M.A. STUDENT HANDBOOK

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

251 STRONG HALL
http://www.missouristate.edu/relst

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MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY
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Preface

This handbook outlines the program and requirements for the Master of Arts in Religious Studies at Missouri State University. It is meant to supplement but not supersede the MSU *Graduate Catalog*. Therefore, students are advised to refer to the relevant portions of the *Graduate Catalog* for the full rules and regulations pertaining to their time at Missouri State.

Nondiscrimination Policy

Missouri State University is a community of people with respect for diversity. The University emphasizes the dignity and equality common to all persons and adheres to a strict non-discrimination policy regarding the treatment of individual faculty, staff, and students. In accord with federal law and applicable Missouri statutes, the University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin (including ancestry, or any other subcategory of national origin recognized by applicable law), religion, sex (including marital status, family status, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or any other subcategory of sex recognized by applicable law), age, disability, veteran status, genetic information, or any other basis protected by applicable law in employment or in any program or activity offered or sponsored by the University. Sex discrimination encompasses sexual harassment, which includes sexual violence, and is strictly prohibited by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.

This policy shall not be interpreted in a manner as to violate the legal rights of religious organizations or of military organizations associated with the Armed Forces of the United States of America.

The University maintains a grievance procedure incorporating due process available to any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against. Missouri State University is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action/Minority/Female/Veterans/Disability/Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity employer. Inquiries concerning the complaint/grievance procedure related to sex discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual assault, should be addressed to the Title IX Coordinator, Carrington Hall 205, 901 S. National Ave., Springfield, Missouri 65897, JillPatterson@missouristate.edu, 417-836-8506, or to the Office for Civil Rights. All other inquiries concerning the grievance procedure, Affirmative Action Plan, or compliance with federal and state laws and guidelines should be addressed to the Equal Opportunity Officer, Office for Institutional Equity and Compliance, Park Central Office Building, Suite 111, Springfield, Missouri 65897, equity@missouristate.edu, 417-836-4252, or to the Office for Civil Rights. (Res. Board Policies No. 70-11; Bd. Min. 10-28-11.)

Program description

The Master of Arts in Religious Studies will develop sound knowledge and professional skills in the discipline of Religious Studies, as well as in the broader context of related disciplines in the humanities. The following areas of emphasis are available: Religions of Asia; Religions of Europe and the Middle East; Biblical Studies; and Religion and Culture. Upon completion of the program, students will have acquired a foundation of knowledge, skills, and perspectives for working in a variety of vocations where a high degree of versatility in human affairs, knowledge in humanities, and an ability to negotiate among various religious perspectives are required. The program provides a strong foundation for doctoral studies and teaching, and it can enhance preparation for such professional careers as non-profit work, counseling, and ministry.

Admission requirements

1. A bachelor's degree in religious studies or a related program in the humanities or social sciences. Some coursework in religious studies is desirable.

2. A minimum GPA of 3.00 on a 4.00 scale. Students who do not meet the GPA requirement may opt to take the GRE and normally will be expected to score a minimum of 158 on the verbal section (580 under the old scoring system before August 1, 2011) and a minimum of 300 (1,000 under the old scoring system) on the combined verbal and quantitative sections.

3. There are additional university requirements for international applicants, including documentation of financial support and demonstration of proficiency in the English language if your primary language is not English. See International Services' Requirements for Graduate Admission for more information.

4. Applicants lacking the appropriate qualifications for the program may be admitted but will be required to rectify deficiencies with appropriate course work. Usually these courses will not count toward the master's degree. Students who do not meet the GPA or GRE standards outlined above may be granted admission to the program at the discretion of the Graduate Program Director.

Accelerated Master's Degree Option

Eligible undergraduate majors in Religious Studies or an equivalent department from an accredited institution may apply for early admission to the Master of Arts in Religious Studies Program. Once accepted for early admission, students will be able to take up to twelve (12) credit hours at the 600- and 700-level that apply to both their undergraduate and graduate programs. Before enrolling in courses to be counted for both undergraduate and

graduate credit, an undergraduate student must be admitted into the accelerated master's program and complete a Mixed Credit Form to receive approval from the Graduate Program Director, Department Head, and the Graduate College Dean.

Admission requirements for the Accelerated Master's program

1. Junior standing, with an overall GPA of 3.4.
2. Major in Religious Studies or equivalent, having completed fifteen hours in the department, including at least six hours at the 300-level or above, with a GPA in the major of 3.5.
3. Recommendation by a faculty member in Religious Studies or an equivalent department from another institution.
4. Admission by the Graduate Committee of the Department of Religious Studies.

Degree requirements (minimum of 30 hrs)

1. Core Requirements - 15 hours

Code	Course Title	Credit Hours
REL 685*	Theories of Religion	3 hrs
REL 711	Seminar in Religions of Asia	3 hrs
REL 731	Seminar in Biblical Studies	3 hrs
REL 751	Seminar in Religions of Europe and the Middle East	3 hrs
REL 771	Seminar in Religion and Culture	3 hrs

*Students who have completed REL 580 Theories of Religion must substitute REL 685 with an additional 600- or 700-level course (3 hours) approved by the Graduate Program Director.

2. Electives - 15 hours. All students must complete two additional seminars (6 hrs), distributed across two of four options: REL 711, 731, 751, 771. They must also complete an additional selected from 600- and 700-level courses to total 30 hours. At least six of the elective hours must be in the Religious Studies department. For students writing a thesis, up to six of the elective hours may be in REL 799, Thesis - the first 3 hours typically taken in the third semester of study after the student has completed at least 12 hours of course work and the second 3 hours taken the following semester to complete the thesis.

3. Advisory committee. Each student will be advised by the Graduate Program Director who serves as the student's Primary Advisor. As soon as possible, the student will also select a faculty member to serve as his or her Research Advisor who will chair a Research Advisory Committee consisting of at least three persons. This committee will supervise the creation of the candidate's Thesis or Research Portfolio.

4. Program of study. The candidate's program will be structured initially by the Primary Advisor in consultation with the student. The program of study can be modified as needed by the Research Advisor in consultation with the student and Primary Advisor.

5. Comprehensive examination. The comprehensive examination will be administered by the student's Research Advisor and a second member of the student's Research Advisory Committee and adjudicated by the student's Research Advisory Committee upon completion of at least 12 hours of course work, normally at the beginning of the third semester.

6. Research. In addition to completing their course work, students must complete either a thesis or a research portfolio in a manner acceptable to the student's Advisory Committee. The thesis or research portfolio constitutes the student's research component and will be defended orally before the student's Research Advisory Committee.

Foreign Language

Foreign language courses are not required for admission to the M.A. program, or for completion of it. However, students who are bound for Ph.D. programs will likely find that those programs require French or German or both, either for admission or completion of the doctorate. And they may require additional languages as well, depending on the student's area in Religious Studies (such as Hebrew and Greek in Biblical Studies). So, students who plan on continuing for a Ph.D. would be well advised to study French or German. Since the introductory classes on those languages at Missouri State are not graduate classes, it is unlikely that they will be covered by financial aid for M.A. students.

Readings in Religious Studies Elective (REL 796)

Students may arrange for a maximum of 9 hours of Readings in Religious Studies (REL 796) under the direction of a member of the Department's Graduate Faculty. The main purpose of REL 796 is to carry out a research project of interest to both the student and the professor that is relevant to the student's research agenda and not addressed by the Department's regular curriculum. Such courses typically entail a reading list (proposed by the student, the professor, or both) and routine meetings with the professor to discuss progress, culminating in a final research paper, a literature review, an annotated bibliography, or other written work. *Students may not enroll in REL 796 in order to prepare for the Comprehensive Examination.*

Permission to Register Each Semester

The Graduate College requires each student to obtain permission to register each semester. Initially, permission will be given by the Graduate Program Director—although it can also be given by the Department Head—by releasing the student to register online. After a Primary Advisor is selected, he or she may also give permission. The student should anticipate meeting with the Graduate Program Director or Primary Advisor to review student's progress in the program before receiving permission and being released to register.

Permission to Register for REL 796 and REL 799

Students must have an instructor's permission to register for either Readings in Religious Studies (REL 796) or Thesis (REL 799). Prior to the semester in which a student hopes to pursue a 796 or 799, the student contacts his/her prospective instructor/Thesis Advisor to plan the project. The instructor/advisor and student complete the Application for Independent Study form, which details the requirements for the course. *A student cannot register for REL 796 or 799 before this paperwork is processed.*

Academic Integrity

The Department of Religious Studies abides by the University's Academic Integrity Policies and Procedures. All graduate students are expected to be familiar with these policies. Students who commit academic dishonesty—cheating, fabricating data or information, plagiarizing, or helping another student to commit academic dishonesty—*even if it is not intentional* may fail the assignment, fail the course, be reported to MSU's Academic Integrity Council, and be removed from the university. For international students, this can severely affect their immigration status. MSU's Office of Academic Integrity has provided a succinct resource on Avoiding Plagiarism (click here).

Style Manuals

The Department has adopted Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 9th ed. (University of Chicago Press, 2018), which is based on the Chicago Manual of Style, as its style manual. Students writing papers in the area of biblical studies may use *The SBL Handbook of Style*, 2nd ed. (SBL Press, 2014), which is also based on the Chicago Manual of Style, as a supplemental resource. Although individual instructors may have their own specific style requirements, students should use Turabian for guidance in citing and documenting sources and employing other stylistic techniques (grammar, syntax, etc.) in seminar papers and other written work correctly. Students writing theses must follow the additional guidelines of the Graduate College.

Completing the Master's Degree in Four Semesters

The M.A. in Religious Studies is a two-year (four semesters) degree, although students writing a Thesis often choose to take an extra semester or year to complete the Thesis. The chart below presents a schedule for completing the degree within two years; required coursework is taken each semester while also completing Comprehensive Examination and Thesis or Research Portfolio requirements.

	THESIS OPTION	**RESEARCH PORTFOLIO OPTION**
Coursework (distributed over four semesters)	Six 700-level seminars (18 hrs) + 3 hrs REL 685 + 3 hrs 600/700-level elective + 6 hrs REL 799 Thesis = 30 hrs total	Six 700-level seminars (18 hrs) + 3 hrs REL 685 + 9 hrs 600/700-level electives = 30 hrs total
By the end of the second semester	Select Research Advisor & Research Advisory Committee; develop Thesis topic	Select Research Advisor & Research Advisory Committee; develop research focus
Summer between second & third semesters	Comprehensive Exam prep; Thesis research	Comprehensive Exam prep
Early in third semester	Comprehensive Written Exam	Comprehensive Written Exam
Third semester	Take REL 799 and write Thesis Proposal; begin writing Thesis	Begin assembling Portfolio
Fourth semester	Take REL 799 and complete Thesis	Complete Portfolio
End of fourth semester	Oral Defense of Thesis (See pp. 14-15, below, for specific final semester deadlines)	Oral Defense of Portfolio (See pp. 14-15, below, for specific final semester deadlines)

Primary Advisor, Research Advisor, and Research Advisory Committee

The Primary Advisor of each student entering the M.A. program in Religious Studies is the department's Graduate Program Director who will assist in the selection of a Research Advisor and Research Advisory Committee. The student should select a Research Advisor and Research Advisory Committee prior to the completion of twelve hours in the Department**, typically before the end of the first year as a graduate student.**

Research Advisor. The student's Research Advisor, who also serves as Chair of the student's Research Advisory Committee, should be a specialist in the student's major area of interest.

Research Advisory Committee. The student's Research Advisory Committee is composed of the Research Advisor and two other members of the Religious Studies Graduate Faculty. In exceptional cases a student writing a Thesis may add a fourth member chosen from the graduate faculty of another department; this member will take part only in Thesis advisement and the Thesis defense. The Research Advisory Committee oversees and approves the student's Thesis or Research Portfolio. To set up the Committee, the student must complete and acquire faculty signatures on the M.A. Student's Advisory Committee form and submit the completed form to the Graduate Program Director. If a change is made to the Committee members, the student must submit a new form.

Committee Member on Leave. The Department does not expect graduate faculty on sabbaticals or other approved leaves from the University to serve on Graduate Committees. In the event that a student wishes to take the Comprehensive Examination or complete the Thesis or Portfolio during a semester in which a Committee member is on leave, it is anticipated that the student either will wait until the faculty member has completed the leave or will select another Committee member competent in the same topic.

Advising During the Summer. Faculty generally are not able to work with students during the summer months. A student should communicate far in advance with Committee members to determine whether they will agree to oversee completion of the student's Comprehensive Exam, Thesis, or Portfolio during the summer. Ordinarily, students should plan to complete the degree during the Fall or Spring semester.

Comprehensive Examination

The Comprehensive Examination is a written exam closely aligned with the student's chosen research focus. It is administered by the student's Research Advisor and a second member of the student's Research Advisory Committee, and adjudicated by the student's Research Advisory Committee, normally at the beginning of a student's third semester or the

completion of at least 12 hours of coursework. Typically, a student will use the summer before the third semester for intensive exam preparation. The student writes a 3-hour essay exam on topics pertinent to their research focus. The purpose of the written comprehensive exam is for the student to demonstrate the knowledge and methodological competence necessary to pursue a particular research focus in the form of either a Thesis or Research Portfolio. Thus, it is helpful to think of Comprehensive Exam in this department as a preliminary exam. The Research Advisor in collaboration with the second Research Advisory Committee member will assign significant books and articles on the topics, and the question or questions will be provided to the student well in advance of the exam. Relevant bibliography from previous course work may be included. The student is required to achieve a score of 80 percent to pass the written exam. If the student fails the exam but achieves a score of at least 70 percent, the student may request an oral examination which provides the student an opportunity to defend, discuss, and elaborate on their essay(s) in response to questions from the Research Advisory Committee. A student who does not pass the written exam will have at least one opportunity to take the Comprehensive Examination again, and this must be by the end of the semester following the first attempt (for example, by the end of the spring semester after a first attempt in the fall).

Scheduling the Comprehensive Examination. Two committee members work with the student to determine the content and format of the Comprehensive Examination. The student is responsible for contacting his/her committee well in advance to agree on exam topics and reading lists. Students must also work with the two committee members and the Administrative Assistant, Jane Terry, to schedule times for the written exam. Upon scheduling the Comprehensive Examination, the student will complete Section 1 of the Graduate College's Comprehensive Examination Application form and submit it to Jane.

Research Option One: Thesis

For many students, the Master's Thesis is their first opportunity to engage in comprehensive research and produce extended, original, scholarly work on a specialized topic. For students intending to pursue doctoral studies, the Thesis is an ideal opportunity both to develop the skills necessary for more advanced research projects and to begin the process of specialization that will continue in a Ph.D. program.

Selecting the Thesis Topic and Advisory Committee. As soon as possible in the first year, a student pursuing the Thesis option should begin exploring a topic and invite a member of the Department's Graduate Faculty to serve as his or her Research Advisor, Thesis Advisor, and Research Advisory Committee Chair. The topic of the Thesis typically influences which other faculty members the student invites to join their Research Advisory Committee.

Completing the Thesis Requirements on the Graduate College's Blackboard Site. The Graduate College has created a course on Blackboard to guide a student through the process of writing a Thesis. The course provides instructions on how to submit the Thesis at the end of the process, but also includes several other steps that the student must complete along the way to have the Thesis approved by the Graduate College. So during the first semester of REL 799, the student should register for the Thesis course and begin to work on those steps. The Blackboard course includes instructions on formatting and other issues of style, which the student must follow meticulously.

Working on the Thesis in the Third Semester. Students wishing to complete a Thesis may earn a maximum of 6 credit hours (REL 799) for the Thesis, although one does not have to be enrolled in REL 799 to be working on the Thesis. Usually during the third semester of study a student will take 3 hours of REL 799, and will be expected to submit a research product that can be the basis for a grade in that course. Many advisors require the student to write a formal Thesis Proposal. A student should consult closely with his/her Advisor about specific expectations, but typically a Thesis Proposal includes:

- Thesis's working title and abstract including an initial formulation of the student's thesis statement
- Chapter outline that includes a working title and an abstract for each chapter indicating how the chapter will contribute to developing the thesis's arguments in support of the thesis statement
- Proposed schedule for completing chapter drafts
- Development of an extensive bibliography on the subject
- Formal literature review that demonstrates the student's familiarity with relevant scholarship

Much of this material will become part of the introductory chapter of the Thesis itself. The student's Research Advisor must approve the Proposal before the student begins writing the Thesis.

Completing the Thesis in the Fourth Semester. Students usually take another 3 hours of 799 as they work on the Thesis in their final semester. The student is expected to maintain regular contact with his/her Advisor throughout the research and writing process. Ideally, by the beginning of the final semester the student is submitting drafts of individual chapters to his/her Advisor as drafts are completed so that the Advisor can provide feedback. The student can anticipate substantial revisions as the Advisor and then the other Advisory Committee members read chapter drafts. Thus, it is best to plan ahead. Reading and revising the Thesis will take time and the Graduate College sets specific thesis submission deadlines each semester; for these and other relevant dates, see the Graduate Calendar in the *Graduate Catalog* and the department-specific calendars pp. 14-15, below.

The M.A. Thesis is typically about 80 to 100 pages in length, comprising 3 to 5 chapters including an Introduction and Conclusion. *Permission must be obtained from the student's Advisory Committee and the Graduate Program Director if the Thesis is to exceed 120 pages.*

If the student has made progress on the thesis, but has not completed it at the end of the second semester of REL 799, he/she will receive temporary grade of Z until successfully defending the Thesis, at which point the student's Primary Advisor will assign a letter grade. If a Z grade is not removed within four years, it will become a W (withdraw without penalty).

If the Thesis is not finished when the student has completed 30 hrs of course work, the student must enroll in GEN 798 (see p. 16) each semester until the Thesis is successfully defended.

Passing the Thesis. The thesis is passed only after it has been orally defended by the student and approved by both the student's Advisory Committee and the Dean of the Graduate College (see Oral Defense of the Thesis or Research Portfolio, below). The Advisory Committee may pass a Thesis either with no revisions required or with minor revisions (requiring the student and her/his Advisor to ensure that the mandated revisions are made). If the Thesis fails to pass, the student will be required to resubmit and re-defend the revised Thesis to the same Advisory Committee prior to the end of the following semester.

Research Option Two: Research Portfolio

The Portfolio allows for the inclusion of a broader range of subject matter than a Thesis and may be attractive to students who wish to focus on a primary research theme and/or method pursued throughout their graduate studies. As soon as possible in the first year, a student pursuing the Portfolio option should begin developing a research focus (methodological and/or topical) and invite a member of the Department's Graduate Faculty to serve as their Research Advisor, Portfolio Advisor, and Research Advisory Committee Chair. The student's research focus typically influences which other faculty members the student invites to join their Research Advisory Committee. The Portfolio consists of written research products that best represents the student's research focus during their course of study in the Master's.

Portfolio Contents. The Research Portfolio is 60 to 80 pages in length, including Title Page and Introductory Essay (see below). *Permission must be obtained from the student's Research Advisory Committee and the Graduate Program Director if the Portfolio is to exceed 100 pages.* The typical Portfolio consists of **three major seminar papers**; typically a major seminar paper is at least twenty pages long. However, one seminar paper can be replaced by a media product (either traditional or digital). Normally the student's Research Advisory Committee includes the faculty members in whose seminars the student produced the three research products.

Introductory Essay. An important component of the Portfolio is an 8 to 10 introductory essay which reflects upon the contents of the portfolio, exploring thematic and methodological connections among the various research products and showing how the work represents the student's research focus during their course of study.

Passing the Portfolio. Assembling the Research Portfolio does not require the same level of interaction between the student and his/her Primary Advisor and Advisory Committee as does writing a Thesis. Nevertheless, the complete Portfolio should be presented to the Primary Advisor at least four weeks before the Oral Defense and, with the Advisor's approval, to the Advisory Committee at least two weeks before the defense, allowing time to make revisions as requested by Committee members (see the Calendars on pp. 14–15 for deadlines). Following the Oral Defense (see below) and after the Portfolio is approved by the Advisory Committee, the student provides a copy of the Portfolio, spiral-bound with a clear plastic cover, to the Religious Studies Department.

Oral Defense of the Thesis or Portfolio

The one-hour Oral Defense is the final major requirement for completing the degree. After the student's Advisory Committee have approved the Thesis or Research Portfolio as ready for defending, the student and his/her Committee will meet for the Oral Defense. During the Defense, the Committee will ask the student to address questions about the Thesis or Portfolio. At the end of the Oral Defense, the Committee will determine whether to pass the Thesis or Portfolio or require the student to complete further revisions and resubmit the Thesis or Portfolio to his or her Research Advisor.

Thesis Oral Defense. The student should bring a copy of the Thesis Approval Form (available in the Graduate College's Thesis Course on Blackboard) to the defense, with the top part filled out. When the student has successfully defended the Thesis, at the end of the Oral Defense the Primary Advisor and Committee members will sign the Thesis Approval Form.

Portfolio Oral Defense. When a student has successfully defended the Portfolio, at the end of the Oral Defense the Research Advisor and either the Graduate Program Director or Department Head will sign a Seminar Report for Non-Thesis Option form. The student should bring a copy of this form to the defense and submit the completed and signed form to Jane Terry, who will submit it to the Graduate College.

Final Semester of Degree Program: Calendars

Fall 2022

Aug 26	Deadline to submit the online Application for Graduation to the Graduate College. Review Graduation procedures in the Graduate Catalog.
Oct 17	Last day to submit completed Portfolio to Research Advisor
Oct 24	Last day to distribute Thesis approved by your Research Advisor to the members of your Advisory Committee
Oct 31	Last day to distribute Portfolio approved by your Research Advisor to members of your Advisory Committee
Nov 7	Final version of Thesis due, though more changes may be required after the Oral Defense
Nov 14	Last day for Thesis or Portfolio Oral Defense
Nov 21	**Thesis Deadline**: Last day to submit approved Thesis to the Graduate College
Nov 21	**Portfolio Deadline**: Last day to submit signed Seminar Report Form for Non-Thesis Option to the Graduate College
Dec 8	**Comp Deadline**: Deadline for submission of Comprehensive Examination results to the Graduate College

Spring 2023

Jan 27	Deadline to submit the online Application for Graduation to the Graduate College. Review Graduation procedures in the Graduate Catalog.
Mar 19	Last day to submit completed Portfolio to Research Advisor
Mar 26	Last day to distribute Thesis approved by your Research Advisor to the members of your Advisory Committee
Apr 2	Last day to distribute Portfolio approved by your Research Advisor to members of your Advisory Committee
Apr 9	Final version of Thesis due, though more changes may be required after the Oral Defense
Apr 16	Last day for Thesis or Portfolio Oral Defense
Apr 24	**Thesis Deadline**: Last day to submit approved Thesis to the Graduate College
Apr 24	**Portfolio Deadline**: Last day to submit signed Seminar Report Form for Non-Thesis Option to the Graduate College
May 11	**Comp Deadline**: Deadline for submission of Comprehensive Examination results to the Graduate College

Summer 2023

Jun 16	Deadline to submit the online Application for Graduation to the Graduate College. Review Graduation procedures in the Graduate Catalog.
Jun 12	Last day to submit completed Portfolio to Research Advisor
Jun 19	Last day for distributing Thesis approved by your Research Advisor to the members of your Advisory Committee
Jun 26	Last day to distribute Portfolio approved by your Research Advisor to members of your Advisory Committee
Jul 3	Final version of Thesis due, though more changes may be required after the Oral Defense
Jul 10	Last day for Thesis or Portfolio Oral Defense
Jul 17	**Thesis Deadline**: Last day to submit approved Thesis to the Graduate College
Jul 17	**Portfolio Deadline**: Last day to submit signed Seminar Report Form for Non-Thesis Option to the Graduate College
Aug 2	**Comp Deadline**: Deadline for submission of Comprehensive Examination results to the Graduate College

Religious Studies Graduate Courses

REL 615 Topics in Biblical Studies (3 hours)
REL 635 Topics in Religion and Culture (3 hours)
REL 645 Topics in Religions of Asia (3 hours)
REL 655 Topics in Religions of Europe and the Middle East (3 hours)
REL 675 Archaeology and the Bible (3 hours)
REL 685 Theories of Religion (3 hours)
REL 711 Seminar in Religions of Asia (variable topics, 3 hours)
REL 731 Seminar in Biblical Studies (variable topics, 3 hours)
REL 751 Seminar in Religions of Europe and the Middle East (variable topics, 3 hours)
REL 771 Seminar in Religion and Culture (variable topics, 3 hours)
REL 796 Readings in Religious Studies (maximum of 9 hours)
REL 799 Thesis (maximum of 6 hours)

REL 751 and 771 are always offered in the Fall semester and REL 711 and 731 in the Spring semester. 700-level seminars usually are offered in the early evening once per week, as are some 600-level courses.

Courses offered in other departments may count toward the M.A. in Religious Studies, including PSY 633 Psychological Issues in Religion; HST 642 Ancient Israel; and COM 714 Qualitative Research Methods in Communication. This is not an exhaustive list; students may take courses outside the Religious Studies Department with the approval of their Research Advisor and the Graduate Program Director.

Active in Research (GEN 798)

Students who have completed all course work and are only working on the Thesis or Portfolio must sign up for GEN 798 Active in Research. This course is offered at a reduced fee ($75) and allows the following:

- access to the library, including online services such as interlibrary loans, MOBIUS, and restricted access databases
- opportunity to purchase a parking permit
- access to computer services and campus email

GEN 798 is a zero-credit course and the grade is "P" (pass) or "W" (student discontinues participation in the course and is dropped from the course).

Graduate Assistantships

The Department has a limited number of GA positions that are awarded annually on a competitive basis (e.g., undergraduate and/or graduate GPA, relevant experience, areas of expertise, ability to work with undergraduate students, and other competencies are considered). GA positions entail on average 20 hours of work each week each semester. Assistantships begin the week prior to the first week of classes. Specific hours of employment are arranged between the student and the faculty member supervisor. The graduate assistantship provides a stipend of approximately $9,000 per academic year (nine months) and a tuition waiver. A graduate assistant is required to complete a minimum of 6 hours of graduate course work (600-level or above) during each semester of appointment. Awarding of these merit-based scholarships is based on the recommendation of the department's Graduate Program Committee and Department Head and approval of the Graduate College Dean. Although graduate students can hold an assistantship for a maximum of two years, GA positions in the Department are not automatically renewed; those wishing to renew their current assistantship must submit a letter of intent outlining the progress and accomplishments made during their assistantships, typically due to the Graduate Program Director in mid-February.

GAs' duties differ, depending on the needs of the faculty members with whom they work. GAs assist professors in working with undergraduate students (e.g., running tutorial groups, grading undergraduate exams and papers, maintaining Blackboard and grade and attendance records, offering review sessions prior to examinations, delivering lectures) and assisting professors with their research or library work as needed, as well as generally contributing to the ongoing life of the Department.

Those wishing to apply for a GA position should see Religious Studies Graduate Assistantships and contact the Religious Studies Graduate Program Director for the timing

and requirements of the application process. Decisions for each year's GA positions are generally made by the Graduate Committee in late March/early April for the fall semester.

2022-2023 Graduate Assistants in Religious Studies
Sadia Afrin (University of Dhaka)
Dakota Nelson (Evangel University)
Emily Taylor (Missouri State University)
Cody Taylor (Missouri State University)
Stephanie Teasley (Kansas State University BS; University of Colorado-Boulder MA; University of Kansas MA)
Matthew Wynn (Missouri State University)

Graduate Scholarships

There are several University, College of Humanities and Public Affairs, and Religious Studies Department scholarships available to graduate students. Interested students should speak with the Graduate Program Director for further information.

Funding for Conference Presentations and Thesis Research for REL Graduate Students

The Department of Religious Studies and the College of Humanities and Public Affairs encourage and support graduate students' research by making funding available for presentation of their papers at conferences and for extraordinary or unusual costs incurred by thesis research. Funding for graduate student research is awarded on a case-by-case basis depending on the merit of the proposal and the availability of financial resources.

Conference Presentations

Religious Studies graduate students may request funds from the department to help with the expense of presenting their research at a conference. Students may receive up to $300 per conference, as funds are available. The student must be presenting a paper at the conference (no funds if just attending). Students may not apply for funds for conferences for which funding is already being provided by the department.

Funding can be awarded twice in a student's graduate career, once per academic year. Preference will be given to students who have not previously received travel funding from the department and to those who are presenting at a national meeting.

Any student seeking funding from the department must first apply for and be approved for Graduate Student Travel Funding from the Graduate College. The Graduate College must receive the application at least two weeks prior to date of travel, but it is best to apply earlier in order to hear back from the College and submit your application to the department (also prior to date of travel). To request funds from the department, the student should submit to

the department's administrative assistant, Jane Terry: 1) a copy of the student's Graduate Student Travel Funding application materials submitted to the Graduate College; 2) confirmation from the Graduate College that it will help to fund the student's travel; and 3) a cover letter requesting department funds including a detailed budget for how they will be spent.

Prior to traveling, a student whose request for funding from the department has been granted must consult with Jane Terry about how to pay for items covered by the funding (such as mileage, airline tickets, food, and hotels), the required documentation of expenses (to be submitted upon the student's return), and so on. In order to disburse funds the department must follow the rules of Missouri State's Office of Financial Services.

Thesis Research

Religious studies graduate students writing theses may request funds from the department to help defray the real costs of supplies, materials, and travel needed to facilitate student research. Thesis research funding is not to be used for books, duplicating materials, or other items purchased with the intent that they become the personal property of the student. Thesis funding may also not be used for printing and binding of the thesis, as that is a student's personal expense. Students may receive from the Religious Studies Department a one-time award of up to $300.

Any student seeking funding from the department must first apply for and be approved for Thesis Research Funding from the Graduate College. To request funds from the department, the student should submit to the department's administrative assistant, Jane Terry: 1) a copy of the students' Thesis Research Funding materials submitted to the Graduate College; 2) confirmation from the Graduate College that it has awarded funding to the student; and 3) a cover letter requesting departmental funds including a detailed budget for how they would be spent.

Prior to purchasing thesis research materials or making travel arrangements, a student whose request for funding from the department has been granted must consult with Jane Terry about how to pay for items covered by the funding, the required documentation of expenses, and so on. In order to disburse funds the department must follow the rules of Missouri State's Office of Financial Services.

Postbaccalaureate and Non-Degree Seeking Students

Postbaccalureate students. At the discretion of the Department Head and Graduate Program Director, students may register and take courses before they are accepted into the M.A. program in Religious Studies. However, no more than 9 credit hours of graduate credit earned as a postbaccalaureate student may be counted toward the graduate degree.

Non-degree seeking students may include the following:

1. Undeclared Major: Students who do not plan to pursue a master's degree at Missouri State, but wish to complete course work for graduate credit.

2. Post-Master's: Students who have received a master's or higher graduate degree and wish to continue taking course work for graduate credit without pursuing another graduate degree.

3. Visiting Student: Students who are actively pursuing a graduate degree at an institution other than Missouri State and are currently in good standing. Visiting students are not required to submit official transcripts from an undergraduate institution. However, the applicant must submit a letter from the Graduate Dean or Registrar at a regionally accredited university certifying that the student is enrolled in a graduate degree program and is in good standing. A visiting student may enroll for no more than 12 hours of graduate courses at Missouri State.

Graduate Faculty

Leslie Baynes, Ph.D. (University of Notre Dame, 2005) Biblical Studies; Second Temple Judaism and Christian Origins; Apocalyptic Literature; C. S. Lewis

Stephen C. Berkwitz, Ph.D. (University of California, Santa Barbara, 1999) Department Head. Religions of Asia; Buddhist Studies; Method and Theory

Mark D. Given, Ph.D. (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1998) Biblical Studies; Early Christian History and Literature; Paul; Apocalypticism; Greco-Roman Philosophy and Rhetoric; Postmodern Biblical Interpretation

Philippa Koch, Ph.D. (University of Chicago, 2016) Religion and Culture; Religion in America; Religion, Health, and the Body

Victor H. Matthews, Ph.D. (Brandeis University, 1977) Biblical Studies; Hebrew Bible/Old Testament; Social History of Ancient Israel

Vadim Putzu, Ph.D. (Hebrew Union College, 2014) Religions of Europe and the Middle East; Jewish Mysticism; Jewish Thought

John A. Schmalzbauer, Ph.D. (Princeton University, 1997) Blanche Gorman Strong Endowed Chair in Protestant Studies; Religion and Culture; Religion in America; Religion and Media; Religion and Health

Yasmine Singh, Ph.D. (Duke University, 2019) Religions of Asia; South Asian Religions and Cultures; Hindu Religious Traditions; Goddess Traditions; Religion and Gender

John T. Strong, Ph.D. (Union Presbyterian Seminary, Richmond, VA, 1993) Biblical Studies; Hebrew Bible/Old Testament; Ancient Israelite Religion; Archaeology of the Southern Levant

Graduate Faculty Emeriti

Stanley Burgess, Ph.D. (University of Missouri, Columbia, 1971) Emeritus. Church History; Renaissance and Reformation; Pentecostalism

Martha L. Finch, Ph.D. (University of California, Santa Barbara, 2000) Emerita. Religion and Culture; North American Religious History; Religion and the Human Body; Theory and Method

Charles W. Hedrick, Ph.D. (Claremont Graduate University, 1977) Distinguished Professor Emeritus. Biblical Studies; Historical Jesus; Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism, and the New Testament; Parables; Hellenistic World; Literary and Narrative Criticism; Early Coptic Christianity

J. E. Llewellyn, Ph.D. (University of Chicago, 1990) Graduate Program Director. Religions of Asia; Modern Hinduism

James C. Moyer, Ph.D. (Brandeis University, 1969) Emeritus. Biblical Studies; Hebrew Bible; Archaeology and the History of Ancient Israel

Kathy J. Pulley, Ph.D. (Boston University, 1989) Religion and Culture; Women and Religion; Religion in America

Austra Reinis, Ph.D. (Princeton Theological Seminary, 2002) Religions of Europe and the Middle East; German Reformation; Women in the History of Christianity