

NANCY LEVENE
Department of Religious Studies
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RESEARCH AND TEACHING INTERESTS

Interpretation in philosophy, religion, art
Social and political thought
Pedagogy

POSITIONS

2019–	Professor, Religious Studies, Yale University
2016–2019	Associate Professor, Religious Studies, Yale University
2013–2016	Senior Research Scholar, Yale University
2004–2013	Associate Professor, Religious Studies, Indiana University, Bloomington
2000–2004	Assistant Professor, Religion, Williams College

PUBLICATIONS

Work in progress

Manuscript on interpretation
Reconsideration of first book, *Religious Studies Review*

Books

[Powers of Distinction: On Religion and Modernity](#) (University of Chicago Press, 2017).
American Academy of Religion Book Award, category of constructive-reflective studies, 2018.

[Spinoza's Revelation: Religion, Democracy, and Reason](#) (Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Edited projects

[I swear](#), co-curated with Mona Oraby, forum on oaths, *The Immanent Frame: A Social Science*
Research Council blog on secularism, religion, and the public sphere, August – October, 2019.

[Is this all there is](#), co-curated with Courtney Bender, special forum for the tenth anniversary of *The Immanent Frame: A Social Science* Research Council blog on secularism, religion, and the public sphere. 90 entries, October 2017 – March 2018.

[Textual Reasonings: Jewish Philosophy and Text Study at the End of the Twentieth Century](#) (co-editor with Peter Ochs) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

Articles and chapters

- [“The Scientific Study of Religion: A Very Brief Reply to Donald Wiebe.”](#) *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 33.1 (2021): 95–97.
- [“The Outside.”](#) Review Article of Robert A. Yelle, *Sovereignty and the Sacred: Secularism and the Political Economy of Religion* (University of Chicago Press, 2019), *History of Religions* 60.2 (2020): 132–150.
- [“Canon, Repetition, and the Opponent: Interpretation in the History of Ideas.”](#) *Journal of Religious Ethics* 48.1 (2020): 122–150.
- [“The Religion of Confrontation: Concepts, Violence, and Scholarship.”](#) *Harvard Theological Review* 113.1 (2020): 111–137.
- [“Structure and History and X.”](#) *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 31.1 (2019): 40–56.
- [“Marx’s Eleventh Thesis and the Politics of the Study of Religion: Lessons from *The Sacred is the Profane*.”](#) *The Journal of Religion* 98.2 (2018): 224–246.
- “Spinoza the Radical.” In *Reassessing the Radical Enlightenment*, ed. Steffen Ducheyne (New York: Routledge, 2017), 107–126.
- [“Self-organization Divided by Two.”](#) Forum on Jonathan Sheehan and Dror Wahrman, *Invisible Hands: Self-Organization and the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 18 (2017), 93–96.
- [“Courses and Canons in the Study of Religion \(with continual reference to Jonathan Z. Smith\).”](#) *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80.4 (2012): 998–1024.
- [“Does Spinoza Think the Bible is Sacred?”](#) *Jewish Quarterly Review* 101.4 (2011): 545–573.
- [“Memento Mori: Gary Lease and the Study of Religion.”](#) *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 21.2 (2009): 139–156.
- [“Traces of History in St. Anselm.”](#) *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 20.4 (2008): 371–384.
- [“Introduction to Special Topic: Novelty, Presence, and History: Brief Pre-modern Discourses.”](#) *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 20.4 (2008): 369–370.
- “Athens and Jerusalem: Myths and Mirrors in Strauss’s Vision of the West.” *Hebraic Political Studies*, 3.2 (2008): 113–155.
- [“Reflections on Knowledge and Obscurity from Anselm to Freud.”](#) *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 89.1/2 (2006): 101–134.
- [“Sources of History: Myth and Image.”](#) *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 74.1 (2006): 79–101. Focus Issue: The Future of the Study of Religion in the Academy.
- [“Response to Gavin Flood.”](#) *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 74.1 (2006): 59–63.
- [“Reply to José Cabezón.”](#) *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 74.1 (2006): 105–106.
- [“The Fall of Eden: Reasons and Reasoning in the Bible and the Talmud.”](#) *Philosophy Today* 50.1 (2006): 6–23.

“From Law to Ethics... and Back: Trajectories in Jewish Ethics,” in *Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics*, ed. William Schweiker (Cambridge: Blackwell, 2005), 188–196.

[“Levinas’s Beginnings: Ethics, Politics, and Origins.”](#) *Journal of the European Legacy* 9.1 (2004): 12–54.

“Judaism’s Body Politic,” in *Women and Gender in Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Hava Tirosh-Samuelson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 234–262.

“Introduction” and “Epilogue,” in *Textual Reasonings: Jewish Philosophy and Text Study at the End of the Twentieth Century*, eds. Nancy Levene and Peter Ochs (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 15–27; 278–288.

[“Spinoza’s Bible.”](#) *Philosophy and Theology* 13.1 (2001): 93–142.

[“Ethics and Interpretation, or How to Study Spinoza’s *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* without Strauss.”](#) *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 10.1 (2001): 57–110.

Online essays and reviews

[Modernity](#), in [A Universe of Terms](#), *The Immanent Frame*, June 12, 2020.

Cambridge Core [Religion Blog entry](#) on “The Religion of Confrontation: Concepts, Violence, and Scholarship,” January 20, 2020.

[I swear](#), exchange forum on oaths, *The Immanent Frame*, August 27, 2019.

[Practices of relation: Khawaja + Levene](#), inaugural entry in new exchange forum, *Practices of relation*. Posted on *The Immanent Frame*, April 2, 2019.

[This](#), special project [Is this all there is](#), curated by N. Levene and Courtney Bender. Posted on *The Immanent Frame: A Social Science Research Council blog*, January 19, 2018.

[Another story than the other story](#), exchange forum *Traditions of immanence*, curated by Joseph Blankholm and Carlo Invernizzi-Accetti. Posted on *The Immanent Frame: A Social Science Research Council blog*, September 12, 2017.

[On inclusion](#), essay adaptation from *Powers of Distinction* for *The Immanent Frame: A Social Science Research Council blog*, June 22, 2016.

[The list](#), for [Frequencies: A Collaborative Genealogy of Spirituality](#), curated by Kathryn Lofton and John Lardas Modern. Entry 100 (of 100), January 18, 2012.

[Paul Kahn’s roots](#), exchange forum on Paul Kahn, *Political Theology: Four New Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (Columbia University Press, 2011). Posted on *The Immanent Frame: A Social Science Research Council blog*, July 14, 2011.

[Commentaries on our age](#), exchange forum on Craig Calhoun, Michael Warner, Jonathan van Antwerpen, eds., *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age* (Harvard University Press, 2010). Posted on *The Immanent Frame: A Social Science Research Council blog*, July 8, 2010.

[The third rose](#), review of *Youth without Youth*, by Francis Ford Coppola. Posted on *The Immanent Frame*: A Social Science Research Council blog, April 9, 2008.

[The forces unleashed](#), exchange forum on Mark Lilla, *The Stillborn God* (Knopf, 2007). Posted on *The Immanent Frame*: A Social Science Research Council blog, January 1, 2008.

Newsletters

“The State of Israel and the state of Israel,” *Sh ’ma* (December 2004).

“Who is Sleeping in the Bed of Sodom?” CLAGSNews, CUNY Graduate Center, The Center for LGBTQ Studies 10 (Summer 2000).

Book reviews

Brayton Polka, *Between Philosophy and Religion: Spinoza, the Bible, and Modernity*. Volume 1: Hermeneutics and Ontology; Volume 2: Politics and Ethics (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007), *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78 (2010), 1211–1215.

Ivan Strenski, *Thinking About Religion: An Historical Introduction to Theories of Religion* (Blackwell, 2006) and Strenski, ed. *Thinking about Religion: A Reader* (Blackwell, 2006). *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 75 (2007), 1018–1023.

Steven B. Smith, *Spinoza’s Book of Life: Freedom and Redemption in the Ethics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003) and Aaron V. Garrett, *Meaning in Spinoza’s Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). *AJS Review* 30 (2006), 454–460.

J. Samuel Preus, *Spinoza and the Irrelevance of Biblical Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 94 (2004), 191–201.

ACADEMIC HONORS, GRANTS, AWARDS

- 2018 American Academy of Religion Book Award, category of constructive-reflective studies.
- 2017 Fellow, Whitney Humanities Center, Yale University.
- 2017 Frederick W. Hilles Publication Grant, Whitney Humanities Center, Yale University.
- 2012 College of Arts and Sciences Trustees Teaching Award, Indiana University.
- 2011 Election to American Society for the Study of Religion.
- 2007 Robert A. Borns and Sandra S. Borns Program in Jewish Studies Travel Grant.
- 2006 New Frontiers in the Arts and Humanities Traveling Fellowship.
- 2005 Indiana University Summer Faculty Fellowship.
- 2003–04 Class of 1945 World Fellowship, Williams College.

EDUCATION

- 2000 Ph.D., Committee on the Study of Religion, Harvard University
dissertation: “Spinoza and the Dawn of Enlightenment: Reason, Interpretation, and Politics in the Early-Modern West.”
Hilary Putnam and Jay M. Harris, co-advisers
- 1997 Research Fellow, Hebrew University and the Jerusalem Spinoza Institute
- 1995 A.M., Committee on the Study of Religion, Harvard University
- 1993 M.T.S., Harvard Divinity School

PAPERS AND PANELS

- 2024 Yale Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning panel on teaching in view of Israel-Palestine and other challenging topics, August.
- 2022 “Why Schmitt?,” panel on 100th anniversary of Schmitt’s *Political Theology*, Columbia University, October.
- 2022 On Graeber and Wengrow’s *The Dawn of Everything*, symposium, Tufts University, October.
- 2021 Respondent, “The Use and Abuse of Judaism for Critique,” Association of Jewish Studies Annual Meeting.
- 2021 Respondent, Clare Carlisle, *Spinoza’s Religion* (Princeton UP, 2021), Department of Philosophy and Centre for Jewish Studies, University of Toronto, and North American Spinoza Society.
- 2020 Respondent, “New Wine from Old Thought,” Association of Jewish Studies Annual Meeting.
- 2019 “Canon, Repetition, and the Opponent,” Philosophy of Religion Workshop, University of Chicago Divinity School.
- 2018 “Marx, for example,” New Avenues for Scholarship on Religion, Modernity, and the Secular: The Case of the Long Nineteenth Century, Nineteenth Century Theology Group, American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting.
- 2018 “Criticism,” 40th anniversary of Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, Critical Theory and Discourses Group, American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting.
- 2018 “Jewish Questions to Spinoza,” Spinoza’s Universe, Wasserman Jewish Studies Center, Baruch College, CUNY.
- 2018 Symposium on Clémence Boulouque, “A Religious Crucible: Kabbalah, Interreligious Encounters, and the Margins of Modernity in the Work of Elia Benamozegh (1823–1900),” Columbia University.
- 2017 “The History of Ideas,” symposium on “History’s Religion Revisited” at the Collegium for Advanced Study, Helsinki, Finland.
- 2016 “Vice Versa,” Author Meets Critics: Thomas A. Lewis’s Why Philosophy Matters for the Study of Religion & Vice Versa (Oxford, 2015), American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting.
- 2015 “Religion, Judaism, Modernity,” Association of Jewish Studies Annual Meeting.
- 2014 “An Answer to the Question ‘What is the Enlightenment?,’” Berkeley Center for the Study of Religion.
- 2014 “The Elementary Forms of Religion in Modernity,” Hardigg Family Fund Lecture, Dartmouth College.
- 2013 “J.Z. Smith’s *On Teaching Religion*,” North American Association for the Study of Religion, American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting.
- 2013 “Challenging Schempp: Thoughts on the Study of Religion in Society,” Religious Studies 50 Years after Schempp: History, Institutions, Theory. Department of Religious Studies, Indiana University.
- 2012 “Kant and the Worlds of Reason and Religion,” Department of Religious Studies, Yale University.
- 2012 “Can Religion Disappear?” Opening remarks, Graduate Student Conference, Department of Religious Studies, Indiana University.
- 2010 Respondent, “Theorizing Religion,” North American Association for the Study of Religion at the American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting.
- 2010 Panelist, “Political Theology, Jewish and Democratic: A Discussion of Bonnie Honig’s *Emergency Politics*,” American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting.
- 2009 “From Foucault to Descartes in the Study of Religion,” Roundtable on Theoretical-Critical Issues in the

- Study of Religion,” American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting.
- 2009 Respondent to Julia Lupton’s “Paul Shakespeare,” Religious Renaissance Symposium, Indiana University.
- 2009 “Body, Mind, Blood: Philosophical Variations on the Jewish Question,” Jewish Philosophy: Past Approaches, New Directions, under the auspices of the Canada Research Chair in Modern Jewish Thought at McMaster University and at King’s University College at the University of Western Ontario.
- 2009 “Spinoza on Stevens on Scripture,” Early Modern/Postmodern, Departments of Comparative Literature and Rhetoric, University of California, Berkeley.
- 2009 “Does Spinoza think the Bible (or any inanimate thing) is sacred?” UCLA Center for Jewish Studies.
- 2008 “Spinoza and the Secular,” Posen Faculty Seminar on Secular Jewish Culture and History, University of Cincinnati, Department of Judaic Studies.
- 2007 Panelist, Athens and Jerusalem in Modern Jewish Thought, Association of Jewish Studies Annual Meeting.
- 2007 Commentator, New Directions in Eighteenth-Century Art History, Center for Eighteenth-Century Studies, Indiana University.
- 2007 “Traces of History in St. Anselm,” Novelty, Presence, and History: Brief Pre-Modern Discourses on Method and Theory convened at the North American Association for the Study of Religion Annual Meeting.
- 2007 “Reflections on the Materialist Spinoza,” Spinoza by 2000: The Jerusalem Conferences IV: Spinoza as Social and Political Thinker), Spinoza Institute, Jerusalem.
- 2007 “Badiou and the One,” Respondent to Alain Badiou, discussion of Badiou’s *St. Paul: The Foundations of Universalism*, Politics, Universalism and the Legacy of 1960’s, Indiana University.
- 2007 Respondent to Bruno Bosteels, Recent Events: A Symposium on the work of Alain Badiou, sponsored by Indiana University’s Department of Germanic Studies and the Modernisms and Modernities Study Group.
- 2007 “Secular, law,” Religion, Law, and the Public Sphere, second event in the series of workshops (2006-2007) of the Collective on Religion and the Secular, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
- 2006 “Textual Reasoning: History and Directions,” Shalem Center, Jerusalem.
- 2006 “Athens and Jerusalem: Myths and Mirrors,” Political Hebraism, Shalem Center, Jerusalem.
- 2006 “Athens and Jerusalem: Myths and Mirrors,” Ethics, Philosophy, and Politics Faculty and Graduate Student Colloquium, Indiana University.
- 2006 “Introduction to the Proceedings,” Cosmopolitanism, Post-ethnicity, and the New Jewish Diaspora, Indiana University.
- 2006 “The Idea of a Philosophical History,” Workshop on History and Hermeneutics at the International Society for the Study of European Ideas, Valletta, Malta.
- 2006 “From Anselm to Freud: Reflections on Secrecy, Revelation, and History,” Ethics, Philosophy, and Politics Faculty and Graduate Student Colloquium, Indiana University.
- 2005 Chair and Respondent, “On the Intersection of Theory and Practice: a Conversation about Justice amongst Scholars, Rabbis, and Activists,” Association of Jewish Studies Annual Meeting.
- 2005 Respondent, Symposium on Shinran in Comparative Context, Colgate University.
- 2004 “Nothing more natural than culture: Vico and the secular,” American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting.
- 2004 “The State of Israel,” “American Judaism After 350 Years: the State of American Jewish Belief in the 21st Century,” Indiana University.

- 2003 “How (and why) to think about creation in Spinoza,” the second Shoshana Shier Symposium on Judaism and Modernity, University of Toronto.
- 2001 “Scripture, Prophecy, and Interpretation in Spinoza’s *Tractatus*,” Association of Jewish Studies Annual Meeting.
- 2000 “Spinoza’s Election (Again): Divine and Human Laws and the Case of the Hebrews,” Association of Jewish Studies Annual Meeting.
- 2000 “The Bible in the 21st Century,” Academy of Jewish Philosophy at the American Philosophical Association Annual Meeting.
- 2000 “On the Value of Dialectical Thinking in Jewish Philosophy,” American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting.
- 2000 Respondent, “Whose Millennium? Religion, Sexuality, and the Values of Citizenship,” The Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York.
- 1999 “Joy and Sadness as Movements within Perfection in Spinoza’s Ethical Thought,” Association of Jewish Studies Annual Meeting.
- 1999 “Echoes from the Peanut Gallery: Theory and/or Practice for the Public Intellectual,” American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting.
- 1998 “Boundaries Permeable and Impermeable: Jewish Postmodernity and its Modern Antecedents,” American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting.
- 1996 “Ethics and Interpretation: Reflections on the Role of the *Tractatus* in the Architecture of Spinoza’s Thought,” American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting.
- 1993 “A Seducer in Binary Form: Kierkegaard’s *Either/Or* and the Problem of the Erotic,” American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting.

LANGUAGES

Latin, German, French, Hebrew (reading knowledge)

SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION

- 2017 Co-founder, doctoral subfield [Religion and Modernity](#), Yale Department of Religious Studies.
- 2012-23 Editorial Board, *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*.
- 2016-19 Editorial Board, [The Immanent Frame](#), the Social Science Research Council’s digital forum on secularism, religion, and the public sphere.
- 2014 Scientific Advisory Board, “Religion and Pluralities of Knowledge,” Groningen, The Netherlands, in conjunction with the 400th anniversary of the university. Organizations: Dutch Association for the Study of Religion and European Association for the Study of Religion.
- 2008-13 Co-founder and member of Steering Committee, [Center for Theoretical Inquiry in the Humanities](#), Indiana University.
- 2010 Member of consulting team and author of report assessing proposal for new doctoral program in the study of religion at University of Texas, Austin.
- 2008-11 Steering Committee, Critical Theory and Discourses on Religion Group, American

	Academy of Religion.
2007-10	Executive Council, North American Association for the Study of Religion.
2006	Co-organizer, "Cosmopolitanism, Postethnicity, and the New Jewish Diaspora," Indiana University.
2004-06	Editorial Advisory Board, <i>Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses</i> .
1999-04	Editorial Board, <i>Textual Reasoning</i> .

Reviewer/Referee: *Journal of Religion*, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, *Jewish Quarterly Review*, *Political Theology*, *Modern Theology*, *Studies in Religion*, *Hebraic Political Studies*, *Philosophical Quarterly of Israel*, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Sage Publications, Continuum Books, Lexington Books, Routledge, McGill-Queens University Press, University of Chicago Press, Stanford University Press, Banting Postdoctoral Fellowship.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

American Academy of Religion
North American Association for the Study of Religion
Association of Jewish Studies
American Society for the Study of Religion

TEACHING

- Metaphysical Fictions (RLST 2555, HUMS 2555)
 - Freud and Interpretation (RLST 4100)
 - Readings on Mind and Nature (RLST 8820)
 - Neighbors and Others (RLST 428, ANTH 428, PHIL 493)
 - Nietzsche, Religion, History (RLST 210, PHIL 206)
 - The Force of Life (RLST 380, CPLT, ENG, PHIL, HUMS)
 - The End of Metaphysics (RLST 303, PHIL 311)
 - Metaphysics and Modernity (RLST 107, PHIL 192) (Humanities Program, Modernities)
 - Pedagogy (RLST 606)
 - [Spinoza, Derrida (RLST 450/RLST 880, PHIL 403, JDST 219)]
 - [Readings and Operations (RLST 634)]
 - Philosophical Fragments (RLST 635)
 - Religion and Modernity (RLST 890)
 - Spinoza and the God of the Bible (RLST 450/880, PHIL 403/603, JDST 219/860)
 - Religion and Society (majors seminar) (RLST 490)
 - PHIL 490-491: senior requirement independent study
 - Kierkegaard (RLST 314, PHIL 201)
 - Scriptures (freshman seminar) (RLST 025)
 - Seminar in the Study of Religion (RLST 510)
 - Theism and Atheism (RLST 107)
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UNIVERSITY SERVICE

2025-2026	Standing Advisory & Appointments Committee for the Divinity School Assistant Director of Graduate Studies, Religion & Modernity Graduate Admissions Committee RLST Chair, promotion committee Graduate program policy and procedures committee Exam and Dissertation Committees JBPO rep
2024-2025	Standing Advisory & Appointments Committee for the Divinity School Jewish Studies Executive Committee (resigned February 2025) Assistant Director of Graduate Studies, Religion & Modernity (spring) Graduate Admissions Committee RLST Exam and Dissertation Committees JBPO rep Fa24 graduate reading course Fa24 PHIL senior thesis
2023-2024	Standing Advisory & Appointments Committee for the Divinity School (fall) Jewish Studies Executive Committee (fall) Exam and dissertation committees Junior faculty leave committee JBPO rep (fall) Senior thesis, PHIL (Triennial leave sp24)
2022-2023	Standing Advisory & Appointments Committee for the Divinity School Acting Director of Graduate Studies (spring) Judaic Studies Executive Committee Promotion committee Exam and dissertation committees JBPO rep. Senior thesis director x 4
2021-2022	Judaic Studies Executive Committee Exam and dissertation committees Promotion and search committees (diversity officer) JBPO rep. Assistant Director of Graduate Studies, Religion & Modernity (spring) Pedagogical Partners program: Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning
2020-2021	Judaic Studies Executive Committee Exam and dissertation committees
2019-2020	Vice-chair, Yale College Executive Committee Assistant Director of Graduate Studies, Religion & Modernity Religious Studies promotion committee (chair) Prospectus committee

Senior thesis director x 4: Philosophy (3), Anthropology

2018-2019

Assistant Director of Graduate Studies, Religion & Modernity

Graduate Admissions Committee

Co-organizer, Whitney Humanities Center Working Group in Religion & Modernity

Dissertation committee external member, Social and Political Thought, York University

Senior thesis second reader: Religious Studies

2017-2018 (on leave)

Assistant Director of Graduate Studies, Religion & Modernity (spring 2018)

Co-proposer, Whitney Humanities Center Working Group in Religion & Modernity

2016-2017

Co-author, new doctoral subfield in Religion & Modernity

Graduate Admissions Committee

Co-organizer, Yale Seminar in Religious Studies

Religious Studies promotion committee

2013-2016

Senior thesis director: Philosophy (PHIL 491), 2015-16

Committee on Religious Ethics, Department of Religious Studies, 2014-2015

Sophomore advisor: 2014-2015

Senior thesis second reader: Ethics, Politics, and Economics, 2014

Senior thesis director: Religious Studies, 2013-2014