Tyler Fall, the religion professor known around campus as one of the most entertaining professors to have on campus over his six years at the University of Wyoming.

"It is almost by luck, or chance, or fate, I ended up at UW at all," Tyler Fall, religious studies professor, said.

Fall has received awards such as the 2015 John P. Ellbogen Meritorious Classroom Teaching Award and has consecutively won the Promoting Intellectual Engagement (P.I.E.) Award from 2010-2015.

This semester Fall is teaching Introduction to Religion, Introduction to the Old Testament, Varieties of Non-Belief and a class in the department’s Honor Program.

Fall grew up in the suburbs of Washington D.C. and attended a quiet college in Virginia at the University of Mary Washington. He graduated in 1999 with a degree in History, a degree he chose after finding the classes the most interesting.

Fall said that after graduation he took an extended break from academics.

"I honestly didn’t have career goals. I traveled and enjoyed life," Fall said.

It wasn’t until 2008 he enrolled at the University of Oregon to receive his Masters in History. Fall said that he enjoyed graduate school a fair amount.

"The classes were interesting enough but the aspect that really stood out to me was teaching," Fall said.

Once he obtained his second degree, a particular career still didn’t capture Fall’s attention.

"I delivered newspapers and drove a school bus," Fall explained laughing. "Eventually, I landed a job teaching high school in Florida."

After living in Florida, Fall quickly realized he belonged out west.

"I love the mountains, skiing, fresh air, there’s just something about it," Fall said.

Fall explained that UW’s Creative Writing Department caught his interest and he applied for the M.F.A. program. The one stipulation for attendance was to get funding to help with the often fairly high tuition cost. One professor that could provide adequate funding was Paul Flesher, in the Religious Studies Department.

After becoming Flesher’s graduate assistant, Flesher said if Fall proved himself, he could get a job teaching at UW. Soon after graduating, Fall became a full time teacher at UW.

"I would not have imagined I would be living in Laramie, Wyoming and enjoying it, for this long. Initially, it felt a little small town but now I like that," Fall said.

Not shying away from the fact his road to teaching took a nontraditional path, Fall ended up in a place that feels right for him.

"I’ve never been a person to have a job I’m ‘supposed’ to have. I want to be happy in life first," Fall said. "I believe having a job you enjoy, and are well suited for, is important. A job that fills you out as a person."

Fall said he believes he is good at his job in the Religious Studies Department, the students seem to like his teaching style and it is continuously interesting for him.

Fall is able to take a sensitive subject, such as religion, and teach the academic side in a relatable way for students.

"Not to sound self-serving, but studying and knowing about world religions is as important as being scientifically literate," Fall said.

Fall said he doesn’t know how people can be well-versed in his
tory without knowledge of the complexities and impacts, major world religions have made over the course of human time.

A large number of governments, militaries, cultures and societies were developed with religious influence and religion still impacts society and culture today.

"I suggest people learn about Islam to understand more the ongoing conflicts," Fall said.

On the opposite side, the Varieties of Non-Beliefs class is a place to learn and discuss major criticisms and opposition of religion.

"There is a large and growing secular population around the world and I think understanding how and what it thinks is important to understanding religion," Fall said.

The class description under the university catalogue explains the class as teaching non-belief perspectives on history, post-renaissance, through the ideas of philosophers, novelists, poets and politicians.

Fall said that he believes humanities classes are beneficial for everyone.

"You can better appreciate the strangeness of humans. And how weird people are," Fall said.