

# **The Study of Religion Graduate Program Bylaws**

Current Administrative Home: Department of Religious Studies Program

Graduate Council approval: December 6, 2019

## **Article I. Objective**

- A. Degrees offered by the program: M.A. and a Ph.D. in The Study of Religion
- B. Discipline: The Study of Religion applies deep scholarly knowledge of specific religious traditions to questions of broad academic interest. It is distinguished from theology in its historical and comparative approach, analyzing the evidence of religious traditions as human phenomena. Students receive both classical training in the corpus of a particular religious tradition and theoretical training to place this tradition at the center of wider academic and public interest.
- C. Mission: The mission of the Study of Religion Graduate Program is to train future scholars to produce advanced research in pursuit of new knowledge about the human phenomenon of religion, as viewed from a broad range of perspectives. The most distinctive features of the UC Davis PhD in the Study of Religion are its intellectual flexibility, its integration of area expertise with social theory, and the broad range of its faculty expertise (including at least seven major religious traditions from the Late Bronze Age to the twenty-first century, and thematic emphases ranging from sexuality to theology, ritual performance to human rights, and from biomedical ethics to war and violence). The program's integration of classical philological and historical research techniques with vital questions from social theory provides outstanding opportunities for research projects on the cutting edge of religious studies.

## **Article II. Membership**

### **A. Criteria for Membership in the Graduate Program**

#### **1. Appropriate academic and teaching title.**

The program consists of those faculty members of the Davis campus qualified to guide candidates for graduate degrees in the Study of Religion. Members of the Academic Senate or Academic Federation, including Adjunct Faculty, having strong interest and expertise in Religion whose appointment authorizes the direction of graduate work, may be elected to membership by the faculty of the Department of Religious Studies.

Members must hold an appropriate academic title as outlined in Graduate Council Policy, GC1998-02, "Policy on Membership in Graduate Programs".

#### **2. Active research-appropriate to the discipline(s) encompassed by the group.**

Members must have doctoral-level degrees in fields related to the study of religion, broadly defined. They must also demonstrate an active research agenda germane to the academic study of religion.

**Departmentally-Based Graduate Programs:** Membership is based upon disciplinary expertise and active research, so members throughout campus are eligible for consideration to membership in the program. However, faculty with appointments in the department have automatic membership rights in the program.

### **3. Voting rights.**

All resident members are eligible to vote on graduate program matters. See GC2011-04, Policy on Quorum, Voting Rights and Responsibility.

## **B. Application for membership**

1. How faculty may apply: Applications for membership may be by self-nomination or nomination by an existing member. Final approval of membership rests with the graduate program faculty. Those interested in membership should submit the following to the Graduate Committee for consideration:
  - Letter of interest stating the nominee's willingness to contribute to the program as defined above.
  - CV
2. Expected contributions that graduate faculty will perform as a member: Any one of the following:
  - a. Serving on an administrative committee (admissions, executive, etc.)
  - b. Serving as a program officer (e.g. graduate adviser, program chair)
  - c. Serving as a major professor
  - d. Serving as TA supervisor;
  - e. Teaching a 200 level REL course.
  - f. Serving on a dissertation and qualifying examination committee.

## **C. Emeritus Status**

Emeritus faculty who are active members of the program are afforded full rights. Emeritus faculty who are no longer active members of the program may attend and participate in activities, including meetings, but are not afforded the right to vote.

## **D. Review of Membership**

Each faculty member's contributions to the graduate program shall be reviewed once every three years for the purpose of identifying faculty members who are not providing a minimal level of service to the program. This review will be conducted by the Graduate Program Committee. The review will focus on the expectations defined above in article II, section B., "Anticipated Contributions by Members." The criteria for reviewing members of the program is the same for all members.

Faculty whose record reflects poor performance in any of these areas will be subject to non-renewal or to a probationary period in which greater involvement must be demonstrated as a condition of continuing membership.

### **E. Membership Appeal Process**

If membership or renewal of membership is denied, the denied applicant can request consideration by members of the program, by submitting an appeal to the Graduate Program Committee justifying membership. The Graduate Committee reviews and forwards the appeal to the Chair of the Department of Religious Studies, who calls for the vote. When the appeal is submitted for a vote, a 50+% positive majority vote of the total membership is required for admission. Applicants denied membership or renewal of membership may make a final appeal to the Dean of Graduate Studies.

### **Article III. Administration**

The administration of the program and its activities will be vested in the Department Chair and the Graduate Program Committee (also known as the Executive Committee). The Department Chair coordinates the nomination of members to the Graduate Program Committee. The Graduate Program Committee oversees the advising and administration of the Graduate Program. The Department Chair is always a member of the Graduate Program Committee.

### **Article IV. Graduate Program Chair**

#### **A. Chair appointment process**

The Department Chair administers a departmentally-based graduate program. The Chair may delegate some or all of the day-to-day responsibilities of the program to a Graduate Program Chair and/or a Graduate Adviser. The Department Chair should notify the Office of Graduate Studies of the name of the faculty to whom they have delegated duties. Chairs of departmentally-based graduate programs also coordinate the program's graduate course teaching assignments with relevant department chairs.

#### **B. Duties of the Chair:**

The Chair:

- a) provides overall academic leadership for the program;
- b) develops and implements policies for the program;
- c) represents the interests of the program to the campus and University administrators;
- d) oversees the professionalization of graduate students, tracking job placement and career paths, and reports on it to the program committee and department
- e) calls and presides at meetings of the Graduate Program Committee;
- f) calls and presides at meetings of the program;

- g) is responsible for coordinating all administrative matters with the Office of Graduate Studies;
- h) manages the budgets of the program;
- i) submits course change or approval forms;
- j) is responsible for the accuracy of all publications related to the program including web pages and catalog copy; and
- k) nominates graduate advisers for appointment.

## **Article V. Committees**

The Graduate Program Committee will consist of the Program Chair or, if the position has not been delegated, the Department Chair, who acts as Chair of the committee, four faculty members nominated and elected by the members of the program — including at least one graduate program affiliate from outside of the department — and one Graduate Student Representative, as stated in Article VI. Appointees to positions of Graduate Program Director and Graduate Adviser will be normally be drawn from the committee's elected faculty members.

Graduate Program Committee members serve a two-year term. During the second year of service, nominations for the next year's Graduate Program Committee shall be emailed to the Chair by the members of the faculty. Elections shall be conducted by email ballot and completed at least two weeks prior to the end of the Spring Quarter. The elected members shall assume their duties on July 1. Any vacancies will be filled by the faculty member(s) selected by the Graduate Program Committee in consultation with the Chair. Members of the Graduate Program Committee may serve multiple terms provided they are re-elected.

The Graduate Program Committee shall meet at least quarterly. Additional meetings and executive sessions may be held as deemed necessary, or upon petition by five members of the program.

### **Role and function of the Graduate Program Committee**

The Graduate Program Committee will administer the program including:

- a. Studying and recommending educational policy and program changes to the faculty.
- b. Reviewing and approving graduate program membership.
- c. Reviewing student applications for graduate study in the program and ranking candidates for admission.
- d. Selecting and ranking graduate students and applicants for fellowships.
- e. Overseeing curriculum in terms of seminar offerings.
- f. Reviewing, updating, and preparing revisions to the program (including curriculum).

g. Appointing subcommittees, as needed.

## **Article VI. Student Representatives**

All graduate students will vote once a year on a member to represent them on the Graduate Program Committee for a one-year term. Call for nominees will be distributed two weeks before the election. Voting will take place via confidential email ballots. The results of the vote will be communicated to the students and to the department chair. The student representative will not be a voting member of the Graduate Program Committee. The Chair of any committee with student members must excuse the student representatives from meetings during discussion about other students, personnel actions or disciplinary issues relating to faculty, during rankings of existing students for funding, and for disciplinary issues related to students.

## **Article VII. Graduate Advisers**

Graduate advisers are appointed for a three-year term in compliance with the policies and procedures of the Graduate Council and the Office of Graduate Studies. The Chair of the program will recommend a graduate adviser(s) to the Office of Graduate Studies for review and appointment for a three-year term. The graduate adviser is responsible for evaluating the adequacy of preparative course work, interpreting requirements and appointing guidance and comprehensive exam committees (if applicable). If possible, the thesis/dissertation adviser for a student should not serve as their Graduate Adviser. There must be at least one Graduate Adviser for every 15 graduate students.

## **Article VIII. Meetings**

The Graduate Program Committee shall convene at least one meeting per quarter to oversee the Graduate Program. The committee shall be privileged to call additional meetings in the interest of the graduate program and shall be required to do so at the written request of three or more members. Notification will be emailed at least two weeks before the meeting. Members not on campus may participate by telephone or video conference.

## **Article IX. Quorum**

All issues that require a vote must be:

- Voted on by 50+% of the membership
- On graduate program matters other than amendment/revision of bylaws: passage requires a 50+% supporting vote of the members voting.
- On amendments and revision of bylaws: passage requires a 2/3rds supporting vote of the members voting.

If balloting is conducted via e-mail or web-based technology, 10 days must be provided for expression of opinions about the proposal prior to the acceptance of

votes; the program must allow 14 days for votes to be returned or before the "polls are closed."

#### **Article X. Order of Business for Meetings**

1. Chair's Business
2. Acceptance of previous minutes
3. Business arising from previous minutes
4. Report from Graduate Student Representative
5. New Items
6. Any other business

#### **Article XI. Amendments**

Amendments to these bylaws may be made in accordance with program's quorum policy in Article IX. Any member of the graduate program faculty may propose an amendment to the bylaws by submitting the proposal in writing to the Graduate Program Committee. The committee may ask for revisions from the faculty who submitted proposed amendments before forwarding the revisions to the membership for review and voting. Proposals for amendment(s) will be circulated to the membership by email. Voting on amendments will take place two weeks after distribution of email ballots. Quorum, voting and passage is prescribed in Article IX. All amendments and revisions must be submitted to the Graduate Council for review and approval; changes in the bylaws will become effective upon approval by the Graduate Council.