

ADVICE FOR RELIGIOUS STUDIES MAJORS

The Basics

The Religious Studies major requires 30 hours (i.e. 10 classes).

There are three required courses:

- RS2030: Religion and Society (offered every semester)
- RS3020: Comparative Religion (offered every year, usually Spring Semester)
- RS4900: Seminar in Religious Studies (offered every year, usually Fall Semester)

Students must complete three courses, one from each of the RS Competency Areas:

- Description: Terms and Concepts
- Analysis: Cultural Areas and Traditions
- Critique: Disciplinary Approaches

Additionally, students complete four guided elective RS classes.

Opportunities

We encourage you to make the most of your studies at MTSU. Your professors and your college advisors will help you plan your program of study according to your interests, career ambitions, and learning goals. We encourage you to actively participate in the social and intellectual environment of our department by joining the Religious Studies Association (student club) and by attending lectures, lyceums, fieldtrips, and workshops. There are several opportunities for students to conduct independent research through URECA grants and directed studies. Students are also encouraged to present research and course papers at Scholar's Week, the Undergraduate Social Sciences Symposium, and the Southeastern Commission for the Study of Religion conference. Papers can be submitted for publication to undergraduate journals such as *Scientia et Humanitas*, an interdisciplinary journal sponsored by the MTSU Honors College. Finally, we encourage students to participate in study abroad programs, internships, honors theses, and other opportunities to diversify and expand their knowledge of religion and the academic study of religion.

Graduation Requirements

Each graduating Religious Studies major will be required to complete a Major Field Test which is comprised of three components.

- 1) Submission of a final paper/project comprising of critical application of theories and methods appropriate to the chosen research topic (usually a student's major paper/project from RS4900 will qualify for this metric).
- 2) Completion of an exam designed to assess religious knowledge and disciplinary competency.
- 3) Evaluation of the student's overall course of study with attention to the role of religion in society and in relation to other academic disciplines via an exit interview with Religious Studies faculty.

Applying to Graduate School

It is never too early to start building your *curriculum vitae* through scholarly presentations, independent research, student publications, and involvement in the Religious Studies Association. Those majors who are interested in pursuing advanced study – whether in religious studies or in a related discipline – should consult with their advisors and other members of the faculty during their junior year. Doing so will allow you to begin studying for the GRE and researching departments that interest you. The academic study of religion is a small scholarly community, it is likely that at least one of us will know something about any program that interests you. If you are planning to attend graduate school immediately upon completion of your undergraduate degree you should take the GRE during the summer prior to your senior year. You will need to start putting together your dossier early in the fall semester. In particular, you will need to request letters of recommendation and work on your writing sample and research statement. Most graduate programs have application deadlines in December or January. Yet again, your advisor will be a big help in this endeavor.