Religion(s) and American Public Schools

Theology 492 / Education 402
Meets Tuesdays 4:00 - 7:00 pm in Spring 2014

About the class:
In this class we’ll examines a controversial but surprisingly unfamiliar topic: religion(s) in American public schools. In a seminar format that brings together graduate and advanced undergraduate students in education, theology and other disciplines, we will cover the topic with several goals in mind:

(1) to understand the complex role religions have played in the development of American public schools and the political and educational philosophies that undergirds them;

(2) to examine the principled philosophical and theological issues behind contemporary legal cases about religion and public education; and

(3) to understand how constitutionally sound approaches to religion in schools can help to modulate or resolve the pedagogical and administrative issues that arise across the curriculum and within school culture.

About the professor:
Erik Owens is associate director of the Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life, and adjunct assistant professor of theology and international studies at Boston College. In addition to his other scholarly work on domestic and international issues, he writes on religion and public education in the US, Europe and Turkey, and is working on a book about religious freedom and civic education in American public schools. He is co-chair of the American Academy of Religion’s Religion and Politics Section, a member of its Committee on the Public Understanding of Religion and its program unit on comparative religion education.