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*HANDBOOK*

*FOR*

*STUDENTS AND FACULTY*

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OF THE

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY

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## Goals, Courses, Fields of Study

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**Goals:** The Graduate Program in Religious Studies comprises programs of study leading to the MA and PhD degrees. The primary goal of both degree programs is to prepare persons for academic leadership in the field, and hence for professional careers as teacher-scholars in colleges, universities, and schools of theology. The MA degree program also aims to accommodate the qualified nonprofessional student interested in advanced work in religious studies within the context of the liberal arts and sciences.

**Courses:** All students in the Graduate Program in Religious Studies take four courses in common over a two-year period (one course each semester) which together constitute an ongoing Core Seminar in Religious Studies. The individual components are:

- ◁ RELI 6301, The Philosophical Study of Religion
- ◁ RELI 6302, Approaches to Asian Religions
- ◁ RELI 6303, History, Theory, and Method in Religious Studies
- ◁ RELI 6304, Contemporary Approaches to the Study of Religion

Beyond these four courses, students in the MA program take an additional eighteen credit hours of course work, for a total of thirty credit hours. Students in the PhD program take an additional thirty-six credit hours, for a total of forty-eight credit hours.

courses of three different types: intended field of specialization, may include

1. *Regular courses* in Southern Methodist University that are approved for graduate study in the student's field. (Undergraduate courses will be approved only if they have a particular relevance to the student's course of study and only if the student has reached a prior agreement with the instructor on additional work to be done to raise the requirements of the course to the graduate level.)
2. *Directed study courses* in which one or more students and a faculty member agree to meet not less than six times during the term to discuss the material under study and which require the submission of substantial written work to which the faculty member assigns grades as well as assigning an overall letter grade for the course as a whole.
3. *Independent study courses* in which the student and a faculty member agree on a bibliography for study that the student will pursue independently and which do not require either the submission of written work or the assignment of letter grades; rather, these courses are pass/fail and require one meeting near the end of the semester to determine completion of the reading..

Directed study and independent study courses are arranged individually by the student or students with an appropriate member of the faculty who is willing to undertake such a course.

Each student is encouraged to take advantage of regular courses to the extent that it is possible and . There is no limit to the number of courses a student may take in the form of directed study courses. MA students may take as much as six credit hours of work (two courses) in independent study, and PhD students may take as much as twelve credit hours

(four courses) of work in independent study. (If any credit has been waived in recognition of pertinent graduate work completed elsewhere, the amount of independent study credit permitted will be reduced accordingly.)

Students should be aware that, outside Perkins School of Theology and the Religious Studies Department in Dedman College, independent study courses may not be an option.

Information about specific course requirements that apply to students in the field of New Testament.

**Fields of Study:** Each student in the PhD program specializes in one of the following six fields of study:

1. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament
2. New Testament
3. The Christian Tradition
4. Systematic Theology
5. Religious Ethics [Christian Ethics]
6. Religion and Culture

These six fields of specialization require comprehensive field examinations as follows:

#### **Hebrew Bible/Old Testament**

1. *Ancient Near Eastern, Hellenistic, and Greco-Roman Texts and Contexts*  
This examination covers the historical background and literary milieu of the Hebrew Bible and their possible influence upon formation of the biblical texts and canon in (1) pre-exilic and exilic (pre-Assyrian, Assyrian, and Neo-Babylonian) periods and (2) post-exilic (Persian, Hellenistic, and Greco-Roman) periods. Successful completion of the exam will demonstrate mentioned periods and demonstrate his/her ability to employ these materials in biblical interpretation and to engage critically major modern and post-modern trends and theories pertaining to the study of the Hebrew Bible in different ancient contexts.
2. *Hermeneutics and Basic Topics of Hebrew Bible Studies*  
This examination covers (1) the hermeneutical developments as they pertain to Hebrew Bible studies since the emergence of the modern worldview, with special consideration given to contemporary debates on social location of the reader and (2) basic topics in the study of particular biblical corpora and books. Successful completion of the exam demonstrates the study of these issues.
3. *Methodologies of Hebrew Bible Studies*  
This examination covers diachronic/historical-critical and synchronic/literary-critical scholarly approaches to the Hebrew Bible. Successful completion of the exam will presuppositions underlying these approaches and of the scholarly debates about their strengths and limitations as well as his/her ability to apply one or more approaches from each group to specific texts of the Hebrew Bible.
4. *Elective* (chosen in view of th





theories with one another and trace developments from the 1920s to the present.

2. *History of Christian Ethics*

critical engagement with major figures, ideas, and developments in the history of Christian ethics, beginning with pre-Christian Greek and Hebrew ethics and continuing through Early Christianity, the Middle Ages, the Reformation period, and Early Modern religious thought.

3. *Philosophical Ethics*

Successful completion

with major issues, figures, and theories in moral philosophy from the seventeenth century to the present.

4. One of the following: *Systematic Theology, Philosophical Theology, Biblical Ethics, Applied Ethics, or Ethics of another major religious tradition.*

with another discipline that is closely related to the study of religious ethics, with theological and philosophical approaches to a specific moral problem, or with the history, figures, and issues in the ethics of another major religious tradition. The exam should also demonstrate the dissertation research. blem, or tradition in his/her

**Religion and Culture**

1. *Modern Study of Religion*







A member of the Steering Committee shall normally serve as convener of the faculty involved in each field for these purposes.

7. Amendments to these Principles of Governance may be proposed by any member of the faculty or by the Steering Committee. Any proposed amendment must be distributed in writing to all members of the faculty at least seven days prior to the meeting at which it is to be considered. In order to pass, an amendment must receive the support of a majority of the members of the faculty who are based in the Department of Religious Studies and a majority of the members of the faculty who are based in Perkins School of Theology.

Adopted by the faculty of the Graduate Program in Religious Studies, May 8, 2019

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## *The Degree Programs*

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**Degree of Master of Arts:** The requirements for the degree of Master of Arts are the following:

1. satisfactory completion of thirty credit hours of approved course work, including the four courses of the Core Seminar in Religious Studies: RELI 6301, The Philosophical Study of Religion; RELI 6302, Approaches to Asian Religions; RELI 6303, History, Theory, and Method in Religious Studies; and RELI 6304, Contemporary Approaches to the Study of Religion;
2. passing an examination in an approved foreign language;
3. satisfactory completion of a master's thesis on an approved topic in one of the six fields of study.

The student is encouraged to develop an area of concentration in his or her eighteen hours of undesignated course work. A maximum of six credit hours may be taken in Independent Study courses. Concentrations in areas of scholarship represented primarily in the Department of Religious Studies in Dedman College are especially welcome. Students whose main interests are in areas represented in the typical theological curriculum are advised to consider the Master of Theological Studies degree in Perkins School of Theology as an alternative to the Master of Arts degree in the Graduate Program in Religious Studies.

Each student will be assigned an advisor in his or her anticipated area of concentration, to aid in the development of a plan of study. A thesis proposal, endorsed by a three-member thesis committee, is to be submitted to the Steering Committee for its approval. Approval of the proposal, normally occurring early in the fall term of the second year of study, will signify admission to candidacy for the MA degree, provided that the student has satisfactorily completed twenty-four hours of approved course work and has passed the required foreign language examination.

The language examination must be taken during the August examination period at the beginning of the first year. Students who do not pass at that time will be allowed to retake the examination during the January examination period of the first year.

The program normally occupies two academic years: one year of full-time course work (twenty-four credit hours) and one year involving six hours of course work—the two remaining components of the Core Seminar, one each term—and the writing of a thesis. In accordance with university policy, the maximum time allowed for completion of the degree is six years. Ordinarily, transfer credit is not allowed toward the degree.

However, a PhD student who, owing to a change of plans or circumstances, wishes to receive the MA rather than proceed to the  
Such a plan would normally involve the completion of at least thirty hours of course work, the passing of at least one language examination, and the completion of either an approved MA thesis or the four comprehensive field examination



3. Students in the two fields of biblical studies must take the second language examination no later than the June examination period of the first year; students who do not pass at that time will be allowed to retake the examination the following August. All other students must take the second language examination no later than August of the second year; students who do not pass at that time will be allowed to retake the examination in January of the second year. Students in biblical studies must pass their third and fourth language examinations no later than June of the third year.
4. The comprehensive field examinations must be completed no later than August of the third year.
5. The dissertation proposal must be submitted to the Steering Committee for approval no later

## *Time Limits*

### **Requirements for the MA Degree**

	<b>No later than</b>
Pass language exam	August* of 1st year
Complete 30 hours of approved course work Core Seminar RELI 6301, RELI 6302, RELI 6303, RELI 6304 (12 hrs.) Elective course work (18 hrs.)	May of 2nd year (1st year 24 hrs., 2nd year 6 hrs.)
Complete thesis	April of 2nd year (Consult deadlines published by Office of Research & Graduate Studies.)

### **Requirements for the PhD Degree**

	<b>No later than</b>
Pass 1st language exam	August* of 1st year
Submit Draft of Plan of Study	November 5 of 1st year
Submit Plan of Study	March 3 of 1st year
Pass 2nd language exam	August* of 2nd year (Biblical Studies: June of 1st year)
Complete 48 hours of approved course work Core Seminar RELI 6301, RELI 6302, RELI 6303, RELI 6304 (12 hrs.) Elective course work (36 hrs.)	May of 2nd year
Pass four comprehensive field exams	August* of 3rd year
Submit dissertation proposal	November 30 of 3rd year (Biblical Studies: April 30 of 3rd year)
Biblical Studies: Pass 3rd and 4th language exams	June of 3rd year
Be admitted to candidacy for degree	June of 3rd year
Practice teach one-semester course	May of 5th year

**Policies on Time Limits:**

- ◁ If requested, the GPRS will make accommodations to the course of study following the birth or adoption of a child. These accommodations might include allowing a student to take a leave of absence from the Program for at most one academic year (depending on complications and timing of the birth) and/or allowing a student to postpone exams (language and comprehensive) and other deadlines for the period of leave. In particular,
  
- ◁ The student is not guaranteed stipend support for the period of leave. However, if a student chooses to take a period of leave, the Program will extend stipend support for one term past the term in which support would ordinarily have terminated. Health insurance benefits will be continued during the period of the leave, but for only one parental leave. A student on leave must verify his/her return date at least 6 months prior to re-entering the program in order to re-commence stipend support.

In special circumstances, exceptions to these policies may be granted upon petition to the Steering



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## *Languages and Language Examinations*

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**Language Examinations:** The purpose of the language examinations is to ensure that the student is competent in reading and, when applicable, speaking the language in question and in using it in research. The student will be required to demonstrate competence in reading the various kinds of literature in the language in question that are relevant to scholarship in the student's area or field of religious studies. Thus, the language examiner is required to certify whether the student is or is not sufficiently competent in reading and,

Steering Committee for approval to be examined in that language. If a suitable examiner cannot be acquired by the GPRS, the student is responsible for providing evidence of competence sufficient to conduct research (e.g., a copy of a graded final exam in that language from an accredited course adequate for graduate research needs or a signed FLAS foreign language evaluation or an examination from another institution). The student must submit the petition to the Program Coordinator in writing no later than sixty days prior to the beginning of the examination period in which the student wishes to schedule the examination.

**Administration of Language Examinations:**

are available online or from the office of the Program Coordinator. The completed form, signed





and the level of work described above for the practice teaching requirement, and it requires that the student does not take any compensation for the course (as the student is already being compensated in her or his stipend, as articulated in the letter of admission).





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## *Guidelines for Preparing the Dissertation Proposal*

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The purpose of the doctoral dissertation is to contribute to the ongoing discussion of the problem with which it deals in the relevant field of specialization. Accordingly, the dissertation proposal

the specified time limits seem a reasonable objective. Specifically, the dissertation proposal must include the following four components:

1. a statement of the specific question or problem to be investigated;
2. a statement of the reasons that make an investigation of this question or problem important and desirable both for the ongoing scholarly discussion in the relevant field and for the student individually;
3. a self-assessment by the student of her or his qualifications, including competences in relevant foreign languages, to carry out the proposed investigations; and
4. either a bibliography of the primary and secondary literature basic to the proposed investigation and of ways and means of meeting those requirements.

Excluding the bibliography, the dissertation proposal should be **five to ten typewritten pages (1500 to 3000 words) in length.**

Before submitting the dissertation proposal for approval, the student must secure its endorsement by the prospective dissertation advisor, by two additional members of the SMU faculty, and by one reader from outside the SMU faculty, all of whom are willing to work with the student in satisfying the two final requirements for the PhD degree (i.e., the completion of the dissertation and the oral examination).

proposal constitutes, at the same time, its appointment of these persons  
dissertation committee

Once these endorsements have been secured, the completed proposal may be submitted to the faculty of the student. The dissertation proposal must be submitted to the

of students in biblical studies, no later than April 30 of the third year. The

be considered.

*Special Note:*

- < In the fields of Systematic Theology and Religious Ethics, once the committee endorsements have been secured, the completed proposal must be submitted to the

Steering Committee for approval.



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*Procedures for Preparing and Securing the Approval  
of the Dissertation and for the Oral Examination*

Accordingly, prior to the first date specified, all of the following procedures must have already been completed: (1) the student must have submitted her or his completed dissertation to the

forwarded the tentatively approved dissertation to the other members of the committee for their reading and approval; (3) the other members of the committee must have read and approved the dissertation, with or without proposals for revision, and have reported accordingly directly to the chairperson; (4) the chairperson must have given final approval of the dissertation, having first seen to it that the student has made any and all proposed revisions that, in discussion with the other members of the committee, have been required; and (5) the student must have prepared the final copy of the approved dissertation for submission to the Office of Research and Graduate Studies.

Ordinarily, therefore, the chairperson should require that the student submit his or her completed dissertation <sup>than</sup> sixty days prior to the official close of the semester. This allows some four to five weeks for the other members of the committee to read and approve the dissertation and for the student to prepare the final copies of the approved dissertation for submission to the Office of Research and



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## *Evaluations, Grades, and Necessary Conditions for Continuing in Study*

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**Evaluations:**

evaluated, first of all, by the grading procedures in force in her or his courses. In addition, there (s) and evaluations of the . In the case of a PhD, the student is also evaluated on written comprehensive examinations, the oral dissertation examination, and the one-semester course of required practice teaching. The purpose of each of -teacher in religious studies.

**Grades:** In accordance w-10(d(d)2 612 7912 0 612 792 reW\* nBT/F5 11 Tf1 0 0 1 124.3 494.9 Tm0 g0 G[:])-32(n)2

**Review of Student Progress:**

Steering Committee. In a case in which there is insufficient evidence of satisfactory progress toward the degree, the Steering Committee may decide, in consultation with relevant members of the faculty, (1) to discontinue the student from the program, (2) to allow the student to continue under certain specified conditions, or (3) to recommend to the student a change of degree program.

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## *Policy on Student Academic Responsibility*

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**Academic Honesty and Dishonesty:** Students in the GPRS are expected to uphold the SMU Honor Code and are under the authority of the Constitution of the Honor Council of Southern Methodist University (available on the SMU website).

It should also be noted that graduate students serving in any instructional capacity at Southern Methodist University are subject to the same standards of professional conduct as are binding on regular faculty members (see especially policies 6.1–6.3 in the University Policy Manual, <http://www.smu.edu/policy/>).

**Administrative Procedures:** The faculty of the Graduate Program in Religious Studies has established the following procedures to be followed in dealing with incidents of suspected academic dishonesty:

1. Should an instructor believe that a student has committed an act of academic dishonesty, the instructor will notify the Director in writing. The Director will then arrange as soon as possible a meeting with the student and the instructor. The Director will be present at this meeting. Should he or she wish, the student may also have another faculty member present. At the meeting, the instructor will present her or his concerns to the student. The student may then respond to those concerns. Following this, the instructor will consult in private with both the Director and the faculty member invited by the student (if a faculty member has been invited). If after consultation, the instructor still believes that academic dishonesty has taken place, he or she will assign an appropriate penalty. (The penalty can range from a failing grade on the assignment to a failing grade for the course.) Final authority for determining whether academic dishonesty has taken place and for the determination of the penalty rests solely with the instructor.

Following the meeting, the decision of the instructor and the nature of the penalty assigned by the instructor will be communicated in writing by the Director to the student, with a copy to the instructor. Following the meeting, the instructor will also prepare a written account of the student's academic dishonesty and the penalty. This account is to be placed in the student's academic file.

Should the instructor deem the student's academic dishonesty to be sufficiently grievous as to call into question that student's fitness to continue in the program, he or she may also request that the matter be referred to the Steering Committee, for consideration of whether the student should be dismissed from the Graduate Program (see section 6).

2. A student accused of academic dishonesty has the right to appeal the decision of the instructor. Her or his appeal as described here may concern only the determination of academic dishonesty, not the grade resulting from the dishonesty. (A student wishing to appeal a grade assigned by an instructor should follow the procedures described in section 7.)

Two levels of appeal are possible.



- evidence, the committee is required to vote as to the question of whether the student should be allowed to continue in the program. A majority vote will be decisive.
7. The award of a grade is a matter solely within the academic discretion of the faculty member. A student who wishes to appeal an assigned grade must first discuss the matter with the faculty member who awarded the grade. If the faculty member decides not to seek a grade change, the student may petition the Director of the GPRS for a review of the faculty member's decision. The Director is not authorized to change a grade, even with the consent of the faculty member who awarded it. If, after discussion of the matter with the Director, the faculty member decides to seek a grade change, he or she should follow standard procedures for doing so. The Director will then report the faculty member's decision to the student. If, after discussion of the matter with the Director, the faculty member decides not to pursue a grade change, the student may petition the Dean of Graduate Studies for a review of the faculty member's decision. The Dean may proceed as he or she deems appropriate. By university policy, final authority in the determination of grades rests with the instructor.

Adopted by the GPRS Faculty, May 8, 2019



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## *Descriptions of Language Examinations*

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GRADUATE PROGRAM IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

DEDMAN COLLEGE

SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY

### **THE FRENCH EXAM**

The study of languages is considered an integral part of the Graduate Program in Religious Studies at SMU. The examination in French is designed to evaluate the candidate's ability to use academic materials written in French effectively for scholarly research. The examination requires the translation into English of passages from recent French scholarly publications in the field of theological and religious studies.

The examination will consist of two sections, the first to be completed in one hour and the second in one hour and a half:

- (A) The first will be the translation into English of a passage in French to be selected from a longer work chosen in advance\* for preparatory study. This portion of the examination is to be written *without* the use of a dictionary.
- (B) The second will be a sight translation into English of a passage to be given at the time of the examination. The use of a dictionary *will* be permitted during this hour. The length of the text may vary but will normally be limited to one or two book pages at the most.

In evaluating the translations, comprehension and accuracy will be given greater weight than quantity, although, of course, a reasonable amount of material should be translated to demonstrate that research could be done effectively using the French language.

Students should see their examiners for recommendations of books to help prepare for the exam.

\*Each student should select an item of scholarly work a journal article or book chapter



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**THE LATIN EXAM**

The Latin exam falls into two parts, the first an hour in length and the second an hour and a half. The first part, for which no dictionary is allowed, requires translation of a selection from a previously prepared text; the other, for which a

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**THE SPANISH EXAM**

The study of languages is considered an integral part of the Graduate Program in Religious Studies at SMU. The examination in Spanish is designed to evaluate the candidate's ability to use academic materials written in Spanish effectively for scholarly research. The examination requires the translation into English of passages from recent Spanish scholarly publications in the field of theological and religious studies.

The examination will consist of two sections, the first to be completed in one hour and the second in one hour and a half:

- (A) The first will be the translation into English of a passage in Spanish to be selected from a longer work chosen in advance\* for preparatory study. This portion of the examination is to be written *without* the use of a dictionary.
- (B) The second will be a sight translation into English of a passage to be given at the time of the examination. The use of a dictionary *will* be permitted during this hour. The length of the text may vary but will normally be limited to one or two book pages at the most.

In evaluating the translations, comprehension and accuracy will be given greater weight than quantity, although, of course, a reasonable amount of material should be translated to demonstrate that research could be done effectively using the Spanish language.

Students should see their examiners for recommendations of books to help prepare for the exam.

\*Each student should select an item of scholarly work a journal article or book chapter written in Spanish and submit this proposed selection to the examiner for approval prior to the examination. Students are encouraged to select a work in their own field of interest.

*Revised spring semester 2018*

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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**THE GREEK EXAM FOR STUDENTS IN THE FIELD OF NEW TESTAMENT**

**General**

Three hours will be allowed for the examination, and it will consist of two parts. In the first part, the student will translate two or three passages from the New Testament. In the second part, the student will translate one or more passages from non-New Testament sources. The student will *not* be permitted to use a computer.

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**THE GREEK EXAM FOR STUDENTS IN FIELDS OTHER THAN NEW TESTAMENT**

**General**



### **Evaluation**

In assessing the examination, the various passages will be given about equal weight. A numerical grade will be has been achieved. (In GPRS, 80 is the minimum passing grade.)

*Approved: November 13, 2017* R. Heller, S. Frolov, J. Levison, S. Scholz,











- Term: one year, nonrenewable. Must be elected by the October that follows the Spring annual general meeting

**Section D.** The GSO Liaisons are constituted as follows:

◁ **PSA Liaison** The PSA Liaison will:

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- Term: one year, renewable. Elected at the Spring annual general meeting

**Section E:**