

GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK



2009-2010

**Department of Religious Studies
University of California, Riverside**

Welcome to the Graduate Program in Religious Studies at the University of California, Riverside!

Although not an official contract, this handbook serves as a guide for students: please read carefully to understand terms, requirements, and resources.

This handbook is a work-in-progress; feedback and input from current and prospective graduate students is more than welcome.

Pashaura Singh
Faculty Graduate Advisor
pashaura.singh@ucr.edu

Diana Marroquin
Graduate Student Affairs Advisor
diana.marroquin@ucr.edu

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1. The Graduate Program in Religious Studies: Overview

The Graduate Program in Religious Studies was founded in Fall 2005, with its first class of students entering in Fall 2006. It is only the second graduate program in religious studies in the UC system (the other is at UC Santa Barbara). The program offers two degrees: a terminal M.A. and a Ph.D. While some of the requirements for the two programs overlap, these are separate degree tracks: the M.A. does not feed into the Ph.D. program. (Although see section 4.e on changing degree track.)

The goal of both programs is to foster the critical study of religions, both specific traditions (e.g., Buddhism, Sikhism, Christianity) as well as themes and methods prominent in the academic study of religions. The graduate program has a great deal of flexibility, but also a particular focus on religion in the public sphere (representations, politics, interreligious contacts, and so forth). This special focus of the program is inscribed not only in the required core courses, but also in the topics and methods of all of our graduate seminars.

a. The M.A. Program

The M.A. program allows students to explore the academic study of religions broadly and is geared toward students who wish to expand their study of religions in an academic environment but may not yet wish to pursue a career in academia. A general background in religious studies is recommended, but in-depth knowledge of specific traditions or disciplinary methods is not expected upon matriculation. Students coming from related fields of study--such as anthropology or philosophy--may find the M.A. program a useful way to shift academic tracks or enrich their intellectual development.

Students will have the opportunity to pursue enough specific coursework in areas and traditions that they will be qualified to move on to a more specific doctoral degree program in religious studies upon graduation.

Following University of California regulations, students who already hold a master's degree in religious studies are ineligible for this program.

b. The Ph.D. Program

The Ph.D. program prepares students to enter into academia as researchers and university instructors in a specific field of expertise. General background in the methods and discipline of religious studies is expected before matriculation, as well as a strong background in a specific area of study that will form the student's "major" field (including some background work in requisite histories, languages, and literatures). Prospective students should carefully examine the courses offered, and the faculty specializations, as well as cognate resources throughout the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (CHASS) to make sure that they will be able to pursue their desired area of study.

Following University of California regulations, students who already hold a doctoral degree in religious studies are ineligible for this program.

c. Faculty and Staff

The Department of Religious Studies is part of the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (CHASS). The Department currently houses nine full-time faculty members and three staff members. Part-time instructors and staff are also occasionally hired.

Faculty

Michael Alexander, Associate Professor

INTN 3038, phone TBA, michael.alexander@ucr.edu

Ph.D., Yale University

Modern Jewish history; American religious history; religion and ethnicity

Muhamad Ali, Assistant Professor

INTN 3017, phone (951) 827-5111, muhamad.ali@ucr.edu

Ph.D., University of Hawai'i

Islam in Southeast Asia; Qur'anic exegesis; Comparative Muslim societies; Transmission of Islamic Knowledge; religious pluralism; Islamic movements and politics

Jennifer Hughes, Assistant Professor INTN 3025,

(951) 827-2538, jennifer.hughes@ucr.edu

Ph.D., Graduate Theological Union

Global Christianity, historical and cultural study of religion in Latin America

Sherri Johnson, Assistant Professor

INTN 3021, (951) 827-7971, sherri.johnson@ucr.edu

Ph.D., University of Arizona

Medieval Christianity, Women and Religion, Monasticism

Vivian-Lee Nyitray, Associate Professor, Chair

INTN 3049 (and INTN 3033C), (951) 827-2234 & (951) 827-1251, vivian-lee.nyitray@ucr.edu

Ph.D., Stanford University

Chinese Religions, especially Confucian Traditions, Gender Studies and Mazu Studies, Diasporic Lay Buddhist Movements, Religious Biography, Saints and Sanctity, Material Culture of Religion

June E. O'Connor, Professor

INTN 3034, (951) 827-3743, june.oconnor@ucr.edu

Ph.D., Temple University

Religious Ethics, Ethics of Violence and Nonviolence, Human Rights, Contemporary Christian Thought, Ethics of Death and Dying, Liberation Theologies

Pashaura Singh, Professor & Dr. Jasbir Singh Saini Endowed Chair of Sikh and Punjabi Studies, Faculty Graduate Advisor

INTN 3050, (951) 827-6444, pashaura.singh@ucr.edu

Ph.D., University of Toronto

Textual Criticism: Canon Formation and Hermeneutics, Historical Analysis: Historically-grounded critical method based upon contextual depth, Sikh Studies: Religion, History and Society, Indian Studies: Religion in Modern India, Punjabi Language: Modern and classical/scriptural (Sacred Language of the Sikhs)

Ivan Strenski, Professor & Holstein Endowed Chairholder

INTN 3013, (951) 827-5986, ivan.strenski@ucr.edu

Ph.D., Birmingham University

Method and Theory in the Study of Religion, Cultural and Intellectual History in the Study of Religion, Phenomenology of Religion, Religion and Nationalism, Religious Legitimations of Economic Formations

Jonathan Walton, Assistant Professor

INTN 3011, (951) 827-2137, jonathan.walton@ucr.edu

Ph.D., Princeton Theological Seminary

African American Religious Studies, Religion, Media and Culture, and Christian Social Ethics

Staff

(Links lead to detailed staff job descriptions)

Diane Shaw, Management Services Officer

INTN 3033B, (951) 827-3741, diane.shaw@ucr.edu

Diana Marroquin, Graduate Student Affairs Advisor

INTN 3033A, (951) 827-3612, diana.marroquin@ucr.edu

Veronica Quesada, Administrative Assistant

INTN 3033, (951) 827-2783, veronica.quesada@ucr.edu

d. Departmental Organization

The **Department of Religious Studies** ([INTN 3033](#)) is open Monday-Friday, 9am-12 noon and 1pm-4pm. Should students need to meet with a staff member after 4pm, they should contact the appropriate staff person ahead of time for availability.

Faculty offices along the hallways of most of the third floor of INTN. Office hours are posted each quarter outside the faculty members' doors, as well as contact information should students need to make an appointment.

In December 2007, the Department moved into its new building, the CHASS Interdisciplinary North Building (INTN). All office information is updated; the new office space includes a conference room with computers for graduate student use, a second kitchen for faculty and student use, and plenty of meeting space.

Students should always contact a staff or faculty member by phone or email before to arrange for dropping off any forms or assignments: they should never slip forms or papers under doors, as they will almost certainly be lost.

The **Department Chair**, Vivian-Lee Nyitray, is responsible for the overall academic operation of the department, including curricular and financial matters. She reports to the Dean of the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences. Any matters pertaining to academic departmental policy may be directed to her.

The **Faculty Graduate Advisor**, Pashaura Singh, is responsible for monitoring all aspects of the graduate program, from admissions and fellowships to review of student progress to processing Graduate Division petitions during and at the end of the degree program. He reports to the Department Chair and to the Dean of the Graduate Division. Any questions pertaining to the graduate program may be directed to him.

The **Management Services Officer**, Diane Shaw is responsible for the management of all departmental business and administrative affairs, including financial management and administration of all budgets, contract and grants, academic and staff personnel, merits and promotions, payroll, space facilities, and staff supervision. She serves as primary advisor to the Chair and assists the Chair on departmental matters. She is responsible for analyzing and interpreting University policy and procedure to department faculty and staff. Any questions related to business, administrative, and financial matters, should be directed to her.

The **Graduate Student Affairs Advisor**, Diana Marroquin, is responsible for counseling and overseeing the graduate degree programs, in close consultation with the Graduate Advisor. She assists in the scheduling of graduate courses and is responsible for assigning TA discussion sections, TA payroll, and the interpretation of graduate student policies and procedures. She is the primary interface for all matters related to graduate student affairs, including course registration and fellowship disbursement. In addition, she provides administrative, financial, and instructional support to the Chair, MSO, and faculty. All questions pertaining to the graduate program should begin here.

The **Administrative Assistant**, Veronica Quesada, handles the front office and greets all visitors including faculty, staff, students, and community. She provides general information over the telephone and in person. She is responsible for most financial reimbursements, purchase orders, payroll, key distribution for departmental facilities, and serves as the Departmental Safety Coordinator. Veronica works closely with the MSO on all matters of academic personnel such as faculty recruitment and merit/promotion. Any questions regarding class or office resources should begin here.

2. The M.A. (Master of Arts) Program

The M.A. program should take, on average, two years (six quarters) and comprises coursework (described in more detail below, but generally designed to be comparative in scope and breadth) and a set of comprehensive exams which constitute the capstone of the program. Because the Religious Studies M.A. culminates in exams, and not a thesis, it is officially designated a "Plan-II M.A."

Only in the most extraordinary of circumstances, and with the approval of the Department and the Graduate Division, can a student substitute a written thesis for the comprehensive exams.

a) General course information

There are four categories of courses at UCR:

Lower division undergraduate (course numbers 1-99): These are introductory courses, usually fulfilling undergraduate breadth requirements and populated primarily by freshmen and sophomores. (In the Department of Religious Studies, most of these are large lecture courses for which many of our graduate students can expect to serve as Teaching Assistants.)

Upper division undergraduate (course numbers 100-199): These are more advanced disciplinary courses, principally populated by juniors and seniors. Most of these courses fulfill undergraduate major requirements. (Occasionally, depending on the size of the course, these classes may provide opportunities for graduate students to be hired as readers.)

Graduate (course numbers 200-299): These are the courses designed specifically for graduate study; no numerical or content distinction is made between M.A. and Ph.D. courses at UCR.

Professional (course numbers 300-399): These are courses designed to give professional instruction for life after graduate school. Some courses are worth few units, but address key topics of professional life, such as giving a professional address, applying for grants or jobs, and teaching. The course units for TAships (see below) are professional course credits.

M.A. students should make every effort to enroll only in Graduate level courses. Students may also enroll in upper division undergraduate courses in the Department of Religious Studies, but must concurrently enroll in RLST 292 (see below) and do work sufficient to raise the course to graduate level standards. Undergraduate courses do not hold the same unit value for graduate students, so enrolling into undergraduate courses may require students to carry a higher course load to maintain full-time status. Students may also, after consultation with the Graduate Advisor, enroll in relevant, upper-division courses in other CHASS Departments, as long as they also enroll in a 292 (Concurrent Enrollment) course in that Department.

M.A. students are encouraged to take graduate courses in other departments if they think they relate to their program of study. Before enrolling for such courses, students should check with the Graduate Advisor and Student Affairs Advisor to ensure that proper procedures are followed.

Students may also enroll in graduate courses at other UC campuses, pending approval of instructors at UCR and at the target campus. Forms for the Intercampus Exchange Program (IEP) are available through the Graduate Division, and must usually be filed several weeks before the quarter begins. Again, students should consult the Graduate Advisor and Student Affairs Advisor about submitting an IEP request.

Students should be familiar with the following special graduate course numbers:

RLST 290: Directed Studies

Directed Studies are individually designed, quarter-long courses arranged between a faculty member and one or more students. Should students wish to pursue a specialized topic with a faculty member, they must set up a course of study for the quarter and submit a study plan for approval by the Department and the Graduate Division. Forms are available from the Graduate Division website (<http://www.graddiv.ucr.edu/forms/290Petition.pdf>). RLST 290 courses should involve regular meetings between the student and faculty member; if the time will be used primarily for independent research, students should register for RLST 297 instead (see below).

RLST 291: Individual Studies in Coordination Areas

Comprising a flexible number of units, M.A. students should enroll for at least 4 units of RLST 291 in Winter and Spring of their second year, to allow time to study reading lists in preparation for comprehensive exams. The instructor of record should be the chair of the comprehensive exam committee.

RLST 292: Concurrent Studies in Religious Studies

M.A. students are allowed, upon approval of the graduate advisor, to take some upper division undergraduate offerings in the Department of Religious Studies. In order to bring these courses up to the graduate level, the student must also enroll in RLST 292 (worth one extra unit) and arrange with the instructor to accomplish graduate-level work during the course of the quarter. As with RLST 290, students must submit a study plan for approval by the Graduate Advisor. Forms are available in the Department office.

RLST 297: Directed Research

Students may choose to pursue an individual research project under the supervision of a faculty member. This may involve local fieldwork, expansion of an existing research project (article, essay, translation, and so forth), or laying the groundwork for a new, but discrete research project. Students should submit a study plan for approval by the Graduate Advisor; forms are available in the Department office.

RLST 302, **Teaching Practicum**, is for students who are serving as Teaching Assistants in the Department of Religious Studies. Typically this flexible course is worth 4 units. (For more on TAs, see section 5c below.)

Other 300-level (professional courses) may be added at a future date.

b) Specific course requirements

Core courses

All M.A. students must enroll for the three core courses, preferably in their first year:

RLST 200A: Religion, Politics, and Public Discourse

RLST 200B: Representations, Interpretations, and Critical Histories

RLST 200C: Religions in Contact

The specific topics of these courses may vary according to the instructor and, with permission from the graduate advisor, these courses are repeatable one time (assuming the syllabus varies significantly). These courses are designed to present to the graduate students various methods and theories for the study of religion as a public, social phenomenon.

Other courses

M.A. students are free to take any graduate-level RLST seminars offered without seeking the approval of the instructor. Students who wish to take graduate level seminars in other departments, or wish to enroll in Directed Studies (RLST 290), Concurrent Studies (RLST 292), or Independent Research (RLST 297) should seek the approval of the graduate advisor.

There are no specific requirements as to which RLST seminars M.A. students may take.

Units

M.A. students must complete a minimum of 36 units in order to qualify for their degree; 18 of those units must be 200-level courses. The Graduate Student Affairs Advisor will assist students in making sure they are on track to completing the minimum requirements, but keep the following in mind:

- **12** of these **18 200-level** units are already accounted for in the core courses.

-The typical length of the M.A. program is six quarters, which means students acquire the minimum number of units simply by enrolling in **6 units** per quarter.

- Full-time enrollment comprises **12 units** of course work (typically 3 courses)

Be advised that undergraduate course units are worth "less" than graduate course units; a 4-unit undergraduate course is worth 3 graduate units. To keep up full-time enrollment, students must be enrolled in **12 graduate** units.

Duration of Coursework

M.A. students should plan on taking their comprehensive exams (see below) in their sixth and final quarter. Students who take longer than six quarters to complete their M.A. degree requirements may have to pay their own fees beyond the second year.

Typically, students taking their comprehensive exams in the sixth quarter should plan on four quarters of full time classes (in quarters in which they are working as a TA, this will mean two graduate seminars; in quarters where they are not working, three graduate seminars).

In their fifth quarter and sixth quarters, they should plan on taking at least one graduate seminar (two if they are not TAing) and registering for RLST 291 ("Individual Studies"). The work for RLST 291 will comprise compiling their reading lists for exams and beginning to do research and studying for their exams.

c) Language requirements

Master's students must demonstrate reading proficiency in either French or German, the languages in which much modern secondary scholarship in the discipline has been written. Students may petition to substitute either another modern language of secondary scholarship or a language of primary if it is deemed more immediately relevant to their studies.

This requirement can be fulfilled through a departmental examination by passing a designated language course (FREN 009A-009B, GER 001R-002R), or by alternative certification (such as a diploma from a foreign language institute), as approved by the Graduate Advisor.

FREN 009A-009B are offered most years in Winter and Spring quarters; GER 001R-002R are offered less frequently. Students enrolling in this sequence of courses should be aware that they do not count toward the minimum graduate course unit requirements.

Students wishing to submit to a departmental examination (a timed translation exercise in the department with a dictionary) should notify the graduate advisor and allow a few weeks to set up the examination. The student will be given a recent, untranslated article or book chapter related to her or his field of interests, and allowed 3 hours in the Department Library to translate at least 3 pages of text. The student may not use any computer-assisted translation software.

Language requirements must be met by graduation to qualify for the M.A. degree.

d) Registration process

Choosing courses

It is recommended that each student should make an appointment to meet with the Faculty Graduate Advisor before registering for the next quarter's classes (new students who have not yet relocated to Riverside by the registration date may confer by email or telephone). The Faculty Graduate Advisor will make sure the students' planned courses meets their academic needs, and progresses toward a comprehensive course of study (leading, ultimately, to the comprehensive exams). During this meeting, the Faculty Graduate Advisor will also discuss the student's progress toward degree and answer any questions or concerns a student may have.

At the time of the meeting, the Faculty Graduate Advisor will also approve of any 290-level courses (Directed Studies, Concurrent Studies, Directed Research). Be advised that Directed Studies (RLST 290) must be approved by the Graduate Dean. Students may also propose to register for selected upper-division RLST courses, pending the agreement of the instructor and the approval of the Graduate Advisor; the student will then register for the undergraduate course and RLST 292 (Concurrent Studies in Religious Studies). Not all upper-division undergraduate courses are available for Concurrent Studies.

After this initial meeting, it is the responsibility of the student to acquire and fill out all appropriate forms with the assistance of the Student Advisor.

First-year students should expect to enroll in the core courses (RLST 200A, 200B, 200C) in Fall, Winter, and Spring quarters. Since the M.A. program is also designed to be broadly comparative, students should also seriously consider taking the other RLST graduate seminars offered in a given quarter.

Students may also propose to take graduate-level courses in other Departments; the Graduate Advisor will contact the instructor in the target Department or, if the student is already on familiar terms with the instructor, the student may contact the instructor directly.

French and German for Reading courses are typically offered in Winter and Spring quarters; if students wish to take these courses, they should make sure they fit their schedules and that they are still registered for a full-time graduate course load.

Registering for courses

General information about enrollment, including the dates for registration, can be found online at <http://classes.ucr.edu/> (click on "Academic Calendar" for the schedule). All registration takes place online through GROWL (<http://growl.ucr.edu/>). In order to receive funding (fellowship or TA funding), students must be registered for a minimum course load. If a hold has been placed on a student's account (by Graduate Division, Student Business Services, or Financial Aid), he or she must have the hold removed in order to register. If the student does not have the hold removed, that student will be dropped from any courses for which he or she has registered when accounts are reconciled at the beginning of every quarter.

After meeting with the Faculty Graduate Advisor, students should arrange a meeting with the Graduate Student Affairs Advisor who will enroll the students in their approved courses; students familiar with the GROWL system can also enroll themselves during their appropriate enrollment period. **Note:** The Student Advisor will need to provide call numbers for any 290-level courses as well as for RLST 302 (Teaching Practicum).

Students who, for some reason, are unable to meet with the Student Advisor and need to register on their own can obtain their quarterly pin number (REGPIN) from the Student Advisor. With the REGPIN and their permanent pin number (PERMPIN) they can then register on GROWL (<http://growl.ucr.edu/>). Through GROWL, they can also regularly look up grades, view financial aid status for any quarter, view their current bill, confirm courses, view/accept financial aid awards, verify their Student ID, set privacy restrictions, and change their PERM PIN by computer over the internet.

e) Comprehensive exams

Comprehensive exams are the capstone requirement of the M.A. degree, and should normally be taken in the sixth, and final, quarter of the program.

The purpose of the comprehensive examinations is to demonstrate that a student has gained a thorough grounding in the methods and subjects of the academic study of religions, sufficient for them to go on to pursue a doctoral degree or teach religious studies (although not at a four-year institution).

Each set of exams will be tailored to the specific interests of the student, in consultation with the Graduate Advisor and a designated director of the exams (a professor in the Department of Religious Studies with whom the student has developed a productive working relationship). A committee of no fewer than three members of the Department will be appointed by the Graduate Advisor as a student's M.A. exam committee. (Students may, under special circumstances, petition to have an outside faculty member serve on their exam committee).

Students will sit for **two (2)** exams, both of which will draw substantially on an individual student's coursework and supplementary reading:

1. "Methods and Theories Exam." The questions on this exam will cover issues related broadly to the methods and theories deployed in the academic study of religions. Students are encouraged to draw on the themes and ideas explored in the three core courses to arrive at a topic, or set of topics, which engages their interest.

Topics should be broad enough to engage a wide swath of the field, but should not be so broad as to make examination unwise. Students may also cluster similar theoretical ideas into one exam (remember that each exam will contain multiple questions).

Example one: A student may decide to explore political ideologies of the study of religion, drawing on coursework in RLST 200A and RLST 200C. Such a topic could be framed as "Nationalism and the Study of Religion," and might include Marxism and postcolonial theory as two related, but distinct, approaches to the study of religion.

Example two: A student may decide to explore question of religious performance and representation, drawing on coursework in RLST 200B and RLST 200C. Such a topic could be framed as "Ritual and Representation in the Study of Religion," and might include ritual theory (ranging from Durkheim to Bell) and anthropology of religion (Geertz, Asad).

2. "Subject Exam." The questions on this exam will cover issues related to one or more specific religious traditions. Students are encouraged to draw on the aspects of particular traditions (in isolation or comparatively) from topics covered in their coursework, supplemented by additional research.

Topics should be broad enough to engage one or more religious tradition comparatively (either in contemporary or historical context) relying on both primary and secondary scholarship. Topics do not need to be as narrow as a dissertation area, but should show a growing interest in specific areas of study developing during the course of the master's program.

Subjects might be oriented around a comparative topic common to multiple religious traditions, or around a topic particular to one religious tradition that nonetheless has broader historical or cultural ramifications.

Example one: A student may decide to look comparatively at questions of sainthood and representation, drawing on courses in multiple religious traditions. Such a subject might be framed as "Sainthood in Comparative Perspective," and explore "holy men and women" in Christianity, Sikhism, and Buddhism.

Example two: A student may decide to explore the multiple uses of Scripture, primarily in the Sikh tradition but also (for comparison) in Judaism. Such a subject might be framed as "Scriptural Performance and Interpretation," with a couple of questions on Sikhism and an additional question on Hebrew Scriptures.

A rough schedule of exam-related events for M.A. students is as follows:

Summer before second year. Students should determine a general focus for their subject and method/theory exams, perhaps in consultation with faculty members with whom they have worked closely during their first year.

Fall quarter. Students should meet with the Faculty Graduate Advisor early in the quarter to discuss topics and possible committee members for the comprehensive exams. Students may ask their chosen faculty members to serve on their committee, or the Faculty Graduate Advisor may act as intermediary. The committee, including determination of a committee chair, should be determined during fall quarter. The committee should have at least three members, all typically members of the Department.

The remainder of the quarter should be spent in "gathering" mode: gathering titles (books, articles, primary and second sources) for the chosen topics in preparation of the **reading lists**.

Each reading list should comprise roughly twenty to twenty five items, including primary sources (where applicable) and key secondary sources (books, articles, and essays). There should be a mixture of "classic" secondary texts as well as recent, up-to-date scholarship. The lists may draw substantially on sources already used in coursework, but should also be appreciably

supplemented by new, and more thorough, research. In specific cases, non-textual media (films, documentaries, art) may comprise items on the "reading" lists. Both reading lists and exam topics should be finalized by **the beginning of the fifth quarter.**

Winter and Spring Quarters. Once the reading lists have been determined and exam topics set, students should enroll in at least 4 units of RSLT 291 each quarter to provide time to study for their exams. (The chair of the exam committee should be the instructor of record for these RLST 291 courses.) It is also recommended that the student meet occasionally (or even on a regular schedule) with at least the chair of the exam committee, if not all members, in order to discuss the topics and exams.

The committee chair and student should also agree on the specific aspects of the topics that will be covered in the exams. The specificity of these aspects will be negotiated between the student and exam committee, but should lie somewhere between broad rubrics ("Gender and Buddhist Monasticism") and outlining actual questions ("Explain how contemporary Theravada monasticism approaches the question of female ordination, paying special attention to..."). Exams should have more than a single question but may be formatted in the manner the committee director finds most appropriate.

The student should then spend the remainder of the fifth quarter and a significant portion of the sixth quarter making sure they understand and can speak to all of the items on their list. If asked a question on their chosen subject, they should be prepared to answer fully, in essay form, drawing on and referring to the literature on the reading lists.

At a designated date in during the sixth quarter, agreed upon by the exam committee chair and student **by the beginning of the sixth quarter**, the student will be able to pick up their exam questions from the Graduate Student Affairs Advisor (unless alternate arrangements have been made). The student will then have **seventy-two hours** to complete both exams and return them to the Graduate Student Affairs Advisor. **Once the exams have been picked up, the clock is ticking.** Late exams will result in a grade of "no-pass."

It is advisable that students take their exams no later than the **seventh week of the sixth quarter**, in order to allow time for grading and processing of paperwork for graduation.

Once the exams have been turned in, they will be copied and read by the exam committee, who will meet to decide on the grade for the exams. Comprehensive exams will receive one of the following grades:

Honors Pass (Exams are passed with distinction)

Pass (Exams are passed with satisfaction)

No Pass (Exams are not passed, and must be taken again for graduation)

A unanimous vote among the exam committee is required for a grade of **honors pass** or **no pass**, but not for a grade of **pass**.

The results, which should post within two weeks of the examination date, will be given in writing to the student and a copy forwarded to the Graduate Division. Students are also encouraged to meet with their exam chair and/or the graduate advisor, to discuss the exams in person and receive direct feedback.

If a student receives a grade of "No Pass," the student may repeat the M.A. exams **once**; per Graduate Division regulations, students may only attempt to pass their comprehensive examinations two times. Students who receive a "No Pass" grade should set up a meeting immediately with the exam chair and Faculty Graduate Advisor to discuss rescheduling of the exams, either in the summer or the following quarter.

A student who has failed his or her comprehensive examinations once may, under extraordinary circumstances, petition the Graduate Advisor and the Graduate Division to submit a thesis in place of the second round of comprehensive examinations; this route is not, however, encouraged.

In order for students to graduate in Spring Quarter, notice that they have passed their comprehensive exams must be submitted to Graduate Division according to the Graduate Division deadline (usually the week following graduation--yes, a bit of a paradox, but that's how it works).

f) Graduation procedures

Students who plan to graduate in June of their second year must consult with Faculty the Graduate Advisor and Student Affairs Advisor and submit an intent to graduate by the appropriate deadline (which falls early in Spring Quarter). The Graduate Student Affairs Advisor will assist the student in completing the M.A. "Advancement to Candidacy" Form available from the Graduate Division website. **Students should not submit this paperwork unless they are reasonably certain of their graduation date.** The Graduate Student Affairs Advisor will make certain that they will have completed the requisite coursework by the end of the quarter, as well as language and other requirements.

Students will be notified by Graduate Division if they are eligible to participate in commencement exercises (usually held the second or third week in June), and what requirements must be fulfilled by then. Diplomas are not distributed at this time, and are usually available twelve weeks after graduation date; the Registrar will send a notice by mail once diplomas are ready. Students must provide postage to have the diploma mailed to them.

If graduates require proof of graduation sooner, the Registrar will upon request provide a "certificate of completion."

g) Applying to the Ph.D. Program

The M.A. program is terminal, which means that students do not automatically progress to the Ph.D. level.

If students wish to enter into the Doctoral program immediately following their M.A. degree, they will need to submit a Change of Degree Petition, with the approval of the faculty of the Department.

If more than two years have passed since the M.A. degree was received, students may reapply for admission to the doctoral program. Before deciding to reapply, however, students should keep these two facts (one practical, one theoretical) in mind:

1. Students are only eligible for Graduate Division assistance one time. If students have received Central Fellowship funds from the Graduate Division to support their M.A. program, they are ineligible to receive additional funds should they apply to and be accepted into the Ph.D. program. They might still be eligible for TAs, but there would be no guarantee of financial support.

2. Breadth of experience is intellectually valuable. The more viewpoints students can get in their academic formation, the stronger scholars they will become. The graduate program at UCR has a particular "take" on the study of religion which we find valuable and important, but it is not the only view of scholarship on religion available. Students should find an academic environment that will encourage intellectual growth, not stifle it.

If students wish to continue on to doctoral work elsewhere, they are encouraged to set up meetings with any and all members of the faculty, who will be happy to guide them in this endeavor.

3. The Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy) Program

The Ph.D. program should take, on average, six years, although time to degree may vary depending on: the amount of coursework taken; the time between advancement to candidacy and writing of the dissertation; the amount of research and writing time required of the dissertation (especially if fieldwork is necessary). The Ph.D. program is divided into three major components:

- i. **Coursework.** Students entering with a recent, relevant M.A. degree in religious studies should expect to take at least six quarters of coursework total before sitting for qualifying exams. Students entering directly from a B.A. should expect to take seven or eight quarters of coursework. A tentative schedule of coursework should be established at the beginning of the program with the Faculty Graduate Advisor, and is subject to revision during this first stage of the program.
- ii. **Qualifying Examinations.** After coursework, Ph.D. students must sit for three qualifying examinations (details below) followed by an oral defense of the written exams. Once these exams are passed, a student is officially "advanced to candidacy" by the Graduate Division.
- iii. **Prospectus and Dissertation.** After advancing to candidacy, Ph.D. students must present a formal prospectus for a dissertation (details below) and are then responsible for producing a dissertation, which is the capstone requirement of the Ph.D. program. **Students should expect this stage of the program to take at least two years, perhaps more depending on research and writing time.**

a) General course information

There are four categories of courses at UCR:

Lower division undergraduate (course numbers 1-99): These are introductory courses, usually fulfilling undergraduate breadth requirements and populated primarily by freshmen and sophomores. (In the Department of Religious Studies, most of these are large lecture courses for which many of our graduate students can expect to serve as Teaching Assistants.)

Upper division undergraduate (course numbers 100-199): These are more advanced disciplinary courses, principally populated by juniors and seniors. Most of these courses fulfill undergraduate major requirements. (Occasionally, depending on the size of the course, these classes may provide opportunities for graduate students to be hired as readers.)

Graduate (course numbers 200-299): These are the courses designed specifically for graduate study; no numerical or content distinction is made between M.A. and Ph.D. courses at UCR.

Professional (course numbers 300-399): These are courses designed to give professional instruction for life after graduate school. Some courses are worth few units, but address key topics of professional life, such as giving a professional address or applying for grants or jobs. The course units for TAships (see below) are professional course credits.

Ph.D. students should make every effort to enroll only in Graduate level courses. Students may also enroll in upper division undergraduate courses in the Department of Religious Studies, but must concurrently enroll in RLST 292 (see below) and do work sufficient to raise the course to graduate level standards. Undergraduate courses do not hold the same unit value for graduate students, so enrolling into undergraduate courses may require students to carry a higher course load to maintain full-time status. Students may also, after consultation with the Faculty Graduate Advisor, enroll in relevant, upper-division courses in other CHASS Departments, as long as they also enroll in a 292 (Concurrent Enrollment) course in that Department.

Ph.D. students are encouraged to take graduate courses in other departments if they think they relate to their program of study. Before enrolling for such courses, students should check with the Faculty Graduate Advisor and Graduate Students Affairs Advisor to ensure proper procedures are followed. Students should also consult with the instructor of the course to discuss the possibility of enrollment. **Different departments in CHASS have different procedures for enrolling students from other Departments: do not assume you can just sign up and show up on the first day.**

Students may also enroll in graduate courses at other UC campuses, pending approval of instructors and advisors at UCR and at the target campus. Forms for the Intercampus Exchange Program (IEP) are available through the Graduate Division, and must usually be filed several weeks before the quarter begins. Again, students should consult the Faculty Graduate Advisor and Student Affairs Advisor submitting an IEP request.

Students should be familiar with the following special graduate course numbers:

RLST 290: Directed Studies

Directed Studies are individually designed, quarter-long courses arranged between a faculty member and one or more students. Should students wish to pursue a specialized topic with a faculty member, they must set up a course of study for the quarter and submit a study plan for approval by the Department and the Graduate Division. Forms are available from the Graduate Division website (<http://www.graddiv.ucr.edu/forms/290Petition.pdf>). RLST 290 courses should involve regular meetings between the student and faculty member; if the time will be used primarily for independent research, students should register for RLST 297 instead (see below).

RLST 291: Individual Studies in Coordinated Areas

Ph.D. students may enroll for a flexible number of units in the quarters leading up to their Qualifying Examinations; enrollment in this course, and the number of units, should be cleared with the Graduate Advisor before registration.

RLST 292: Concurrent Studies in Religious Studies

Ph.D. students are allowed, upon approval of the graduate advisor, to take some upper division undergraduate offerings in the Department of Religious Studies. In order to bring these courses up to the graduate level, the student must also enroll in RLST 292 (worth one extra graduate

unit) and arrange with the instructor to accomplish graduate-level work during the course of the quarter. As with RLST 290, students must submit a study plan for approval by the Graduate Advisor. Forms are available in the Department office.

RLST 297: Directed Research

Students may choose to pursue an individual research project under the supervision of a faculty member. This may involve local fieldwork, expansion of an existing research project (article, essay, translation, and so forth), or laying the groundwork for a new, but discrete research project. Students should submit a study plan for approval by the Graduate Advisor; forms are available in the Department office.

RLST 299: Research For the Dissertation

After being advanced to candidacy, while still in residence at the University, Ph.D. students will automatically be registered for a number of units of RLST 299 that will keep them at full-time status.

RLST 302, **Teaching Practicum**, is for students who are serving as Teaching Assistants in the Department of Religious Studies. Typically this flexible course is worth 4 units. (For more on TAships, see section 5c below.)

Other 300-level (professional courses) may be added at a future date.

b) Specific course requirements

Core courses

All Ph.D. students must enroll for **two** core courses, preferably in their first year:

RLST 200A: Religion, Politics, and Public Discourse

RLST 200B: Representations, Interpretations, and Critical Histories

RLST 200C: Religions in Contact

The specific topics of these courses may vary according to the instructor and, with permission from the graduate advisor, these courses are repeatable one time (assuming the syllabus varies significantly). These courses are designed to present to the graduate students various methods and theories for the study of religion as a public, social phenomenon.

Method and Theory courses

In addition to completing the two core courses, all Ph.D. students must complete two Method and Theory courses:

RLST 201: Thinking about Religion: Classic Theories in the Study of Religion

RLST 202: Contemporary Theories and Theorists in the Study of Religion

Other courses

Ph.D. students are free to take any graduate-level RLST seminars offered without seeking the approval of the instructor. Students who wish to take graduate level seminars in other departments, or wish to enroll in Directed Studies (RLST 290), Concurrent Studies (RLST 292), or Directed Research (RLST 297) should seek the approval of the Faculty Graduate Advisor and the instructor with whom they wish to work.

Major and Minor Focus

In order to help focus their coursework, but also ensure diverse grounding religious studies, all Ph.D. students are required to focus their coursework geographically. In other words, they must take at least 6 courses (24 units) in either **Western Religions** or **Asian Religions**, and at least 3 courses (12 units) in **Asian Religions** or **Western Religions**.

Since Ph.D. students typically enter the program with a much more focused area of interest (e.g., Sikh Studies or Thai Buddhism) the requirement to take six courses in a broader, "major" field is intended to make sure the student not only does a significant amount of coursework in his or her specific field of study, but also appreciates the broader context of that field. Likewise, the "minor" field focus gives students a necessary comparative vantage point on their studies.

Students may petition the Faculty Graduate Advisor to count courses taken in other departments as long as these courses can be framed as part of an identifiable "major field."

A course may not be counted as both a "major field" and "minor field" course.

Duration of Coursework

Ph.D. students are required to sit for their qualifying examinations in the quarter following their completion for coursework. For many students, this will be in their seventh or eighth quarter although many students may choose to extend their coursework into their third year and sit for their exams in their ninth quarter of the program.

In the quarter or two quarters preceding the examination quarter, students may combine their graduate seminars with a flexible number of units of RLST 291 ("Individual Studies). The work for RLST 291 will comprise compiling their reading lists for exams and beginning to do research and studying for their exams.

Students may petition to defer their qualifying exams, especially if their research necessitates travel away from campus or precisely scheduled research time (e.g., fieldwork or restricted access to archives).

c) Language requirements

Ph.D. students must demonstrate reading proficiency in both French and German, the languages in which much modern secondary scholarship in the discipline has been written. Students may petition to substitute another modern language of secondary scholarship if it is deemed more relevant to their studies. This proficiency must be demonstrated before the student is advanced to candidacy (i.e., before completing their qualifying examinations).

This requirement can be fulfilled through a departmental examination, by passing a designated language course (FREN 009A-009B, GER 001R-002R), or by alternative certification (such as a diploma from a foreign language institute).

FREN 009A-009B are offered most years in Winter and Spring quarters; GER 001R-002R are offered less frequently (but will be offered in Winter and Spring 2008). Students enrolling in this sequence of courses should be aware that they do not count toward the minimum graduate course unit requirements.

Students wishing to submit to a departmental examination (a timed translation exercise in the department with a dictionary) should notify the graduate advisor and allow a few weeks to set up the examination. The student will be given a recent, untranslated article or book chapter related to her or his field of interests, and allowed 3 hours in the Department Library to translate at least 3 pages of text. The student may not use any computer-assisted translation software.

Ph.D. students are also expected to develop sufficient mastery of the languages in which their primary source materials are written. Some of these languages may be offered at UCR, and students will be encouraged to register in the highest possible level of those language courses (if the subject of a language or literature course is close enough to the "major" or "minor" field, students may petition to have these courses count toward the coursework requirements). Be advised that students may also have to make special arrangements, through summer travel or Intercampus Exchange Program (IEP), in order to study the languages needed for research.

No formal examination of research languages is required, but the Faculty Graduate Advisor will closely monitor the language progress of Ph.D. students, in coursework and out of it, in order to make sure they do not advance to candidacy without requisite language proficiency. In some cases, a student's language of research may also be a language of secondary scholarship (e.g., Arabic or Punjabi).

d) Registration process

Choosing courses

Each student may make an appointment to meet with the Faculty Graduate Advisor before registering for the next quarter's classes (new students who have not yet relocated to Riverside by registration date may confer by email or telephone). The Faculty Graduate Advisor will make sure the students' planned courses meets their academic needs, and progress toward a comprehensive course of study (leading, ultimately, to the comprehensive exams). During this meeting, the Graduate Advisor will also discuss the student's progress toward degree and answer any questions or concerns a student may have.

At the time of the meeting, the Graduate Advisor will also approve of any 290-level courses (Directed Studies, Individual Studies, Concurrent Studies). Be advised that Directed Studies (RLST 290) must be approved by the Graduate Dean. Students may also propose to register for selected upper-division RLST courses, pending the agreement of the instructor and the approval of the Graduate Advisor; the student will then register for the undergraduate course and RLST 292 (Concurrent Studies in Religious Studies). Not all upper-division undergraduate courses are available for Concurrent Studies.

After this initial meeting, it is the responsibility of the student to acquire and fill out all appropriate forms with the assistance of the Student Affairs Advisor.

First-year students should expect to enroll in the core courses (RLST 200A, 200B, 200C) in Fall, Winter, and Spring quarters, respectively. Since the Ph.D. program requires students to fulfill a specific number of "major field" and "minor field" units, students should also be thinking of how to fulfill those requirements when they register.

Students may also propose to take graduate-level courses in other Departments; the Graduate Advisor will contact the instructor in the target Department or, if the student is already on familiar terms with the instructor, the student may contact the instructor directly.

French and German for Reading courses are typically offered in Winter and Spring quarters; if students wish to take these courses, they should make sure they fit their schedule and that they are still registered for a full-time graduate course load.

Registering for courses

General information about enrollment, including the dates for registration, can be found online at <http://classes.ucr.edu/> (click on "Academic Calendar" for the schedule). All registration takes place online. In order to receive funding (fellowship or TA funding), they must be registered for a minimum course load. If a hold has been placed on a student's account (by Graduate Division, Student Business Services, or Financial Aid), that student must have the hold removed in order to register. If the student do not have the hold removed, he or she will be dropped from any courses for which the student has registered when accounts are reconciled at the beginning of every quarter.

After meeting with the Graduate Advisor, students should arrange a meeting with the Student Advisor who will enroll the students in their approved courses.

Students who, for some reason, are unable to meet with the Student Advisor and need to register on their own can obtain their quarterly pin number (REGPIN) from the Student Advisor. With the REGPIN and their permanent pin number (PERMPIN) they can then register on GROWL (<http://growl.ucr.edu/>). Through GROWL, students can also regularly look up grades, view their financial aid status for any quarter, view their current bill, confirm courses, view/accept financial aid awards, verify their Student ID, set privacy restrictions, and change their PERM PIN by computer over the internet.

e) Qualifying Exams

Advisor and Committee

By the end of coursework (which should last from six to nine quarters), students should have identified and completed a significant amount of coursework in both a major and minor field of study, and should have some idea of the specific subject area they will pursue in their dissertation. It is hoped that they will also have identified the faculty member in the Department of Religious Studies who will serve as their mentor and advisor through their qualifying exams and dissertation.

In preparation for the qualifying exams, the Faculty Graduate Advisor, in consultation with the student and their mentor/advisor, will put together a Qualifying Examination Committee comprising at least five members. One of these members, per Graduate Division rules, must be from outside the Department of Religious Studies. This outside member is there to ensure fairness, and does not have to participate in the writing or grading of written exams and need not be from a related discipline or field.

Members of the committee must typically be full-time faculty members of the Department (except for the outside member, who must be a full-time faculty member of her or his own department); adjuncts and lecturers who hold Ph.D.s in relevant fields may be permissible, but a strong case must be made. UC faculty from other campuses may also be eligible to sit on the committee, providing they can be present for the oral defense.

Once the student and Faculty Graduate Advisor have agreed upon a Committee, the Graduate Advisor will forward the committee slate to the Graduate Dean for approval. This approval must be filed no fewer than two weeks before the scheduled oral defense of the exams (since our Qualifying Exams have a written component, this should in reality be done several months beforehand, with a tentative date for the oral defense filed; if necessary, that date can be easily changed in consultation with the Faculty Graduate Advisor).

This committee and the student's advisor will take responsibility for supervising reading lists, establishing exam topics with the student, writing and evaluating the written exams, and conducting the oral examination.

Written Exams

In consultation with this advisor and the Graduate Advisor, students should begin establishing their examination subjects in the last quarter or two of coursework (typically, quarter five and six or six and seven). Students are required to take three exams:

1. Major field studies. In this exam, students will demonstrate mastery over specific aspects of a religious tradition or subdiscipline of religious studies (e.g., "Sikh Traditions" or "Theravada Buddhism"). In preparing the reading lists and topics for questions, students should try to develop specific areas of their major field on which they will concentrate (e.g., "Monasticism in Theravada Buddhism" or "Scripture and Performance in Sikhism"). The reading lists should comprise relevant secondary literature (both recent and "classic") as well as primary sources (in the original languages where applicable).

2. Comparative Studies. In this exam, students will draw their major field into intellectual conversation with their "minor field" as articulated during coursework. The goal is to demonstrate facility with comparative approaches to the academic study of religion (or, should students find it advisable, to question or problematize certain comparative approaches). The comparative subjects elucidated in reading lists and chosen for exam questions should allow students to broaden their knowledge of multiple religious traditions while still pursuing the topics and idea central to their own work. Topics might be thematic--"Ascetic Impulses in Christianity and Buddhism"--or historical--"Islam and Hinduism in the Mughal Empire."

3. Critical Studies. This exam will comprise two parts: one on methods of religious studies scholarship (e.g., Anthropology of Religion, Fieldwork, Literary Analysis) and another on theories of religion (e.g., Marxism, Postcolonial Theory, Durkheimians). The kernel of their reading lists may derive from their core courses (taken in their first year), but should be significantly enhanced by later coursework as well as individual study in preparation for their exams.

All three exams should be framed in such a way as to allow students to demonstrate their overall mastery of the subjects and approaches, but they should also be focused enough to prepare students for the more narrow, rigorous research they will pursue once they have advanced to candidacy and begun work on their dissertations.

Students will take the exams over a period of no more than three weeks in the designated quarter. Students will receive each exam, in turn, from the Graduate Student Affairs Advisor and have no more than **72 hours** to complete each examination. Once one examination has been turned in, the next one may be picked up, until all three are completed.

Oral Defense of the Exams

After the written examinations are finished, and the committee has had a chance to read them, students must present themselves for an oral examination, the contents of which will be based on the written examinations just completed.

The oral exam is not public, and all members of the committee must be present for the duration of the oral exam. The structure of the oral exam will be agreed upon by the members of the committee, with the student's advisor taking the lead, but typically the following components should be included:

- a. An opportunity for the student to comment on her or his written exams (including corrections, explanations, and elaborations she or he feels necessary).
- b. An opportunity for every member of the committee to ask questions and receive answers to their satisfaction.
- c. Discussion of how the student's exams may profitably lead to a dissertation area or project, and suggestions on how this might proceed.

Students may not be provisionally passed on one or more of their three exams; the oral exam must either recommend "pass" or "no pass" (this is according to Graduate Division regulations).

A student may not pass her or his qualifying examinations if more than one member of the committee votes to fail.

If the committee recommends the student not pass her or his exams, the student must be allowed to sit for exams a second time, ordinarily not given until at least three months after the original exam. The committee, in consultation with the graduate advisor, will decide whether or not the student should also prepare new written exams before the second oral examination.

Graduate Division regulations do not allow a student a third pass at qualifying examinations.

Once students have passed their qualifying examinations, and providing all other requirements for the degree (apart from the dissertation) have been met, a petition is filed with the Graduate Division to advance the student to candidacy.

f) Prospectus defense

Within a reasonable amount of time after sitting for qualifying examinations (typically not more than three months, although it is possible that reasonable circumstance, such as archival or field work, may cause a delay), the candidate shall prepare a dissertation prospectus for her or his Dissertation committee.

A dissertation committee should comprise no fewer than three faculty members, the major of whom should be faculty members of the Department. The dissertation committee does not need to comprise the same members as the Qualifying Examination committee, but it must also be nominated by the Graduate Advisor and appointed by the Graduate Dean. Normally, one member of the committee will act as Chair, assuming primary responsibility for supervising and mentoring the candidate in her or his research and writing.

The prospectus should outline the topic, thesis, methods and resources for the completion of the written dissertation. This prospectus must be circulated and approved by all the candidate's dissertation committee members before the student can begin work on the dissertation itself. A formal meeting of the dissertation committee, with the student, should address the concerns of the committee members and provide guidance for the student. Once completed, the dissertation committee chair should file a form with the Graduate Advisor attesting to the confidence of the committee.

g) Dissertation: Expectations and goals

The prospectus should act as a guide and template for the dissertation, but not a contract. It is understood that the dissertation itself will grow and evolve in the course of research and writing. Major changes in the scope or direction of the dissertation should be cleared with the dissertation committee chair.

The dissertation should be a substantial piece of original research and writing that can, with sufficient post-graduation work, be turned into a book: students shouldn't think of it as "a long

paper," but rather like "several papers (chapters) united by an overarching thesis." Students should count on spending roughly two years of writing and research, especially if they are also teaching or otherwise working.

Students should check in with the members of their committee regularly in order to show their progress, providing written chapters and drafts on an agreed-upon schedule. The dissertation, when written, must follow the format guidelines of the Graduate Division (available from the Graduate Division website), and should also follow the standards and protocols of the discipline.

h) Dissertation defense and graduation procedures

Once the student has completed, or neared completion of, the dissertation, she or he may schedule the dissertation defense. **It is recommended that all members of the committee have read sufficient drafts of the dissertation to agree that a defense is warranted:** this is the capstone requirement of the doctoral program and a stage not to be taken lightly.

Following Graduate Division regulations, the oral defense of the dissertation is public and open to all members of the academic community. Students should be ready to defend the quality and significance of their work, and committee members should be prepared not only to evaluate said quality and significance but to offer suggestions for further development of the dissertation project (into a book, articles, or further directions).

If all members of the committee vote to approve, the appropriate forms are signed and submitted to the Graduate Dean for final approval. Dissertation defenses should normally take place during the regular academic quarter, and the student officially graduates with a Doctor of Philosophy degree on the final day of that quarter. Students should pay close attention to dissertation filing deadlines (both the intent to graduate, and the signed approval of the dissertation) in order to avoid paying additional fees.

Students will be notified once their diplomas are ready to be picked up from the registrar (usually some weeks after the graduation date); they may provide postage and have the diploma mailed directly to them. If necessary for professional reasons, the registrar can also provide a certificate of completion upon request.

4) Policies and Procedures

The University of California is a sprawling and magnificent beast, delicately designed and often baffling in its complexity. The policies and procedures outlined below (some of which have been treated in the first three sections of this Handbook) are meant to give students a general idea of what can be done, what cannot be done, and how to find out the difference. Students should always be prepared to consult with the Graduate Student Handbook prepared by the Graduate Division (usually linked on their home page: <http://www.graduate.ucr.edu/>) and also with the Faculty Graduate Advisor and Graduate Student Affairs Advisor, as well as the Student Affairs office in the Graduate Division. Usually any question that might be asked has been asked before, and an answer is to be had.

a) Admissions

To be admitted to the Graduate Program in Religious Studies, students must hold a B.A. degree in a field related to Religious Studies, and have significant background in the discipline. Students applying for the Ph.D. program must also demonstrate significant background (including requisite languages and histories) in their major field of study. A B.A. in religious studies is not required.

Students must also fulfill the requirements of the Graduate Division:

1. GRE scores of a certain level (usually at least 1100 Verbal and Quantitative)
2. A sufficient junior-senior year GPA (usually at least 3.20)
3. Three letters of recommendation (these should be academic recommendations)
4. Transcripts from all colleges and universities attended
5. A statement of purpose outlining the student's background, interests, and goals in the program

International students must meet additional practical requirements.

All application materials and requirements can be found online at the Graduate Division website (<http://www.graduate.ucr.edu/>).

The deadline to be considered for admission with financial assistance is usually in early January, and all components of the application must be received by the Department. The program admits very few students (typically fewer than 10 total), and will usually try to begin putting together admission packages (including financial awards) by February.

If an applicant does not hear from the Department, they should feel free to check in with the Faculty Graduate Advisor; usually, if they haven't heard anything, this means their file is still under consideration. All decisions are usually made by April or, at the latest, early May. Students are required to inform the graduate programs to which they have been admitted of their decisions by mid-May, although more timely decisions are always appreciated.

Admission recommendations are made by the Graduate Advisor and an ad hoc committee of faculty members appointed yearly. Final admission decisions, including financial awards, are made by the Graduate Division.

Students are admitted either to the M.A. or Ph.D. program; only under extraordinary circumstances will a student be allowed to change degree track.

b) Annual review of student progress

Once admitted, students must maintain a strong academic progress toward their degree. To this end, each year the Faculty Graduate Advisor compiles and submits progress reports to the Graduate Division. These reports are based on the numerical data of the student (grade point average, course completion, number of incomplete grades) and also on the evaluation of the faculty members who have taught them. These progress reports are submitted simultaneously to the Graduate Dean, the Department Chair, and the student; students are encouraged to meet with the Graduate Advisor if they have questions or concerns about their annual review.

Typically, students who complete their coursework and show progress toward their degree goal (comprehensive exams or qualifying exams and dissertation) will be making good progress. Students whose GPAs fall below 3.0, who carry more than 12 units of "incomplete" work, who fail to pass required exams after two attempts, or who do not progress through the various stages of the degree (coursework, examinations, prospectus, dissertation) may be held to be making unsatisfactory progress. A report will be filed with the Graduate Dean, and students making unsatisfactory progress may be ineligible for fellowships, readerships, and assistantships.

In order to be eligible for TAs and GSR (graduate student research position), students must maintain a GPA of at least 3.0; students must maintain a GPA of 3.5 in order to continue receiving fellowship funds.

Students are encouraged to keep the Faculty Graduate Advisor apprised of any work in the field conducted outside of the classroom: papers delivered, conferences attended, articles submitted. The annual report will take as complete a picture as possible, and students should contribute everything they can to this picture.

c) Residence and registration requirements

Residence

"Residence" is a technical term used by the Graduate Division to signal presence on a University campus (status as a California resident is usually granted after the first year of study for students moving from out-of-state, by various means: registering a car, getting a new driver's license, registering to vote, and so forth; establishing in-state residence for some students reduces tuition obligations and is worth looking into). By "residence," the Graduate Division means presence on campus for a minimum period of time. For Ph.D. students, the minimum period of residence is two years (six quarters); one year of that (three quarters) must be accomplished by continuous presence (three straight quarters) on the UCR campus. For M.A. students, the minimum period of residence is one year (three quarters); two of those quarters must be continuous presence on UCR campus.

There are various exceptions and extensions of the residence policy, including transfer units from other University of California campuses. Such exceptions are rare, however, and should not be common.

To be "in residence" in a given quarter, a student only needs to be enrolled in four units (usually one class).

If a student does not maintain graduate student status, his or her spot in the program may be lost and he or she may need to reapply.

Continuous registration

In addition to maintaining residence, graduate students must be continuously registered, that is, they are expected to enroll for every academic session (Fall, Winter, Spring) for a full-time slate of courses (at least 12 units, normally) until the final requirements for the degree are met (for M.A. students, this means comprehensive exams; for Ph.D. students, this means the oral defense of the dissertation). Failure to register for courses may lead to lapsed status. Even if students have paid fees, this does not mean they are enrolled: they must enroll in courses by the last add/drop date, or else petition the Graduate Division for late enrollment and pay a fee (currently, \$100).

Note: Students whose fees are being paid through the University (by fellowship or TAship or other funds) should register for a minimum amount of units (at least six) during pre-registration (in the summer before matriculation or during the previous quarter for enrolled students); if they are not enrolled for at least 6 units by the time fees are due (usually two weeks prior to the beginning of the quarter), this will cause a bureaucratic nightmare.

Filing Fee

Students who have fulfilled all but the final requirements for their degree (M.A. students: comprehensive exams; Ph.D. students: oral defense of the dissertation) may pay a **Filing Fee** in lieu of registering for courses and paying the fees for the quarter. The filing fee is usually half of the registration fee (just over \$100). Students may only pursue this option:

1. In the quarter in which they intend to fulfill the final requirement for their degree
2. If all other requirements for the degree have been met in previous quarters

Students who pay a filing fee instead of registering for the quarter are ineligible for University services (anything requiring the I.D. card), financial assistance, or employment as a TA or GSR. Student health insurance in that quarter must be purchased separately.

Half-time registration

Although full-time registration is the norm at UCR, students may petition the Graduate Division to be enrolled half-time (no more than 6 units per quarter). A petition must be submitted to Graduate Division two weeks before fees are due, and a good excuse must be provided (full-time

work, poor health, family responsibilities). Students registered half-time are ineligible for fellowship or TA funds. Students cannot register for more than 6 units to be enrolled half-time, so this will typically involve one class per quarter.

In Absentia Registration

Ph.D. students who have advanced to candidacy and are actively researching their dissertation outside of California may petition to register *in absentia* and receive a reduction in the registration fee; approval of the Graduate Advisor and the Graduate Division are required.

d) Leave of absence and withdrawal

Students who cannot maintain continuous registration, but do not wish their graduate student status to lapse, may petition the Graduate Division for a leave of absence. Typically, a leave of absence will only be granted for serious medical, financial, or professional reasons (for instance, if a student must work apart from his or her program and needs time off to do so). Students may also petition for a leave of absence in order to conduct research related to their dissertation, and should ask their advisors for a letter attesting to this need.

Students on leave are ineligible for University services, financial assistance, and University employment reserved for graduate students (such as TAs or GSRs). Students living in University housing should check with the housing office to see if they will be required to vacate their housing during a leave.

In extraordinary circumstances, students may request that a leave of absence begin retroactively after the beginning of a quarter. Students may also petition to have a leave of absence extended beyond three quarters.

Students who have already used their leave of absence, or wish to leave the university without a leave of absence, may petition to withdraw and apply for readmission when they wish to resume graduate study. Students should keep in mind that readmission is not guaranteed and must be approved by the Graduate Division as well as the Department. Students who withdraw who have paid fees, even after the beginning of the quarter, may be eligible to get a partial or complete refund.

Forms for withdrawal and leaves of absence are available from the Graduate Division website.

e) Changing major or degree track

Once admitted to UCR by the Graduate Division, all graduate students have the option of changing their degree track or even their major (i.e., the department in which they are enrolled as a student). Any petition to switch major or degree track (from M.A. to Ph.D., or vice versa) should be cleared with the Graduate Advisor before being submitted to the Graduate Division.

M.A. students who wish to switch to the Ph.D. track should speak to the Faculty Graduate Advisor as soon as possible, and should be warned that switching degree tracks will only be granted in extraordinary circumstances. At present, the Department has devised an internal

application process to facilitate this venture; speak to the Faculty Graduate Advisor for more information.

Ph.D. students who wish to leave the program early with an M.A. should also consult with the Graduate Advisor; they may be required to sit for comprehensive exams. Students who already hold an M.A. in religious studies will likely not be granted permission to receive another M.A. by Graduate Division.

Students may also pursue the option of switching to another Department, although this privilege is granted very rarely and requires the approval of both the Graduate Advisor in Religious Studies and the Graduate Advisor of the target Department (as well as a petition approved by the Graduate Dean).

f) Misconduct and grievance policies

It is the responsibility of all students to be aware of the policies with respect to student conduct and misconduct, including sexual harassment, cheating, and plagiarism. Students who wish to file a complaint in any of these areas can speak confidentially to the Graduate Advisor, Department Chair, or MSO. No action will be taken against a complainant, and the responsible party (Advisor, Chair, MSO) will work with the administrative parties best suited to resolve any conflicts.

It is recommended that all students consult the most recent copy of the University's Graduate Student Handbook (available from the Graduate Division website, here: <http://www.graduate.ucr.edu/GSHndbk.pdf>) to familiarize themselves with the conduct and grievance policies of UCR and the University of California.

5) Financial Resources

It is the intention of the Graduate Program to admit all students, both M.A. and Ph.D., with some financial assistance so they can maintain full-time student status without having to take on significant work responsibilities outside of school. Any financial package is affirmed by the Graduate Division at the time of admission, and should be included with the original offer of admission. The financial assistance package included with the admission offer should be considered a contract by both student and Department, although continued financial awards depend on a student remaining in good standing.

To interpret an award letter (attached to the acceptance letter):

Left-most column: the time period of award (an Academic Year or summer period)

Money received:

"Stipend": Fellowship money (usually from Central Fellowship funds)

"Value TA/GSR salary \$\$": Salary received for work as a Teaching Assistant or Graduate Research Assistant.

Money paid on the student's behalf:

"Fees Paid by Award (Includes Health Insurance)": The annual fees required of all students

"NRT Paid by Award": Non-resident tuition required of non-California residents

Money paid by the student to the University:

"Misc Campus Fees to be paid by student": Minor fees must be paid by the student directly to the registrar. **Note:** Any quarter in which the annual fees are paid by a TAship, the student must pay the "miscellaneous fees" by September 15 (for Fall quarter), December 15 (for Winter Quarter), or March 15 (for Spring quarter). Any quarter in which a student receives a stipend, those miscellaneous fees are paid for that student.

"NRT to be paid by student": This column is almost always blank, as Graduate Division pays non-resident tuition.

a) Graduate Division Funds

Every year, the Graduate Division makes available a predetermined amount of funds to each graduate program to be distributed among prospective applicants. In making admissions decisions, Departments decide how to allot this money among an entering class of students for **Graduate Division Fees** and **Stipends**. All students receive some of these funds in the form of fees and stipends in their first year or two.

Students with exceptional academic records, and desirable out-of-state students, are also eligible for additional funds directly from the Graduate Division.

Applicants should pay close attention in the reward letter to the type of funding received in a given year from Graduate Division. Usually a **stipend** will be paid out in the quarter (or quarters) in which the student is **not** working as a Teaching Assistant. In the first two years, most students receive a combination of stipend and Teaching Assistantship.

The goal of every award is to combine Graduate Division Funds with Department Funds (see below) so that students do not have to pay the major fees (more than \$3000/qtr.) and in every quarter receive some form of paid financial assistance.

Students are only eligible to receive Graduate Division Funds once; students who receive funds for the M.A. program and then reapply for the Ph.D. program will not be able to receive any stipend or fees money from the Graduate Division.

The Graduate Division also awards fellowships to students nearing completion of their doctoral program in the form of dissertation grants; these grants are competitive and often limited in number.

Some additional University funds are also available from the Graduate Student Associate (see below, p. 37).

b) Department Funds

At the present date, most of the Departmental funds that can be allocated to graduate student financial assistance are in the form of instructional money, i.e., TAships (see below). The Department has also begun granted small supplements to the stipends, which are entered into the Financial Award Package in a separate column.

A limited amount of funds is available for smaller paid positions in the Department, such as readers for courses or other titles of student and part-time research assistants. These are hourly positions that do not carry with them benefits and payment of graduate fees.

Some faculty members may have research funds, from University or external sources, that allow them to pay for a full-time Graduate Student Researcher. A GSR is a half-time job (like a TAship) that pays a salary and covers fees and benefits for a graduate student. Such funds are very limited in the Department of Religious Studies, and at present no student has been offered a guaranteed GSR; it is possible that, as faculty make research funds available for this purpose, some students will have their TAship replaced with a GSRship.

Technically, students are not supposed to receive additional work if they are already TAing and receiving fellowships. Exemptions are often granted if, for instance, a student is receiving a modest fellowship in one quarter but also wishes to TA, or is already working as a TA but also wants to do a few extra hours a week as a research assistant for a faculty member. The hiring faculty member and student should give the Faculty Graduate Advisor as much information as possible to allow her or him to appeal to Graduate Division for the exemption.

In 2009-20010, the Department also started granting two monetary awards:

M.A. Advancement Award. Students may nominate themselves for this award by submitting a statement of purpose outlining their past, present, and future goals in the study of religion. Award (or awards) of \$1000 will be made in Spring Quarter.

Ph.D. Research Grant. Students may apply for these grants by submitting a budget and narrative proposal detailing how they will use these funds to advance their research project. Grant (or grants) of up to \$3000 will be made in Spring Quarter.

Flyers for these awards should go up in early Spring, and submissions should be submitted to the Faculty Graduate Advisor or Graduate Student Affairs Advisor.

The Department also has discretionary funds that may be allocated on an ad hoc basis to students with urgent research needs. Petitions for these limited funds should be made in as timely a manner as possible to the Chair of the Department.

c) Teaching Assistantships

The primary mode of financial assistance offered by the department is Teaching Assistantships. A TA position is a half-time employment (this means that the average time worked should not exceed twenty hours per week). TA responsibilities include: attending the lower division class for which they are an assistant; grading and course management; regular meetings with the instructor; and three weekly meetings (three discussion sections) with students.

Almost every lower division course in the Religious Studies Department employs TAs. Every TA has (usually) 75 students whom they are responsible for grading and monitoring, across three discussion sections that meet weekly. (The Department is considering lowering the number of students per section.) TAs must also hold at least two hours of office hours per week during the quarter (shared office space is provided by the Department).

The TA salary for 2008 was \$5463.67 (or so) per quarter. Most students are assigned at least two quarters of TAs in a year; students will be notified by the Graduate Student Affairs Advisor in the Spring quarter of the previous year (or in the summer for new students) for which quarters and courses they will be TAing.

TAs are members of a collective bargaining agreement between CASE/UAW and the University of California, which can be accessed here:

http://atyourservice.ucop.edu/employees/policies/local_contracts/ase/index.html

Every effort will be made to coordinate student interest with TA positions, and to give students the chance to TA for the same course multiple times (to provide familiarity with the material and ease the burden of learning new material every year).

In the quarters that students serve as TAs, they should be aware that the "miscellaneous fees" (in AY 2008-2009, these total \$195 per quarter) are not paid by the University (although all other registration fees are paid, along with the Graduate Student health insurance plan) and must be paid by the student to the registrar by the deadline (these fees and their due dates will be noted in GROWL).

All new TAs are required to go through the "Teaching Assistance Development Program" (TADP); some components of TADP are offered throughout the year, and should be completed in the first two quarters in which a student TAs. Other components, however, are offered only in the beginning of Fall quarter. Even if students are not TAing in the Fall quarter of their first year, they should be prepared to go through TADP Orientation and the first two "Prep Courses" in the first week of Fall quarter (usually before instruction begins). If students miss these events, they must register for make-up events: consult the TADP website (<http://tadp.ucr.edu/>).

In the quarters in which students serve as a TA, they are expected to register for RSLT 302, "Teaching Practicum," a Satisfactory/No Credit (i.e., ungraded) set of units that will allow the students to TA while maintaining full-time enrollment status.

Even if a student is "guaranteed" a TA salary in his or her award letter upon admission, any University employment is predicated upon maintaining adequate progress toward degree: a lapse in GPA, too many "incomplete" grades, or other red flags may cause Graduate Division to put a student on probation or revoke his or her status as a TA.

Students whose course of study extends beyond their award offer may still be eligible for TAships, but these will only be offered if they are available and on a merit basis. Graduate students cannot serve as a TA for more than 12 quarters without permission from Graduate Division, and are never allowed to serve as a TA for more than 18 quarters.

Students are also free to apply for TAships in other Departments, or in the College or University programs that use TAs (such as the University Writing Program). The Department considers this a valuable teaching experience, especially once a student has advanced to candidacy.

d) External Funding Opportunities

Students are always encouraged to seek outside sources of fellowship funding, particularly if they relieve students from the burden of work during their graduate program. Some of these fellowship opportunities are listed on the Graduate Division website, and the Graduate Advisor will pass any notices of fellowship opportunities on to the graduate students.

e) Teaching Opportunities

The Department is often in a position to hire part-time lecturers, during the regular school year and during the summer. If these positions are open to a general search, qualified graduate students in the department (normally Ph.D. students who have advanced to candidacy) are welcome to apply for them: keep in mind these are competitively offered positions, and cannot be handed to graduate students. Current students hired as lecturers in the Department are given the title "Associate-Instructors" (or "Associate-Ins").

The local community colleges also often hire part-time lecturers, and the Department will remain in close contact with them in order to be able to pass on job opportunities to qualified graduate students.

Students, especially doctoral candidates in the dissertation stage, should always be careful not to overburden themselves with so much outside work that their own research and writing languish.

6) Departmental and Campus Resources

a) Libraries and research

The UCR Library system is an ever-improving combination of paper and electronic resources, which students will get to know extensively in the first year of classes. Many of the electronic resources, which are available through institutional subscription, can be accessed from home using a proxy client, details about which can be found here:

<http://library.ucr.edu/?view=help/remoteaccess.html>

Students should also become familiar with Interlibrary Loan, which offers relatively speedy access to books and articles not found in UCR's collection.

The Department also has a faculty library liaison (at present it is Andrew Jacobs); should students have specific requests for items they think should be added to the primary University collections in religious studies, they can pass that information on to the departmental library liaison.

b) Computing

A trusty computer will be essential to the writing, reading, and teaching tasks that will take up much of graduate student life. Students who do not have a good computer upon arrival can often get one for a nice price at the University computer store (located in the basement of the main bookstore).

In addition, there are several microcomputer clusters on campus for student use; maps and information about them can be found here:

http://www.cnc.ucr.edu/index.php?content=student_services/computer_labs

Finally, computers and printers with internet access are located in the Department Conference Room, to which all graduate students will have access. For now the Department will cover the cost of toner, but students must provide paper.

c) Departmental Conference Room

The Department Conference Room (and library), located across from the main Department office in INTN 3031, contains a modest (but often surprising) collection of donated volumes in the academic study of religion, a conference table, and two computers and printers for student use. The Conference room may be used for small Department functions. When it is not in scheduled use, it can function as a gathering place for the graduate students, who will be given keys to the INTN building and to the Conference Room. Graduate student mailboxes are also found in the Conference Room.

Should the graduate students wish to reserve the Library for their own use (a meeting of some sort), they should check with the Graduate Student Affairs Advisor.

d) Photocopying

The one photocopier in the Department office is reserved for the administrative, teaching, and research needs of the department. Students who are acting as TAs or research assistants may be given copier codes to make photocopies; otherwise, students should use the photocopiers found across campus and in the libraries.

7) Graduate Student Life

INFORMATION ON THESE TOPICS WILL BE FORTHCOMING; ANY NEW, OR (EVENTUALLY) RETURNING STUDENTS WHO WOULD LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THIS SECTION, FEEL FREE TO CONTACT PASHAURA SINGH DIRECTLY WITH TIPS!

a) General Information on Riverside and the Inland Empire

From the UCR website (<http://www.ucr.edu/about/riverside.html>):

Riverside County, with a population of over 1.3 million people, borders densely populated Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, and San Bernardino Counties. The county was formed in 1893 from almost 7,200 square miles of fertile river valleys, low deserts, mountains, foothills, and rolling plains, that extend from within 14 miles of the Pacific Ocean to the Colorado River.

The City of Riverside, once known for its many citrus groves, palm lined avenues, and a wide array of subtropical shade trees, remains a pleasant oasis in the inland region of Southern California. Its "Mediterranean image" derives from the many examples of fine architecture in the California Mission Revival and Spanish Colonial styles that dot its landscape. One of the most famous of these landmarks is the Mission Inn, built between 1902 and 1932 by Frank A. Miller and his partner Henry Huntington. This splendid old hotel — with its rich decor, fine dining, marvelous chapel, and other amenities — continues to draw visitors and guests from around the world. evoking a slower, more livable time in California when rows of orange trees and palms caressed its sprawling landscape.

The city was founded in 1870 by John W. North and the Southern California Colony Association. The land had long been inhabited by Native Americans, but was later divided into several large Spanish land grants that gave way to gradual settlement by other Europeans, Chinese, and Mexicans. The region became famous for its citrus and horticultural industries that over time gave way to military and industrial growth, and education.

Today, the city is a vibrant, culturally diverse center of commerce, finance, industry, and education in the Inland Empire. It has libraries, art and history museums, theaters, concert venues, a convention center, fine restaurants, quaint shops, modern shopping malls, and a wide variety of sports and other recreation activities that make living here comfortable and fun. Its people reflect the same cultural and ethnic diversity found throughout Southern California, giving the city a rich, cosmopolitan feel.

In 1907, Riverside became home to the University of California Citrus Experiment Station, sponsoring wide-ranging research that greatly benefited agriculture in the region. In 1954, the site was established as a campus of the University of California, and by 1959 it had grown to become a general campus, offering a broad range of graduate and professional studies. Along the way, UCR has earned a reputation as one of pre-eminent teaching and research institutions in the world.

Information about the City of Riverside:

<http://www.riversideca.gov/>

Information about Riverside County:

<http://www.countyofriverside.us/>

The city of Riverside has also recently composed a "Student Guide," found here:

<http://www.riversideca.gov/sg/>

While it appears to be primarily geared toward the larger undergraduate population, there may still be some useful bits of information to be gleaned about life in Riverside.

b) Housing

On-campus and family housing is extremely limited: first-year students may have difficulty acquiring a room in on-campus housing.

The housing office, however, does maintain lists of available apartments as well as a posting board on which students can seek roommates, available rooms, and post other queries.

<http://www.housing.ucr.edu/>

UCR Housing Office home page.

http://www.housing.ucr.edu/indexsub.php?content=housing/graduate_housing.html

UCR Housing Office information for graduate students.

<http://students23.ucr.edu/ucroch/logins/loginstu.cfm>

UCR Housing community living listing service (available only to enrolled UCR students).

c) Food, Shopping, Banks

The following grocery store chains have stores in Riverside:

[Ralph's](#)

[Trader Joe's](#)

[Stater Bros.](#)

[Albertson's](#)

[Vons](#)

[Food 4 Less](#)

In 2007, a new, organic grocery store, [Goodwin's](#), opened near campus at Big Springs Rd. and Watkin's Ave.

In addition, Riverside has a number of specialty and ethnic food markets, as well as a weekly farmer's market with fresh produce (Saturdays from 8am-1pm in Downtown Riverside on the Main St. Promenade).

There are several shopping centers, malls, and outlet malls in Riverside and the Inland Empire:

[Moreno Valley Mall](#)

22500 Town Circle
Moreno Valley, California 92553
(951) 653-1177

[Galleria at Tyler](#)

1299 Galleria at Tyler
Riverside, California 92503
(951) 351-3110

[Riverside Plaza](#)

Riverside Plaza, Suite 200
3545 Central Ave Riverside,
CA 92506
(951) 683-1066

[Ontario Mills](#) (retail and outlet malls)

One Mills Circle
Ontario, CA 91764
(909) 484-8301

Riverside is also convenient to a number of [IKEA](#) (inexpensive furniture and household items) stores.

In addition to branches of [Bank of America](#) and [Washington-Mutual Bank](#) (both of which have ATMs on campus), Riverside also has a local credit union, [Service Plus](#), with a branch in University Village and an ATM in the UCR commons.

d) Culture and Entertainment

There are a variety of entertainment options in Riverside and the Inland Empire, as well as relatively convenient access to Los Angeles.

e) GSA (Graduate Student Association)

The Graduate Student Association at UCR is a valuable resource for advocacy, social events, and academic support:

<http://gsa.ucr.edu/>

Please note especially the availability of (modest) mini-grants and conference travel grants.