

The Graduate Program

The Division of Religious and Theological Studies offers MA and PhD degrees. When applying for admission to the program, graduate students will choose an area of specialization within one of four tracks. The guidelines for each track are meant to ensure that students are well-prepared to produce high quality academic work in their chosen areas of specialization while also remaining fully engaged in the broader trends in the study of religion most relevant to their work. Each track is guided by a group of faculty that includes, among others, members of the GRS Religion Department and the School of Theology. These tracks, therefore, represent the ways in which the Division faculty members work together, in groups, to provide a meaningfully collaborative and collegial educational environment, and to foster excellence in religious and theological studies.

1. Texts and Traditions: This program guides students to develop skills in historical, cultural, and textual analysis, combined with relevant linguistic proficiency, to illumine texts, traditions, artifacts, phenomena, or events of particular significance for the understanding of religion. Students in this program will typically develop mastery in the history, literature and language(s) of a specific religious tradition, or a particularly significant body of religious writing. Current areas of strength within this track include: Ancient Christianity and Christian Origins, Greco-Roman Religions, Hebrew Bible, History of Christianity, Jewish Studies, Islamic Studies, Religions of China, Religions of India, and Religions of Japan.
2. Religious Thought: This program guides students to develop skills in analytic thought and expertise in one of the following disciplines: philosophy of religion, systematic theology, comparative religious thought, and religious ethics. Specialized research programs within this track include: (i) historical study of religious thought in one of these disciplines, (ii) constructive development of interpretations of religious subject matters within the domain of religious ideas, and (iii) the interdisciplinary study of religious thought in relation to cognate fields in the humanities, literary studies, fine arts, and social sciences.
3. Religion and Society: This interdisciplinary program seeks to examine the relation of religion and society in modern or traditional cultures. This program guides students to develop generalized skills in the social sciences and specialized expertise in sociology, anthropology, social ethics or social history. Research programs within this track involve the application of one or more of these disciplines to one or more particular geographic area(s) or historic period(s), as chosen by the student, in close consultation with the Advisor.
4. Religion and Science: This interdisciplinary program pursues religious and theological studies in relation to the physical, biological, and psychological sciences. Students will develop skills in relevant scientific methods, and gain knowledge in the history and philosophy of science. In consultation with the advisor, the student will develop a program that, among other types of research, involves (i) studying issues at the intersection of religion and science; or (ii) making religion the object of study by means of the physical, biological, and psychological sciences.

When it is beneficial to their academic program, students in the Division may take courses in other Schools and departments, including but not limited to the following: Anthropology, Art History, Classics, English, History, Modern Languages and Comparative Literature, Religion, Romance Studies, Sociology, and the School of Theology. Core and affiliated faculty of the DRTS may serve as major professors, assisting in the design of programs of study and in the evaluation of qualifying examinations, theses, and dissertations.

Through the Boston Theological Institute, Division students may register for courses in the consortium that includes Andover-Newton Theological School, Boston College, Episcopal Divinity School, Gordon-Conwell School of Theology, Harvard Divinity School, Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, St. John's Seminary, and Weston School of Theology. All Division PhD students, regardless of whether they are enrolled in Institute courses, have access to member libraries.

The Division adheres to all Graduate School of Arts and Sciences policies and requirements as outlined in the opening pages of this Bulletin.

Application and Admission January 1 is the application deadline for September admission. Applicants must submit (1) application forms; (2) transcripts of all college or university work; (3) three letters of reference; (4) a statement of purpose; (5) an academic writing sample; (6) GRE scores from a test taken within the last five years. International applicants must also submit TOEFL scores from a test taken within the last five years. There is no spring admission.

An applicant must indicate the track into which he or she seeks admission, as well as the proposed area of specialization within that track. The Division of Religious and Theological Studies does not offer ThD and DMin degrees. These are offered through the School of Theology.

Financial Assistance The Division awards a limited number of tuition scholarships and stipends to entering PhD students based on academic merit. PhD students entering the second and third years of study may apply for research or teaching assistantships. These assistantships provide a stipend and also carry a merit-based tuition award.

Applicants who wish to request financial assistance should (1) mark *yes* in the space provided on the application form for Divisional financial assistance; (2) contact the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Financial Assistance Office (617-353-2696) for information on other sources of aid; (3) file the FAFSA form with the Graduate School Office of Financial Assistance. Continuing students should file a financial aid request in the Division office by January 30 of the academic year prior to the one for which they are requesting aid.

Prerequisites An applicant to the MA or MA/PhD (post-bachelor's PhD) program should hold a Bachelor of Arts degree in an area related to the proposed area of specialization. An applicant to the post-master's PhD program should hold an accredited

Master of Arts, Master of Divinity, or equivalent degree in an area related to the area of specialization. The master's degree program must have included at least four courses in the proposed field.

All entering students should show transcript evidence of having studied at least one religious tradition at the advanced Bachelor's or Master's level. Students should also show transcript evidence of having studied a variety of religious traditions at the introductory level. If this prerequisite has not been met before admission, it may be met during the course of study by taking courses approved by the Director of Graduate Studies. This prerequisite may also be met by successfully completing the *Core Texts and Motifs* sequence (RN 723-724). Any courses used to satisfy this prerequisite (other than *Core Texts and Motifs*) will *not* be counted toward the minimum course requirement for the PhD degree.

In addition to the above:

Students entering the Texts and Traditions track should show transcript evidence of a strong background in their chosen area of specialization, including advanced knowledge of the languages relevant to such study. Further background in the humanities, literary studies, fine arts, or social sciences is strongly encouraged.

Students entering the Religious Thought track should show transcript evidence of knowledge of the religious thought of at least two distinct traditions. Students should also demonstrate a strong background in one or more of the following areas: philosophy, theology, or ethics. Further background in the humanities, literary studies, fine arts, social sciences, or natural sciences is strongly encouraged, and required where relevant to a student's proposed program of research.

Students entering the Religion and Society track should show transcript evidence of knowledge in their proposed area of specialization. Students must also have a strong background in one or more of the following areas: sociology, anthropology, social ethics or social history. Further background in the humanities or social sciences is strongly encouraged and required where relevant to a student's proposed program of research.

Students in the Religion and Science track should have strong background in (1) religious studies, theological studies, or philosophy of religion, and (2) natural sciences, the psychological sciences, or philosophy and history of science. Further background in natural science, humanities, or social sciences is strongly encouraged, and required where relevant to a student's proposed program of research.

Time Frame for Completion Master's students have 3 years to complete their degree. Post-master's doctoral students have 7 years to complete their degree, while post-bachelor's students have 8. After this time limit has been reached, students will need to petition the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences for an extension.

Students whose continuation in the program extends to seven years beyond the completion of their comprehensive examinations may be required to retake one or more of their comprehensive examinations, in order to insure that they remain well informed of current issues in the field.

Master of Arts

Students who do not wish or expect to pursue the PhD at Boston University may develop an individualized program to suit their needs irrespective of the curricular requirements of the particular tracks, provided the general rules described in this section are followed. Students who hope to pursue the PhD at Boston University should carefully attend to the curricular requirements of the relevant doctoral tracks, as described below.

Course Requirements In addition to any prerequisites required upon admission, 32 semester hours (normally eight 4-hour semester courses) are required as a minimum for the Master of Arts degree. Additional courses may be required at the discretion of the Advisor and the Director. All students in the division must successfully complete two 4-credit courses in Approaches to Religious Studies. These courses will in most cases be selected from the following: *Humanities Approaches to Religion* (RN 795); *Social Science Approaches to Religion* (RN 796); *Philosophical and Theological Approaches to Religion* (RN 797). Students are encouraged, but not required, to take all three. Students with a particularly strong background in one of these areas will not normally be exempted from this requirement, but may be encouraged to take the other two courses. These courses count toward the required credits for the MA degree.

Language French, German, or another relevant modern foreign language is required of all MA candidates. This requirement may be satisfied by transcript evidence of having passed two years of undergraduate study of the language, by Division examination, or by passing GRS LG 621 (German) or GRS LF 621 (French). These are non-credit courses offered by the Department of Modern Languages and Comparative Literature (German) and Romance Studies (French). Additional languages may be required at the discretion of the Advisor, in consultation with the Director.

Comprehensive Examination or Thesis After fulfilling course requirements, an MA candidate must write and defend a thesis or pass a comprehensive examination in the student's area of specialization. The contours of the exam or thesis will be determined in the first case by the student's advisor, in consultation with related faculty, and with the approval of the Director of Graduate Study.

Doctor of Philosophy

Post-bachelor's PhD (MA/PhD)

Admission is to PhD candidacy, but the MA may be awarded to a candidate upon his or her petition when all MA requirements have been fulfilled.

Course Requirements In addition to any prerequisites required upon admission, 64 semester hours (normally sixteen 4-hour semester courses) are required as a minimum for the post-bachelor's PhD degree. The required two courses in Approaches to Religion count toward this minimum course requirement. Additional courses may be required at the discretion of the Advisor or Track Coordinator. All other requirements are the same as for the post-master's PhD and are outlined below.

Post-master's PhD

Course Requirements A minimum of 32 semester hours (normally eight 4-hour semester courses) are required for the post-master's PhD degree. In addition, students who have not already done so as part of a DRTS MA degree must successfully complete two 4-credit courses in Approaches to Religious Studies. These courses will in most cases be selected from the following: *Humanities Approaches to Religion* (RN 795); *Social Science Approaches to Religion* (RN 796); *Philosophical and Theological Approaches to Religion* (RN 797). Students with a particularly strong background in one of these areas will not normally be exempted from this requirement, but may be encouraged to take the other two courses.

Additional courses may be required at the discretion of the Advisor or Track Coordinator. Some additional course requirements are determined by the student's track:

Students in the Texts and Traditions track are required to take *Humanities Approaches to Religion* (RN 795). Students may be required to take further coursework in cognate disciplinary methods or approaches (e.g., History or Classical Studies). Students in the Religion and Society track are required to take *Social Scientific Approaches to Religion* (RN 796). Students in the Religious Thought track are required to take *Philosophical and Theological Approaches to Religion* (RN 797). Students in the Religious Thought track and the Religion and Science track are required to take *Core Texts and Motifs of World Religions* (RN 723-724) or suitable alternatives in order to demonstrate broad religious literacy. Students in the Religion and Science track are required to take a science literacy requirement (e.g. Science Literacy and Scientific Boundary Questions, STH TT871) and are encouraged to take the following, depending on their backgrounds and in consultation with the Advisor, as preparation for comprehensive examinations: (i) a philosophy of science course (e.g., CAS PH643 Philosophy of Mind, CAS PH665 Philosophy of Cognitive Science, CAS PH670 Philosophy of Physics, CAS PH677 Philosophy of the Social Sciences); (ii) a history of science course (e.g., GRS HI868 Science and American Culture, GRS HI869 Science and Christianity in Europe and North America Since 1500); and (iii) a philosophy or history of religion or theology course (e.g., GRS RN750 Philosophy of Religion, STH TT923 Philosophical Cosmology, STH TT909 Modern Western Theology I, STH TT930 Modern Western Theology II).

Language and Research Competence Requirements During the first two years of graduate study, PhD candidates are required to demonstrate a reading knowledge of two modern foreign languages, one of which will usually be French or German. The second language, if not French or German, should be a modern foreign language clearly related

to the dissertation research. Fulfillment of this requirement will be demonstrated by reading examinations administered by faculty in the Division or the relevant GRS department (e.g., Modern Languages & Comparative Literature, Romance Studies). The Department of Modern Languages & Comparative Literature offers a free non-credit course in German reading for graduate students. The Department of Romance Studies offers a free non-credit course in French reading for graduate students. The first language examination must be passed by the end of the first year of study. The second language requirement must be met by the end of the second year. Passed language exams must be reported to the Division office at 145 Bay State Road, Room 302. Fulfillment of each language requirement is noted on the transcript.

Students in the Religion and Society track may be permitted, with the approval of their advisor, to substitute for the second modern foreign language, an exam in a relevant research methodology (such as statistics, ethnographic fieldwork methods, or other forms of qualitative or quantitative research skills).

Students in the Religion and Science track will be required to substitute, for the second modern foreign language, an exam in a science skill (such as cognitive and neural modeling, ecological modeling, mathematics, computer programming, or statistics for empirical research) depending on the direction of research. Students in the Religion and Science track will also complete a 200-hour practicum in a relevant physical, biological, or psychological science setting to gain experience as (i) contributors to research, aiming at a publication, and (ii) interpreters and evaluators of research procedures in light of knowledge gained about philosophy and history of science.

Beyond two modern foreign languages, students in the Texts and Traditions track or the Religious Thought track who are working with primary written sources in foreign language(s) will need to demonstrate a thorough knowledge of grammar, syntax, and vocabulary in these language(s), at a level of expertise appropriate to the particular area of specialization. Normally, this expertise will be evaluated directly by Division faculty, during the stage of Qualifying Examinations.

Qualifying Examinations Before proceeding to the dissertation, students are required to pass three or four separate qualifying examinations. The precise number and nature of the exams is determined by the student's track and particular research focus, but will generally follow the guidelines indicated below for each track. At least one of these examinations should have an oral component. At least two of these examinations must have a written component. Questions for all comprehensive examinations will be shared among faculty in the appropriate track. PhD candidates may schedule qualifying examinations after successful completion of all coursework and language requirements. One retake may be allowed for each examination. Qualifying examinations may not be extended longer than one year, unless an extension of time is approved by the Director. At least two faculty members in the student's area of research must be closely involved in the preparation and evaluation of each examination. Completed written examinations should also be reviewed by the Track Coordinator. Passage of each qualifying exam must be reported to the Division office located at 145 Bay State Road, room 302. Completion

of all qualifying examinations is noted on the transcript. Copies of completed written examinations will be placed in the student's file.

Basic Structure of Qualifying Examinations, by Track:

- (1) Texts and Traditions: Students will normally take four comprehensive examinations. The first examination consists of a written research paper in the student's area of specialization that explicitly integrates into the analysis a careful selection of relevant theories or approaches to religious and theological studies. This paper should include, but need not be restricted to, approaches covered in the divisional course, *Humanities Approaches to Religion* (RN 795). This paper may, in the first instance, be produced within the context of required coursework. Once evaluated by the student's advisor, a final version of the paper will be submitted to the Director or Track Coordinator to verify successful completion of this requirement. For most students, the second examination will test the student's competence in the primary source language(s) most relevant for the chosen area of study, at the level of expertise appropriate for quality academic work in that field. In the case of students doing research on English language sources, the second exam should focus on a relevant method or approach (e.g., textual criticism or literary theory). The third exam will define the student's specialization in a broad sense. For most students this will be a broad-based exam in a single religious tradition or, in some cases, a particularly significant body of religious literature. The fourth comprehensive examination will seek to establish that the student has a deep expertise in a particular area of focus, usually limited within a particular religious tradition by space and time, but working out from that focus, as needed, to other contemporary or otherwise related religious traditions and phenomena.
- (2) Religious Thought: Students will normally take four comprehensive examinations. The first examination will cover the field of religious thought, broadly speaking, including major themes in philosophy of religion, theology, and religious ethics. The second exam will treat core literature and methodological debates within the particular disciplinary tradition(s) in which each student is specializing. The third exam will treat the literature related to each student's research specialty, testing both competence in a specialized area of research and the ability to articulate the relevance of that specialized area to the broader horizons of religious thought and religious and theological studies. For some students a fourth exam will test the student's competence in the primary source language(s) most relevant for the chosen area of study. For other students the fourth exam may serve as supplement to the second, as described above.
- (3) Religion and Society: Students will normally take three examinations. The first will test expertise in Social Science Approaches to the Study of Religion, and will be divided into two roughly equal sections. The first half of the examination, based on knowledge of approximately 25-30 core texts, will be administered to all students in the unit. The second half of the examination, of also approximately 25-30 core texts, will be more streamlined to specialties such as Anthropology, Sociology, Social Ethics, or Social History. The second exam will test the

student's knowledge of a broad area of competence, including the ability to situate theoretical and methodological knowledge within a broad geographic and/or historical area. Comparative perspectives will be encouraged where relevant. The third exam will test the student's competence in the chosen specialized area of research, including the ability to articulate the topic's relevance to the broader, comparative horizon of the study of religion.

- (4) **Religion and Science:** Students will normally take four comprehensive examinations. The first will cover Philosophy of Religion, treating major themes in the philosophical and theological study of religion. The second will cover Philosophy and History of Science, treating debates in philosophy of science and the history of science, with particular attention to the history of interactions between sciences and religions. The third will cover Religion and Science, treating the core literature of the religion and science field. The fourth exam, a multidisciplinary specialty exam, will be customized, to treat the literature surrounding the student's multidisciplinary research specialty.

Prospectus (Dissertation Outline) After passing all qualifying examinations, the student must present a formal proposal for the dissertation, which, after approval by the Committee on Academic Programs, is filed in the Graduate School Records Office.

Dissertation and Final Oral Examination See General Requirements for the PhD of the GRS Bulletin.

For fuller descriptions of DRTS degree guidelines and procedures, please consult the DRTS Student Handbook.