

# MA STUDENT HANDBOOK

## Religious Studies Program New York University

### Academic Year 2017-18

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# 1 Registration and Coursework

## 1.1 Coursework Requirements

This multidisciplinary program seeks to prepare students with both knowledge of a religious world and the tools to study that world, including language training where appropriate. The program for each candidate for the Master of Arts degree in religious studies consists of 32 points of course work (eight courses) in addition to either a thesis project or an exam. All students are required to take RELST-GA 1001, Theories and Methods in the Study of Religion (4 points). The other seven courses (28 points) are elective on religious life and practice combining a disciplinary and a cultural focus. Courses often speak to both areas of study (e.g., History of 19th-Century American Christianity uses a historical approach to cover religious life in the United States). Therefore, a student's course trajectory will be worked out with close faculty advice. By graduation, students should have a grasp of the tools of at least one disciplinary focus and a working knowledge of at least one cultural area.

## 1.2 Advisement

You are not required to meet with an advisor prior to registration; however, you are strongly encouraged to discuss your course selection with either a faculty member whom you are familiar with or the program administrator. If you would like to discuss your course selection with the program administrator please send an email to [religious.studies@nyu.edu](mailto:religious.studies@nyu.edu).

## 1.3 Course Loads and Full-Time Status

- The normal full-time course load is **12 credits per semester**.
- Most courses in Religious Studies count for four credits. This means that Religious Studies students ordinarily take **three courses per semester**.
- Most courses in other departments, as well as some courses in HJS, count for four credits. Therefore students who take courses in other departments may have a course load anywhere from 10-14 credits in a particular semester. Students in this situation must notify the Department Administrator before the start of the semester. The Department Administrator will request approval for this variance from GSAS. **It is especially important that students who are not US citizens obtain this approval in order to maintain full-time student status.**

## 1.4 Registration for Courses

Registration for the Fall 2016 semester will begin on Monday, April 11th. You can view your registration status on Albert under the "Registration" tab. Please make note of any holds you may have as these will need to be removed before you will be able to register. If you have any holds, you must contact the appropriate office to have the hold removed. If you are uncertain who to contact to have a hold removed, please contact the program administrator at [religious.studies@nyu.edu](mailto:religious.studies@nyu.edu) and you will be directed to the appropriate office.

## 1.5 Directed Study

- As part of their course loads, students may elect, **beginning in their second semester and with the consent of their advisers**, to study individually or in a small group with a faculty member under the rubric of “Directed Study.”
- Students wishing to engage in a Directed Study course should first discuss this plan with their adviser. Only after obtaining their adviser’s consent should they approach the faculty member with whom they wish to study. The faculty member must also indicate consent by signing the **Independent Study Agreement Form**, which can be obtained from the HJS Administrative Office.
- Ordinarily students will not take more than one Directed Study course per semester.
- Directed Study courses may be taken for between 1-4 credits, depending on the work required by the supervising faculty member.

## 1.6 Transferring Credit from Other Institutions

- Students may apply to transfer up to 40 points of credit toward the PhD degree.
- According to GSAS regulations, **all requests for transfer of credit must be submitted and approved within one year of matriculation at NYU**. A transferable course must have been taken at the graduate level, and the student must have received a grade of B+ or better (see section 4.12 of the GSAS Policy and Procedures Manual).
- There are three parts to the transfer of credit request: 1) a completed **Transfer of Credit Request Form**, obtained from the HJS Administrative Office or from the GSAS website; 2) an unmarked original transcript; 3) an unofficial transcript of photocopy of the student’s original transcript.
- Students should indicate on the unofficial/photocopy transcript the courses they wish to transfer. The student’s adviser should indicate approval by initialing the unofficial transcript. After the adviser has approved the courses, the request should be submitted to the DGS to be signed. The Transfer of Credit Request must be submitted in full to the appropriate office in GSAS by either the DGS or the HJS Administrative Office. GSAS will not accept requests sent by a student.
- In most cases, the department expects doctoral students who enter the program with an MA degree in their area of doctoral study to transfer at least 24 credits. In some cases, where warranted by a student’s specific academic situation, the department may permit transfer of fewer than all possible credits. Students should consult with their advisers during their first semester in order to determine how a credit transfer will affect their specific course of study.
- Starting with 2016 cohort, students who transfer in 24 or more credits will retain their five years of MacCracken stipend support. The transfer of 24 or more points still requires students to complete the degree within seven years (see section 5.8 of the GSAS Policies and Procedures Manual).

## 1.7 Required Courses

The program for each candidate for the Master of Arts degree in religious studies consists of 32 points of course work (eight courses) in addition to either a thesis project or an exam. All

students are required to take RELST-GA 1001, Theories and Methods in the Study of Religion (4 points). The other seven courses (28 points) are elective on religious life and practice combining a disciplinary and a cultural focus. Courses often speak to both areas of study (e.g., History of 19th-Century American Christianity uses a historical approach to cover religious life in the United States). Therefore, a student's course trajectory will be worked out with close faculty advice.

## 1.8 Incomplete Work

- The NYU Registrar requires grades to be assigned to students in all courses no more than 72 hours after the stated date of the course final. A student who has not completed all requirements for a course by that time may be assigned a grade of I (Incomplete) if the instructor believes that the student is likely to complete the requirements within one semester and to receive a passing grade.
- If no letter grade or grade of I is entered for a course within 60 days, a grade of "NR" or "No Record" will appear for the course on a student's record.
- Students who receive an I grade or grade of NR have until the beginning of the semester one year after the semester in which they took the course to complete their work and receive a grade. Students who do not complete their work are given a grade of F (see section 4.6 of the GSAS Policies and Procedures Manual).
- Students who believe they will require more than the time allowed to complete the work for a course in which they have received an I grade must file an **Extension of Incomplete Grade Request Form** for up to one additional year. This petition must be approved by three people:
  - o The instructor of the course
  - o The student's adviser
  - o The Office of Academic and Student Affairs (OASA)
- The form may be obtained from the HJS Administrative Office or from the GSAS website.
- Students wishing to complete a course in which they have been assigned an I grade should make certain to submit their work to the professor in question **well in advance of the deadline for completion**, in order to give the professor sufficient time to read the work and file the necessary change of grade form.
- No extensions are granted for grades of NR. NR grades must be changed to a grade of I in order to be extended through the Extension of Incomplete process.

## 1.9 Good Standing and Academic Probation

- To remain in good academic standing, GSAS requires that students successfully complete 66 percent of credits attempted, maintain a 3.0 GPA and be within time-to-degree limits (for more information on time- to-degree limits, see section 5.6 of the GSAS Policy and Procedures Manual). Courses with grades of I, N, NR, W, and F are not considered successfully completed. In addition, the Department requires that students maintain a GPA of at least 3.4 (A-/B+). Please note: the Department maintains a more rigorous GPA

standard than that of GSAS. For more information on good academic standing please see section 4.1 of the GSAS Policies and Procedures Manual.

- Students who do not meet the criteria for good academic standing will be placed on academic probation. Students on academic probation are officially notified of their probationary status by a letter from the DGS. The letter explains how to return to good standing. Students are granted one full semester following the one in which they received a probation letter to correct the situations that have led to their probation.
- Students who remain on academic probation for more than one semester following notification may not receive fellowship support nor be given teaching assignments. They are also subject to termination from their program. For further information on probation and termination please see section 7 of the GSAS Policies and Procedures Manual.

### 1.10 Maintenance of Matriculation (MM)

- Students must be registered for MM during any semester in which they are not enrolled in courses.
- In order for summer funding to be disbursed (see Section 4.3 below), and to maintain access to the NYU Health Center and gym facilities over the summer, students must be either enrolled in a credit-bearing course, a zero-credit GSAS Language for Reading Knowledge course, or MM during the summer. There is no fee for MM over the summer, and the department will register students for summer MM, if not already enrolled in a credit-bearing course or GSAS Language for Reading Knowledge course, for the duration of the student's term in the program.
- Upon completion of coursework, students in good standing are entitled to MM waivers for the duration of their stipend support term plus an additional four semesters (two years). During this time students will be registered for MM by GSAS and their MM fees will be waived.
- Four semesters after the end of a student's stipend support term, students will be required to register themselves for MM on Albert (MAINT-GA 4747 section 4) and pay all associated fees until the degree is completed.
- GSAS requires that all students maintain continuous enrollment until they are awarded a degree. If more than two semesters of inactivity appear on a student's record, the student will be automatically discontinued from the university.
- If and when a student wishes to return to the university after more than two semesters of inactivity, the student must reapply for admission. **Students whose applications are approved will be responsible for paying all MM fees for inactive terms.**

### 1.11 Financial Aid

- We are able to allay some of the expense of certain students' degrees by offering a partial tuition scholarship, thus reducing the total tuition paid. This assistance is offered at the time of acceptance to the program. It is based solely on the student's application and the amount varies according to the available funding.
- Other financial aid opportunities are available through the Graduate School of Arts and Science (GSAS). More information on these opportunities can be found by visiting their website at: <http://gsas.nyu.edu/page/grad.financialaid.html>.

## 1.12 Travel Research Fund

The Religious Studies Program encourages its students to travel, visit archives, and attend academic conferences. Graduate students are eligible to receive funding to subvent the cost of travel pertaining to their research or to attend a conference through the Religious Studies Research Travel Fund. Those interested should submit a one-page proposal or information on the conference or event they plan to attend to [religious.studies@nyu.edu](mailto:religious.studies@nyu.edu). Upon return students are expected to submit documentation pertaining to their cost for travel i.e. receipts and/or boarding pass stubs, train ticket, etc. *This fund was established through the support of Cherie Acierno in honor of James P. Carse.*

## 2 Examination and Evaluation Requirements

### 2.1 Language Examinations

#### 2.1.1 Hebrew

- All students are required to demonstrate the ability to read academic literature in their fields in Hebrew within two years of matriculation. Students must meet with the Hebrew Language Coordinator immediately upon beginning their studies for an evaluation of their reading comprehension level.

#### 2.1.2 Additional Languages

- All PhD students must demonstrate the ability to read academic literature in at least two additional non- English languages besides Hebrew. In other words, reading knowledge of **a minimum of three** languages other English is required for the PhD degree. One of the three languages must be Hebrew.
- Students may demonstrate the required ability in languages other than Hebrew only by passing an examination administered by the student's adviser or another member of the HJS faculty. If no member of the HJS faculty is qualified to administer the exam, the DGS will make an alternate arrangement.
- The DGS may, at his or her discretion, waive up to one non-Hebrew language examination for students who possess a graduation certificate from a high school in which one of the relevant languages was the primary language of instruction.
- Students who fail a language examination may take it again. Students who fail twice are ordinarily not permitted to continue in the program without special permission from their advisers and the DGS. Students who fail three times are terminated from the program without exception.
- Most doctoral students in the department will be strongly recommended by their advisers to undertake further language work. Such work may involve acquiring knowledge of additional ancient, medieval, or modern languages or developing a level of proficiency in Hebrew of another language beyond the minimum level required. The number of languages and levels of proficiency recommended of each student will be determined by the student's principal adviser according to each student's academic concentration.

## 2.2 Mid-Course Evaluation

- All doctoral students are subject to formal evaluation by the department faculty after they have completed or attempted 48 of the 72 points required for the PhD. This means that students entering the PhD program with an MA degree already in hand will be evaluated after one year of study at NYU, while students entering the PhD program without an MA will be evaluated after two years. Evaluations are typically conducted in late April – early May.
- The purpose of the evaluation is to determine whether the student is meeting departmental expectations and will be permitted to proceed to the final year of coursework.
- Students who do not appear to be meeting departmental expectations will receive a warning in writing from the DGS prior to the midcourse evaluation.
- In addition to meeting the standards stated in this handbook and in the GSAS Policies and Procedures Manual—including those concerning minimum GPA and course completion rate—departmental expectations include:
  - Regular consultations with the adviser
  - Following the adviser’s directions and recommendations
  - Completion of work in a timely and professional manner
  - Demonstration of appropriate professional habits of work and conduct
  - Sustained intellectual interest in the department’s activities
- Students who do not meet these expectations are subject to termination at the Mid-Course Evaluation.
- Evaluation is conducted by a committee of three members of the Skirball Department, all of whom must have taught the student in at least one course for which written work was submitted.
- The evaluation committee is convened by the DGS, who may also serve as a member of the committee if appropriate. Ordinarily the student’s principal adviser will serve as committee chair. Students are not involved in the selection of the committee members.
- The committee will review the record of the student’s performance in all courses and examinations attempted to date. The committee may ask the student to present samples of written work submitted in one or more courses, but is not required to do so.
- After reviewing the student’s record, including any written warnings from the DGS, the committee will make one of the following recommendations to the DGS:
  - The student may proceed to the remaining year of coursework.
  - The student must complete all outstanding incomplete work and/or demonstrate the ability to read academic literature in Hebrew, upon completion of which the committee will reconvene to continue the evaluation.
  - The student should be terminated from the program.
- A student for whom termination is recommended will be asked to prepare a written response to the committee’s recommendation. The DGS will review the recommendation and the response and decide whether to sustain the recommendation or to overturn it.
- All recommendations of the evaluation committee and decisions of the DGS are subject to review by the department chair and may be appealed to the chair within 30 days of announcement.

- Should the chair sustain a decision for termination, the student affected may appeal to GSAS in the manner described in section 7 of the GSAS Policies and Procedures Manual.

## 2.3 Comprehensive Field Examinations

- PhD students must pass two comprehensive field examinations.
- Students obtaining their degree from the Skirball Department (HJS) alone (i.e. students who are not enrolled in a joint program) must pass examinations in a **major field** and a **minor field**.
- The major field examination consists of two parts:
  - A written examination, administered by the examinee's principal adviser, based upon a bibliography developed jointly by the adviser and the student;
  - An oral examination, administered by the examinee's adviser and two additional faculty members, at least one of whom must be a member of the Skirball Department.
- The major field examination must be taken in one of the following fields:
- The minor field examination is a written examination only. It is administered by a faculty member selected jointly by the student and the adviser and is based upon a bibliography developed jointly by the student and the examiner.
- Except under unusual circumstances, the faculty member who administers the minor field examination will be a member of the Skirball Department. The DGS must approve a minor field examination administered by a faculty member from outside of the department.
- For the minor field examination, special fields in addition to those listed for the major field examination may be designed. The DGS must approve any special field before the exam is administered.
- The minor field must bear some relations to a student's major field. For example, students in rabbinics may select a minor field in Bible, Dead Sea Scrolls, medieval exegesis, medieval Jewish history, etc. Such students would not likely be permitted to take a minor field examination in history of the Holocaust or contemporary Israeli literature without demonstrating a compelling intellectual rationale for such a combination.
- Students should take their field examinations as soon after completion of coursework as possible. Delaying these examinations makes it likely that a student's funding will expire long before completion of the dissertation.
- Students enrolled in a joint doctoral program with another department take the written HJS major field examination only. Students in the joint History program are required to sit for a one-day History Qualifying Exam in May of their second year. These students should consult the History PhD Handbook for more information on policies related to History Qualifying Exams.
- Students who fail the major or minor field exam may be allowed to retake the exam at the discretion of their adviser. Failure of a major or minor field exam a second time will result in termination from the program.

## 3 Thesis Proposal and Thesis

### **3.1 Thesis Advisement**

You should work with your religious studies faculty advisor or the program administrator to identify appropriate individuals to serve as your thesis advisor. Thesis advisors are typically faculty members or other individuals at NYU who have obtained a PhD, and whose research interests match up with the focus of your thesis. Once you have found a thesis advisor, you should work with this individual during your last semester in the MA program to complete an academic work of at least 50 pages. It is, therefore, very important for you to secure an advisor long before your last semester. Your final thesis must be approved by two readers, at least one of which must be a faculty member from the religious studies program. When your thesis is complete, please contact the program administrator at [religious.studies@nyu.edu](mailto:religious.studies@nyu.edu) in order to obtain the thesis reader approval sheets which you must take to each advisor for their signature.

### **3.2 Thesis Proposal**

### **3.3 The Thesis or Examination**

In fulfillment of the degree, students may elect to complete a thesis paper as their capstone project. Before their final semester, students will secure a thesis adviser from among either the Religious Studies faculty or faculty from another department at NYU. Together with this adviser, the student will produce a thesis paper to be reviewed by two faculty members, one of whom must be in the Religious Studies program. Although the thesis paper is not graded, students may elect to enroll in M.A. Thesis Research, RELST-GA 2901 or 2902, (with departmental permission) for a grade as they work toward completion of the paper. As an alternative to the thesis, students may instead choose to take a written comprehensive exam as their capstone project. This requires securing an examination adviser with whom the student will design a set of questions around their particular field of study. The exam will be administered in the student's final semester, and will receive either a grade of "P" (pass) or "F" (fail). Students will not receive credits for completion of the exam; they must have completed, or be in the process of completing, the required 32 credits at the time of examination

## **4 Journalism Concentration**

### **4.1 Objectives**

As religion appears with growing force in the political, economic, social and cultural life of a globalizing world, its representation in various media, electronic and print, likewise grows in importance. The Program in Religious Studies has joined forces with the Department of Journalism to provide a concentration within the graduate program that provides education and preparation for students seeking careers in journalism with an expertise on religion. Students who complete the concentration receive an MA degree in religious studies with a concentration in journalism and religion. Like the regular MA degree in religious studies, students are required to complete 36 credits, however, half of these credits are taken through the Department of Journalism. Additionally, in lieu of a thesis, students in the concentration are expected to complete a final project in long-form journalism aimed at a sophisticated general readership in expository, explanatory or investigative form on a subject related to religious life.

## 4.2 Application Requirements

All applicants are required to submit a complete application for admission which can be found on the Graduate Admissions web site. In addition to the application form questions, applicants must submit academic transcripts, GRE test scores, two writing samples (an academic sample no longer than 25 double-spaced pages and a second sample that demonstrates your aptitude for journalism), 3 letters of reference that show you to us in such a way that we can see how you would fit into our program, and an intellectually focused Statement of Academic Purpose that includes a discussion of your aspirations as a journalist, writing and reporting on important matters in the news and religious issues. Foreign students whose primary language is not English are also required to submit TOEFL scores for admission into the Graduate School.

## 4.3 Program Coursework

- The area of study draws on courses offered by both the Program in Religious Studies and the Journalism Institute. These courses are intended to provide students with the theoretical tools necessary to examine modern religious life and the issues that surround it in conjunction with training in journalistic writing, research, and ethics. Admission to the concentration will be made at the discretion of both the Program in Religious Studies and the Journalism Institute.
- 36 total points are required for the M.A. in Religious Studies with a concentration in Journalism. Required courses in religious studies (16 points total) are: (1) Theories and Methods in the Study of Religion, RELST-GA 1001, (2) Religion as Media, RELST-GA 3397, and two elective courses focusing on the study of religion. Required courses in journalism (20 points total) are: (1) Writing, Research, and Reporting Workshop I and II, JOUR-GA 1021, 1022. (2) Introduction to Literary Reportage, JOUR-GA 2048 and (3) Portfolio Workshop I and II, JOUR-GA 1044, 1045.
- The requirements for this concentration also include a final project in long-form journalism, an article aimed at a sophisticated general readership in expository, explanatory, or investigative form on a subject related to religious life. Accompanying this long-form article in journalism, the student will write an essay that discusses, in terms of the theoretical and empirical work done in religious studies classes, how they conceptualized and researched the original article. It is hoped they will emerge with a sense of how their scholarly and journalistic training worked together.

## 5 Dual (MA/MSLIS) in Religious Studies and Library Science

### 5.1 Component 1: MS in Library and Information Science

- The Palmer School of Library and Information Science offers the full Master of Science in Library and Information Science (M.S.L.I.S.) in Manhattan. It is housed in the renowned Bobst Library of New York University, an outstanding research facility in the heart of Greenwich Village, overlooking Washington Square.
- The dual degree allows student to graduate with an MSLIS from the Palmer School,

accredited by the American Library Association, and Master's degree from any department at NYU, including Africana Studies. The Palmer School has elective courses in information technology, subject reference and organization of information, web architecture, digital libraries, information retrieval, metadata, collaborative technologies, rare books, archives and management.

## **5.2 Component 2: MA in Religious Studies**

- A student's course trajectory will be worked out with close faculty advice. By graduation, students should have a grasp of the tools of at least one disciplinary focus and a working knowledge of at least one cultural area.
- In fulfillment of the degree, students may elect to complete a thesis paper as their capstone project. Typically before their final semester, students will secure a "thesis adviser" from among either the Religious Studies faculty or faculty from another department at NYU. Together with this adviser, the student will produce a thesis paper to be reviewed by two faculty members, one of whom must be in the Religious Studies program. Although the thesis paper is not graded, students may elect to enroll in a Thesis Research course (with departmental permission) for a grade and for a maximum of 4 credits as they work toward completion of the paper. As an alternative to the thesis, students may instead choose to take a written comprehensive exam as their capstone project. This requires securing an "examination adviser" with whom the student will design a set of questions around their particular field of study. The exam will be administered in the student's final semester, and will receive either a grade of "P" (pass) or "F" (fail). Students will not receive credits for completion of the exam; they must have completed, or be in the process of completing, the required 24 credits at the time of examination.

## **5.3 MSLIS Mentorship**

- Students enrolled in the dual degree program participate in a mentorship program with NYU Libraries' library subject specialists (LIS 785).

## **6 Points and Course Assistance**

## **7 Leave of Absence**

- GSAS grants leaves of absence to students only in cases of medical illness, military service, maternal or paternal leave, or compelling personal need (see section 5.5 of the GSAS Policy and Procedures Manual).
- Full-time MacCracken students may also request up to one semester of parental accommodation upon becoming the primary care-giving parent to a newly born or adopted child. Details on this policy (and how it differs from a leave of absence) can be found at <http://gsas.nyu.edu/content/nyu-as/gsas/about-gsas/policies-and-procedures/Parental-Accommodation-Policy.html>.

- Students on leave are not entitled to use university facilities, but they need not apply for readmission once the leave ends.
- Applications for Leave of Absence must be filed with the HJS Administrative Office with approval of the DGS. The DGS will recommend approval or disapproval of the request to the Associate Dean of GSAS. Final approval or disapproval will be made by the Associate Dean. The **Leave of Absence Request Form** can be obtained from the HJS Administrative Office or from the GSAS website.
- The period of an approved academic leave of absence **does not** count towards a student's time to degree limit.
- Starting in Fall 2017, students on an approved academic leave of absence are eligible to enroll for up to one year of health insurance coverage through an NYU sponsored insurance plan, for the same cost as when they are actively enrolled students.
  - Students are responsible for paying the cost of student health insurance during the leave of absence period. GSAS financial aid awards that include health insurance require full-time enrollment and do NOT cover health insurance during a leave of absence.
- Students who are **denied** a leave of absence are required to maintain matriculation (MM) and pay all associated fees if they are not enrolled in coursework. GSAS requires all students to maintain continuous enrollment.

## 8 General Advice

- The primary key to success in graduate school is a good student-adviser relationship. Support of advisers is crucial for beginning graduate students seeking consideration of special requests, for advanced students applying for dissertation funds or wishing to present papers at academic conferences, and for recent PhDs at the beginning of their careers looking for jobs, postdoctoral fellowships, or publication subsidies. **Students should meet regularly with their advisers during each semester to discuss their progress, and they should keep their advisers well informed of any problems encountered along the way.**
- Students preparing themselves for an academic teaching position are well advised to take advantage of the wide variety of courses regularly offered in the department. Job prospects are usually enhanced when candidates can legitimately claim to have studied in fields outside their own during their graduate careers and can show familiarity with the literature, sources, and problems of other fields. The Skirball Department offers extraordinary breadth and depth of faculty resources in Judaic Studies, giving students outstanding opportunities to widen their intellectual horizons as well as deepen their expertise in a specific field of research.