



SAN FRANCISCO
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Whole Leaders for the Whole Church

105 Seminary Road
San Anselmo, CA 94960
415.451.2800
www.sfts.edu

SFTS Contact
Holly Woolard
Communications Associate
415-451-2823
hwoolard@sfts.edu

History of Religions Seminar receives funding from Dr. Robert Koenig

SAN ANSELMO, Calif., April 28 – Inspired by the tradition of scholarship at San Francisco Theological Seminary since its founding in 1871, an annual History of Religion Seminar was added to the curriculum in the 2010 Spring semester.

This first year's theme is entitled, "Nature, Miracle, and Magic," a subject that lies at the heart of current debate over secularization in western and non-western societies and touches on all fields in the seminary's curriculum. In keeping with SFTS's ethos of intense, open faculty-student exchange, the seminar has invited prominent scholars from other universities and seminaries to make guest presentations across disciplines alongside its own distinguished faculty.

Over the course of this first semester, SFTS professors Christopher Ocker, Annette Schellenberg, Annette Weissenrieder, James Noel and Greg Love have been joined by Brent Sockness of Stanford, Philip Gorski of Yale, Jonathan Sheehan of U.C. Berkeley, Catherine Peyroux of Drew University, Frank Klaassen of the University of Saskatchewan, Philip Clayton of the Claremont School of Theology and Robert Jewett of Heidelberg University and David Biale of the University of California at Davis.

Dr. Robert Koenig (M.Div. '69) of Inver Grove, Minn., has committed to annual support for what will now be called the Muilenberg-Koenig History of Religion Seminar, and has pledged an estate gift to partially endow the seminar in memory of Dr. James Muilenberg, his former SFTS professor.

"I was a student of James Muilenberg for one year prior to attending SFTS," reflected Koenig. "He taught me Hebrew each Monday afternoon and during that year I sensed a call to ministry. I attended SFTS to continue studying under Dr. Muilenberg, and was at SFTS when Dr. Karl Barth visited. It was a thrill. I am pleased to provide financial support that will allow the Seminary to continue inviting distinguished scholars to teach with SFTS's own outstanding faculty."

Coordinated by Ocker, SFTS professor of history, the seminar meets every Thursday evening to discuss sociology, history, ancient Israel and the religion of the ancient Near East, early Christianity and Roman civilization, theology and science, the African

Diaspora, and more. It will help position SFTS as a center of interdisciplinary excellence and creativity, exploiting the seminary's own unique faculty strengths.

"We hope to create a dialogue at SFTS that transcends our individual disciplines and highlights perennial issues in the study of the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, the history of Christianity, theology, Christianity's interactions with its manifold cultural environments, secularism, and religious belief and practice in the world today," Ocker explains. "We were prompted by the desire to work intensely with students in a small group, to model cross-disciplinary exchange, and to share with them some of the extraordinary critical scholarship being done by scholars scattered throughout the world today: on religion, secularization, post-colonial Christianity, the Ancient Near East, Roman religions, sociology, medieval and early modern Christianity, etc. We are incredibly grateful to Dr. Koenig for helping us realize these goals over the long term in this unique way."

Participating seminarians are advanced Master of Divinity and Master of Arts students who asked to be admitted or were encouraged by participating faculty. This unique opportunity for SFTS students connects theology and social sciences in addition to opening the door for relationships and in-depth conversations with renowned scholars from around the world.

###

San Francisco Theological Seminary, a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) graduate school, has prepared whole leaders for the whole church since 1871. One of the founding members of the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, it offers theological degrees at two campuses, in San Anselmo and Pasadena. Its innovative Program in Christian Spirituality is open to clergy and non-ordained individuals. For more information please call SFTS at 1-800-447-8820 in San Anselmo or 1-800-473-8772 in Pasadena. Also find information on our Web site: www.sfts.edu.