

# Stephen Dunning, Religious Studies

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*Stephen Dunning*

Stephen Northrop Dunning, a professor emeritus of religious studies in the School of Arts and Sciences, died on January 6. He was 82.

Dr. Dunning was born in Philadelphia and grew up in the nearby suburbs. After graduating from the Haverford School, he attended Yale College, then Goddard College, where he received a BA in 1964. He then earned an MDiv and a PhD from Harvard University in 1969 and 1977, respectively.

Dr. Dunning taught the Modern Religious Thought course at the University of Pennsylvania from 1977 until his retirement in 2008. During that time, he published three books: *The Tongues of Men: Hegel and Hamann on Religious Language and History* (Scholars Press, 1979), *Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Inwardness: A Structural Analysis of the Theory of Stages*

(Princeton University Press, 1985), and *Dialectical Readings: Three Types of Interpretation* (Penn State Press, 1997). He received fellowships from the Danforth Foundation (1971–74) and the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (1974–76), as well as a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship for Independent Study and Research (1982–83).

Dr. Dunning celebrated the vocation of teaching and will be remembered for his dedication to his students' learning. He taught courses in 19th century religious thought, spiritual autobiography, hermeneutics, new religious movements, and religious influences on organizational dynamics, among other topics. In 1993, he was awarded a Lindback Award for Distinguished Teaching from Penn (*Almanac* April 20, 1993 (<https://almanac.upenn.edu/archive/v39pdf/n30/042093.pdf>)). "His course was one of the most innovative and effectually organized that I have ever seen (on the undergraduate or graduate level) and he was constantly considering new ideas to make it even more effective," said a student. "As an engineering major, I have had very few electives. I heard about Dr. Dunning from several friends who praised him as one of the best professors at Penn. I must agree." At Penn and beyond, he was known for his kindness, devotion, sharp intellect, and wry humor.

Dr. Dunning is survived by his wife, Roxy; his brother, Hap; his sister, Kate; and his three children and five grandchildren.

Funeral services were held on January 20. In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorial donations be made to Philabundance (<https://www.philabundance.org/> (<https://www.philabundance.org/>)).