

Russell P. Johnson

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[Accurate as of November 2024. Please email for an up-to-date CV.]

Academic Appointments

Assistant Director, Undergraduate Religious Studies Program and Core Sequence, University of Chicago (2021–present)

Divinity Teaching Fellow, University of Chicago (2019–2021)

Education

PhD, Philosophy of Religions, University of Chicago, 2019

Dissertation: “Communication Ethics in Social Conflict: Nonviolent and Christian Perspectives”

M.A., Philosophy, University of Chicago, 2015

M.T.S., Duke University, 2012, *Magna cum Laude*

B.A., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2009, with Highest Honors, with Distinction

Triple major in Religious Studies, Political Science, and Communication Studies

Publications

Books

Opposites Attract: A Primer on Dialogue and Dialectic (under contract, Integratio Press, 2025)

Beyond Civility in Social Conflict: Dialogue, Critique, and Religious Ethics (Cambridge University Press, 2024)

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

“The Arc of the Moral Universe: Narrative Theology and Constructive Critique,” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 43.2 (Fall/Winter 2023)

“Inhuman, All Too Inhuman: Zombies, Zealots, and the Myth of Religious Irrationality” for *Journal of Religion and Film* (revise and resubmit)

“The Gospel in a Polarized Society: Newbigin and Roberts on Ephesian Protest” for *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 57.3 (Summer 2022)

“Building Peace in a Culture War: Christian Witness in a Polarized Society” in *Political Theology* 22.3 (April 2021)

“Doing Justice to Difference: Stanley Hauerwas and Public Theology” in *Modern Theology* 36.3 (July 2020)

“The Ministering Critic: Kierkegaard’s Theology of Communication” in *Religions* 11.1 (January 2020)

“Pragmatism without the –Ism: Cavell, Rhetoric, and the Role of Doctrines in Philosophy,” in *American Journal of Theology and Philosophy* 40.2 (Fall 2019)

“Won’t Get Fooled Again: Wittgensteinian Philosophy and the Rhetoric of Empiricism,” in *Sophia* 59 (June 2019)

“The Gospel and the Prosperity Gospel: Joel Osteen’s *Your Best Life Now* Reconsidered” in *Theology* 121.1 (January 2018)

Invited Articles

“Dialogue, Difference, and Disagreement: Martin Buber and Polarization” in *Touchstone* 40.2 (July 2022)

Book Chapters

“National Amnesia: The Competing Legacies of Martin Luther King Jr.,” co-written with Matthew Vega, in *Saints in Divided Societies*, ed. Aaron T. Hollander (forthcoming, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2024)

“An Open Letter to Christian Bakers in Indiana,” in *Faith Across Traditions*, ed. Jacob J. Prahlow (Arise, 2024)

“Another Solution Will Present Itself: *The Phantom Menace*, Daoism, and Doing Without Trying” in *Star Wars and Philosophy Strikes Back*, eds. Kevin Decker and Jason Eberl (Blackwell, 2022)

“‘Not Gonna Turn Invisible’: *Into the Spider-Verse* and Black Theology,” co-written with Matthew Vega, in *Theology and Spider-Man*, ed. George Tsakridis (Fortress, 2021)

“Lifting Rocks: Camus, Sainthood, and the Anti-heroic in *The Last Jedi*” in *Theology and the Star Wars Universe*, ed. Benjamin Espinoza (Rowman and Littlefield, 2021)

“‘I Wanted to Do Something Outrageous’: On the Limits of Parody in *True Lies*,” co-written with Naaman Wood, in *A Critical Companion to James Cameron*, eds. Adam Barkman and Antonio Sanna (Lexington, 2018)

“Abraham Joshua Heschel,” “George Lindbeck,” “Mohandas Gandhi,” “Peace,” “Reconciliation,” “Rhetoric,” in *The Dictionary of Philosophy of Religion*, eds. Charles Taliaferro and Elsa Marty (Bloomsbury, 2018)

“Stanley Hauerwas,” in *An Encyclopedia of Communication Ethics: Goods in Contention*, eds. Ronald Arnett, Annette M. Holba, and Susan Mancino (Peter Lang, 2018)

“Nicholas of Cusa,” in *Words and Witnesses: Communication Studies in Christian Thought from Athanasius to Desmond Tutu* eds. Robert H. Woods and Naaman Wood (Hendrickson, 2018)

Book Reviews

Christianity as a Way of Life: A Systematic Theology by Kevin W. Hector (Yale University Press, 2023), symposium convener for *Syndicate Theology* (forthcoming, 2024)

A Thinking Reed: Pascal’s Voice, Yesterday and Today by Stephen N. Williams (Cascade Books, 2023), for *The Journal of Religion* (forthcoming, 2024)

On Believing: Being Right in a World of Possibilities by David Hunter (Oxford, 2022) for *American Journal of Theology and Philosophy* (forthcoming, 2024)

The Ethics of Tainted Legacies: Human Flourishing After Traumatic Pasts by Karen V. Guth (Cambridge University Press, 2022), for *Theology Today* 81.2 (August 2024)

A Field Guide to Christian Nonviolence by David Cramer and Myles Werntz (Baker Academic, 2022), for *Studies in Christian Ethics* 36.2 (May 2023)

What Do We Do When Nobody Is Listening? Leading the Church in a Polarized Society by Robin Lovin (Eerdmans, 2022), *That We May Be One: Practicing Unity in a Divided Church* by Gary B. Agee (Eerdmans, 2022), and *Now What? How to Move Forward When We’re Divided (About Basically Everything)* by Sarah Stewart Holland and Beth Shivers (Revell, 2022) for *Christian Century* (November 2022)

Navigating Post-Truth and Alternative Facts: Religion and Science as Political Theology ed. Jennifer Baldwin (Lexington 2018) for *American Journal of Theology and Philosophy* 43.2–3 (September 2022)

Introducing Prophetic Pragmatism: A Dialogue on Hope, the Philosophy of Race, and the Spiritual Blues by Jacob Goodson and Brad Elliot Stone (Lexington, 2019) for *American Journal of Theology and Philosophy* 42.2 (May 2021)

Evangelism After Pluralism by Brian Stone (Baker, 2018), for *Anabaptist Witness* 7.2 (November 2020)

Kierkegaard and the Legitimacy of the Comic: Understanding the Role of Irony, Humor, and the Comic for Ethics and Religion by Will Williams (Lexington, 2018) for *Christianity and Communication Studies Network* (September 2020)

Healthy Conflict in Contemporary American Society: From Enemy to Adversary by Jason A. Springs (Cambridge, 2018) for *The Journal of Religion* 100.3 (July 2020)

The Perilous Sayings: Interpreting Christ’s Call to Obedience in the Sermon on the Mount by Amos Winarto Oei (Langham, 2017) for the *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 40.1 (Spring/Summer 2020)

The Myth Awakens: Canon, Conservatism, and Fan Reception of Star Wars ed. Ken Derry and John C. Lyden (Cascade Books, 2018) for *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* (March 2020)

Humanity in God's Image by Claudia Welz (Oxford, 2016) for *The Journal of Religion* 98.3 (April 2018)

Public Scholarship

Editor, *Sightings* (2022–present)

Columnist, *Sightings* (2019–present)

“First Impressions: Expectations and Tone in Syllabus Construction” in *Teaching Matters* (April 2024)

“Social Media and Identifying as a Christian” in *Theology and Society* (October, 2022)

“The Difference Between Heroes and Martyrs,” “How War Bypasses Morality,” “Demanding Peace Even in the Absence of War in Israel and Gaza,” in *Religion News Service* (January 2020; October 2020; November 2023)

“Waiting with Simone Weil: Atheist-Christian Dialogue as Spiritual Practice” in *Ecumenical Trends* 48.8 (September 2019)

“Public Theology—It’s Not for Everybody” in *Political Theology Network* (September 2018), co-written with Brandy Daniels

“My Lai after Fifty Years” in *Political Theology Network* (March 2018)

“The Struggle Is Real: Understanding the American ‘Culture War’” in *Religion and Culture Forum* (July 2017)

“Behind Blue Eyes: Consubstantiality and the Unthinkable” in *The Other Journal* 27 (February 2017)

“A Religion of Losers: Dissenting Voices in Church History” in *The Other Journal*, 23.5 (May 2014)

Teaching

University of Chicago

“Villains: Evil in Philosophy, Religion, and Film,” undergraduate course, spring 2020, winter 2022, 2024

“Truth, Half-Truth, and Post-Truth,” undergraduate course, winter 2020, 2024

“*Star Wars* and Religion,” undergraduate course, spring 2019, 2021, 2023, 2025

“Religion: Cosmos, Conscience, and Community,” undergraduate course, spring 2022, fall 2022–spring 2023, spring 2024, fall 2024

“bell hooks and Cornel West: Education for Resistance,” undergraduate course, winter 2023

“Arguing on the Internet: Persuasion and Polarization,” undergraduate course, winter 2022

“Human Being and Citizen,” undergraduate course, fall–winter 2019–2020, fall 2020

“Religion and the Nobel Peace Prize,” undergraduate course, fall 2019 (course offered)

“Reasons of the Heart: Philosophy, Rhetoric, and the Passions,” undergraduate course, Chicago Academic Achievement Program, summer 2018

Dominican University

“Introduction to Theology,” undergraduate course, Dominican University, fall 2016

Teaching Awards

Chicago Center for Teaching Excellence in Course Design, Honorable Mention (2019), University of Chicago

Susan Colver-Rosenberger Educational Prize (2019), University of Chicago

Divinity School Prize for Excellence in Teaching (2018), University of Chicago Divinity School

Alma Wilson Teaching Lectureship, University of Chicago Divinity School (2018)

Pedagogy Training

Pedagogy Fellows Program at the University of Chicago (2022), Associate Pedagogy Fellows Program (2022–2024)

Mentoring Graduate Students Workshop Series at the University of Chicago (2021–2022)

Inclusive Pedagogy Workshop Series at the University of Chicago (2019–2020)

Chicago Center for Teaching Certificate (completed 2019)

Mental Health First Aid Certificate Program (2018)

Wabash Center Teaching Seminars (2016–2017)

Certificate in the Craft of Teaching in the Academic Study of Religion, University of Chicago (2015)

Invited Lectures and Public Lectures

“What Really Happened on Dante’s Trip to Hell?” at the University of St. Mary of the Lake (February 2024)

“Heroes, Saints, and *Star Wars*” at the University of St. Mary of the Lake (January 2023)

(In the pandemic, lectured remotely at Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, the University of Chicago, Duke University, the University of Scranton, and the University of Virginia)

“*Star Wars* and Religion” at the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago (December 2019)

“The Psychology of Myth” at DePaul University (November 2019)

“Unrest: The Implacability of Cornel West” at the University of Chicago, panel discussion with Dr. Cornel West (February 2018)

“Self-Betraying Education: Freire and Kierkegaard on Telling It Slant” at the University of Illinois Philosophy of Education Workshop (January 2016)

Conference Papers

“Power in Dialogue: Mennonite Decision-Making and the Virtues of Dissent” at the American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting (San Diego, 2024)

“The Next Word: Tutu and Bakhtin on Telling the Truth” at the North American Academy of Ecumenists Annual Conference (Toronto, 2024)

“The Arc of the Moral Universe: Narrative Theology and Constructive Critique” at the Society of Christian Ethics Annual Meeting (Chicago, 2023)

“Like and Unlike: Mimesis, Social Identity Theory, and the Barriers to Online Dialogue” at the American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting (San Antonio, 2021)

“The Gospel in a Polarized Society: Roberts and Newbigin on Ephesian Protest” at the North American Academy of Ecumenists Annual Conference (remote, 2021)

“Reconciling the Divided Self: *Ubuntu* Theology and Self-Plurality Psychology” at the Society of Christian Ethics Annual Meeting (remote, 2021)

“Transcendental Empiricism: Martin Luther King and the World Behind the World” at the American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting (remote, 2020)

“Beyond Either/Or: Cornel West’s Kierkegaardian Style” at the American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting (Denver, 2018)

“We Find Ourselves in Disagreement” at the Department for the Study of Religion Graduate Symposium, University of Toronto (Toronto, 2018)

“The Psychology of Reconciliation: Internal Conflicts and Conflict Resolution” at the John D. Stratton Conference on Nonviolence in Theory and Practice (Ashland, Ohio, 2018)

“‘An Enemy I Couldn’t See’: Dehumanization as a Guide to Humanity” at the University of Chicago/ Notre Dame Conference on Theology and Religious Ethics (South Bend, 2018)

“Un-American Activities: McCarthyism, Nazism, and Islamophobia” at the American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting (Boston, 2017)

“A Scene in a Danish Graveyard: History, Hermeneutics, and Domestication” at the Duke Graduate Conference in Theology (Durham, North Carolina, 2017)

“Trust, *Ubuntu*, and a Sustainable Peace” at the Enhancing Life Project Capstone Conference (Chicago, 2017)

“Rewording the Gospel: The Tradition of Rhetorical Theology” at the Constructive Studies Conference at the University of Chicago Divinity School (Chicago, 2017)

“Self-Betraying Education: Freire and Kierkegaard on Telling It Slant” at the Society for the Philosophical Study of Education Annual Conference (Chicago, 2016)

“Self-Multiplicity in Hume, James, Hume, and James” at the Harvard Divinity School “Ways of Knowing” Graduate Conference (Cambridge, 2016)

“Unsettling Theology: Desmond Tutu’s Case for Incompleteness” at the McCormick Ethics Colloquium at Loyola University (Chicago, 2016)

“Godwin’s Law: John Wisdom on Why Every Argument Ends with Hitler” at the University of Chicago/ Notre Dame Conference on Theology and Religious Ethics (South Bend, 2015)

“Pascal, Kierkegaard, Osteen” at the University of Virginia Graduate Colloquium on Theology, Ethics, and Culture (Charlottesville, 2014)

Service

Co-Chair, Ethics Unit, American Academy of Religion (2023–present)

Board Member and Application Committee, Fellowship of Protestant Ethics (2023–present)

Core Conversations Organizing Committee, University of Chicago (2022–2023)

Panelist, “Practical Assessment Design” and “Chatting about ChatGPT: Situating Generative AI in Your Course,” Chicago Center for Teaching and Learning (2023)

Refereed papers for *Political Theology*, *The Journal of Religion*, *Philosophies*, *Religions*, and the National Communication Association

Consulted on a Pew Research Center study, “How Religion Intersects with Americans’ Views on the Environment,” published November 2022

Panelist, Forum on Teaching in the Core, University of Chicago College, 2021, 2022

Panelist, “Introduction to Syllabus Design,” Craft of Teaching, University of Chicago (2020)

Facilitator, Hearing One Another, University of Chicago (2018–present)

Coordinator, 2016 University of Chicago/ Notre Dame Conference on Theology and Religious Ethics, topic: “Theology, Ethics, and the Death of God”

Founder and Coordinator, UChicago 101s (2012–2019)

Relevant Work

Mellon/PATHS Summer Internship, Writing Program, University of Chicago (2020)

Scholar-in-Residence, Better Angels (renamed Braver Angels) (2018)

Editorial Assistant, *The Journal of Religion* (2017–2019)

Project Assistant, Enhancing Life Project, for the Templeton Foundation (2017)

Administrative Assistant, University of Chicago Divinity School (2012–2016)

Awards and Honors

William Rainey Harper Dissertation-Year Fellowship (2018–2019), University of Chicago

Featured in *The Mennonite* magazine “20 under 40” (2016)

Ray C. Petry Scholarship (full tuition) from Duke Divinity School (2009)

Phi Beta Kappa (2009)

Bernard Boyd Memorial Fellowship for Excellence in Religious Studies from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (2009)

Academic Seminars

Faith in the Story: Trialogues for Enhancing Religious Literacy, University of Notre Dame (2022, 2023)

Accountability as a Virtue, Summer Workshop, Baylor University (2021)

Religion and its Publics Emerging Scholars Workshop, University of Virginia (2018)

Lumen Christi Summer Seminar on John Henry Newman, Oxford University (2014)

Professional Societies

Religious Communication Association (2020–present)

Fellowship of Protestant Ethics (2020–present)

Society of Christian Ethics (2015–present)

American Academy of Religion (2011–present)