

GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE STUDY IN RELIGION SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

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I. INTRODUCTION

Graduate students in the Department of Religion at Syracuse University forge unique, creative, and rigorous programs of study that emphasize both research and teaching.

The study of religion at Syracuse focuses on the category “religion” as an intellectually provocative and problematic concept rather than simply as a descriptive, institutional, or phenomenological label. The Department takes two premises as fundamental to its educational program: 1) study of religion must be interdisciplinary, and 2) study of religion must investigate the material, textual, historical, and cultural dimensions of religions as well as the theories used to produce and analyze them.

The Graduate Program in Religion in Syracuse University's College of Arts and Sciences was founded in 1955. It has offered study toward the Ph.D. as well as the M.A. since 1969. Ph.D. training includes teaching mentorship and experience.

The Department offers three concentrations in the following interrelated areas of the study of religion that align with the distinctive research profile of its faculty. Each concentration gives sustained attention to religion, theory, bodies, gender, and materiality.

COMMUNITIES AND IDENTITIES explores religion and spirituality in modern societies, both local and global, through the lenses of anthropology of religion and history of religions.

CRITIQUE, IMAGE AND POLITICS explores how religions shape and are shaped in aesthetics, ethics, psychology, sociology, philosophy, and political and culture theory.

TEXTS AND CONTEXTS explores literary and performative expressions of religion, including scriptures, through the lenses of history, philosophy, literary theory, and rhetoric.

Students are admitted to graduate study in the Department of Religion to conduct innovative and interdisciplinary research in one concentration and one traditional or regional religious culture. Currently the department can support study of the following traditional or regional religious cultures:

African American	Hindu
American	Jewish
Buddhist	Middle Eastern
Christian	Muslim
East Asian	South Asian
Indigenous (the Americas)	

Students must follow their concentration's curriculum throughout their course work. They will also be encouraged to take course work in other concentrations and other departments, as appropriate for their research interests and as approved by their advisor. They must also take the two-semester seminar on theories and methods in the study of religion (REL 601-603).

II. **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

The Department and the University hold students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in assignments, exams, and to all stages of the writing of theses and dissertations. Serious sanctions up to and including expulsion from the graduate program can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. For more information and the complete policy, see <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>.

III. **ADVISING**

- A. The Director of Graduate Studies, in consultation with the faculty, will assign the initial advisor for all new, first-year M.A. or Ph.D students. Students may subsequently change advisors, by permission of the Director.
- B. By the end of the second semester of the first year of the M.A. program, a thesis advisor shall be selected by the student from among the faculty in the Department. The advisor's advice and signature will be required throughout the process of proposing and writing the M.A. thesis.
- C. After completion of the Ph.D. comprehensive examinations, a dissertation director shall be selected by the student from among the faculty tenured in the Department. The director's advice and signature will be required throughout the prospectus and dissertation stages of Ph.D. studies.
- D. At all levels, the advisor performs the important function of advising and consenting on such matters as course selection, designing the student's Program of Study, petitioning the Graduate Committee, and submitting requests to sit for examinations.

IV. **REQUIREMENTS FOR THE M.A. DEGREE**

- A. Residency, Courses, and Credits
 - 1. A minimum of 30 credits must be completed, including at least 27 for course work, plus 3 thesis credits; of the 27 credits for course work, at least 18 must be earned in regularly scheduled Religion graduate courses or seminars, while the remainder may be earned either in departmental courses or seminars, in courses offered outside the department, or in independent studies.
 - 2. Special requirements for recipients of a Foreign Language Areas Studies Fellowship are as follows: Due to the requirement of the FLAS program for language study in each semester, FLAS students will be able to count

language courses as part of their normal course-load and program of study in the Department of Religion. However, in order to correct for the loss of contact-hours in the study of religion (i.e., the three credit-hours per semester that are devoted to language study), FLAS students must insure that advanced language courses (i.e., courses beyond elementary instruction) contain contents that pertain directly to the study of religion (e.g., reading primary documents in a given religious tradition, for example, the Ramayana).

3. The M.A. may be obtained upon completion of a minimum of three semesters of full-time study, and upon writing and successfully defending the M.A. thesis in the fourth semester.
4. Ordinarily the student will register for three or four courses each semester for three semesters.
5. M.A. students are required to take two 3-credit courses (REL 601 and 603) introducing them to a variety of approaches to the study of religion, as a part of their residency requirements. At the end of their first year, any student who intends to apply to our Ph.D. program must take the Theory and Methods comprehensive exam as described below.
6. Students may, with proper approvals, sit in on undergraduate courses as a part of the work they may do for graduate-level course requirements.
7. A student will not be allowed to submit a thesis if there are any 'Incomplete' grades outstanding.
8. Incompletes at all levels of graduate study must be satisfied by the first weeks of classes in the subsequent term.

B. Language Requirement

Candidates who matriculate in the program at the M.A. level must complete one language requirement before the beginning of the third semester of study. See V. B under Requirements of the Ph.D. degree for further information.

C. Thesis and Oral Defense

1. Thesis Proposal

In order to write and defend an M.A. thesis in the Spring semester, a thesis proposal must be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies by November 15 and bear the approval of the thesis advisor. (The thesis advisor need not be the same person as the academic advisor; the latter's responsibilities are terminated upon the candidate's fulfillment of all curricular requirements.)

2. Formation of the committee

- a. The Advisor should appoint a First Reader in consultation with the DGS as soon as possible in the thesis proposal preparation process and well enough before November 15 for the first reader to review the thesis proposal before the submission to the DGS.

- b. Upon receipt of the advisor-approved thesis proposal the DGS will appoint a Department Reader.

3. Guidelines for Writing the Thesis Proposal

The proposal should be between five and ten pages in length. It is an important step in both giving initial shape to, and making argument for, a thesis topic and design. It is therefore a projection and an instrument of research rather than a definitive statement. However, the proposal needs to concern itself with the plausibility of the thesis and be indicative of the candidate's ability to argue and defend it appropriately in time to complete the M.A. on schedule. Cogency, clarity, and feasibility, then, are the primary qualities to be attained.

The proposal typically includes the following elements:

- a. a statement of the thesis, together with an explication of it.
- b. a survey of the literature pertaining to the argument, showing the contribution it will make to the field.
- c. a chapter by chapter projection indicating the general design of the thesis.
- d. a bibliography, together with a demonstration of its availability.

4. Procedures for Submitting a Thesis Proposal

- a. Once the proposal is written, approved and signed by the MA Thesis Advisor and First Reader as evidence of their concurrence (by November 15 at the latest), it shall be sent to the Departmental Reader.
- b. The Department Reader will assess the proposal quickly, just roughly enough to approve (or not) distribution of the proposal to all Religion faculty.
- c. The proposal will be circulated to all faculty members, who will be encouraged to submit critical comments in writing to the Departmental Reader within a two week window.
- d. By the end of the fall semester, the MA Thesis Committee will review and decide whether to approve the written proposal. This review may occur face-to-face or via email and may include a face-to-face meeting with the student. It shall be the responsibility of the MA Thesis Adviser to insure that issues raised in writing by faculty be addressed in the committee's discussion.
- e. A report of the critical reflections and/or recommendations arising from the MA Thesis Committee's discussion will be prepared by the Department Reader and given to the student and the Thesis Advisor, and simultaneously. A signed report needs to be submitted to the Graduate Director for the student's academic file.

- f. The Department Reader may request a review of the thesis chapters as they are completed or in a timeframe that allows review of the thesis as a whole before the defense.

5. Writing the Thesis

The MA Thesis Committee will consist of the Thesis Advisor, the First Reader, and the Departmental Reader with the latter being designated by the Director of Graduate Studies. The Departmental Reader must be a member of the Department of Religion. The Departmental Reader will read the thesis on behalf of the Department.

The Thesis Committee shall establish in advance and consistently require conformity with the committee's directions or questions of style and format. The Department of Religion requires, e.g., that all quotations in a foreign language be translated either in the text of the thesis with the original in a footnote, or vice-versa. The Graduate School suggests the MLA guide sheet regarding form and style, but accepts the use of Kate Turabian's Guide for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press). Footnotes, rather than end-notes, are required. Consistency in form of documentation is absolutely requisite. The thesis is normally around 50 pages in length, although in some cases a thesis as long as 75 pages may be deemed appropriate.

A complete first draft of the thesis must be submitted to the Thesis Advisor by March 1 at the latest.

6. Procedures for Submitting a Thesis

- a. A report from the Thesis Advisor and First Reader must be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies certifying that the thesis is ready for oral examination.
- b. The student shall present one copy of the thesis for examination and format approval to Graduate Certification at least five weeks prior to graduation.
- c. The student shall secure from and file all necessary forms requesting the oral defense with Graduate Certification. Prior to the defense of the M.A. thesis, a "Program of Study" — approved by the Advisor and the Department Chair — shall be filed with Graduate Certification. Certification will be sent confirming that the student has fulfilled all other academic requirements for the M.A.
 - i. At least four copies of the thesis, including the original, shall be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies no less than three weeks prior to the date when the student

desires to be examined. This minimum time does not guarantee that the oral will be that soon.

- ii. The Director of Graduate Studies may suggest any faculty member deemed appropriate to Graduate Certification to serve as Chairperson of the Thesis Examining Committee. The Graduate School prefers that this chairperson be someone outside of the faculty of the Department of Religion. These four persons shall be the members of the Examining Committee for the oral defense.
- iii. All graduate students shall be notified of the date and invited to attend each oral defense.

7. The Oral Defense, Corrections and Revisions of the Thesis

- a. The oral defense shall be conducted by no fewer than four faculty members, consisting of all three members of the thesis committee and the Chairperson of the Thesis Examining Committee who serves as the representative of the Graduate School. All members of the faculty of the Department of Religion are invited to participate in the oral examination. In typical practice, the defense will open with a 5-7 minute précis and then will move to questioning from faculty as the committee determines.
- b. The oral defense will lead to one of the following decisions:
 - i. Pass with minor corrections.
 - ii. Pass with revisions.
 - iii. Fail with opportunity for rewriting all or major portions of the thesis to be defended at another oral.
 - iv. Fail with no opportunity for rewrite.
- c. It shall be the responsibility of the MA Thesis Advisor and any other members of the MA Thesis Examining Committee, at the discretion of the Committee, to certify to the Graduate Certification Office that all corrections and/or revisions required by the Committee have been completed to the satisfaction of representative(s) of the Examining Committee.

D. Graduation Requirements

The Office of Graduate Certification requires the completion and filing of a number of forms, payment of certain fees, etc. before graduation is possible. The student is expected to fulfill all these requirements directly with Graduate Certification.

E. Admission to Ph.D.

M.A. students wishing to enter the Ph.D. program must apply for admission at the same time as outside applicants by the admissions deadline (usually January 10th) in the year in which they plan to enter the Ph.D. program. The M.A. needs to be

completed for the May graduation in the year they plan to enter the Ph.D. program as well.

V. REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PH.D. DEGREE

A. Residency, Courses, and Credits

1. The M.A. in religion (or its equivalent) and a minimum of 36 course credits, with 12 additional dissertation hours, is required.

Of these 36 course credits, 24 must be taken as regular seminars offered within the department. The remaining 12 credits may be distributed between graduate level courses offered in other departments within the university (or in a university in the area with whom we have reciprocal registration) and/or independent studies arranged with a faculty member in the department or the university with the approval of the advisor. Any additional credits may be distributed as needed with the approval of the advisor. Doctoral Students entering from other universities are required to take the sequence 601 and 603 in their first year of study.

Special requirements for recipients of a Foreign Language Areas Studies Fellowship are as follows: Due to the requirement of the FLAS program for language study in each semester, FLAS students will be able to count language courses as part of their normal course-load and program of study in the Department of Religion. However, in order to correct for the loss of contact-hours in the study of religion (i.e., the three credit-hours per semester that are devoted to language study), FLAS students must insure that advanced language courses (i.e., courses beyond elementary instruction) contain contents that pertain directly to the study of religion (e.g., reading primary documents in a given religious tradition, for example, the Ramayana).

2. Candidates who fail to complete the language requirements according to the stipulations above may lose financial aid awards until such requirements are met.
3. B.D., Th.M., M.Th., or other degrees representing theological school completion, will ordinarily be accepted as the equivalent to an M.A. in Religion. Further, courses taken at the graduate level at another accredited institution will be evaluated on a course by course basis by the Graduate Committee, up to 30 hours of credit (i.e., the equivalent of the M.A.) may be transferred.
4. Students may, with proper approvals, sit in on undergraduate courses as a part of the work they may do for graduate-level course requirements.
5. The Religion Department recognizes that at times students may need to pursue lines of study independently, that is, outside of regularly offered graduate seminars. Such independent study may be pursued through the Department's Research and Writing courses. These are guided by a faculty

member and are as vigorous and comprehensive as regular graduate seminars in terms of their requirements for advanced study. Research and Writing courses are offered to support specific research interests of students that are not available in the curriculum and that will enhance a given student's program in breadth or depth; they are not to be used *solely* to prepare for doctoral examinations. Students must negotiate an agreement on a Research and Writing course with an individual faculty member, who has complete discretion whether to guide it and, if so, on what terms. To register, the student and faculty member must together complete the Proposal for Independent Study form and register under one of the Research and Writing numbers (REL 719-799).

6. Before a Ph.D. can be awarded a student must have accrued a total of 12 dissertation hours. This is normally done by registering awarded tuition credits not used for graduate courses for dissertation hours.
7. Students are strongly advised to complete all work for courses in the semester in which they are taken; in the event that an Incomplete is requested, students are required to complete the course work and thus to remove the Incomplete by the first weeks of classes in the subsequent term.

B. Language Requirements

1. PhD students are required to learn at least two languages (not distinguishing languages of scholarship from source languages): at least one by time of matriculation into the Ph.D. program and another in consultation with the advisor by the beginning of the third year of the Ph.D. program. Competency must be demonstrated by passing (grade B- or better) coursework through the 202-level or language placement exam administered by LLL or an equivalent department, and at most one by department's reading competence exam. Documented certification of successfully completed language examinations at other institutions will be accepted for entering Ph.D. candidates.
2. Departmental Reading Competence examinations will test the reading for comprehension. The examinations will consist of passages drawn from texts pertinent to the study of religion (usually two to four pages in length). Each passage will be accompanied by a series of questions based on the text (for example, descriptions of a text's argument, paraphrases of sentences and/or paragraphs, summaries of issues under consideration). Candidates will have up to three hours to read the passage and answer the questions and may make use of a lexicon appropriate to the language being tested. Use of computers is not permitted.
3. The Department will maintain sample French and German examinations for student review.
4. Reading competence examination will be administered by the Department of Religion five times yearly (January, May, June, July, August).
5. Credit for courses fulfilling language requirements will not count towards the degree. Language study *beyond the language requirements* may count

for credits towards the M.A. or Ph.D. degree (grade B or better) up to the existing limits for non-departmental courses (M.A. 9 hours, Ph.D. 12 hours) only if the content directly relates to a student's program of study within religion and are not elementary courses. Normally this would include advanced reading courses in religious texts in original languages or contemporary literature, newspapers, etc. directly associated with the student's research field.

C. Comprehensive Examinations

Four comprehensive examinations are designed to promote an interdisciplinary, individualized program and to prepare the student with a clearly defined and recognizable geographic and/or tradition-based specialty as well as a concentration that defines their methodologies and their thematic concerns within the broad field of religious studies.

To ensure theoretical and methodological competence, students are required to pass a comprehensive examination in theory and methods, based on a fixed bibliography, at the end of their first year of course work. Following completion of all course work and language requirements, they must also pass comprehensive examinations in both a methodological concentration and a traditional or regional religious culture, as listed at the beginning of these guidelines; bibliographies for these examinations are partly set by the faculty and partly constructed by the individual student in conversation with relevant faculty mentors. Finally, students must pass a comprehensive examination on a particular issue or problem relevant to their intended dissertation topic; the bibliography for this final examination is entirely constructed by the student in conversation with his or her faculty mentors.

A "request to sit" for the second, third, and fourth exams should be filed no later than March 1 during the final semester of course work; it should include descriptions (roughly 150 words each) and bibliographies for each exam, as well as a rationale for the entire slate of exams (roughly 200 words). Prior to submitting the "request to sit," the student should have proposed to the DGS a slate of first readers for each exam (note that the first reader for the last exam will typically be the adviser with whom the student plans to do the prospectus); once these faculty members have agreed to serve in this capacity, they must approve the exam descriptions and bibliographies submitted with the "request to sit" and will subsequently serve as primary drafters as well as readers of the exams. When the "request to sit" has been approved by the Graduate Committee, the DGS appoints a second reader for each exam, in consultation with appropriate faculty members. (Note that in the case of the Texts and Contexts concentration exam, both faculty readers will be determined by the selected bibliographic modules and both will participate in drafting the exam.) At least three different faculty members should be involved in the assessment of the second, third, and fourth exams, and no single faculty member can write more than two out of three of these exams.

1. The Comprehensive Examination in Theories and Methods
 - a. Closed book with non-internet computers
 - b. Offered annually 8:30 am to 5 pm on a designated day, which will normally be the last day of final exams in May.
 - c. Maximum length of 5,000 words
 - d. Bibliographies will follow those for the course syllabuses of REL 601/603; entering graduate students must take both seminars in their first year of study. Although the course designs of 601 and 603 will vary with the instructor, each seminar will cover the standard texts each year.
 - e. The exam will be divided in three parts
 - i. Questions pertaining to 601 (maximum 2000 words)
 - ii. Questions pertaining to 603 (maximum 2000 words)
 - iii. Questions that speak to the entire range of theory (maximum 1000 words)
 - f. The faculty members offering 601 and 603 for that year will submit questions pertaining to those seminars' figures and topics and will evaluate responses to those questions.
 - g. One member of the Graduate Committee acting on behalf of the department will submit the third set of questions and evaluate responses to those questions.
 - h. There will be choices among the questions.
2. The Comprehensive Examination in the Concentrations:
 - a. Closed book with non-internet computers
 - b. Offered 8:30 am to 5 pm on a day scheduled with the Graduate Administrator
 - c. Maximum length of 5,000 words
 - d. Bibliographies include 30 to 50 books or essays, comprised of both a standardized list developed by the concentration faculty (75% of the total bibliography) and a specialized list developed by the student in consultation with the advisor and/or another relevant concentration faculty member who is serving as first reader for the exam (25% of the total bibliography).
3. The Comprehensive Examination in a Traditional or Regional Religious Culture
 - a. Closed book with non-internet computers
 - b. Offered 8:30 am to 5 pm on a day scheduled with the Graduate Administrator
 - c. Maximum length of 5,000 words
 - d. Bibliographies include 30 to 50 books or essays, comprised of both a standardized list developed by the faculty members who specialize in the relevant traditional or regional religions cultures

(75% of the total bibliography) and a specialized list developed by the student in consultation with the faculty member who is serving as first reader for the exam (25% of the total bibliography).

4. The Comprehensive Exam: Pre-Dissertation

This examination must critically engage and map a scholarly conversation, or set of intersecting conversations, in which the argument of the dissertation will be situated. In other words, this exam will test the student's comprehension of the broader field or fields that will be the context for their dissertation. Students must demonstrate the ability a) to formulate a question or problem that focuses and impels their engagement with the broader field or fields, and b) to grasp and evaluate the theories and methodologies and issues related and relevant to that question or problem.

The pre-dissertation examination will be graded as a written examination, but in addition, there will be an "oral review" of the pre-dissertation examination. The oral exam committee will consist of three faculty members: the first reader, who will typically be the advisor with whom the student intends to do the prospectus; the second reader, assigned at the time the request to sit is submitted; and a third reader, assigned by the Graduate Director after the exam has been written. All members of the oral exam committee will grade the written examination. The results of the oral review will be taken into consideration in the grading of the examination.

Administration of the exam:

- a. Closed book with non-internet computers
 - b. Offered 8:30 am to 5 pm on a day scheduled with the Graduate Administrator
 - c. **Maximum** length of 5,000 words
5. **Request-to-Sit:** For all students the Request-to-Sit submitted to the Graduate Committee will include the final bibliographies (including both standardized and specialized lists) for the comprehensive exam in the Concentration and the Tradition or Region which the student has chosen, as well as the bibliography for the Pre-Dissertation exam, along with the intended dates for taking the exams. Prior to the administration of the exams, the Graduate Studies Committee must approve all questions for students' exams.
- a. *All comprehensive exams must be written before the beginning of the fall semester of the student's fourth year.*

- b. Comprehensive examinations test the student's ability to conceptualize, analyze, and organize discrete bodies of material and to know these well enough to recall them in teaching situations and in scholarly conversation and debate. The comprehensive examinations are not considered finished papers but are highly informed, on-the-spot answers to specific questions posed by the examiner as delimited by the approved narrative and biography for each exam. Therefore, the examinees' access to data including outside sources and their own notes will be restricted. The length of their answers on each exam should not exceed a total of 5,000 words. On the day of each examination, students will pick up the examination from the departmental secretary at 8:30 a.m. and go to an assigned place to take the exam. They may use only the assigned computer in the room where there will be no Internet access or external drive capacity. Although the examination may likely be completed in four to six hours, a student may take up to eight hours to finish it.

6. Procedural Stages:

- a. The Graduate Committee shall review each request to sit, and, with whatever modifications it requires, the form shall be filed in the student's permanent file and the student notified of the committee's action.
- b. Before sitting for exams, students must have met all eligibility criteria (language requirements, removal of incomplete).
- c. The faculty members of the Graduate Committee will review questions submitted by faculty members and may request modifications in the examination texts where necessary.
- d. The secretary to the Director will then prepare three copies of each examination in the appropriate form. One copy will be placed on permanent file in the Director's office, another will subsequently be made available for perusal by other graduate students, and one copy will be placed for the student to receive at the time of examination.
- e. The Theories and Methods exam will be graded as follows:
 - i. Part 1 and 2 covers 601 and 603 respectively will be evaluated by the faculty members who offered each seminar in current year. The second readers will be faculty members who have offered the seminars in the past or who plan to offer it in the near future.
 - ii. Part 3 will be evaluated by the two graduate committee members who wrote the question

The comprehensive exam in the Concentration will be graded by the person who wrote the questions and the Director of Graduate

Studies will appoint one other member of the concentration in consultation with the faculty of the concentration.

The comprehensive exam in the Tradition/Region will be evaluated by the faculty member who wrote the question plus another faculty member who specializes in the area appointed by the Director of Graduate Studies in consultation with faculty members who specialize in the area.

- f. When all reports from readers for all exams taken during a given examination period have been received, the faculty members of the Graduate Committee shall assess the overall results of each student's examinations. The committee shall have discretionary authority to require a student, on the basis of received evaluations, to retake one, several, or all of the examinations under conditions to be determined by the Committee, or to require some alternative means for a student to demonstrate quality competence in area(s) where the committee desires further evidence.

- g. The Graduate Committee in evaluating the overall results either initially or after the student has retaken the exams or prepared the required equivalent work, may judge the results as:
 - i. Pass with distinction
 - ii. Passing and qualifying to continue onto the prospectus and the dissertation.
 - iii. Low passing but without qualifying to continue in the program. In these cases the student will be awarded a terminal M.Phil. degree.
 - iv. Fail.
- h. Students desiring feedback on the overall quality of their comprehensive examinations must initially talk with the Director of Graduate Studies. Students may also seek feedback on individual examinations from their Advisor and from the faculty persons who wrote the examinations.
- i. Upon final certification by the Graduate Committee that a student has completed all requirements relating to comprehensive examinations, the Graduate Certification Office shall be so notified and a Program of Study – approved by the advisor and Department Chair – filed. Copies shall be placed in the student's permanent record, and a letter shall be written to the Syracuse University Library (and/or other libraries in specific cases) certifying the student's status and requesting that appropriate library usage privileges be extended to the student to pursue his/or her dissertation research.

D. Prospectus, Dissertation and Oral Defense

1. Prospectus

After a candidate has successfully fulfilled all curricular requirements and passed his/her Comprehensive Examinations, he/she will submit a dissertation Prospectus which will also bear the approval of his/her dissertation advisor. (The dissertation advisor need not be the same person as the academic advisor; the latter's responsibilities are terminated upon the candidate's fulfillment of all curricular requirements.) *Note that the prospectus must be defended within one year from the semester in which the student passes their comprehensive exams.*

2. Guidelines for Writing the Prospectus

The prospectus is an important step in both giving initial shape to, and making argument for, a thesis topic and dissertation design. It is therefore a projection and an instrument of research rather than a definitive statement. The prospectus should be between fifteen and twenty pages in length.

However, the prospectus needs to concern itself with the plausibility of the thesis and be indicative of the candidate's ability to argue and defend it appropriately. Cogency and clarity, then, are the primary qualities to be attained.

The prospectus typically includes the following elements:

- a. a statement of the thesis, together with an explication of it.
- b. a survey of the literature pertaining to the argument, showing the need for this dissertation, assuring its originality, and articulating the contribution it will make to the field.
- c. a chapter by chapter projection indicating the general design of the dissertation.
- d. a bibliography, together with a demonstration of its availability.

3. Procedures for Submitting a Dissertation Prospectus

- a. Once the prospectus is written in compliance with the Guidelines for Writing the Prospectus, it shall be sent to the Graduate Director with the name of the Dissertation Advisor, who shall sign the prospectus as evidence of concurrence.
- b. Prospectus Committee consisting of the Dissertation Advisor, plus two other faculty members (one of whom will chair the Committee) appointed by the Graduate Director in consultation with the dissertation Advisor, will be constituted. This committee will conduct an oral evaluation of the prospectus. The Prospectus

Committee operates independently from the Dissertation Committee (see E.2.a. below) and does not necessarily include the same faculty members (except for the advisor of the dissertation).

- c. The Prospectus will be circulated to all faculty members, who will be encouraged to submit critical comments in writing to the Prospectus Committee. All faculty members will be invited to attend and to participate in the oral evaluation. It shall be the responsibility of the Chair of the Prospectus Committee to insure that issues raised in writing by faculty be addressed in the oral evaluation.
- d. A report of the critical reflections and/or recommendations arising from the oral evaluation will be prepared by the Chair of the Prospectus Committee. The report, which will be signed by the Chair of the Prospectus Committee and the student, will be filed with the Director of Graduate Studies together with a copy of the Prospectus. A copy will also be given to the Dissertation Advisor.

4. Writing the Dissertation

The student is expected to establish an appropriate working relationship with the Dissertation Committee by consulting with the Dissertation Advisor who shall coordinate the advice and suggestions offered by the other members of the committee. The candidate will also, after consulting with the Advisor and securing his or her agreement, designate a First Reader who will be a member of the Dissertation Committee (see E.2.a. below). The Dissertation Committee will consist of the Dissertation Advisor, the First Reader, and the Departmental Reader with the latter being designated by the Director of Graduate Studies. The Departmental Reader must be a member of the Department of Religion. The Departmental Reader will read the dissertation on behalf of the Department and certify whether it is ready to go to the oral defense.

The Dissertation Committee shall establish in advance and consistently require conformity with the committee's directions or questions of style and format. The Department of Religion requires, e.g., that all quotations in a foreign language be translated either in the text of the dissertation with the original in a footnote, or vice-versa. The Graduate School suggests the MLA guide sheet regarding form and style, but accepts the use of Kate Turabian's Guide for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press). Footnotes, rather than end-notes, are required. Consistency in form of documentation is absolutely requisite.

5. Procedures for Submitting a Dissertation

- a. The Dissertation Advisor, First Reader and the Department Reader must each certify to the Director of Graduate Studies that the dissertation is ready for oral examination.
 - b. The student shall present one copy of the dissertation for examination and approval to the Graduate School.
 - c. The student shall secure from and file all necessary forms requesting the oral defense with the Graduate School.
 - d. At least six copies of the dissertation, including the original, shall be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies no less than three weeks prior to the date when the student desires to be examined. This minimum time does not guarantee that the oral will be that soon.
 - e. The Director of Graduate Studies, considering any requests made by the student, shall invite at least two faculty members in addition to the Dissertation Committee (usually but not necessarily from the faculty of the Department of Religion) to serve on the Dissertation Examining Committee. Further, the Director of Graduate Studies may suggest any faculty member deemed appropriate to the Graduate School to serve as Chairperson of the Dissertation Examining Committee. The Graduate School requires that this chairperson be someone outside of the faculty of the Department of Religion. These six persons shall be the members of the Examining Committee for the oral defense.
 - f. All graduate students shall be notified of the date and invited to attend each oral defense.
6. The Oral Defense, Corrections and Revisions of the Dissertation
- a. The oral defense shall be conducted by no fewer than five faculty members, which five shall include all three members of the Dissertation committee and no fewer than two additional examiners, and the Chairperson of the Dissertation Examining Committee who serves as the representative of the Graduate School. All members of the faculty of the Department of Religion are invited to participate in the oral exam.
 - b. The oral defense will lead to one of the following decisions:
 - i. Pass with minor corrections.
 - ii. Pass with revisions.
 - iii. Fail with opportunity for rewriting all or major portions of the dissertation to be defended at another oral.
 - iv. Fail with no opportunity for rewrite.
 - c. It shall be the responsibility of the Dissertation Advisor and any other members of the Dissertation Examining Committee, at the discretion of the Committee, to certify to the Graduate School that all corrections and/or revisions required by the Committee have been completed to the satisfaction of representative(s) of the Examining Committee.

E. Graduation Requirements

The Graduate Certification Office requires the completion and filing of a number of forms, payment of certain fees, etc. before graduation is possible. The student is expected to fulfill all these requirements directly with the Graduate Certification Office.

VI. **REQUIREMENTS FOR THE M.PHIL DEGREE**

The requirements for this degree are identical to those for the Ph.D. degree (see V above), except that no Prospectus or Dissertation is required.

VII. **DEGREE-PROGRESS: TIME LIMITATIONS**

A. M.A. Degree:

The time between the completion of M.A. residency and the completion of the degree may not exceed three semesters.

B. Ph.D. Degree:

1. The time between the completion of Ph.D. residency and the completion of comprehensive examinations shall not exceed fifteen months; that is, comprehensive examinations must be completed before the beginning of the fourth year of study.
2. The time between the completion of the Ph.D. comprehensive examinations and the defense of the prospectus shall not exceed one year; funding for the fifth year of study is contingent on the prospectus having been defended by the end of the fourth year.
3. According to Graduate School protocols, the time between the completion of Ph.D. comprehensive examinations and the completion of the dissertation shall not exceed five years.

C. General Proviso:

The Department of Religion, like the Graduate School, reserves the right to grant or not grant petitions extending these limitations, and to establish conditions on any approvals. Similarly, the Department of Religion may establish criteria for considering students 'inactive' in the program, and any special conditions for reactivation.

D. Sample timeline for PhD program:

Year	Fall	Spring	Summer
1	Course work TA	Course work TA	Languages Field work
2	Course work TA	Course work TA Request to sit (due March 1) Theories & methods exam (May)	Languages Field work Grant applications Comprehensive exam prep
3	Comprehensive exams TA	Comprehensive exams Prospectus TA	Prospectus Field work Grant applications
4	Prospectus defense Dissertation TA	Dissertation TA/320	Dissertation
5	Dissertation TA/lower level course Or TA/320	Dissertation defense TA/ lower level course	

VIII. TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS

- A. Teaching Assistantships are normally awarded only to students in Ph.D. ranks, and the Department of Religion – through its Graduate Committee – reserves the right to establish other eligibility requirements and exceptions to these policies.
- B. Teaching Assistants are expected to be available to devote an average of twenty hours of work each week during the semesters to their TA duties.
- C. Policies Regarding Duration
 1. TA appointments are normally for five consecutive years. The fifth year is contingent on having a dissertation prospectus approved.
 2. Some special university-wide fellowships alternate university support and Departmental TA support.
- D. To participate in the Future Professoriate Program (FPP), students must fulfill the requirements as defined in the Department of Religion Future Professoriate Program description. This includes teaching REL 320 as one-half of their

responsibilities as a teaching Assistant during one of the semesters. Following the completion of their exams, Students may not schedule their 320s for the following fall unless they have finished all requirements by March 15 or for the following spring unless they have finished all requirements by October 15.

- E. After teaching REL 320, Teaching Assistants are required to teach at least one lower-division undergraduate section as half of their teaching responsibilities for the semester. This will take place during the fifth year of their Ph.D. studies. The student must consult with the faculty member who regularly teaches the course and with their assigned teaching mentor. In all cases a “Request to Teach Lower-Division Course” form must be submitted to the chair of the department in time to meet the scheduling deadline. Students are expected to devote the other ten hours of their service to the Department as Teaching Assistants or Research Assistants.

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