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1 Introduction

Welcome to the graduate program in the Department of Religion. Princeton’s program has much to offer, both within the department and beyond, including in other University departments and interdisciplinary programs and at the neighboring Princeton Theological Seminary. The small size of the program fosters a spirit of collegiality within and across subfields, allows for a close working relationship with faculty and student colleagues, all with the support of dedicated administrative staff.

We value the working community of the Department of Religion and aim to make each student’s experience in the graduate program fulfilling and productive. The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), the Department Chair, Graduate Program Administrator, and Graduate Student Committee are all available to help you address questions or concerns that may arise during your course of study and to provide avenues for your suggestions. This handbook serves as an introductory guide but is not comprehensive. Please consult the department website, as well as make use of faculty, staff, and administrators as resources for information on topics not found here.

2 Graduate School Policies and Procedures

Many academic policies and procedures are common to all students in all departments at the University, and you should familiarize yourself with these in addition to policies that are specific to the Religion department. You will find these on the Graduate School’s website (link).

All members of the University community commit to adhere to the codes of conduct and regulations outlined in Rights, Rules, and Responsibilities (link) In addition to the DGS, Department Chair, and the Graduate School Deans as resources for assistance in resolving conflicts, the Ombuds Office provides the opportunity for members of the campus community to discuss issues in a neutral and confidential venue.

3 Degree Requirements

3.1 Overview

Graduate students in the department are expected to work full time toward their degrees, normally in residence, and to complete the program within five years. All students work toward the Ph.D.; there is no separate master's program. An M.A. degree is awarded after students pass the General Examinations, normally completed by the middle of the third year of graduate work.
Students who have not completed the dissertation by the end of the fifth year are eligible to be enrolled for an additional two years under Dissertation Completion Enrollment (DCE) status. “To qualify for DCE status, students must have made substantial progress on the dissertation and must at the time of reenrollment move directly into DCE status when their period of regular enrollment ends. Eligible students apply for this status during the annual reenrollment (link) process in the last year of their program of study and must be approved for DCE status by their department and the Graduate School based on criteria for satisfactory academic progress. Students in DCE status are fully and formally enrolled graduate students, working full time to complete degree requirements. DCE students may be enrolled as regular (in residence) or in absentia students (pursuing their work away from Princeton). In both cases, a marginal-cost tuition that includes the mandatory Student Health Plan fee will be charged.”

### 3.2 Subfield Concentration

While the department encourages its graduate students to work out innovative programs of study and to make use of the full range of available resources, it also requires each student to demonstrate mastery of one of the fields of concentration:

- **Asian Religions** (faculty: Jonathan Gold, Bryan Lowe, Stephen Teiser)
- **Islam** (faculty: Shaun Marmon, Tehseen Thaver, Muhammad Q. Zaman)
- **Religion in America** (faculty: Wallace Best, Seth Perry, Garry Sparks, Nicole Turner, Judith Weisenfeld)
- **Religions of Mediterranean Antiquity** (faculty: Liane Feldman, Yedidah Koren, AnneMarie Luijendijk, Elaine Pagels, Moulie Vidas)
- **Philosophy and Religion** (faculty: Leora Batnitzky, Andrew Chignell, Gabriel Citron, Eric Gregory)
- **Religion, Ethics, and Politics** (faculty: Leora Batnitzky, Andrew Chignell, Gabriel Citron, Eric Gregory)

### 3.3 Coursework

All graduate students enroll in one of the two required departmental courses in the fall of the first and second year:

**REL 501: Religion and the Tradition of Social Theory**
A critical introduction to developments in social theory that have influenced the academic study of religion, including the classic contributions of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber as well as more recent debates in anthropology and cultural theory.
REL 502: Philosophy and the Study of Religion
The impact of twentieth-century philosophical ideas on the academic study of religion: naturalism, phenomenology, hermeneutics, structuralism, Nietzschean genealogy, and American pragmatism, among other philosophical movements.

Selection of other courses should be done in consultation with advisors within the student’s subfield. Subfield course requirements, if any, can be found on the Religion Department’s website Religion Department’s website (link).

3.4 STUDENT-INITIATED READING COURSES

In addition to enrolling in regularly scheduled courses, an individual or group of graduate students may create a Reading Course on a topic not available in the course offerings or building on an undergraduate course offering, provided a faculty member is willing to oversee the course. Visiting faculty may not lead a graduate reading course.

A reading course must have a complete syllabus and weekly schedule of readings and meetings as well as established written requirements. If a graduate reading course is built on an existing undergraduate course, substantial material must be added to bring it up to the graduate level. Students must complete a Reading Course Proposal Form, outlining requirements and expectations agreed upon by both the student and instructor. For complete guidelines and the Reading Course Proposal Form, see the Forms and Guidelines (link) section of the Religion Department’s website.

3.5 INCOMPLETES

The Graduate School policy states: “Students should complete the work of graduate courses, both 500- and 700-level, and any other courses during the regular academic term in which they are taken. Failure to do so may result in deferred reenrollment, which in turn has an impact on the student’s financial support and registration and course enrollment for the next academic year.” The department affirms this policy and grants Incompletes only under extraordinary circumstances.

3.6 LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT

All degree candidates are expected to have a reading knowledge of the two modern foreign languages most appropriate to their fields of concentration – French, German, Japanese, Arabic and so forth. Students should consult with their advisers and subfield faculty to determine which languages would be most appropriate in their case.

The language requirement may be fulfilled by successfully completing language courses offered by the University (during the academic year or in the summer); by passing tests given by the language departments; or by some other means approved by the Department, for which the
Director of Graduate Studies should be consulted. All entering students are strongly urged to achieve competence in at least one of the required languages before matriculation. Students must show evidence of competence in the two required modern languages before being admitted to a fifth term.

Beyond these requirements, students are expected to demonstrate competence in whatever additional languages they need to pursue advanced work in their own areas of specialization.

### 3.7 Reenrollment

The Graduate School has established “Reenrollment [as] the annual process whereby departments and programs, along with the Graduate School, evaluate the academic progress of advanced degree candidates. The process is conducted during the latter half of the spring term and is often supplemented by other department-specific evaluations during the academic year. For example, thesis committee meetings may occur once or at several times during an academic year. Students who may be eligible to be enrolled but will not, because of leave, graduation, or termination, also use the Graduate School Reenrollment System to provide progress reports and declare end-of-enrollment status to the Graduate School.”

All students eligible for reenrollment, including those writing dissertations, must make formal application each year through their individual department. Students who have satisfied all academic requirements within their department or program and demonstrated their readiness for continuing graduate work are offered reenrollment no later than June; others are notified about reenrollment when a basis for judgment is available.

### 3.8 General Examinations

Each student’s knowledge and competence in the special field is tested in the General Examination, normally completed by the middle of the third year of graduate work. On occasion, some part or parts of the General Examination may be taken earlier. The nature of the General Examination varies from field to field and, within fields, from student to student. The Examination typically consists of four parts and may entail preparing scholarly essays (as if for publication) as well as sitting for traditional written examinations. Successful completion of the General Examination entitles a student to the M.A. degree. If the faculty recommends that a student not attempt to submit a dissertation, the M.A. becomes a terminal degree, though in most cases students are permitted to move directly to the Dissertation.

Requirements and guidelines for the General Examinations in each subfield can be found on the Religion Department’s website Religion Department’s website (link).
3.9 DISSERTATION

Candidates who are permitted to proceed beyond the M.A. submit a formal dissertation proposal to the faculty in their subfield and the Director of Graduate Studies as soon as possible upon completion of the General Examination. The candidate discusses the proposal in an open meeting attended by the subfield faculty and members of the Graduate Studies Committee of the Department. Upon conclusion of that meeting, all faculty in attendance confer and decide whether to accept the proposal. If the proposal is accepted, the candidate is permitted to execute the project in consultation with appropriate faculty advisers.

When all Ph.D. requirements as listed under the Graduate School (link) and Religion Department (link) are met, the Final Public Oral (FPO) Examination can be scheduled. The Director of Graduate Studies designates at least three principal examiners, normally members of the Princeton faculty at the rank of assistant professor or higher, at least two of whom have not served as principal readers of the Dissertation. The examination not only involves a defense of the Dissertation but also covers the student's special field. The Department determines whether the candidate has passed the examination. Those who do pass receive the Ph.D. degree; those who do not are offered one more opportunity to be examined at least one year after the unsuccessful attempt.

Please consult the department’s checklist (link) for preparing to defend your dissertation as well as the Mudd Library’s guidelines for submitting a dissertation here (link) and here (link).

3.10 DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

The Religion Department has no formal dissertation committees. Students are encouraged to engage multiple faculty members both within and outside the Department as they see fit; see also the section on advising below. Faculty hold formal roles in the dissertation process as follows:

- A quorum of three professors votes on the prospectus (normally, this includes the DGS, the adviser, and all subfield faculty who are not on leave that term; but the configuration can be different).
- Once the dissertation is submitted, the adviser submits a form noting the acceptance of the dissertation and two readers write reading reports confirming the dissertation's contribution to scholarship (one of the readers must be a PU faculty member, normally but not necessarily from the Department, and neither can be the student's adviser).
- The FPO includes three faculty members: one of these three needs to be a Religion faculty member (e.g., the DGS), and two of those three cannot be the same as the readers mentioned above.
4 GRADUATE ADVISING AND MENTORING

One of the hallmarks of the Graduate Program in Religion is that students have access to training and mentoring from a wide range of faculty both within and across our six subfields. In keeping with the interdisciplinary nature of the field of Religious Studies, students are encouraged to consult and work with faculty in other departments as well.

In response to the Graduate School’s January 2021 policy on frequency of advising meetings (link), the Department established these guidelines for graduate advising and mentoring in April 2021. These guidelines go beyond what the school requires; they also reflect what was already the established practice of most members of the Department.

The Chair appoints at least one colleague each year to assist with faculty advising accountability and to help other faculty members improve their advising practices and skills. The Chair also receives (anonymized) evaluations of faculty advisors by students each year from the Grad School and takes account of them in the annual faculty review.

4.1 PRE-DISSERTATION ADVISING

The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) serves as an advising resource for all graduate students, and as the liaison between students and the Graduate School.

Each student chooses (or is assigned in consultation with the subfield faculty) an initial point person in the summer before their first year. If the DGS is willing and the sub-field would prefer, the initial point person can simply be the DGS.

During the first year, students are welcome to consult with a variety of faculty but should check in with their point person about courses, research plans, and any other items of concern. (If a student does not, for whatever reason, want to go to their assigned point person with a specific issue, they are also welcomed to speak directly with the DGS). The point person is listed as the student’s advisor in the Graduate School system and thus oversees reenrollment at the end of the first year.

During their first few years in the program students work with the subfield (and the DGS if need be) to choose a primary academic advisor - this is typically, though not always, a faculty member within their subfield.

During the rest of the coursework and General Examination phases, students should meet (in person or virtually/telephonically) with the advisor at least once per year. The advisor guides the student through the course selection process and the General Exam, the requirements of which vary according to subfield. The advisor is also in charge of the student’s annual reenrollment process.
Students in the coursework and Generals phases are encouraged to meet with at least one other member of the subfield faculty at least once per year to seek advice, feedback, and inform faculty of their progress, though this is not required. They are likewise encouraged to consult faculty in other subfields and departments.

4.2 DISSERTATION ADVISING

Advisor meetings (required): Once a student has passed the Generals, they should expect to meet with the advisor to discuss research and writing progress at least twice per year.

Dissertation advisors are expected to be accessible and responsive to students, and to offer timely, substantive, and constructive feedback on written materials, and regular assessment of progress to completion. Advisors also work with students to discuss professional goals as well as resources and opportunities at Princeton and beyond. Faculty are expected to be available (with sufficient notice) for meetings with dissertation advisees even when on leave.

Additional meeting (required): In addition, and in consultation with the advisor and/or the DGS, each student will identify at least one additional faculty member within the department with whom they will meet at least once per academic year to discuss their academic progress and professional goals.

In cases where students have two or more advisors, and at least two of these advisers are from within the student’s department or program, then this requirement is met by way of the first requirement (i.e., to meet twice per year with advisors).

Subfield meeting (optional): During the dissertation phase, students are encouraged to meet collectively with the faculty in their subfield at least once per academic year. If appropriate and feasible, they can invite any external faculty members who are involved in the student’s dissertation work for this annual check-in. This meeting can fulfill the “Additional meeting” requirement above. Note: A subfield “workshop” meeting does not fulfill this requirement.

These meetings should all take place prior to reenrollment decisions in May.

5 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Students have access to a range of professional development resources within the Religion Department, the Graduate School, in the broader University, and beyond. Taken together, these provide support for pedagogical training, scholarly development, preparation for the job market, and resources for considering careers beyond the academy. One resource is the GradFUTURES Professional Development (link).
5.1 Academic Job Market

The department hosts a session each fall during which the DGS offers an overview of the process of applying for academic positions and the specific elements of the dossier. Other faculty and advanced graduate students also participate to offer advice.

The Department provides a dossier service for graduate students in the program that provides a central location for application materials and recommendations. The Graduate Program Administrator compiles these into a dossier that the department maintains and forwards to prospective employers until students secure a tenure-track job if that is their ultimate professional goal.

Students considering going on the market should begin preparing the following dossier materials during the summer before.

- curriculum vitae
- cover letter
- writing sample
- statement of teaching philosophy
- teaching portfolio

Students applying for jobs should provide a CV to the Graduate Program Administrator to be included in the listing of job candidates on the department’s website (link).

Each Princeton graduate student is eligible to create a website, hosted at Open Scholar, that they may use to promote their candidacy and supplement materials included in the job application dossier (https://scholar.princeton.edu/).

Job listings can be found in The Chronicle of Higher Education (http://www.chronicle.com), to which Princeton has an institutional membership (you must log in from campus or a VPN), and on the American Academy of Religion and Society of Biblical Literature’s Employment Information Services site (https://www.aarsbl.org/). You must be a member of one of the societies to gain access. Other sites for academic job listings include Higher Ed Jobs (https://www.higheredjobs.com/) and Inside Higher Ed (https://www.insidehighered.com/).

Students who receive invitations for interviews at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion and Society of Biblical Literature may request a mock conference interview session with a group of department faculty. Contact the Graduate Program Administrator to make arrangements.

Students who receive invitations for campus interviews may request a mock job talk and/or teaching demonstration session to receive feedback from faculty and graduate students.
Please contact your GPA Florian Fues (flo.fues@princeton.edu) for help with scheduling a session.

5.2 Teaching

Normally, all graduate students serve at some point in their careers as Assistants in Instruction, known more commonly at Princeton as Preceptors. An Assistant leads precentorial in undergraduate courses and is responsible for grading students as well. This opportunity depends, at any given time, upon undergraduate instructional needs, but the Department views such experience as integral to the professional education it offers. It also encourages graduate students to give lectures in appropriate undergraduate courses taught by members of the faculty. Contact the Department Manager regarding preceptor opportunities and assignments in the Religion Department. In addition, opportunities may be available in other departments and programs, and students should contact the relevant Department managers or refer to the Office of the Dean of the Graduate School AI postings (link).

5.3 McGraw Center for Teaching and Learning

Students are encouraged to take advantage of the services offered at the McGraw Center (link), in addition to the required orientation for preceptors, particularly in preparation for applying for jobs that include a teaching component. The Center offers pedagogical and professional development workshops as well as a Teaching Transcript Program that includes support for writing the Statement of Teaching Philosophy often required as part of the dossier.

5.4 National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity

Princeton is an institutional member of the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity (link). “The independent center provides professional development, training, and mentorship opportunities to more than 83,000 members representing colleges and universities in the United States.” Graduate students “can enroll in a free sub-account membership to get access to the center's online resources which include workshops, webinars, and seminars on topics related to faculty life, such as increasing writing productivity, prioritizing and managing time, cultivating mentors, securing external funding, and maintaining work-life balance.”

5.5 Office of Career Services

Students are encouraged to consult with staff in Career Services (link) to prepare for the job market. The office provides career counseling sessions, workshops about and assistance with application materials, and resources for identifying and applying for academic jobs, non-teaching positions in the academy, and positions beyond the academy.
5.6 University Administrative Fellows

University Administrative Fellowships (link) help you prepare for the tenure-track job market or a career in academic administration. They are also valuable if you are looking for an experience that will position you for careers beyond the academy. Work on a project under the direction of the host department, attend meetings, and learn the ins and outs of your host’s position—including specific responsibilities, organizational dynamics, external networks, and more.

The Fellowship is broken into two components:

Mentoring and shadowing: Roughly 2 hours per week for the length of a semester

A project component: Roughly 4 hours per week for the length of a semester

To accept the fellowship, you must receive permission from your adviser(s) and be in good academic standing. International graduate students are encouraged to apply and to be in touch with the Davis International Center during the application process. University Administrative Fellows receive a $1,920 stipend in addition to normal support. The total time commitment is an average of 6 hours per week for the length of a semester. Summer UAFs are available, as are remote fellowships, which enable a broader range of participation in this program.

6 Funding

6.1 Stipends and Payment

In addition to a grant covering tuition and fees, the Graduate School typically provides a 12-month stipend for entering graduate students in the humanities. “In subsequent years, returning Ph.D. students in the Humanities and Social Sciences departments typically continue to receive a University Fellowship as their base financial support unless they have alternate sources of funding.”

Stipend checks are available the last business day of each month; the only exception is the month of December. Contact the Religion department’s Graduate Program Administrator for problems with Gross Pay. Contact Payroll at 258-3416 for problems with Net Pay.

Direct deposit sign up is available online via Self Service on TigerHub (link).

6.2 Summer Language and Research Funding

Students who require supplemental funds for language study, fieldwork, or archival research, for example, may apply to a variety of interdisciplinary programs for support. A list of programs and application information are available on the Graduate School’s website (link). The Center for Culture, Society and Religion (link) and the University Center for Human Values (link) also offer research fellowship combined with weekly research workshops.
6.3 Support for Scholarly Travel

The Graduate School (link) provides support up to $800 for students in years three through DCE1 to present research at scholarly conferences. Applications are made through the Student Activities Funding Engine (SAFE). Some support may be available from the Religion Department for first and second-year students who have been invited to present research. Interested students should consult the Graduate Program Administrator.

6.4 Fellowships

The Graduate School (link) offers a variety of competitive fellowships for students in the later years of graduate study.

7 Library

7.1 Librarians

Firestone Library

Wayne Bivens-Tatum
Philosophy and Religion Librarian
609-258-6367
rbivens@princeton.edu

East Asian Library and
The Gest Collection

Dr. Martin Heijdra
Director, East Asian Library
609-258-3183
mheijdra@princeton.edu

Ms. Setsuko Noguchi
Japanese Studies Librarian
609-258-6159
snoguchi@princeton.edu

Joshua Seufert
Chinese Studies Librarian
609-258-5336
jseufert@princeton.edu

Hyoungbae Lee
Korean Studies Librarian
609-258-0417
hyoungl@princeton.edu
7.2 STUDY SPACE AND LOCKERS

Please access the link below for updated information on SREL and other library services: https://library.princeton.edu/phased-planning-updates

SREL, in Firestone Library 2-12-C, is study space for all Religion graduate students. Your PUID Card will allow access to SREL.

Graduate students are eligible for lockers in Firestone Library. Information and the application can be found at the following link: https://library.princeton.edu/libraries/firestone/services/firestone-carrels-lockers

Please email the Graduate Program Administrator for information about study space in the basement of 1879 Hall.

8 1879 HALL RESOURCES, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

8.1 BULLETIN BOARDS

- Various university announcements and advertisements are located on the bulletin boards in the first-floor hallway of 1879 Hall.
- The “official department bulletin” for departmental information only is located in the mail room just above the copying machine.
8.2 **COFFEE AND TEA / DEPARTMENT LOUNGE**

Graduate students are welcomed to help themselves to coffee or tea. We ask that you:
- wash your own cup and keep the lounge clean
- return any trays, dishes, utensils that are from the Frist Student Center
- keep microwave and refrigerator clean

8.3 **COPY MACHINE**

The department’s copy machine in Room 141 is for **administrative use only**. Copy machines located in all of the university Libraries and in the Frist Campus Center are for student use. Students normally use PAW points as a method to pay for copies. Access the following link for more information on PAW points: [http://www.princeton.edu/tigercard/ppwhat.html](http://www.princeton.edu/tigercard/ppwhat.html)

8.4 **EMAIL**

Students are expected to check their email regularly; the department will communicate most information by email.

8.5 **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES / PUBLIC SAFETY:**

911 (Campus Phone)  
609-258-3333 (from a cell phone)  
609-258-1000 (for non-emergency matters)

If you notice anything unusual happening in the department (e.g., strange visitors, emergency medical situations, building maintenance needs, etc.), **please inform a department staff member as soon as possible.**

8.6 **FIRE SAFETY PLAN**

If you discover a fire, activate the nearest fire alarm pull station and call Public Safety and 911. If the fire alarm does not work, call 911 and notify occupants verbally of the emergency and the need to evacuate.

You may attempt to put out the fire if you have been trained in and are comfortable with using a fire extinguisher. **Otherwise, evacuate immediately.**

8.7 **EVACUATION PROCEDURES**

The Princeton Telephone & Email Notification System (PTENS) is an emergency notification system that allows authorized Princeton officials to send news and instructions simultaneously to individuals through landline phones, cellular phones, text messaging and e-mail. The benefits of the PTENS system are its immediacy and direct access to individual campus members
through multiple points of contact. In the event of an actual emergency, the University will relay critical information using the most appropriate options from a full range of notification resources: PTENS, Web announcements, e-mail, an automated message line, the Tiger TV emergency alert system, local radio stations, door-to-door notifications, and posters. For further information access: https://emergency.princeton.edu

Evacuate via the nearest stairwell to the outside assembly point located in the courtyard in front of the Music/Architecture Buildings.

Instructors/Preceptors are responsible for their assigned precept students by reporting to the predesignated meeting place and conducting a head count.

8.8 KEYS

Graduate Students have access to keys for the following department rooms:

- Outside Entrance (Key #11-N-1)
- Common Rooms (classrooms, department lounge, and graduate study space in 1879 Hall). (Key #11-M-33)

Keys can be obtained from the Graduate Program Administrator. There is a $10 fee for each lost key.

8.9 MAIL

Student mailboxes are located in Room 141. The mailroom is open during regular university hours, Monday - Friday, 8:45 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. (Students do not get keys to access this room.)

Please remove packages immediately, since the mailroom is small and tends to clutter quickly. Packages have been known to disappear.

If you plan to be away for an extended period, please arrange for a friend to collect and forward your mail.

9 DEPARTMENT DIRECTORY

9.1 DEPARTMENT FACULTY ADMINISTRATORS

Department Chair (acting)
Judith Weisenfeld
Room 234, 1879 Hall
609-258-8409
jweisenf@princeton.edu

**Director of Graduate Studies**
Eric Gregory  
Room 236, 1879 Hall  
609-258-5298  
gregory@princeton.edu

**Director of Undergraduate Students**
Seth Perry  
Room 249, 1879 Hall  
609-258-6008  
sethp@princeton.edu

**9.2  DEPARTMENT ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES**
Regular office hours are Monday-Friday 8:45 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

**Department Manager**
Kerry Smith  
Room 146, 1879 Hall  
609-258-4482  
kerrys@princeton.edu

**Graduate Program Administrator**
Florian Fues  
Room 149, 1879 Hall  
609-258-4481  
flo.fues@princeton.edu

**9.3  OFFICE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

**OIT Support and Operations Center (SOC)**  
609-258-4357 (8-HELP)  
helpdesk@princeton.edu  
7 days a week, open 6 am – midnight

**OIT Solutions Center**  
[www.princeton.edu/solutionscenter](http://www.princeton.edu/solutionscenter)  
Monday to Friday, 9 am – 5 pm