

UPEI Religious Studies Graduates – Alumni Career Profiles

We are pleased to include the following highlights of some of our alumni's professional career achievements and success stories. There are a few examples here, but we will continue to add and update the site in the coming years. You are welcome to contact any of these people directly (via e-mail, if the address is available) for any academic feedback or career-related advice. For further information, drop by our offices (Main Building, 3rd floor). If you wish to pursue a major or minor in Religious Studies, we'll be pleased to discuss and accommodate your academic interests in a rewarding manner.

Michelle Corrigan-Doiron

Currently: Social Worker in PEI

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UPEI: B.A. 1999, with a double major in Psychology and Religious Studies; went to McGill University, Montreal, for my Social Work degree.

"I am currently practising with Child and Family Services in Child Protection in Montague, PEI. I live in Mermaid, PEI. This [current occupation] is challenging work, but also very interesting as the challenges are always evolving. I do plan to go back to school at some point to do graduate studies but in what I'm not sure... (psychology, religious studies, or social work). I believe my Religious Studies major helps me to be a better social worker as many people with whom I interact have their beliefs and morals rooted in religious philosophy (even if they do not know it). Not to mention that social work's early days were originated from religious groups.

"I also wanted to add that the Religious Studies program enriched my university experience, as the class sizes were small and one could participate more actively in discussions and with other classmates. I think the discussions that I had in these courses were very meaningful in terms of learning, but also in questioning one's own beliefs or non-beliefs. Realizing that religion has shaped cultures and societies is something that cannot be overlooked in one's learning of his or her own community and the world."

Norman Collin

Currently: Professional ESL instructor (full-time) in South Korea

Philosophy M.A. in progress (Brock University, Ontario)

UPEI: B.A. 1997, with a double major in Philosophy and Religious Studies.

"...Eastern traditions were my primary interest, especially Buddhism and Taoism. Fortunately, the UPEI Religious Studies Department, though small, offered many courses in eastern thought — courses that served my philosophical interests well. Indeed, for many of my religion courses, I was able to do much of my research in the area of comparative philosophy. I eventually went on to an MA in Philosophy (in progress), with special focus on Eastern and comparative thought. The foundation provided by the classes and instructors at UPEI's Religious Studies Department....did much to prepare me for my graduate courses.

"I've been living and working, as an English teacher, in the Republic of Korea since July 2000. I've no doubt that the opportunity to study many diverse Eastern traditions through UPEI's Religious Studies Department has enabled me to better appreciate and adjust to life and living in Asia. I think it has been of great benefit to me in my professional dealings in Korea. Deepest gratitude to the UPEI Religious Studies Department for their part in making my undergraduate experience a truly special one!"

Darcy Macdougall

Currently: Automobile Retail Business in PEI

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UPEI: B.A. 2002, with a minor in Religious Studies and a major in Psychology

"I graduated in 2002 with a minor in Religious Studies and a major in Psychology. I continue to live in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. At the moment, I have a part-time job, working with Greenspot Autosales, my father's business. I have learned a lot about business in this work, and am satisfied with the type of work; however, I am actively looking for a full-time job. I am applying for positions with HRDC and DVA at present.

"Taking the Religious Studies courses was very worthwhile for me because it broadened my understanding of subjects like the meaning of religion in people's lives. Also, I was able to learn a lot about Christianity, Eastern faiths, and various cults and sects. I found the professors to be quite knowledgeable and interested in the subject, and the grouping set-up was quite flexible."

Rod Weatherbie

Currently: freelance journalist in Toronto, Ontario

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UPEI: B.A. with a major in Religious Studies; completed post-graduate journalism at Centennial College in Toronto.

"Very satisfied with my current career. The courses I took at the University of Prince Edward Island have been extremely helpful in my role as a journalist. I have just completed five long stories dealing with congregation-building, and my background in Religious Studies was a huge asset. It meant that I had already done a lot of background research and could talk intelligently with people of numerous faiths."

Dawn Ambler

Currently: Ph.D. and Adjunct Professor in Religious Studies, University of Ottawa;

Living in Calgary; an Editor for the Frederica de Laguna Northern Books Publishing Company; and sessional professor and Adjunct Professor at the University of Ottawa and Carleton University

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UPEI: B.A. 1992; M.A. from University of Ottawa in 1994; Ph.D. from University of Ottawa in 2002 -- double major in Art and Religion and Canadian Aboriginal Studies

"I am now living in Calgary, AB, where... I also teach ESL.... I worked for three years with a software company to create Knowledge Management software (called Logik), now used by academics, lawyers, and government agencies. I am currently completing work on a book called Plants Used by Aboriginals for Smoking and Smudging: A Field Guide, co-authored with Dr. Marie-Francoise Guedon.

"My varied education in Religious Studies has enabled me to work in diversified areas, from co-ordinating conferences on China and Aboriginal Traditions to working on software in the Knowledge Management field, to editing works on Aboriginal culture groups. In that I was able to take different courses in Religion. I am able to work in a multicultural classroom, as well as interact with business people from countries on the other side of the world.... All in all I have no regrets. For eight years I have met and taught some wonderful students, many of whom still keep in contact. I have been able to research and therefore learn in a continuous progression over the years, and I see myself doing so for years to come...."

Lindsay Bergen

Currently: Living in Vancouver; M.A. in Archival Studies in progress at UBC

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UPEI: B.A. 2003, Religious Studies major

"Currently in first year of the Master of Archival Studies program at University of British Columbia.... The study habits are different and the concepts are totally new. I suppose that's what makes it interesting, though. I'll admit it is a lot of work, but in the end the rewards will be worth it.

"The Religious Studies Department at UPEI is great because it provides an overview of so many other areas, such as politics, history, gender, etc. The professors are great. They are knowledgeable, approachable, and make class fun and interesting. The religion classes provided me with a more open mind about different people and cultures, which is especially beneficial in Vancouver. The classes also got me interested in other religions of which I previously had little or no knowledge.... For me, almost any arts degree would have allowed me into the archival program; however, anything besides Religious Studies would not have been as interesting or fun."

Michael Gibbons

Currently: Completing a Master of Divinity degree at University of Toronto; soon to be ordained as a professional minister, United Church of Canada

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UPEI: Religious Studies major 2001

"I graduated with a B.A. from UPEI in May 2001 with a major in Religious Studies. Currently I am in the middle of my M.Div. (Master of Divinity) programme at Emmanuel College in the University of Toronto. This year I am on a Church-assigned Internship on the Kingston Peninsula in southern New Brunswick, engaged with congregational ministry. In September 2004 I will finish my last year of my M.Div. at University of Toronto."

"Upon graduation from UPEI I was very well prepared for graduate theological studies, in fact I was awarded a full scholarship to study at U of T. My time at UPEI greatly prepared me for graduate studies, I was introduced to history, biblical studies, Jewish and Near Eastern history and religion, as well as Eastern religion and philosophy; all of which have been invaluable to me in theological studies. While most of my work now is concerned with Christian theology and history; it has been an invaluable asset to have a well-rounded background in 'all things religious.' Many of my current classmates and colleagues graduated with a major in RS from other universities, and I can certainly say that my time at UPEI left me better prepared than most to enter graduate studies."

Michael J. Small

Currently: Living in Toronto; completed an M.A. in Religious Studies, University of Toronto in 2003 and a Bachelor of Education in 2008 at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Currently a High School teacher.

UPEI: B.A. 2001, with an honours in History; B.A. 2000, with a major in History and double minors in Religious Studies and Classics

"I completed a Master's degree in Religious Studies at the University of Toronto in 2003, which focused on Christian-Pagan relations in Late Antiquity. In 2008 I finished my Bachelor of Education and teach English, History, and Social Science courses - including World Religions. My time at UPEI was really helpful in preparing me to not only succeed in my continued education at both U of T and OISE, but also on an ongoing basis as a high school teacher."

Catherine Sweet

Currently: Religious Studies M.A. in progress, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario

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UPEI: B.A. 2003, with a major in Religious Studies

"I am now living in Hamilton, Ontario. I'm working on my MA in Religious Studies at McMaster University; it's an excellent challenge and I'm learning a lot about my abilities. I'm going to be focusing on religion and tourism, its parallels to pilgrimage, and its spiritual/therapeutic qualities. Obviously, I would not be in grad school following Religious Studies if my professors and lecturers at UPEI didn't share their enthusiasm with me. I have a solid sense that there's always much more to learn. I enjoy discovering elements of religion that have seeped into popular culture, and seeing how religion shapes how people live their lives. Besides academically, Religious Studies has been invaluable, especially now that I'm in a more diverse city and TA-ing for students from many different backgrounds."

Daniel Cuthbertson

Currently: History M.A. in progress at UNB.

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UPEI: B.A. 2003, with a minor in Religious Studies and a major in History

"I have chosen to do graduate studies at the University of New Brunswick, and I am very satisfied with my decision. My experience in the Religious Studies program was both enlightening and educational. I began by taking a class on World Religions, a class which opened my eyes to several religions I knew very little about, particularly Islam and Buddhism. Afterwards, I took a class on Islam and Judaism, which gave me an interesting perspective on the current problems between the Israelis and Palestinians and the events of 9/11. The last few classes I took centered on eastern religions, and really gave me a sense of 'enlightenment,' with their various philosophies and mystical approaches.

"My minor in RS complemented my other major/minor, History and Political Science, as I feel that I can truly begin to grasp an understanding of humanity with the three. Taking classes in RS also has assisted me in my current endeavor at the graduate level, as my thesis deals with Afghanistan and Islamic terrorism, something I would know very little about without my initial experiences in RS. The courses offered, and the professors who teach them, make taking RS both an exciting and educational experience, and make the RS Department one of the best at UPEI."

Genesta MacInnis

Currently: Senior Analyst, Government of Canada

UPEI: B.A. 2003 with a major in Religious Studies and a minor in Women's Studies; M.W.S. 2006, Memorial University of Newfoundland

The Religious Studies Programme at the University of Prince Edward Island has been significant in my education as it enabled me to develop thorough reading, critical thinking, and writing skills. It provided me with a better understanding of both eastern and western religions, which has since translated into a sincere appreciation for the diversity of culture and an enthusiasm for travel. With its small class sizes, the Programme allowed for a community of intellectual sharing and class participation.