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Leading Religious Studies

05.31.2012 | Catholic, Campus and Community, Faculty, Culture and Society Daniel Speed Thompson, a distinguished theologian and author, has been named the new chair of the department of religious studies at the University of Dayton.

Thompson, former chair and associate professor of theology at St. Mary's University in San Antonio, will join the University of Dayton faculty June 15.

"Dan Thompson brings to the University of Dayton an outstanding record as former department chair and university academic leader at St. Mary's University," said Paul Benson, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

"With important scholarly interests in theological study of U.S. Catholicism and contemporary Catholic theology, Professor Thompson is uniquely suited to advance our doctoral program in theology and to sustain the department's tradition of influential leadership in pursuing rigorous academic study of religion in the context of the University's Catholic and Marianist mission."

Thompson has written about Catholic identity and the Catholic intellectual tradition. His research and writings have focused on the challenge of dissent with church authority and how faith communities stay together in the face of change.

Thompson said he will teach and work with doctoral students as well as build on the department's strengths and its growing reputation as well as help implement a University-wide revision to the undergraduate curriculum launching in 2013.

"The department prides itself on interdisciplinary studies, and I will help implement this perspective in the new undergraduate curriculum," he said. "I've worked for most of my career in teaching and administrative roles, and I hope to be of service in leading this complex and interesting department forward."

Thompson is familiar with the Marianist educational philosophy; St. Mary's and the University of Dayton are two of only three U.S. universities founded by the Society of Mary.

Thompson has taught at St. Mary's since 2005. Previously he taught at Fordham University in New York City and Calumet College of St. Joseph in Indiana.

He earned his doctorate and master's degrees in theology from the University of Chicago and his bachelor's in theology and philosophy from the University of Notre Dame.

His studies have focused on systematic theology in the Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant traditions with a special emphasis on the work of controversial theologian Edward Schillebeeckx.

Associate professor of religious studies Sandra Yocum, who has served as chair since 2003, will continue on the faculty. During her tenure, the department created the Gudorf Chair in Catholic Theology and Culture, increased the number and quality of new faculty, continued to develop the doctorate program in theology and helped develop the revised undergraduate curriculum.

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