

tional hierarchy. Women and people of color find that out right away. Your best bet is to read everything you can get your eyes on, but then find an ally (see **Allies**). Sit down and ask the hard questions until you feel you have a handle on how the unarticulated power dynamics of the institution work. Your own intuition will kick in, but having somebody to check your perceptions against, and doing it early, will save you a lot of aggravation.

Intellectual property

Laws governing intellectual property are in constant flux as this new area of expertise develops. Be careful on two fronts: First, be sure your own work is copyrighted or otherwise credited to you. Many women report seeing their good ideas in other people's work without permission. Second, be scrupulous in noting your sources and securing your data. There are sad tales of women's careers screeching to a halt when they have, however inadvertently, used their graduate students' work or otherwise appropriated what was not rightfully theirs. When in doubt, a good lawyer is a good investment.

Interdisciplinarity and the disciplines

Religious studies is an interdisciplinary field of study defined by its object of study: religion. The question of object and study are not easily separable. Recent historical and philosophical work has shown how the idea of a transhistorical, cross-cultural phenomenon called "religion" was created in part through the study of religion and how this process was intertwined with European colonialism (see **Religious studies**). Disciplines, on the other hand, are most often organized around method of study. As the concept literally implies, a discipline is knowledge created by controlling and adjudicating the processes by which that knowledge is sought. Historians must meet standards of empirical evidence, sociologists must gather data through recognized quantitative and/or qualitative methods, and philosophers must submit to logic and argument.