Stanford



Michael Penn

Teresa Hihn Moore Professor of Religious Studies and Professor, by courtesy, of Classics

Curriculum Vitae available Online

Bio

BIO

Michael Penn, the Teresa Hihn Moore Professor of Religious Studies, is a specialist in the history of early Christianity with a particular focus on middle eastern Christians who wrote in the Aramaic dialect of Syriac.

Professor Penn's first book, Kissing Christians: Ritual and Community in the Late Ancient Church, was published in 2005 by the University of Pennsylvania Press. In 2015 he published two books on Christian-Muslim relations: Envisioning Islam: Syriac Christians in the Early Muslim World (University of Pennsylvania Press) and When Christians First Met Muslims: A Source Book of the Earliest Syriac Writings on Islam (University of California Press). For these projects Professor Penn has received awards from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, the American Council for Learned Societies, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Humanities Center, the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, the British Academy, the American Philosophical Association, the American Academy of Religion, and the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning.

Professor Penn is currently working on an Andrew Mellon Foundation funded collaboration that uses recent advances in the computerized analysis of handwriting to help analyze ancient Aramaic manuscripts. In addition to this work in the digital humanities, Professor Penn has begun several related projects that focus on the history of Syriac Christianity and the manuscripts they produced.

Before joining Stanford, Professor Penn was on the faculty of Mount Holyoke College. He has also taught at Brandeis University, Haverford College, Bryn Mawr College, and Duke University. He has additional experience as a secondary school teacher, including six years as the director of forensics at Durham Academy High School, where he ran a nationally competitive policy debate team. Professor Penn has also held research positions at Apple Computers, the Weizmann Institute (Israel), the Palo Alto Veterans Hospital, and Ames Research Center, NASA.

Ph.D. (Religion) Duke University (1999)

A.B. (Molecular Biology) Princeton University (1993)

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

- Professor, Religious Studies
- Professor (By courtesy), Classics

PROGRAM AFFILIATIONS

- Center for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity (CCSRE)

Teaching

COURSES

2026-27

- Exploring the New Testament: CLASSICS 43, HISTORY 111B, JEWISHST 86 (Spr)

2025-26

- Exploring the New Testament: CLASSICS 43, HISTORY 111B, JEWISHST 86, RELIGST 86 (Spr)
- Sex and the Early Church: CLASSICS 262, FEMGEN 262, FEMGEN 362R, RELIGST 262, RELIGST 362 (Aut)
- Teaching Religious Studies: RELIGST 391 (Spr)
- What Didn't Make the Bible: CLASSICS 9N, HISTORY 112C, JEWISHST 4, RELIGST 4 (Aut)

2024-25

- Early Christianity in the Middle East: HISTORY 284C, HISTORY 384C, RELIGST 243, RELIGST 343 (Spr)
- Exploring the New Testament: CLASSICS 43, HISTORY 111B, JEWISHST 86, RELIGST 86 (Spr)
- Sex and the Early Church: CLASSICS 262, FEMGEN 262, FEMGEN 362R, RELIGST 262, RELIGST 362 (Aut)
- What Didn't Make the Bible: CLASSICS 9N, HISTORY 112C, JEWISHST 4, RELIGST 4 (Aut)

2023-24

- Exploring the New Testament: CLASSICS 43, HISTORY 111B, JEWISHST 86, RELIGST 86 (Spr)
- Sex and the Early Church: CLASSICS 262, FEMGEN 262, FEMGEN 362R, RELIGST 262, RELIGST 362 (Aut)
- Teaching Religious Studies: RELIGST 391 (Spr)
- What Didn't Make the Bible: CLASSICS 9N, HISTORY 112C, JEWISHST 4, RELIGST 4 (Aut)

STANFORD ADVISEES

Doctoral Dissertation Advisor (AC)

Anuj Amin, Julian Zumbach

Orals Evaluator

Lauren Urbont

Publications

PUBLICATIONS

- **Serto before Serto: Reexamining the Earliest Development of Syriac Script** *ARAMAIC STUDIES*
  Penn, M., Crouser, R., Abbott, P.
  2020; 18 (1): 46–63
- **EARLY SYRIAC REACTIONS TO THE RISE OF ISLAM** *SYRIAC WORLD*
  Penn, M.
  edited by King, D.
  2019: 175–88