

Religious Studies MA Program Student Handbook

2021-2022

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GENERAL INFORMATION

G1. Welcome to the Program

Welcome to the Religious Studies MA Program at Arizona State University (ASU)! We're excited to have you join us. This handbook will help you navigate your time at ASU, outlining resources that will help you succeed and policies that will keep you in good academic standing and on schedule for a timely graduation. Our hope is that much of the information that you need can be found here and that you will consult this first when questions arise. But if you can't find all the answers here, you should certainly reach out to Mark Barrios (Graduate Programs Coordinator for the School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies) at Mark.Barrios@asu.edu and/or to Joel Gereboff (Associate Head of Graduate Studies in Religious Studies) at joel.gereboff@asu.edu. We're here to help and are happy to do so. Our program is first and foremost about participating in the academic study of religion. You will learn from your outstanding peers and professors as we pursue exploring important aspects of how religions have been central to the human experience over the centuries. You will develop the creative, analytical, skills and enhance your abilities communicate effectively. We'll be doing that soon enough. But, in this handbook, you will mostly find information both about the logistics of our program and about the policies, procedures, and resources that will help to keep you in good academic standing.

G2. Our Collegial, Congenial, and Inclusive Community

The Religious Studies MA Program is committed to creating an inclusive community where everyone can thrive. We uphold the ASU Charter which states that we are "measured not by whom we exclude, but rather by whom we include and how they succeed."

We also know that learning is richer and more rewarding when there is a sense of community. We strive to create such a community through faculty being open and available to students and through programs such as the Religious Studies Forum that bring together faculty and graduate students for lectures and conversations on a range of topics relevant to our field of study.

Lastly, our graduate students have formed the Graduate Religious Studies Society, which meets regularly, and serves as a way to provide advise and feedback to the Religious Studies Faculty on relevant issues.

G3. Our Faculty

The Religious Studies Faculty are committed to maintaining excellence in the major subject areas of Religious Studies and to participating in innovative programs that build an interdisciplinary setting for exploring the relevance of developments associated with religion throughout the course of history with particular emphasis on today's world.

G4. Student Success

ASU is one of the largest—if not *the* largest—research university in the United States. That means there is a wide range of resources available to help you succeed as a graduate student. We encourage you to take advantage of these resources as they will greatly assist you. Here, we highlight some of the resources we expect that you'll find most useful, though you should be aware that this is only a partial list.

Professional Development Workshops: To help ensure the success of our students, the Religious Studies Faculty sponsors several extra-curricular workshops on a rotating basis. These may include topics such as: “Teaching and Pedagogy,” “Preparing for the Job Market,” “Writing and Research in Religious Studies,” and “Getting the Most Out of Graduate School.”

Placement: Our MA program is designed to prepare you both for more advanced degree programs and for various employment opportunities within and outside of academia. Many of our MA students have gone on to excellent PhD programs in Religious Studies. Others have gone on to pursue law degrees at law schools. Still others have gone on to work as community college instructors. Finally many have gone on to work in public, non-governmental and international organizations or to pursue careers as counselors and freelance writers. Since we're a small program, we don't have a designated placement director, but the Associate Head of Graduate Studies (AHGS) will help you both with finding jobs and programs to apply to and with putting together a professional dossier and/or application.

Funding: Unfortunately, our MA program is unfunded. This means that MA students must pay out of pocket or secure their own funding. We encourage you to see the following link for ASU's information on [Financial Aid and Scholarship Services](#). The Grad College gathers many funding opportunities at this page: <https://graduate.asu.edu/current-students/funding-opportunities> while also including good information at their [Pay for your Graduate Education Site](#). Additional sources of funding include various research centers and programs at ASU such as The Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict, The Center for Jewish Studies and the Center for Asian Research. Finally, be sure to check your email regularly, as financial opportunities are occasionally sent via email by program faculty and staff.

Mental Health: Graduate school is challenging and those who are most successful typically attend to their overall wellbeing and mental health. ASU offers professional [Counseling Services](#), EMPACT: a 24 hour ASU-dedicated crisis hotline: 480-921-1006 (with Crisis TEXTLINE: Text HOME to 741741). In addition there are a range of wellness resources including Live Well @ASU: <https://wellness.asu.edu/>, [TAO Connect](#) – a self-help tool for emotional well-being, Center for Mindfulness, Compassion and Resilience: <https://mindfulnesscenter.asu.edu/>, and a set of [10 Best Practices in Graduate Student Wellbeing](#).

Advising: The Religious Studies MA Program has multiple people who can help answer your questions, but a good place to start is with Mark Barrios (PhD Graduate Programs Coordinator for SHPRS) at Mark.Barrios@asu.edu and/or Joel Gereboff (Associate Head of Graduate Studies in Philosophy) at joel.gereboff@asu.edu. All students should by their second semester have identified a primary advisor and that faculty member should serve a major role in advising.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center (<https://tutoring.asu.edu/student-services/writing-centers>) helps students at every stage of the writing process and with all types of assignments and genres of writing. The Writing Center

operates on a peer-to-peer, collaborative model where graduate students meet one-on-one with a graduate writing tutor in 60-minute appointments. Our tutors are ASU graduate students who undergo training each semester that provides them with tools and strategies to discuss students' writing goals.

Your Peers: One of the wonderful things about this program is that you will meet dozens of other philosophy students. Introduce yourself! Exchange email addresses! Form study groups! Draw on each other's knowledge and expertise! Also, there is a graduate student-run Discord channel, which is an app available for your smartphone or desktop that allows students to message each other, share documents, post content, and voice chat.

Other ASU Resources: [ASU Libraries](#), [Graduate Student Writing Centers](#), [Graduate & Professional Student Association](#), [Provost's Office](#), [Career Services](#), [Campus Parking](#), [Student Business Services](#), [Sun Devil Student ID Card](#), [IT Help Office](#) and [Campus Dining/Banking/Student Organizations](#).

G5. Situating Our Program within the University

ASU is an enormous enterprise, and so it will help to have a quick orientation to the major branches of the university and their relations to our program. The Religious Studies MA Program is overseen by the Religious Studies Faculty, who are a proper subset of the School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies (SHPRS). The Religious Studies Faculty is led by the Head of Philosophy, currently Jason Bruner (Jason.bruner@asu.edu). And SHPRS is led by the Director of SHPRS, currently Richard Amesbury (Richard.Amesbury@asu.edu). SHPRS faculty manage degree programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels in all three disciplines: History, Philosophy, and Religious Studies. SHPRS is housed within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences ("The College"), which oversees programs ranging from English to Physics. As a graduate program, our program is also overseen by ASU's Graduate College. Each of these organizations—Religious Studies Faculty, SHPRS, The College, and the Graduate College—set policies on different matters. Fortunately, this document captures the vast majority of these policies, and your advisors can help you navigate any other bureaucracies if, or when, that becomes necessary.

SHRS PROGRAM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

S1. Introduction

The objective of this handbook is to provide information on degree requirements for students enrolled in the SHPRS MA programs to ensure consistency in program objectives, maintain the quality of degrees to be awarded, and enable students to progress through their programs in a timely manner. It also provides important links to students concerning various policies and procedures set by Arizona State University, the Graduate College and the School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies (SHPRS) concerning academic standards expected from all students. This handbook and all program policies are reviewed annually and are subject to change. All current and past handbooks are available on the [SHPRS Resource](#) page.

It is each student's responsibility to be familiar with policies and regulations of the Graduate College and Arizona State University and meet deadlines for registration and payment of fees. The best resources to find this information are the [ASU Graduate College Website](#), [the ASU Catalog](#), and [the Graduate Policies and Procedures Manual](#). Students should discuss questions about [progress toward their degree with their](#) committee chair, the [director of graduate studies](#), and/or the [graduate coordinator](#).

[Enrolled SHPRS graduate students](#) can also find program [procedures](#), forms and references on the [SHPRS Graduate Resources site](#).

All university related emails are sent to the ASU email address. **Students are required to have an active ASU email account and check it frequently.** A [guide](#) for [establishing](#) and [maintain an ASU email account](#) is found on this [website](#).

Resource	Email/URL	Location	Phone
SHPRS Grad Programs Resource Site	https://sites.google.com/asu.edu/shprsgrad		
ASU Policies and Academic Calendars	https://catalog.asu.edu/		
Graduate College	http://graduate.asu.edu/	Interdisciplinary Bldg, B Wing, Room 170	(480) 965-6113
SHPRS Director, Richard Amesbury	Richard.Amesbury@asu.edu	Coor 4566	(480) 965-5778
SHPRS Associate Director of Graduate Studies, Chris Jones	CJones36@asu.edu	Coor 6632	(480) 965-5778

Associate Head of Graduate Studies in History, Chris Jones	CJones36@asu.edu	Coor 4538	(480) 965-5778
Associate Head of Graduate Studies in Religious Studies, Joel Gereboff	Joel.Gereboff@asu.edu	Coor 4548	(480) 965-5778
Associate Head of Graduate Studies in Philosophy, Doug Portmore	Douglas.Portmore@asu.edu	Coor 3366	(480) 965-5778
Graduate Programs Coordinator, Mark Barrios	Mark.Barrios@asu.edu	Coor 4499A	(480) 965-5778
Student Health & Counseling Services	https://eoss.asu.edu/health	Health Services Building (by footbridge that crosses University Drive)	(480) 965-3349 Crisis Hotline: (480) 921-1006
University Registrar	https://students.asu.edu/registration	Student Services Building, Suite 140	(480) 965-3124
International Students and Scholars Center	https://international.asu.edu	Student Services Building, Suite 170	(480) 727-4776
Student Accessibility and Inclusive Learning Services	https://eoss.asu.edu/accessibility	Matthews Center Building	(480) 965-1234

S2. SHPRS Organization

The School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies (SHPRS) is housed in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and comprises the disciplines of history, philosophy and religious studies. The Director of SHPRS is the school's chief administrative officer responsible for the overall operation of the school (i.e. faculty, budget, facilities, university policies, and school standards and procedures). The director establishes an executive committee (ExComm) made up of the associate directors of undergraduate studies, graduate studies, and research and heads of faculty for each discipline to advise the SHPRS director on the needs and resources of their academic groups.

The school director, in collaboration with the associate director of graduate studies (ADGS), assigns a faculty member from each academic discipline to serve as associate head of graduate studies (AHGS) in their discipline. The role of the AHGS is to work with the discipline's faculty to develop new programs, assign graduate teaching assistantships, monitor and ensure program integrity, determine program

requirements, and resolve various student issues.

The history, religious studies, and philosophy disciplines also convene graduate committees, made up of graduate faculty members, who work with the AHGS to review applications in admitting new graduate students, improve the graduate programs, oversee student evaluation and mentoring, resolve student concerns, and make policy decisions.

Within each faculty, there are tenured and tenure track faculty who are eligible to serve on supervisory committees for graduate students. Lists of these faculty members can be found on the [websites of each academic program](#).

The disciplines of SHPRS share a staff who support hiring and HR, budgeting and payroll, course scheduling, maintaining the academic catalog and program integrity, advising for undergraduate and graduate students, communications, and event planning. SHPRS employs dedicated program coordinators and academic success specialists who support graduate students in navigating the landscape of Arizona State University from matriculation to completion of each student's academic program.

S3. Graduate Faculties

Graduate faculties consist of faculties internal to each SHPRS discipline and faculty from other ASU academic programs approved by the SHPRS Internal Unit Graduate Faculty to serve as supervisory committee members. A complete list of the graduate faculties who are internal to each discipline can be found on the [SHPRS Grad Programs webpages](#). SHPRS graduate faculty, including their endorsements for supervisory committee roles (chair/member) can be found in the [ASU Graduate Faculty Search listing](#).

S4. Academic Integrity

The School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies strongly supports the high standard of academic integrity set by [Arizona State University](#). Failure of any graduate student to meet these standards, either in academic coursework or related research activities, may result in serious consequences including suspension or expulsion from the university or, if discovered after a degree is awarded, may result in the university revoking that degree.

Violations of academic integrity include the obvious offenses of cheating, fabricating information or results, falsifying academic records, tampering, and plagiarism, but also include aiding and/or facilitating such activities and, in some cases, failing to reference one's own work. It is extremely important that students become familiar with what academic integrity entails so they do not inadvertently violate University policy. The Graduate College recommends several websites to help students with academic integrity:

- [ASU Academic Integrity Policy \(Office of the Provost\)](#)
- [The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Academic Integrity Webpage](#)

History students should also become familiar with the Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct on the American Historical Association [website](#).

Students must take an academic integrity training on My ASU before beginning their first semester in

the program.

S5. Research Integrity and Assurance

The Office of Research Integrity and Assurance's Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversees all research at ASU that involves living human or animal subjects. (Note: most oral history interviews [no longer require IRB review](#).) Students should plan to contact the IRB in the planning stages of their research to get approval, if necessary, prior to initiating research.

[When a thesis document is submitted to Graduate College for format review, the document is also checked by IRB. Failure to follow the procedures set by the IRB may result in the student not being able to include the data collected for that particular research.](#)

Further information can be found on the [Institutional Review Board website](#).

S6. Safety, Discrimination, and Harassment

ASU always has safety in mind and wants students, faculty, staff and visitors to be in a secure environment. Please visit our Campus [Safety](#) site for more details.

All ASU students and student organizations are bound by the [University's Code of Conduct](#), which promotes an educational environment that encourages respect, honesty, safety, and collegiality. The Code of Conduct and directions for filing a report can be found on the [Dean of Students webpage](#). Students are encouraged to report any breach of the Code of Conduct or any concerns about other students or members of the ASU community to the graduate coordinator or AHGS. Anonymous reports of misconduct may be filed with the Dean of Students using the [Campus Community Incident Report form](#). Additionally, ASU takes sexual violence seriously and aims to prevent sexual violence. More information and directions for handling incidents of sexual violence can be found on the [Sexual Violence Prevention website](#).

Institutions of higher education have a large community of people with a variety of backgrounds and beliefs and a large international presence. Arizona State University welcomes diversity among students, staff, faculty, and visitors. ASU has strict policies against discrimination based on [race, color, religion, national origin, citizenship, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability, and qualified veteran status](#). Providing a safe environment, free from harassment (sexual, religious, racial, etc.), is a priority concern for ASU and should be reported immediately when it occurs or is witnessed.

There are different types and levels of discrimination and harassment. Students should become aware of [them so they are careful not to cause an offense and to recognize when they have become a victim](#). Descriptions are available at the [Office of University Rights and Responsibilities](#). Students who witness offensive behavior or experience inappropriate and unwelcome responses should contact [the Office of Equity and Inclusion](#) (Phone: 480-965-5057). All information is kept confidential and it is the responsibility of everyone to report instances when observed. [Retaliation against those who report such behavior is not tolerated and every effort will be made to protect those involved.](#)

S7. Enrollment, Residency, Tuition & Financial Assistance

A. Registration and Tuition

Graduate students register for courses through MyASU according to their enrollment appointment dates. Details regarding registration and course drop/add procedures are provided in the [Registration and Tuition Payment Guide](#).

A guide to tuition, tuition estimator, tax forms, and information about payment plans can be found on the [Student Business Services website](#).

B. Residency

Students are considered independent if they have: lived continuously in Arizona for at least 12 months, can demonstrate intent to be an Arizona resident [which includes financial independence] and can show that the primary reason for being in Arizona is not to be a student. Any student who has been classified and a non-resident may apply for reclassification. For further details, please visit:

<https://students.asu.edu/residency-requirements>

C. Continuous Enrollment

Once admitted, students must enroll continuously each fall and spring semester until all requirements for the degree have been met. Students who have completed all course requirements may enroll in HST/REL/PHI 595 Continuing Registration credits. Continuing Registration meets the continuous enrollment requirement but is not graded. A “Z” is assigned as the final grade.

The Graduate College will remove any student from the program who fails to maintain continuous enrollment without obtaining official leave approval from the Graduate College. The student may reapply for admission; however, the student must pay reapplication fees and re-admission is not guaranteed.

D. Full-Time Status

SHPRS requires full-time study in the first two semesters after admission to the program, excluding summer semester, and encourages full-time enrollment each fall and spring until coursework is completed. Nine hours each semester is considered full-time for students who are not on TA or RA funding; six hours is considered full-time for students with TA or RA appointments. Audited courses do not count toward full-time enrollment. Students are strongly encouraged to enroll in nine hours each semester throughout the program (regardless of funding status) to achieve good progress through the curriculum and meet program expectations. More information is available on the [Graduate College website](#) under [“Registration and Enrollment”](#).

International F-1 and J-1 Visa students must maintain full-time enrollment status. Any exception to full-time enrollment must be previously approved by the [International Student and Scholars Center](#). More information can be found in the [Graduate Policies and Procedures Manual](#), published by the Graduate College.

E. Enrollment Verification Requests

Students who have completed coursework and are enrolled in HST/REL/PHI 595: Continuing Registration and who wish to be considered half- or full-time for insurance or loan deferral purposes can submit an [Enrollment Verification Request](#) to the Registrar. This form will not allow loans to be disbursed; it is only for deferral of payment.

F. Withdrawal Requests and Leaves of Absence

Before considering complete withdrawal, students should explore the possibility of “Incomplete” grades, which allow a student additional time to complete coursework based upon a [documented agreement](#) signed by the professor, student, and AHGS. Questions should be directed to the graduate coordinator.

A student may apply for a leave status with the Graduate College in an extraordinary case in which serious illness or injury (medical leave), significant personal situation (compassionate leave) prevents a student from continuing classes, or in the case of military activation. This leave status cannot exceed a maximum of two semesters during the student’s enrollment in their program. A student on leave is not required to pay fees but is not permitted to place demands on university faculty or use any university facilities including the library. [An official Leave of Absence is requested in the iPOS system – Interactive Plan of Study.](#) For further details, please access the [Graduate College’s Leave of Absence Policy](#) More information on withdrawals can be found on the [Graduate College Registration webpage](#) and the [Medical/Compassionate Withdrawal webpage](#). Students requesting leave who are on financial aid are strongly encouraged to consult [Financial Aid and Scholarship Services](#) prior to requesting the leave. International students with an F1/J1 visa must consult with the [International Students and Scholars Center](#) to discuss the immigration consequences that may result from their withdrawal from ASU.

G. Financial Assistance

Please visit ASU’s [Financial Aid and Scholarship Services](#) and [SHPRS Funding](#) page for opportunities. Also, students can apply for Fellowships and Awards by visiting the Graduate College’s [Pay for your Graduate Education Site](#).

At this time, SHPRS does not have any available Teaching AsBsistantships for Master’s students.

S8. Interactive Plan of Study (iPOS)

All ASU graduate students are required to file an online Plan of Study with Graduate College. The online plan is referred to as the iPOS (Interactive Plan of Study) and is accessed through the student’s MyASU, under “My Programs and Degree”. The iPOS serves as an agreement between the student, academic unit, and the Graduate College to identify the selected supervisory committee, verify the selection and passage of the culminating experience, and plan what coursework will be completed to earn the degree.

Students must submit the iPOS by April 1st of their first year. The iPOS must be approved by the student’s chair, the AHGS, and Graduate College. The graduate coordinator cannot approve an iPOS without receiving chair and AHGS approval first.

Since students are required to identify courses for future semesters on the iPOS, they should enter

courses that best match program requirements and their area of interest. Course changes are expected and can be processed. Students should request a course change prior to taking any coursework that is not listed on the original iPOS by emailing their faculty advisor and the graduate coordinator and then making appropriate changes on their iPOS. The coordinator will obtain AHGS approval and enter it into the online system to indicate that a change has been formalized.

S9. Grades

A. Overview

Graduate students are expected to maintain high grades in all courses in order to show mastery of course material and skills. ASU's grading scale can be found on the [Grades and Grading Policies webpage](#). Translations of numerical grades (1-100) into letter grades ("A" through "E") can be acquired from instructors. In rare cases, graduate courses are offered on a Pass/Fail basis, in which case a student will earn either a "Y" to indicate passage or an "E" to indicate failure. A grade of "Y" contributes to a student's earned hours but does not affect GPA. A failing grade of "E" is calculated into a student's GPA. Courses with grades of "D", "E", or "W" and audited courses (graded as "X") cannot be included on an iPOS. Students may be required to re-take core courses if earned grades are below the standard set by their program.

Students who wish to dispute a grade should refer to the [Academic \(Grade\) Grievance webpage](#) for instructions.

B. Auditing Course.

In some cases, students may choose to audit a class, allowing them to attend but not earn credit. Students must obtain approval from the instructor and their prior to enrollment. Auditing is not an option for every course; contact the graduate coordinator to determine whether auditing is an option. This grading option may not be changed after the drop/add period has ended. Audited courses are given a final grade of "X". Audited courses do not count toward full-time enrollment calculations or the minimum number of credits required for international students with visa restrictions or students receiving financial assistance. Audited courses do not satisfy Graduate College continuous enrollment policies.

C. Incomplete Grades

If a student doing acceptable work in a course needs additional time to complete coursework after the end of a term because of extenuating circumstances (illness or other circumstances beyond a student's control), an [Incomplete Grade Request form](#) must be completed by the student and instructor and filed with the graduate coordinator at the end of the term in which the "I" is entered.

Graduate students should avoid taking a grade of "I" (Incomplete) for any graded course work. SHPRS strongly encourages students to finish any coursework for incompletes in a timely manner, within one month of the end of the term. Per university policy, coursework for classes marked "I" must be completed, and the grade must be changed, within one academic year. The instructor is responsible for entering the student's final grade. If the "I" grade is not replaced with a final grade within one year of

the official end of the course, it will remain permanently incomplete.

No student may accumulate more than two incompletes at any one time. Should this situation occur, the director of graduate studies will recommend the student be barred from taking a full load of course work until one or more of the incompletes are removed, which can affect the student's ability to apply for SHPRS and ASU funding. Students who accrue two incompletes in one semester will automatically be placed on academic probation. Students with three incompletes on a graduate transcript can register for no more than one course and will be placed on probation. Students violating these conditions or who fail to meet the requirements of probation will be recommended for dismissal from the program.

S10. Transfer Credits

Students may request that graduate credit earned at ASU or while attending another accredited university be used toward program requirements if the coursework was completed within three years of the first semester of admission to an ASU graduate program. The courses must be related to the student's research and not have been used toward a previous degree. A total of 12 hours can be used and require the approval of the student's chair and the AHGS.

An original transcript showing a final grade for the transfer course(s) needs to be on file with the Office of Graduate Admission. The student submits a written request with a copy of the syllabus and a statement or support from his or her chair in support of the request to the graduate coordinator. The coordinator will present the request to the AHGS and notify the student of the decision.

S11. 400-Level Courses

Graduate students may, with advisor and AHGS approval, take up to 6 credits of 400-level courses as electives (to be included in the iPOS) in the case that appropriate graduate courses are not available. 400-level courses taken prior to admission and 400-level courses graded as Pass/Fail are not acceptable. 400-level courses not listed on the iPOS do not satisfy the Graduate College continuous enrollment policy; graduate level courses must be taken concurrently to satisfy this requirement.

S12. Satisfactory Academic Progress

Graduate students are expected to make steady progress towards completion of their degrees. Students must meet the standards and deadlines of the Graduate College as well as the requirements established by the graduate programs, as stated in this handbook, to maintain satisfactory progress in their respective degree program. Students who fail to meet requirements will receive written notice from the AHGS identifying the deficiency and be given the opportunity to meet with the AHGS to discuss difficulties the student may be having in reaching goals of the program. The student's chair may be included in this meeting. A written plan will be set in place by the AHGS, giving the student specific steps to remedy the deficiency and a time period to complete the plan, during which the student will be placed on academic probation for a specific period identified in the letter. Students placed on probation may be restricted from employment in the department and may lose any funding or opportunity for

future funding given by ASU.

When the student remedies the deficiency satisfactorily, the probation will be lifted and a new letter issued stating that the student is back in good standing. Failure to resolve the issue as directed will result in one or more of the following options:

- Termination of funding, if any.
- Recommendation from the SHPRS Director to the Graduate College to dismiss the student from the degree program.

A recommendation of immediate dismissal may occur under certain circumstances, such as:

- Failure to follow proper procedure set by the office of Research Integrity and Assurance.
- Violation of the University's academic integrity policies.
- Unprofessional or threatening behavior in a classroom, internship, or any public setting in which the student is representing their degree program, the School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies, or Arizona State University.
- Student's GPA falls below program requirements.

The student will be notified in writing that they are recommended for dismissal and will be given ten business days to appeal the dismissal decision or complete a voluntary withdrawal. Voluntary withdrawal from the program will avoid the notation of a dismissal on the student's record. To appeal a dismissal recommendation, the student should follow guidelines set out in the dismissal letter and contact the SHPRS Director in writing by the specified date. All mail and email will be sent to the addresses on file for the student. The student is responsible for checking mail regularly. A student may appeal any action concerning dismissal through the Graduate Council Appeals Board (GCAB).

S13. Graduation

It is important for students to closely follow [graduation deadlines and procedures](#) set by the Graduate College. Links to the graduation process are also on the My ASU website under the "My Programs and Degree Progress" section. The iPOS should be reviewed with the SHPRS graduate coordinator to be sure courses and exams have been recorded appropriately.

Once the graduation semester has been determined and the iPOS has been reviewed, the first step is to apply for graduation. Clicking the "Graduation" tab will link students to an online graduation application and information on how to apply for the graduation ceremony.

The student should check the progress of an application to graduate periodically and refer any questions to the graduate coordinator or Graduate College as appropriate.

S14. Graduate Financial and Wellness Resources

[wellness_resources.pdf \(asu.edu\)](#)

Money Moments: <https://students.asu.edu/moneymoments>

iGrad: a website for financial Literacy: <https://asu.igrad.com/>

ASU Graduate College Funding Opportunities: <https://graduate.asu.edu/current-students/funding-opportunities>

Live Well to Succeed – employee wellness program: <https://wellness.asu.edu/student-employee-wellness>

ASU Student Business Services – billing, payments & payment plans:

<https://students.asu.edu/tuitionandbilling>

EMPACT's 24 hour ASU-dedicated crisis hotline: 480-921-1006

Crisis TEXTLINE: Text HOME to 741741

TAO Connect – a self-help tool for emotional well-being:

<https://thepath.taoconnect.org/local/login/index.php>

Center for Mindfulness, Compassion and Resilience: <https://mindfulnesscenter.asu.edu/>

Live Well @ASU: <https://wellness.asu.edu/>

Sun Devil Fitness Complex: <https://fitness.asu.edu/home>

Sexual Violence Awareness, Prevention and Response: <https://sexualviolenceprevention.asu.edu/>

SunDevilSync – a resource for more information on Grad Student Organizations:

<https://asu.campuslabs.com/engage>

ASU Police [non-emergencies]: 480-965-3456, <https://cfo.asu.edu/police>

10 Best Practices in Graduate Student Wellbeing:

https://graduate.asu.edu/sites/default/files/student_well_being_best_practice.pdf

S15. Additional University Resources

[ASU Libraries](#), [Graduate Student Writing Centers](#), [Graduate & Professional Student Association](#), [Career Services](#), [Campus Parking](#), [Student Business Services](#), [Sun Devil Student ID Card](#) and [Campus Dining/Banking/Student Organizations](#)

RELIGIOUS STUDIES POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

R1. Religious Studies MA Program Overview

The focus of the Religious Studies MA program is to promote scholarly excellence and understanding about the ways in which religion has been a vital feature of the human condition and remains an important force in the world. Scholarly excellence is achieved through the ability to critically analyze primary and secondary sources and the inculcation of strong writing skills needed for a professional career.

The MA program endows the degree recipient with the fundamental training needed for teaching at the community college level and provides students with the research and writing skills to pursue careers in law and business. The program also prepares students to enter a PhD program or a professional degree program in another discipline.

A. Overview

The MA program is a comparative study of religion that seeks to understand the phenomena of religion across a wide spectrum of cultural contexts and historical periods. Reflecting the different interests and areas of expertise of the faculty, the curriculum incorporates a variety of approaches to the subject. Primary areas of study include Asia, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Modern Western religious traditions, and The Americas (including African American, Latin American, and Indigenous American traditions).

Although MA students often concentrate on a single religious tradition in their thesis work, the program seeks a broadly comparative understanding of religion, not simply a specialist's training in a single tradition. Comparative cultural topics and social theories are central to the curriculum and these include material culture; popular religion; post-coloniality and nationalism; religion and gender; religion, secularism, and modernity; religious conflict and peace studies; and ritual studies.

B. Six Areas of Specialization

Students who complete a thesis must select one area of specialization below. Students selecting the portfolio option select a major specialization and a minor specialization.

- **Religions in the Americas:** Indigenous American and religions from Africa, Asia, Europe, and their interrelationships in Central, South, and North America.
- **Comparative Historical Studies of Religion:** Historical studies of religious traditions and comparative studies of related phenomena and issues in two or more traditions. Particular emphasis in beyond the Americas, Buddhism, Christianity, (including Eastern Orthodoxy), East and Southeast Asian religions, Hinduism, Judaism, and Russian.
- **Critical Studies in Religion:** Theoretical studies, including theological and ethical inquiry, critical theory, and cultural studies.
- **Religion and Modernity:** The impact of the Enlightenment, science and technology, colonialism, and other developments in the modern period upon social communities around the world.
- **Religion, Society, and Power:** The study of conflict and power in relation to religious movements and discourses, including issues of identity, gender, class, race, ethnicity, and violence.
- **Religion and Science:** Historical and philosophical study of the relationship between science and

religion during different historical periods and in different cultural settings.

Students enrolled full-time in the Religious Studies MA program are normally able to complete program requirements and receive their degree within two years. The Graduate College requires continuous enrollment, every fall and spring semester, for the duration of the program and has a set limitation of six years to complete the degree beginning from the first semester of the student's admission to MA program.

R2. Admission Requirements & Application Process

The admissions committee in religious studies seeks applicants whose research interests can be well served by the members of SHPRS graduate faculty. Prospective students are encouraged to contact the faculty member(s) they may want to work with during their time at ASU. Applicants must fulfill the requirements of both the Graduate College and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Applicants are eligible to apply to the program if they have earned a bachelor's or master's degree from a regionally accredited institution.

A completed application requires:

- online [Graduate Admissions application](#)
- references
- statement of purpose
- writing sample
- CV
- transcripts
- TOEFL scores

The application deadline is January 15. Fall Admission only. Further details: <https://shprs.asu.edu/graduate-admission>

R3. Affiliated Centers and Programs

[African American Studies Program](#)

[Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies](#)

[Center for Asian Research](#)

[Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict](#)

[Hispanic Research Center](#)

[Jewish Studies](#)

[School of Human Evolution and Social Change](#)

[School of Social Transformation](#)

[School of Trans border Studies](#)

R4. Religious Studies Graduate Faculty

The Graduate Faculty in Religious Studies consists of [Religious Studies faculty internal to SHPRS](#) and faculty members from other ASU academic programs approved by the SHPRS Religious Studies Internal Unit Graduate Faculty to serve as supervisory committee members. A complete list of the Religious Studies Internal Unit Graduate Faculty can be found on the SHPRS [website](#). Religious Studies Graduate

Faculty including their possible supervisory committee roles (chair, co-chair, or member), dependent on AHGS guidance and approval, can be found on this Graduate College [webpage](#).

R5. Supervisory Committees

The Graduate College requires all graduate students to establish a Supervisory Committee to direct their graduate study. A supervisory committee has three basic charges:

1. Recommend and approve the student's program of study.
2. Advise a student regarding the research for a thesis/portfolio.
3. Administer the final oral examination in defense of the thesis/portfolio.

Each MA supervisory committee is comprised of three committee members: a chair and two other members.

A. Chair and Member Selection

Each graduate student is responsible for choosing a chair as the primary thesis director and advisor. In making this important choice, students should consider several qualities of a potential chair: expertise in a particular religious tradition, geographical area, theory and/or methodology, availability, scholarly reputation, and the possibilities for developing a good working relationship.

In most cases, students will choose a chair because of that professor's expertise in a religious tradition or geographical area. Students interested in Buddhism, for example, will normally work with one of our Buddhologists; those working in the Americas will study with an Americanist. Supporting members of the student's supervisory committee should complement the methodological and/or theoretical strengths of the chair and bring historical and/or geographical expertise.

The student's chair must be a tenured or tenure-track member of the [Religious Studies internal unit graduate faculty and must be endorsed as graduate faculty](#). At least two committee members, including the chair(s), must be Religious Studies internal unit graduate faculty. A list of Religious Studies graduate faculty can be found on the [SHPRS website](#).

A list of Religious Studies internal unit tenured and tenure track faculty can be found [here](#). This list should be compared with [the Graduate College's Religious Studies Graduate Faculty](#) list to determine whether the faculty member has been endorsed to serve on graduate committees.

Students have the option to having two faculty members serve as co-chairs. In this case, both co-chairs must be tenured or tenure track faculty members of the Religious Studies internal unit graduate faculty.

In total, at least two committee members, including the chair or co-chairs, must be Religious Studies internal unit graduate faculty. The third member may be selected from [the Graduate College's Religious Studies Graduate Faculty](#) list. Committee members who are not on this list must be approved by the AHGS and the Graduate College. The AHGS and the Graduate Coordinator assist the student in gaining these approvals

All Supervisory Committee members must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies and the

Graduate College.

The supervisory committee chair(s) and members should be selected by April 1 of the student's first year, when the iPOS is due.

B. Supervisory Committee Selection Form

The student prints the Committee Selection Form from [the SHPRS Grad Resources site](#), consults the AHGS about their tentative Chair and Supervisory Committee choices, obtains faculty signatures, and submits the form to the Graduate Coordinator. The student is responsible for submitting the committee into their iPOS online.

C. Supervisory Committee Member Change

Faculty listed on the student's Plan of Study serve as his or her Supervisory Committee. Supervisory Committee member changes, including that of Chair, must first be approved by the AHGS with his or her consultation and advice, and then submitted through the online iPOS system for final approval by the Graduate College. A student may not change the Chair of their committee more than once, except in the case of the Chair leaving the department during a student's time in the program.

The student completes the Supervisory Committee Member Change Request form (found on [the SHPRS Grad Resources site](#)) and submits it to the Graduate Coordinator with signatures. The student then submits the original form with signatures to the Graduate Coordinator.

R6. GPA and Grade Requirements

Students enrolled in the Religious Studies PhD program are required to maintain a minimum grade point average of 3.5 on the iPOS GPA, Overall Graduate GPA, and Cumulative GPA. The iPOS GPA is based on all courses that appear on a student's approved iPOS. The Cumulative GPA represents all courses completed at ASU during the graduate career. The Overall Graduate GPA is calculated based on all courses numbered 500 or higher that appear on the transcript after admission to the program. These GPAs are all visible through MyASU.

If a student's GPA falls below 3.5, the student is automatically placed on academic probation for one semester with the expectation that the GPA will improve and meet the requirement by the end of the following semester. Failure to raise the GPA and meet other terms set in the academic probation letter may result in dismissal from the program.

The AHGS may also recommend a student for dismissal from the program if the following situations occur:

- Student receives three C or lower grades (including incompletes) in courses taken after admission to the program.
- Student's Cumulative GPA, iPOS GPA, or Overall Graduate GPA falls below 3.5 for two consecutive semesters.
- It becomes impossible for a student to graduate with a 3.5 iPOS GPA.

R7. Foreign Language Requirement

An exam in a foreign language may be mandated by the student's supervisory committee to assess knowledge of the pertinent foreign language of the student's chosen field of study. Proficiency in reading a foreign language is usually established by passing the language exam(s) administered through the School of International Letters and Cultures (SILC) at ASU. Students working in any area of the Americas are strongly encouraged to demonstrate proficiency in Spanish. Students who wish to proceed to doctoral studies should seriously consider mastering a foreign language as a way to strengthen their application to PhD programs.

Language exams are offered two times per year by the School of International Letters and Cultures (SILC) at ASU. [Exam applications](#), which identify the selected examination book, must be submitted to the School of International Letters and Cultures approximately one month before the scheduled exam date. The student must complete the [Religious Studies Program Foreign Language Approval form](#) prior to scheduling the exam through SILC. The form requires justification for the selected language, exam book selected, as well as supervisory committee and AHGS approval. Re-examinations must also be approved by the supervisory committee and AHGS.

The Foreign Language examination text must:

- be in the foreign language chosen by the student's supervisory committee;
- be a minimum of 200 pages;
- be a scholarly work;
- not be fiction or poetry;
- relate to the student's closest relevant field of study or research (language learning books from foreign language courses *may not* be used).

Students will be graded on their ability to translate a short text from the foreign language being tested into coherent English. Translations should include main ideas and important details of the passage. Test results are Pass/Fail. Students earn a "Pass" grade if:

- Translated text contains main ideas and important details of the foreign language text;
- Vocabulary and grammar contain main ideas and important details of the foreign language text;
- English translation consists of grammatically correct sentences which form a coherent text that stands on its own as an understandable piece of prose.

Students who do not pass the language test on the first try may retake the exam once. If a student fails the exam on the second attempt, he or she must meet with their chair and the AHGS of Religious Studies to determine terms of academic probation which may result in dismissal from the program.

R8. Course Requirements

The Religious Studies MA Program offers a flexible curriculum of required coursework and electives that best supports the student's area of specialization. Students select courses under the advisement of their committee chair (faculty advisor).

A. Course Requirements for Thesis Option

30 credit hours

- REL 501: The Study of Religion I: Genealogies, Disciplines and Power (3 credits)
- REL 502: The Study of Religion II: Epistemology, Practice and Mediation (3 credits)
- Electives (18 credits)
 - 12 credits related to area of research may be taken in another discipline with AHGS approval
- REL 599: Thesis (6 credits)

A student's iPOS may include up to six credit hours of 400-level course work or one three-credit REL 690: Reading and Conference course with AHGS approval.

B. Course Requirements for Non-Thesis/Applied Project

Students select a Major Specialization and a Minor Specialization

30 credit hours

- REL 501 – The Study of Religion I: Genealogies, Disciplines and Power (3 credits)
- REL 502 – The Study of Religion II: Epistemology, Practice and Mediation (3 credits)
- Major area of concentration (12 credits)
 - 6 credits related to area of research may be taken in another discipline with AHGS approval
- Minor area of concentration (6 credits)
 - 3 credits related to area of research may be taken in another discipline with AHGS approval
- Elective related to area of research (3 credits)
- REL 593 – Applied Project (3 credits)

A student's iPOS may include up to six credit hours of 400-level course work or one three-credit REL 690: Reading and Conference course with AHGS approval.

C. Reading and Conference Courses: REL 690

These custom-arranged courses with a single instructor support student preparation in their research. They allow a student to do intensive reading with the objective of acquiring a sophisticated knowledge of a topic. For 3 credits of Readings and Conference, students are expected to read the equivalent of a book each week during the semester. Reading and Conference courses cannot replace required seminars.

To obtain approval for a Reading and Conference Course (REL 690), the student must submit a 1-2 page written proposal and the [Reading and Conference Request form](#) to their chair and the AHGS that states the reason for the independent study, how it relates to the student's research plan, the content of the course (syllabus), and how the student's knowledge will be evaluated. A resource list that provides

information on readings and/or other methods that may be used to support the proposed course must also be provided.

This must be done and submitted, with all signatures, to the graduate coordinator several weeks before the start of the semester to allow time for the course to be created and the student to register.

R9. Culminating Experience

There are two options for the culminating experience: a thesis or a non-thesis (applied project) option. The thesis option is recommended for students intending to seek admission to a doctoral program upon completion of the master's or planning to teach at a community college. The applied project is recommended for students intending to augment their primary area of expertise and professional training in fields such as: counseling, journalism, law, social work, and K-12 education. An oral defense of the final written work is required for both options.

A. Thesis Option

The master's thesis must demonstrate the ability to pursue advanced independent research, evaluate, and analyze evidence, and present a reasoned and coherent argument. The style of the document is determined by the committee chair/advisor and is usually based on style manuals, such as *A Manual for Writers* by Kate L. Turabian or *The Chicago Manual of Style*. The format of the document must follow the specifications presented in the Graduate College [Format Manual](#); students need to closely adhere to the requirements for setting margins, spacing, pagination, etc. Please note that the formatting tool only checks for formatting issues; students should review the topic of Academic Integrity presented in this handbook for information on preventing plagiarism.

At least one month prior to the date the student plans to defend, the student must submit a copy of the final thesis draft to the faculty members who officially make up the supervisory committee for a critical review of the arguments, narrative, footnotes, and bibliography. The critical review gives the student the opportunity to make revisions before submitting the document to the Graduate College for format review.

i. Scheduling a Thesis Defense

When revisions have been made and all members of the committee agree that the document is ready for a defense, the student arranges a date and time for the required defense with all committee members. The student requests a conference room by calling the SHPRS Front Desk, 480-965-5778. The student must also forward the graduate coordinator approval from the committee chair to schedule the defense.

Scheduling the defense with the Graduate College is done through MyASU (MyASU > My Programs and Degree Progress > Defense). The "Defense" tab provides an electronic form to schedule the final defense and must be submitted **no later than 10 business days prior to the planned defense date**.

ii. Format Review

The final draft of the thesis needs to be e-mailed to the Graduate College for format review **no later than 10 calendar days prior to the planned defense**. Once this form is submitted, additional links appear that guide students through the formatting process and final submission to ProQuest

(the electronic submission of the thesis). A complete and defensible copy of the thesis document must also be submitted to the Graduate College for format review. Before submitting the document, students are again encouraged to use the [Graduate College format tool](#).

iii. Thesis Defense Reminder

Students must send an e-mail reminder to all members of their supervisory committee three days before the defense to remind them of the location and time of the defense. Any problems with the agreed upon date should be reported to the graduate coordinator as soon as possible.

iv. Thesis Oral Defense

The oral defense is open to the public. The defense is posted on the Graduate College website and announced by e-mail to all faculty, staff, and students in the School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies. Oral defenses include a presentation of the argument of the thesis by the candidate and questions from each of the committee members. The exam duration is approximately 2 hours. The deliberations at its conclusion are closed and reserved exclusively for members of the thesis supervisory committee.

v. Thesis Defense Results

Results of the final defense are recorded on the Graduate College Pass/Fail Form that is generated at the time the defense is scheduled and e-mailed to the committee chair and graduate coordinator. Students may pass, pass with minor revisions, pass with major revisions, or fail. If the student and their chair does not want the thesis published for a period of time due to ongoing research, publication, or the sensitive information presented in the document, an “embargo” can be requested for approximately two years.

Each supervisory committee member signs the defense form indicating his or her decision. If revisions are needed, the chair must, when revisions are completed, sign the form at the bottom verifying that revisions have been completed. The completed form is given to the graduate coordinator, who places a copy in the student’s file and submits the original to the Graduate College. Once the Pass/Fail form is submitted, the student will see “Defense Status: Pass” in the defense section. Right below the “Defense Status” you will see “Format Review Status.” The “Review Status” will change to “Ready for ETD/ProQuest.” The document can then be submitted by following the instructions found [here](#).

B. Applied Project/Portfolio Option

i. Documents

Students who choose the applied project option (sometimes referred to as the portfolio) will be required to submit three papers that summarize and display the student's knowledge and research skills gained during their time in the program. These three papers include one on theory and method, one on the student’s major area of study, and one on the student’s minor area of study. The three papers can be three revised papers written in courses taken by the student and/or contain new and additional substantive work.

Three credit hours of REL 593: Applied Project must be taken and appear on the plan of study (iPOS).

At least one month prior to the defense date, the student must submit a copy of the final Applied

Project draft to the faculty members who officially make up the supervisory committee for a critical review of the arguments, narrative, footnotes, and bibliography.

ii. Applied Project Defense

An oral defense is required for the applied project option. Before scheduling the oral defense, the student provides each supervisory committee member with drafts of the written work. The schedule for submitting work and the oral defense should be determined in consultation with the supervisory committee chair. Supervisory committee members need at least three weeks to review the documents and return comments for which the student needs to make revisions before the final defense.

The Applied Project is **not** submitted to the Graduate College for format review; however, the format must be approved by the committee chair and must follow guidelines in *A Manual for Writers* by Kate L. Turabian or the *Chicago Manual of Style*. The supervisory committee may pass the student's work as a whole or may fail it as a whole.

iii. Scheduling an Applied Project Defense and Reporting Outcome

The student arranges a date and time for the required defense with all supervisory committee members and reserves a conference room by calling the SHPRS Front Desk, 480-965-5778. The chair of the committee sends an e-mail to the graduate coordinator with the results of the exam and copies all members of the supervisory committee. The instructor and/or graduate coordinator submits a grade of "Y" for REL 593.

Religious Studies MA Program Summary

1st Semester	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Begin coursework, including REL 501
2nd Semester	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue coursework, including REL 502• Selection of committee chair/advisor by April 1• Complete Plan of Study (iPOS) by April 1
3rd Semester	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue coursework• Pass foreign language exam, if applicable
4th Semester	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete required coursework• Write and prepare to defend the culminating document• Apply for graduation and follow Graduate College Timeline and Procedures for scheduling final defense and format review• Pass final defense of thesis or applied project (check Graduate College timeline for last day to defend)• Submit thesis to ProQuest or applied project to the graduate coordinator