Religious Studies, MA

Go beyond the history and foundation of the world's religions to look at comparative topics that put religion in the forefront of many modern-day themes in this master's degree program, from which you can receive a broad understanding of all religions.

Program Description

Degree Awarded: MA Religious Studies
The faculty in religious studies offer a graduate program leading to the MA in religious studies.

Candidates are offered an opportunity to develop knowledge of various religious traditions in their historical and cultural contexts and to learn research methods. Although students often concentrate upon a single religious tradition for their thesis work, the program provides a broadly comparative understanding of religions, not simply a specialist's training in a single tradition.

At a Glance

- College/School: The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
- Location: Tempe campus

Degree Requirements

30 credit hours including the required applied project course (REL 593) and a foreign language exam, or 30 credit hours, a thesis and a foreign language exam

Required Core (6 credit hours)
REL 501 The Study of Religion I: Genealogies, Disciplines and Power (3)
REL 502 The Study of Religion II: Epistemology, Practice and Mediation(3)

Electives or Research (18-21 credit hours)
Culminating Experience (3-6 credit hours)
REL 599 Thesis (6) or
REL 593 Applied Project (3)

Additional Curriculum Information
There are two options for the culminating experience: a thesis or an applied project. An oral defense of the final written work is required for both options.

The thesis option is recommended for students intending to seek admission to a doctoral program upon completion of the master's degree or for students who plan to teach in the discipline at community colleges. Thesis students must have reading knowledge of all languages relevant to the proposed thesis topic and take 18 credit hours of electives or research coursework.

The applied project option is recommended for students intending to augment their primary area of expertise and professional training in fields such as counseling, journalism, K-12 education, law, social work and the ministry. The applied project requires submission of three publishable papers: one on theory and method, one on the student's minor area of study, and one on the major area of study. The student's chosen areas of study determine the coursework taken as electives, with applied project students taking 21 credit hours of electives coursework, four courses being in a major area of study and two courses being in a minor area. Reading knowledge of a foreign language relevant to the proposed area of study is required.

The student's plan of study may include up to six credit hours of 400-level coursework or one REL 690: Reading and Conference course with department approval.

Admission Requirements
Applicants must fulfill the requirements of both the Graduate College and The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Applicants are eligible to apply to the program if they have earned a bachelor's or master's degree, in any field, from a regionally accredited institution. Transcripts must show evidence of having completed the equivalent of 15 credit hours of undergraduate work in the study of religions, including advanced courses in both western and Asian or other nonwestern religions. Applicants who have not met this requirement may be required to take additional coursework beyond program requirements to remedy this deficiency.

Applicants must have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.30 (scale is 4.00 = "A") in the last 60 hours of their first bachelor's degree program, or applicants must have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.00 (scale is 4.00 = "A") in an applicable master's degree program. The most competitive applicants have a GPA of 3.50 or higher.

All applicants must submit:

1. graduate admission application and application fee
2. official transcripts
3. statement of purpose
4. curriculum vitae
5. writing sample
6. contact information for three references
7. proof of English proficiency

Additional Application Information
An applicant whose native language is not English must provide proof of English proficiency regardless of current residency.

Students are required to submit contact information for three academic references who are qualified to provide detailed, accurate evaluations of the applicant's potential as a graduate student in religious studies. Professors are preferred, particularly faculty advisors. Recommenders are contacted by the Graduate College with a request to complete a reference questionnaire.

The statement of purpose should be approximately 1,000 words and should outline the applicant's academic background, career goals, and specific areas of interest in religious studies.

Application Deadlines

Fall

Career Opportunities
The Master of Arts program in religious studies provides students with training and knowledge relevant to careers in government, nongovernmental organizations, nonprofit organizations, global relationships, intercultural understanding, foreign service, researchers, professional writing, community college teaching, journalism and publishing.

Career examples include:

- book editor
- community college instructor
- foreign service employee
- global affairs writer
- nongovernmental organization professional
- nonprofit management

Contact Information
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