryan Coyne (dissertation chair)  
Associate Professor of Philosophy of Religions and Theology  
University of Chicago Divinity School  
Email: [rcoyne@uchicago.edu](mailto:rcoyne@uchicago.edu)

Sarah Hammerschlag (dissertation reader)  
Associate Professor of Religion and Literature, Philosophy of Religions, and History of Judaism  
University of Chicago Divinity School  
Email: [sehammer@uchicago.edu](mailto:sehammer@uchicago.edu)

Sarah Imhoff (dissertation reader)  
Associate Professor  
Religious Studies and Borns Jewish Studies Program, Indiana University, Bloomington  
Email: [seimhoff@indiana.edu](mailto:seimhoff@indiana.edu)

Angie Heo (dissertation reader)  
Assistant Professor of the Anthropology and Sociology of Religion  
University of Chicago Divinity School  
Email: [heo@uchicago.edu](mailto:heo@uchicago.edu)

Curtis Evans (field examiner)  
Associate Professor of American Religions and the History of Christianity  
University of Chicago Divinity School  
Email: [cjevans@uchicago.edu](mailto:cjevans@uchicago.edu)