



THE RELIGION AND DIVERSITY PROJECT/RELIGION ET DIVERSITÉ



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### **Research Statement**

I am interested in religion as a broad and complex social and cultural phenomenon that historically both generates law and is regulated by law. I have training in law and in religious studies and have taught both in law school and in religion departments. I hold both a J.D. and a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. I practiced law for six years after graduating from law school before returning to school to study religion. My training in the academic study of religion is in two fields, American religious history and the social-scientific study of religion. My research interest is primarily in understanding the intersection of religion and law in the U.S. within a broader comparative context, both theoretically and cross-culturally. Within legal studies, my work falls broadly within socio-legal and critical legal studies.

I am the author of three books analyzing legal discourses about religion, mostly in the context of actions brought to enforce the religion clauses of the First Amendment and related legislation: *Paying the Words Extra: Religious Discourse in the Supreme Court of the United States* (Harvard 1994), *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom* (Princeton 2005), and *Prison Religion: Faith-based Reform and the*

*Constitution* (Princeton 2009). Each of these first three books treats an individual American law case about religion. Each offers a close reading of the texts of the trial using the resources of legal anthropology, socio-legal studies and the academic study of religion, with a view to displaying the multiple models of and discourses about religion there represented. My goal in each case was to situate and critique American law about religion, setting that law in the context of American religious and legal history, and the scholarship about them. I brought to these cases my experience and interest as a trial lawyer in the courtroom as well as my training as a scholar of religion. These books also participate in an evolving academic conversation about the nature of the trial.

My fourth book, *Spiritual Governance*, under contract with the University of Chicago Press, focuses on the legal regulation of religion within the context of administrative law in the U.S. It will use government chaplaincies such as those within VA hospitals, and their regulation, to explore the ways in which partnerships between government and private organizations combine to create an understanding of the nature of the religious needs of Americans. It argues that as religious authority has shifted from institutions to the individual a new kind of religious universalism is emerging in these private-public partnerships.