



**Arizona State University  
Religious Studies  
MA Student Handbook**

**2017-2018**

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## 1. Introduction: Handbook Purpose and Student Responsibility

This handbook provides information on degree requirements for students enrolled in the Religious Studies Master of Arts program to ensure consistency in program objectives, maintain the quality of the degree to be awarded, and enable students to progress through the program in a timely manner. The Handbook also provides important web links for students to search concerning various policies and procedures set by Arizona State University, the Graduate College, and the School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies (SHPRS) on academic standards expected from all students. *If you are a student in the Doctoral Program, please see the Religious Studies Doctoral Program Handbook.*

It is the responsibility of the student to be familiar with policies and regulations of the Graduate College and Arizona State University and meet deadlines for registration and fee payments. 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 concerning progress toward their degree with their Supervisory Committee Chair (Research Advisor), the Director of Graduate Studies, and/or the Graduate Coordinator. SHPRS MA students can also find program procedures, forms, and references on the SHPRS MA Graduate Blackboard: Blackboard > Organizations > SHPRS MA Graduate.

All university related e-mails are sent to the ASU e-mail address. Students are required to have an active ASU e-mail account and check it frequently. A guide for establishing and maintaining an ASU e-mail account is found on this [website](#).

Resource	Email or Web	Location	Phone
ASU Policies and Academic Schedules	<a href="https://catalog.asu.edu/">https://catalog.asu.edu/</a>		
Graduate College	<a href="http://graduate.asu.edu/">http://graduate.asu.edu/</a>	Interdisciplinary Bldg, B Wing, Room 170	(480) 965-6113
SHPRS Director, Matthew Delmont	<a href="mailto:Matthew.delmont@asu.edu">Matthew.delmont@asu.edu</a>	Coor Bldg, 4 <sup>th</sup> floor, Room 4482	
Associate Director of Graduate Studies, SHPRS Miguel Aguilera	<a href="mailto:Miguel.Aguilera@asu.edu">Miguel.Aguilera@asu.edu</a>	Coor Bldg 6 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Room 4544	(480) 965-8576
Director of Graduate Studies, Religious Studies Miguel Aguilera	<a href="mailto:Miguel.Aguilera@asu.edu">Miguel.Aguilera@asu.edu</a>		(480) 965-8576
Academic Success Specialist & MA Advisor Roxanne Shand	<a href="mailto:Roxanne.Shand@asu.edu">Roxanne.Shand@asu.edu</a>	Coor Hall, 4th Floor, Room 4544	(480) 965-5387
Student Health & Counseling Services	<a href="https://eoss.asu.edu/health">https://eoss.asu.edu/health</a>	Health Services Bldg (by footbridge crossing University Drive)	(480) 965-3349 Crisis Hotline: (480) 921-1006
University Registrar	<a href="https://students.asu.edu/registration">https://students.asu.edu/registration</a>	Student Services Bldg, Suite 140	(480) 965-3124

International Students and Scholars Center	<a href="https://international.asu.edu">https://international.asu.edu</a>	Student Services Bldg, Suite 170	(480) 727-4776
Disability Resource Center	<a href="https://eoss.asu.edu/drc">https://eoss.asu.edu/drc</a>	Matthews Center Building, 1 <sup>st</sup> floor	(480) 965-1234

## 2. SHPRS Organization

The School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies (SHPRS) is housed in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and comprises the following discipline faculties: History, Philosophy, Religious Studies, and American 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, school standards and procedures). The Director establishes an Executive Committee made up of the Associate Directors (Graduate Studies, Undergraduate Studies, and Research) and Heads of Faculty for each faculty unit to advise him/her on the needs and resources of their academic groups.

The School Director, in collaboration with the Associate Director of Graduate Studies (ADGS), selects a faculty member from each academic discipline to serve as Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) in their discipline. The DGS works with the discipline's faculty to develop new programs, assign Graduate Teaching Assistantships, monitor and ensure program integrity, determine program requirements, and resolve student issues. The Graduate Coordinator works with the ADGS and the DGS to monitor student progress and serve as a liaison between the University, ADGS, DGS, and the students.

## 3. Religious Studies MA Program

The focus of the Religious Studies MA Graduate 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 enables 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 for entering a PhD program or for a professional degree in another discipline.

## 4. Affiliated Centers and Programs

[African American Studies Program](#)

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

[Asian Pacific American Studies Program](#)

[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 Transborder Studies](#)

## 5. Religious Studies Graduate Faculty

Graduate Faculty in Religious Studies consists of [Religious Studies faculty internal to SHPRS](#) and Graduate Faculty 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](#). SHPRS Religious Studies Graduate Faculty including their possible Supervisory Committee roles (Chair/Member), dependent on RS DGS guidance and approval, can be found on this Graduate College [webpage](#).

## 6. 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/results, 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 "cross the line." The Graduate College recommends several websites to help students with academic integrity:

- [Be in the Know](#)
- [Plagiarism](#)
- [Student Academic Integrity Resources](#)
- [CLAS Academic Integrity Webpage](#)

## 7. 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. The IRB reviews all investigations that use questionnaires and/or interviews as part of the data to be included in the research project.

Students are required to contact the IRB in the planning stages of their research to obtain approval prior to initiating their investigations. The Office of Research Integrity and Assurance requires that the student's faculty committee member supervising the research also has IRB approval. When a dissertation document is submitted to the 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.

## 8. Safety, Discrimination, and Harassment

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 DGS. 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 can be found in the [Academic Affairs Manual](#). Students who witness offensive behavior or experience inappropriate and unwelcome responses should contact the Office of Equity and Inclusion. This is the [office](#) that monitors and manages reports of discrimination and harassing behavior: 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.

## **9. Enrollment and Tuition**

### **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. 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 REL 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 a student from the graduate program that fails to maintain continuous enrollment without obtaining an official leave approval. The student may reapply for admission; however, the student must pay reapplication fees and re-admission is not guaranteed.

### **C. Full-Time Status**

The Religious Studies MA Graduate Program requires full-time study in the first two semesters after admission to their program, excluding summer school. In the first year, nine hours each semester is considered full-time. Enrollment in nine hours each fall and spring semester is advised throughout the program to achieve good progress through the curriculum and meet program expectations. More information is available on the Graduate College website under [“Registration and Enrollment”](#).

Although it is rare for MA students to serve as TAs or RAs, graduate TAs and RAs should enroll in a minimum of 6 non-audit credit hours each semester they receive this funding to maintain full-time enrollment.

International F-1 and J-1 Visa students must maintain full-time enrollment status. Exceptions 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.

#### **D. Enrollment Verification Requests**

Students who have completed coursework and are enrolled in REL 795: Continuing Registration, but who wish to be considered half- or full-time for insurance or loan deferral purposes can submit an [Enrollment Verification Request](#) to the Academic Success Specialist, who will obtain the SHPRS Director's signature and submit the form to the Registrar on the student's behalf.

#### **E. Withdrawal Requests**

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 DGS. More information can be found in section 16 of this handbook. 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.

More information on withdrawals can be found on the [Graduate College Registration webpage](#). The [CLAS Medical/Compassionate Withdrawal webpage](#) is also an excellent resource. The [Doctoral Request to Maintain Continuous Enrollment form](#) can be found on the [Graduate College website](#). 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.

## **10. Program Overview**

### **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 thematic emphasis include:

- Asia
- Buddhism
- Christianity
- Hinduism
- Islam

- Judaism
- Modern Western
- The Americas (including African American, Latin American, and Indigenous American)

Although MA students often concentrate on a single religious tradition on 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
- Ritual Studies

## **B. Six Areas of Specialization**

Students pursuing the Thesis option 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 immigrant 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.

## **11. Supervisory Committee**

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

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

The MA Supervisory Committee is comprised of three committee members: a Chair and two other members. External committee members who are not approved by the Religious Studies Internal Unit

Graduate Faculty may be eligible to be members of the committee; however, they must be approved by the DGS and Graduate College.

### **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 one of our Americanists. 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 endorsed to Chair. At least two committee members, including the Chair(s), must be Religious Studies Internal Unit Graduate Faculty. A list of Internal Unit Graduate Faculty can be found on the [SHPRS website](#). This list should be compared with the list on the Graduate College's [Religious Studies Graduate Faculty page](#) to determine whether a faculty member is a tenured or tenure-track member of the Religious Studies Internal Unit Faculty who is endorsed to chair Supervisory Committees.

Students have the option of having two faculty members serve as Co-Chairs (Co-Directors and Co-Advisors). Co-Chairs must be tenured or tenure track faculty members in the Religious Studies Internal Unit Graduate Faculty. The student's choices of Chair, or Co-Chairs, and other members of their Supervisory Committee are subject to DGS approval.

*All Supervisory Committee members need to be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies and the Graduate College and at least two members, including the Chair(s), must be Religious Studies Internal Unit Graduate Faculty. The Supervisory Committee's Chair(s) and members should be selected by April 1 of the student's first year.*

### **B. Supervisory Committee Selection Form**

The student prints the Committee Selection Form from the SHPRS MA Graduate Blackboard page, consults the DGS about his or her tentative Chair and Supervisory Committee selection choices, obtains the actual signatures of the Chair and members, and submits the form to the Graduate Coordinator. The Graduate Coordinator receives DGS approval, having been prior consulted by the student, and then the student enters the committee on the iPOS.

### **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 DGS 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 and submits it to the Graduate Coordinator. The form is found on the SHPRS MA Graduate Blackboard page (MyASU>Blackboard>My Organizations>SHPRS MA Graduate> Forms). The student must obtain the actual physical signatures from the Chair, previous member, new member, the remaining Supervisory

Committee, and finally the DGS. Non-ASU faculty members can sign electronically. The student then submits the original form with signatures to the Graduate Coordinator.

## **12. Interactive Plan of Study (iPOS)**

Students enrolled in graduate programs at ASU 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 the “My Programs and Degree” section. The Plan of Study serves as an agreement between the student, academic unit, and the Graduate College in identifying the selected Supervisory Committee to verify the quality and acceptability of the culminating document, what the culminating document will be, and coursework required for the degree. **Students must submit the iPOS by April 1<sup>st</sup> of their first year.** The iPOS must be approved by the student’s Chair, the Director of Graduate Studies, and Graduate College.

The iPOS “hard copy” worksheets can be found on the SHPRS MA Graduate Blackboard. Students complete the worksheet in consultation with their Chair and list the courses they agree to take in order to meet program requirements. Students need to follow the steps below to complete the iPOS process:

1. Complete the iPOS hard copy worksheet with their Chair and then work through the iPOS process in MyASU.
2. Submit a screenshot of courses to their Chair before final submission.
3. Obtain Chair approval of iPOS (through e-mail or in writing, using the screenshot) and submit this approval to the Graduate Coordinator who will obtain DGS approval.
4. Submit the iPOS through MyASU.

*Note: Graduate Coordinators cannot approve an iPOS without receiving Chair and DGS 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 frequently needed as students progress in their program and they should request a course change prior to taking any coursework that is not listed on the original iPOS. Changes are easily requested through the iPOS system, though students should also receive written permission (through e-mail) from their Chairs, which they should forward to the Graduate Coordinator, who approves such requests.

## **13. 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 the Religious Studies 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 DGS.

An original transcript showing a final grade for the course(s) needs to be on file with the Office of Graduate Admissions. 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 MA Graduate Coordinator will present the request to the DGS and notify the student with the decision.

## **14. 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 DGS may also recommend a student for dismissal from the program if the following situations occur:

- Student receives three C or lower grades 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.

## **15. Satisfactory Academic Progress**

All graduate students are expected to make steady progress towards completion of their degree. Students must meet the standards and deadlines of the Graduate College as well as the requirements established by the Religious Studies 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 DGS identifying the deficiency and given the opportunity to meet with the DGS to discuss difficulties the student may be having in reaching goals of the program. The student's Research Advisor may be included in this meeting. A written plan will be set in place by the DGS, 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 teaching courses or being otherwise employed in the department and may lose funding.

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 Director of the School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies to the Vice Provost of the Graduate College to dismiss the student from the program.

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

- Violations of the University's academic integrity policy.
- 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.
- A student's GPA falls below a 3.5.
- Failure to follow proper procedure set by the office of Research Integrity and Assurance.

The student will be notified in writing that he or she is 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 Director of the School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies 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).

## **16. Grades**

### **A. Overview**

Graduate students need 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 who wish to dispute a grade should refer to the [CLAS Academic \(Grade\) Grievance webpage](#).

### **B. Auditing Courses**

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 supervisory committee chair 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, students employed as TA/RAs, 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 professor and filed with the Graduate Coordinator at the end of the term in which the "I" is entered. The form can be found on the on the SHPRS Graduate Blackboard and on [ASU's website](#).

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 "Incomplete" 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 accruing 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 lose any graduate assistantship they hold 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.

## 17. Foreign Language Requirement

A foreign language requirement may be required by the student's Supervisory Committee to demonstrate knowledge of the pertinent foreign language of their major field. 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. Proficiency in reading will be required of all students and will be established by passing the language exam(s) administered through the School of International Letters and Cultures (SILC) at ASU. The SILC examination is required for all students with the language requirement and may include students, subject to DGS discretion, who may have taken courses or reported proficiency by other methods.

Language exams are offered two times per year by the School of International Letters and Cultures (SILC) at ASU. Exam applications ([obtained from the SILC Placement & Testing webpage](#)), with the selected 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 the School of International Letters and Cultures. The form requires justification for the selected language, exam book selected, as well as Supervisory Committee and DGS approval. The language exam form can be found on the [SHPRS MA Graduate Blackboard site](#).

The Foreign Language exam:

- Must be in the foreign language chosen by the student's Supervisory Committee;
- Must be a minimum of 200 pages;
- Must be a scholarly work;
- May not be fiction or poetry;
- Must relate to the student's closest relevant field of study or research (language learning books from foreign language courses *may not* be used);
- The chosen foreign language and text to be used for the exam *must* be justified by the Supervisory Committee and approved *in advance* by the DGS of Religious Studies. This includes re-examinations.

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 obtain 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 DGS of Religious Studies to determine probation toward the degree which will likely result in a recommendation to dismiss the student from the program.

Undergraduate language classes taken to obtain proficiency for the foreign language requirement do not count toward the total number of hours needed for the program or used to meet proficiency in a language.

## **18. 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/Research Advisor.

### **A. Religious Studies MA Course Requirements for Thesis Option**

*30 credit hours*

- REL 501 – Methods & Theory (3 credits)
- REL 502 – Methods & Theory (3 credits)
- Electives (18 credits)
  - 12 credits related to area of research may be taken in another discipline with DGS approval
- REL 599 – Thesis (6 credits)

### **B. Religious Studies MA Course Requirements for Non-Thesis Applied Project**

*Students select a Major Specialization and a Minor Specialization*

*30 credit hours*

- REL 501 – Methods & Theory (3 credits)
- REL 502 – Methods & Theory (3 credits)
- Major area of concentration (12 credits)
  - 6 credits related to area of research may be taken in another discipline with DGS approval
- Minor area of concentration (6 credits)
  - 3 credits related to area of research may be taken in another discipline with DGS approval
- Elective related to area of research (3 credits)
- REL 593 – Applied Project (3 credits)

### **C. 400 Level Courses for Thesis & Non-Thesis Options**

Course requirements for both options, thesis and applied project, may include up to six credit hours of 400-level course work or one three-credit Reading and Conference (independent) study with the approval of the DGS.

### **D. Reading and Conference Courses: REL 690**

These custom-arranged courses with a single professor 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 DGS 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 Academic Success Specialist several weeks before the start of the semester to allow time for the course to be created and the student to register.

## 19. Culminating Experience

There are two options for the culminating experience: a thesis or a non-thesis 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 non-thesis option (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 and can submit the document to Safe Assign through the SHPRS MA Blackboard.

*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 completing the [Room Request](#) form. (You may need to login as you do for your MyASU). The student must also forward the MA 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 (through e-mail) 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 MA 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 MA 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 MA Graduate Coordinator, a copy is placed in the student’s file and the MA Graduate Coordinator 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 Option**

#### **i. Documents**

Students who choose the Applied Project option (also referred to as the Portfolio Option) will be required to submit three papers (which constitute the body of the Applied Project) 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 date the student plans to the defense*, 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**

The Applied Project Option requires an oral defense. 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 using the SHPRS online [Room Reservation and Equipment Checkout Form](#). The Chair of the committee sends an e-mail to the MA Graduate Coordinator with the results of the exam and copies all members of the Supervisory Committee. The instructor and/or MA Graduate Coordinator submits a grade of "Y" for REL 593.

## **20. Steps Toward Graduation**

Students need to closely follow graduation deadlines and procedures set by the Graduate College. Links to the graduation process are also on the MyASU website under the "My Programs and Degree Progress" section. The iPOS needs to be reviewed with the MA Graduate Coordinator.

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.

In order to graduate, students must complete the Culminating Experience and submit the Pass/Fail form and any culminating document. They must also have their iPOS reviewed by the MA Graduate Coordinator, Chair, and DGS.

The student should check the progress of their application to graduate periodically on MyASU and refer any questions to the Program Coordinator or Graduate College as appropriate.

## Appendix 1

### Religious Studies MA Program Summary

<b>1<sup>st</sup> Semester</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Begin coursework, including REL 501</li></ul>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Semester</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue coursework, including REL 502</li><li>• Selection of Supervisory Committee Chair/Advisor by April 1</li><li>• Complete Plan of Study (iPOS) by April 1</li></ul>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Semester</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue coursework</li><li>• Pass foreign language exam, if applicable</li><li>• Foreign language</li></ul>
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Semester</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complete required coursework</li><li>• Write and prepare to defend the culminating document</li><li>• Apply for graduation and follow <a href="#">Division of Graduate College Timeline</a> and Procedures for scheduling final defense and format review</li><li>• Final defense of Thesis or Applied Project (check Graduate College timeline for last day to defend)</li><li>• Electronic submission of Thesis to Proquest or Applied Project to MA Graduate Coordinator</li></ul>