

**Department of Religion
Rice University**

**Graduate Studies
PhD Program
Procedural Handbook
2018-2019**



Department Chair, Professor April DeConick

Department Director of Doctoral Studies, Jeffrey Kripal

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Welcome Message from the Chair, Professor April DeConick



The motto of Rice University is strikingly bold. "Unconventional Wisdom." It is a motto that we love to own because it describes the kind of intellectual community that we create and foster in the Department of Religion. To study here means to challenge the status quo, to investigate what is not obvious, to reimagine what was, is and can be when it comes to religion. To study here means to enter an intellectual community where critical thought, disciplined training, and innovation intersect with religion.

We are a bold international faculty with specialties that range across many fields and approaches. We are marvelously interdisciplinary and pluralistic, studying everything from the rich diversity of early Judaism and Christianity to superhero comics and the paranormal, from medieval and renaissance mysticism and magic to African witchcraft, from the origins of Islam to modern apocalypticism and cultural pessimism, from Buddhist models of the mind to Freudian psychology, from modern art and spirituality to hip hop, from the ancient New Age to the modern-day expansion of gnosticism.

Why study religion? Why do it differently from the churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, and theological schools? Religion is a powerful force with many facets and layers. It is part of a bigger historical, social, cultural and political network that links us to the way we perceive our world and our place, as human beings, within it. Many people grow up in a particular religious tradition, which comes to define their view of themselves and their relationship to others and the world. The classes we offer, the conferences we sponsor, and the books we write aim to create a space for stepping back and viewing religion from other angles and perspectives, for asking questions that may be considered "way-out" or even "banned" by the religions themselves. We seek answers that help us face and overcome religious intolerance by informing us about other views, challenging our religious stereotypes, and addressing fears that sometimes lead to hostility and violence.

This does not mean that our approach is antithetical to religion. While we approach religion from the perspective of free and informed intellectual inquiry, we do so with an empathy that does not privilege any particular religion. While we take sincerely the claims of religions and religious people, our investigations are not bound to the authority of any particular religious community, scripture, or person. For our students, this perspective often leads to religious awareness and self-evaluation. It facilitates a conversation that promises to reveal shared understandings and real differences between religious people, some of which have existed for centuries. It offers a place for all of us - faculty and student alike - to freely seek the difficult and risky answers to the whys and wherefores of religion. Studying with us means engaging questions of human diversity, purpose and meaning in a global world. It is a study that takes very seriously religious pluralism, that engages the modern reality of religious diversity, and assists us in trying to build understanding across the lines of religious difference. Welcome to our community!

Welcome Message from the Department Director of Doctoral Studies, Professor Jeffrey Kripal



Welcome to Rice University and the Department of Religion! We have worked very hard over the decades to co-create an intellectual community that is deeply interconnected, diverse, bold, and creative. We strive to embody and actualize two Rice University memes: “Unconventional Wisdom” and “No Upper Limit.” The former Prof. DeConick has addressed just above. The latter phrase was famously uttered by our first president, President Edgar Odell Lovett, who proposed that we assign “no upper limit” to our educational endeavors here.

You are now entering this remarkable community. We expect you to be an integral and active member of it. Accordingly, we will call on you often to attend this meeting or function, to respond to this administrative detail, to speak to this or that historical or theoretical question. Please take each and every one of these callings seriously. If you do not answer, we cannot be the intellectual community and graduate program that we aspire to be.

Each of you will have an individual advisor or mentor. He or she will be the first resource for you and your questions. You will also be receiving regular emails from me about the timelines and responsibilities of our graduate program. Of course, feel free to ask me questions as well.

So here we go!

DEPARTMENT CONTACTS

TITLE	NAME	PHONE	EMAIL
Chair	April DeConick	713-348-4995	adeconick@rice.edu
Director of Doctoral Studies	Jeffrey Kripal	713-348-2710	jjkripal@rice.edu
Department Administrator	Marcie Newton	713-348-5201	mdnewton@rice.edu
Graduate Administrator	Lydia Westbrook	713-348-2092	lydiaw@rice.edu

KEY DEPARTMENT DATES FOR 2018-19:

Language Exams – ALL exams will commence at 9:00am* in HUMA room 215

Friday, September 17, 2018

Friday, November 9, 2018

Friday, January 11, 2019

Friday, March 8, 2019

***French and German exam takers will have two hours; all other language exam takers will have three hours to complete their exams.**

Comprehensive Exams – ALL exams will be 9:00am-1:00pm in HUMA room 215

Tuesday, October 16, 2018

Friday, October 19, 2018

Tuesday, October 23, 2018

Friday, October 25, 2018

Tuesday, March 19, 2019

Friday, March 22, 2019

Tuesday, March 26, 2019

Friday, March 29, 2019

General Information pertaining to Rice Graduate Programs

Refer to Rice University's General Announcements for:

- Regulations and Procedures for All Graduate Students: <https://ga.rice.edu/graduate-students/academic-policies-procedures/regulations-procedures-all-degrees/#text>
- Regulations and Procedures for Thesis Master's Graduate Degrees: <https://ga.rice.edu/graduate-students/academic-policies-procedures/regulations-procedures-thesis-masters-degrees/>
- Code of Student Conduct: <https://ga.rice.edu/graduate-students/rights-responsibilities/code-student-conduct/>
- Dispute Resolution: Petition and Appeals (http://ga.rice.edu/GR_disputes/)
- Academic and Judicial Discipline: Petition and Appeals (<https://ga.rice.edu/graduate-students/academic-policies-procedures/regulations-procedures-all-degrees/#text>)
- To change advisors, meet with the Director of Doctoral Studies. If the advisor is the Director of Doctoral Studies, students should meet with the Department Chair.

In addition to being in compliance with the regulations stated in this departmental handbook, students must also be in agreement with the General Announcements and the Code of Conduct. In case of conflicting information, university-wide regulations take precedence over department-wide regulations, which take precedence over research group-wide regulations.

If in doubt, students should seek help first at the department level (graduate administrator, Director of Doctoral Studies, advisor, and/or department chair) and then at the central administration level (Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies).

When planning vacations, students should be mindful of ongoing academic obligations and responsibilities. Students should consult with their advisors to be certain that all department obligations are met.

Title IX and Sexual Discrimination

Rice encourages any student who has experienced an incident of sexual, relationship, or other interpersonal violence, harassment or gender discrimination to seek support. There are many options available both on and off campus for all graduate students, regardless of whether the perpetrator was a fellow student, a staff or faculty member, or someone not affiliated with the university.

Students should be aware when seeking support on campus that most employees are required by Title IX to disclose all incidents of non-consensual interpersonal behaviors to Title IX professionals on campus who can act to support that student and meet their needs. The therapists at the Rice Counseling Center and the doctors at Student Health Services are confidential, meaning that Rice will not be informed about the incident if a student discloses to one of these Rice staff members. Rice prioritizes student privacy and safety, and only shares disclosed information on a need-to-know basis.

If you are in need of assistance or simply would like to talk to someone, please call Rice Wellbeing and Counseling Center, which includes Title IX Support: **(713) 348-3311**. Policies, including the Sexual Misconduct Policy and Student Code of Conduct, and more information regarding Title IX can be found at safe.rice.edu.

Accommodations for Physical, Sensory, Cognitive, Learning, & Psychological Disabilities

The Department of Religion is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for students with physical, sensory, cognitive, learning and psychological disabilities. At the PhD level this includes dimensions of program requirements such as the Comprehensive Examinations. Students in need of special consideration are encouraged to visit Rice Disability Support Services (www.dss.rice.edu) and provide documentation in order to receive a Reasonable Accommodations Request and Accommodation Letter. The letter should be given to the Director of MA Studies no later than one month prior to sitting for the Comprehensive Examinations.

Department of Religion Definition and Statement on Satisfactory Progress

Satisfactory academic progress is defined as completing the requirements of the PhD program in an adequate and timely manner as outlined in this Handbook. Students completing coursework must maintain an overall GPA of at least 3.0. Submission of Annual Assessment Reports and a Second Year Review is also required. If progress is deemed unsatisfactory at the Second Year Review, the student will automatically be put on probation for the following fall semester. Students are expected to complete the French and German language requirement by the end of the second year and to successfully complete Comprehensive Examinations by the end of the fourth year. Candidacy is to be achieved by the end of the fourth year. Furthermore, students are expected to complete and defend a prospectus based on a timeframe developed in consultation with the primary advisor, but no later than one year from completing the Comprehensive Examinations. Students must submit and orally defend a completed dissertation by the end of the eighth year.

Students who do not make satisfactory progress in the program will be notified by letter from the Director of Doctoral Studies and will be placed on probation. In conjunction with the Director of Doctoral Studies, the student will create an improvement plan for the following semester. After another semester of unsatisfactory progress, the department has the right to dismiss a student from the program.

Brief Program Timeline for PhD in Religion (refer to sections of this Handbook for more specifics)

- Year One: Coursework and regular meetings with advisor
- Year Two: Coursework; complete secondary modern language requirements (French and German) by the end of summer; and prepare Second-Year Review
- Year Three: Prepare for Comprehensive Exams
- Year Four: Complete Comprehensive Exams; achieve candidacy and submit prospectus within one year
- Year Five: Finish work on dissertation research; defend dissertation

Degree Requirements

Minimal Course Requirements

Ninety credit hours in graduate level courses are required for the PhD. Thirty-six credit hours must be taken in 500 and 600 level seminars and include the required seminars below. Students are expected to make satisfactory progress toward the degree in a timely manner and maintain a minimum GPA of B (3.0). Students typically take three courses each semester.

The Department recognizes and embraces the fact that the study of religion is an interdisciplinary project that requires forms of knowledge and methodologies from different intellectual traditions. We thus encourage each student to take coursework outside the Department. However, no more than one-fourth of all credits counted towards the Ph.D. in Religion will be accepted from other departments. This does not preclude a student, from exceeding the overall total credit requirements for the PhD.

Required Seminars (to be taken in the first two years)

- RELI 527 History and Methods: Nineteenth Century
- RELI 559 History and Methods: Twentieth Century

The seminars will generally draw most of their required readings from the bibliographies developed by the faculty for the first Comprehensive Exam. See page 24 for more on Comprehensive Exams.

Additional Course Requirement:

- Pedagogy Practicum (RELI 530)

Independent Study Courses

A syllabus is required for every Independent Study course. Students must contact the individual professor if wanting to take an Independent Study course. In general, independent study courses require students to read a selection of material worked out by the instructor or in consultation

with the instructor. Students are expected, based on readings and scheduled meetings, to develop resource materials related to a research project or comprehensive examinations.

The School of Humanities Review and Approval Form for Independent Study Courses (page 39) should be submitted to the Director of Doctoral Studies for signature by the Department Chair and submission to the Dean's Office.

Minimal Research Language Requirements

To be completed by the end of the summer of the second year.

Demonstrate proficiency in two modern research languages, French and German, by passing a reading and translation examination. See page 13 for more information on language requirements and examination procedures.

*Students working in ancient languages must pass an examination in the language of their primary source original language texts. This is in addition to the modern research language examinations (French and German) and must be completed prior to comprehensive exams.

Advising: First Year Students

First year students are expected to meet regularly with her/his primary advisor. Through these meetings, the advisor provides guidance related to coursework, language training, and other dimensions of the program. In addition, questions regarding the general structure of the Ph.D. program should be brought to the attention of the Director of Doctoral Studies at any time.

First-year students who would like a student mentor should contact their advisors.

Annual Assessment Report

The Annual Assessment is required each year (even the Second Year) and due by the last day of the spring semester. Failure to submit on time will be considered grounds for probation. See page 17 for the Annual Assessment Report form.

Second-Year Review

Written and Oral review of student's progress toward degree, to determine if satisfactory progress is being made and what needs to happen in order for student to achieve candidacy in timely manner. Students are required to provide their portfolio, including progress narratives, all seminar papers, unofficial transcripts, language completion forms, and two annual reports. NOTE: The Second Year Review is not a substitute for the Annual Assessment Report. Both are required at the end of the second year.

Comprehensive Exams

Comprehensive Exams are administered every year in the third and fourth weeks of October and March and are to be completed by the end of the fourth year. (Students are not allowed to substitute research papers in place of exams.) The Comprehensive Exams will be four in number:

1. Methods and History of the Study of Religion (required of all students)
2. one exam dedicated to a particular religious tradition or graduate area of concentration
3. one exam dedicated to a particular methodology or theoretical orientation
4. one thematic concentration exam selected by the student in consultation with her or his advisor.

See page 24 for more on Comprehensive Exams.

Achieve Candidacy

In thesis programs, the attainment of candidacy marks the completion of all requirements for the degree other than those related to research leading to the writing, submission, and defense of the thesis.

Candidacy achievement must be completed by end of the fourth year. Refer to the Candidacy Checklist on page 29 for requirements to achieve candidacy.

Prospectus

The dissertation prospectus must be completed no later than a year after achieving candidacy. It must be written under the supervision of the student's advisor and at least two other thesis committee members (member within the department and member outside the department). In consultation with the dissertation supervisor, the dissertation proposal must be submitted by the student in a standard written form to the Director of Doctoral Studies. The prospectus is then orally defended. For details about the process see page 32.

The Department of Religion does not allow co-directors from outside the Department for dissertation committees.

The outside committee member need not be an expert on the subject of the dissertation.

Committee members from outside Rice University are not allowed except in extreme circumstances and must be approved by the Director of Doctoral Studies.

While the creation of the dissertation committee is done in consultation between the faculty advisor and the student, the final decision for the composition of the committee falls to the faculty advisor, not the student.

Dissertation

The dissertation must be written and defended by the end of the eighth year in the program. As part of the writing process, students must meet with the chair of their dissertation committee at least once a semester to discuss their progress. For additional information on the dissertation defense, see “Dissertation Defense Procedures” (page 34).

For students in RELI 800 - Research for Dissertation, students are required to submit their chapters in progress to their advisor by the last day of class each semester.

Publishing and Presenting Work

Faculty within the department have different perspectives on students presenting and publishing their work. Students should be in touch with the primary advisor to discuss presentation and publishing opportunities. In addition, graduate seminars typically provide opportunities for students to present their research. Department sponsored conferences and meetings also offer presentation opportunities.

Modern Language Requirements and Exam Procedures

Requirements

All Ph.D. students are expected to pass reading exams in two secondary modern research languages, that is, two languages in which modern scholarship is written. Normally, these languages are French and German. All language exams must be completed and passed prior to setting up with the advisor the comprehensive exams. Ideally, students should be completing their language requirements in their second year of coursework. **These exams must be taken by the end of summer of the second year.**

Two paths for students to obtain proficiency in French and German

1. The recommended path is for students to enroll in specially designed intensive summer courses offered by Center for Language and Cultures at Rice. These courses, taught at the end of April and early May, alternate annually between French and German. Students are advised to find out in advance which language will be offered during a given year. The exam given at the end of the courses serves as the proficiency test.

2. The second path for students to obtain proficiency in French and German is through self-study and examination. The French examination is coordinated and administered by Dr. Fanger. The German examination is coordinated and administered by Dr. Henze. When necessary, other members of the Department of Religion faculty may assist in this process.

After receiving approval to take the exam from the student's advisor and Dr. Fanger or Dr. Henze, students must submit at least three weeks before the exam to Dr. Fanger (for French) and Dr. Henze (for German) the book from which they would like to be tested. If the book is approved, Dr. Fanger or Dr. Henze will select an appropriate section and use it to test the student. Examinations are graded by Dr. Fanger or Dr. Henze. Students will have two hours to complete language examinations in French and German.

Written examinations for French and German are taken from 9:00am-11:00am the second Friday of September, November, January, and March. There is also a summer exam date set by the language departments upon completion of the summer language courses that the student may elect to take.

Students may use a conventional language dictionary during the exam. This excludes computer or internet dictionaries and access to computer or internet translation aids. Students who take exams administered by the language departments during the summer will follow the instructor's rules regarding language exams.

Language Proficiency Exams for Primary Source Research Languages

Hebrew, Syriac, Greek, Latin, Coptic, Arabic, and Tibetan

These language exams are required for students who need to work in primary source original language texts. They are meant to prepare the students for dissertation research and their scholarly career. **They do not replace the requirement for the student to pass proficiency tests in the two modern research languages, typically French and German.**

Professors responsible for these exams should be consulted directly by the student.

- Cook [Arabic]
- DeConick [Greek-Coptic]
- Fanger [Latin]
- Henze [Hebrew-Syriac]
- Klein [Tibetan]

Working with the professor, the student will prepare texts in genres deemed most relevant to the student's area of research.

Although the format of the exam is at the professor's discretion, the proficiency exam must consist of a minimum of three passages chosen from genres in which the student has been working. At least one of the passages must be a sight passage. Students will have three hours to complete language examinations in the primary source research languages listed above.

Written examinations are taken from 9:00am-12:00pm the second Friday of September, November, January, and March.

Students cannot use computer or internet dictionaries or access computer or internet translation aids, except in cases where professor determines otherwise. Whether traditional lexicons can or cannot be used is the professor's prerogative.

The language exams determined central to the student's field of study must be completed and passed prior to setting up with the advisor the comprehensive exams.

Graduate Student Annual Report

In addition to regular meetings with the primary advisor, the Annual Report is a tool to monitor progress in the program. The Annual Report is due no later than the last day of the spring semester.

- At the end of each spring semester, the Director of Doctoral Studies sends electronic forms of the Graduate Student Annual Report to all graduate students in the program. In this e-mail, the Graduate Director requests that each student complete the student portion of the form and asks the student to then forward the completed form to the advisor. Part 3 of the Annual Report (Service Assignment Addendum and Timesheet) should be completed and turned in by the student with the supervisor's comments and signature.
- The Advisor and student will schedule an appointment in April to review the student's progress in the program and complete electronically the Advisor portion of the form.
- The Advisor prints two copies of the form, giving one to the student and putting the other in the student's file in the main office. The Advisor forwards the completed electronic form to the Graduate Director.
- The Graduate Director uses the information from the form to write letters to students who are not making satisfactory progress in the program. Written letters are distributed to each of these students, and cc'd to the Advisor no later than the end of June. A copy of the letter is placed in the student's file in the main office.

Graduate Student Annual Report Form

Due no later than the last day of spring semester.

Part 1 (Graduate Student)

This part of the report is to be filled out by the student and e-mailed to the Advisor.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Advisor: _____ Year of matriculation: _____

Concentration: _____

Secondary Area of Concentration (if any): _____

Secondary Advisor (if any): _____

GPA: _____ On probation (Y/N): _____

Total Religion Department courses: _____ Total courses outside department: _____

Cell phone: _____

Email address(es): _____

Respond to the following prompts:

1. Outline your academic progress this past year (include areas of strength that you feel you are developing; areas of weakness that you wish to improve and how we might make this happen).
2. Identify areas of future interest (include what areas you would like to gain more knowledge of in the coming years at Rice and how we might make this happen).
3. Outline your academic plans for the next academic year, including summer.
4. Outline where you are in thinking about your dissertation (if not already writing).
5. List any professional papers, panel discussions, etc. (if any) that you have given in the last academic year.
6. List any publications (if any) that have appeared during the last year, indicating whether they are refereed publications or not.
7. List any pending publications with due dates.
8. List other honors or awards received during the last academic year.

Language Exams

French planned completion date: _____ Date passed: _____

German planned completion date: _____ Date passed: _____

Additional language (if any): _____

Planned completion date: _____ Date passed: _____

Service Assignments (NOTE: Please turn in the Service Assignment ADDENDUM for the current year of the report.)

First Year Assignment(s): _____

Second Year Assignment(s): _____

Third Year Assignment(s): _____

Fourth Year Assignment(s): _____

Comprehensive Exams

Only applicable after both language exams are passed

Exam 1 Subject: _____ Tester: _____

Exam 2 Subject: _____ Tester: _____

Exam 3 Subject: _____ Tester: _____

Exam 4 Subject: _____ Tester: _____

Planned completion date: _____ Date passed: _____

Candidacy

Petition for Candidacy form completed (date): _____

Dissertation Title: _____

Dissertation Committee: _____

Prospectus complete (date): _____

Part 2 (Faculty Advisor)

This form is to be completed by the faculty advisor at the end of the Spring semester. The advisor should see that the student is given a printed copy of this report. The Advisor should file another printed copy in the student's file in the main office. An electronic version should be forwarded by the advisor to the Director of Doctoral Studies.

Student Name: _____

Advisor: _____ Date: _____

Advisor Signature: _____

Provide a BRIEF written evaluation below of the student's progress in the program. Include (if any) concerns that you may have about the student's progress and plans that you and the student have agreed to implement in order to address these concerns.

IMPORTANT: In completing this section, please write regarding these markers of success:

- Successful completion of coursework
- Advancement with respect to language requirements
- Fulfillment of service (seven hours per week) requirement
- Demonstration of satisfactory professional development (e.g., attending professional meetings, submission of paper proposals to various conferences, publications, adequate efforts to establish professional networks, participation in department events)

Part 3 - Annual Report ADDENDUM - Service Assignments (to be turned in with Annual Report)

Academic Year: _____

Description of specific work/service assignment:

Fall _____

Supervisor for Fall _____

Spring _____

Supervisor for Spring _____

Part 3 Continued - Service Assignment WEEKLY TIMESHEET

(to be filled out by student and supervisor) and turned in with Annual Report. NOTE: You will need two of these timesheets for one academic year

Student's Name _____

Supervisor's Name _____

Semester _____

Weekly Time Period	Number of Hours Worked (if "0" hours, note "0")	NOTES (special circumstances, holidays, etc.)
Week 1		
Week 2		
Week 3		
Week 4		
Week 5		
Week 6		
Week 7		
Week 8		
Week 9		
Week 10		
Week 11		
Week 12		
Week 13		
Week 14		
Week 15		
TOTAL HOURS for SEMESTER		

TO BE COMPLETED BY SUPERVISOR:

Brief Evaluation of Work by Supervisor:

Will this project continue next semester (if fall) or next year (if spring)?

Supervisor's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Second-Year Review

Every graduate student participates in a Second-Year Review in order to ensure the proper progress and development of each Ph.D. student and to measure the quality of the program.

1. Students are required to provide their portfolio, including progress narratives, all seminar papers, unofficial transcripts, language completion forms, and two annual reports. The portfolio is submitted by the student to each member of the review committee one week in advance of the oral review.
2. For the narrative, the graduate student writes a 5-10 page narrative discussing his/her progress in the program to date, strengths and weaknesses, research trajectory, and plans to complete the degree.
3. A 90-minute oral review is scheduled by the student with his/her review committee. The review committee consists of the Advisor, the Graduate Director, and any other faculty member who may sit on the student's thesis committee. These faculty members should be selected in consultation with the Advisor and solicited by the student.
4. The Graduate Director provides advisor, student AND the Graduate Program Administrator with written summary of feedback from the review committee regarding progress toward the degree.
5. If progress is deemed unsatisfactory at the Second-Year Review, the student will automatically be put on probation for the following fall semester.

Service Assignments

In return for their annual stipends, all students are expected to perform modest tasks for the department and/or individual faculty. First-year students normally provide assistance to the Department Administrator in the main office, but they also may have work assignments from their advisors. Second-, Third-, and Fourth-Year students are expected to work 7-10 hours a week for a particular faculty member as a research assistant.

In some cases, this might also involve providing teaching assistance for specific courses. Faculty are expected to submit their request(s) for such assistance in the spring for the upcoming fall to the Director of Doctoral Studies (Graduate Advisor). Students are strongly encouraged to approach these assistantships as real and integral parts of the mentoring process and as essential to their graduate education.

Students working as Research Assistants (RA) and Editors (ED) have their assignments set by a particular faculty member. This work typically involves research related to a particular project, bibliographical work, editing, etc.

IMPORTANT:

If a student is enrolled in the Pedagogy Practicum, (RELI 530) she/he will earn two credit hours. This work does not replace the required 7-10 hours of department service required in exchange for the stipend.

Graduate Student Service Assignment Form

Graduate students are expected to work 7-10 hours per week in the department as long as they are receiving a stipend from the department. This work includes assisting a professor with his or her research, teaching (as long as the teaching assignment is not receiving credit for Pedagogy Practicum), editing, organizing conferences, filing, and similar projects, or assisting the Departmental Administrator with office work.

Graduate students who are receiving a stipend must complete the Graduate Student Work Assignment form at the beginning of each semester and return a hard copy to the Director of Doctoral Studies for Religion by the second Friday of the semester.

Name: _____

Semester: _____

Description of your intended work project.

Student's signature

Date

Faculty Member's signature

Date

Comprehensive Exams

All students are required to pass their Comprehensive Exams no later than the second semester of their fourth year, but are encouraged to do so sooner. Preparing for Comprehensive Exams should be done in consultation with their Advisor. Students are not allowed to substitute research papers in place of exams.

The Comprehensive Exams are four in number:

1. Methods and History of the Study of Religion

2. Religious Traditions or Graduate Areas of Concentration

- African-American religions
- African religions
- Biblical religions
- Buddhism
- Christianity
- Hinduism
- Islam
- Judaism
- New Age and New Religious Movements
- Bible and Beyond
- Early Christian Studies
- Global Christianity
- History of Religions in America

3. Methodological Foundations

- Religious Ethics
- Contemplative Studies
- Gender Theory
- History of Religions
- Philosophy of Religion
- Psychology of Religion
- Religion and the Social Sciences
- Biblical Criticism and Scriptural Interpretation
- Theology
- Cognitive Study of Religion

4. Thematic Concentration

Together, the Comprehensive Exams are designed to give the student a broad and solid reading foundation that he or she can draw on for the rest of his or her career.

Students should consult with their advisors about the exams and obtain from them the appropriate reading lists and setup their Comprehensive Exams Committee. This committee shall consist of no less than three faculty members in the department, including their advisor. These faculty will be involved in the writing and grading of the exams.

Students must set up their exams in conversation with their Advisor and turn in the completed **Comprehensive Exams Declaration Form** (see page 26) to the Department Administrator **two weeks prior to the exams.**

Comprehensive Exams are administered every year from 9:00am-1:00pm on a Tuesday and Friday schedule in the third and fourth weeks of October, and again in the third and fourth weeks of March. If an exam date falls on an official holiday or university break, the exam will be scheduled to take place on the first working day following the break day. Students will have four hours to complete each written exam question.

The Comprehensive Exams Committee will review the exams within a reasonable period of time. Marked exams are returned and the student will schedule an oral interview (1-2 hours) via Doodle Poll or email with the examiners. During this interview, the student responds to questions related to the written examinations.

If there are deficiencies in the written exams that are not addressed adequately by the student during the oral interview, the Comprehensive Exam Committee can require the student to write a short essay (15-20 pages) addressing the deficient areas.

Students who fail the Comprehensive Examination will be automatically be dismissed from the program.

Accommodations for Physical, Sensory, Cognitive, Learning, & Psychological Disabilities

Students in need of special consideration are encouraged to visit Rice Disability Support Services (www.dss.rice.edu) and provide documentation in order to receive a Reasonable Accommodations Request and Accommodation Letter. The letter should be given to the Director of MA Studies no later than one month prior to sitting for the Comprehensive Examinations.

Comprehensive Exams Declaration Form

Student must complete this form and return it to the Department Administrator two weeks in advance of the first exam scheduled. Students should make a copy of the completed form for each of the examiners and for him-/herself.

Student Name: _____

Dates of Comprehensive Exams: _____

Exam 1: Methods and History of the Study of Religion

Examiner Name

Examiner Signature

Examiner Name

Examiner Signature

Exam 2: Religious Tradition(s): _____

Examiner Name

Examiner Signature

Examiner Name

Examiner Signature

Exam 3: Methodological Foundations: _____

Examiner Name

Examiner Signature

Examiner Name

Examiner Signature

Exam 4: Thematic Concentration: _____

Examiner Name

Examiner Signature

Examiner Name

Examiner Signature

Evaluation of Comprehensive Examinations

The student will bring this form to the oral interview portion of the Comprehensive Exams. After completion, this form must be turned in to the Department Administrator to be placed in the student's file.

Student Name: _____ Pass ____ Fail ____

Date: _____

Exam 1: Methods and History of the Study of Religion

Examiner's Signature: _____

Examiner's Signature: _____

Exam 2: Religious Traditions(s)

Examiner's Signature: _____

Examiner's Signature: _____

Exam 3: Methodological Foundations

Examiner's Signature: _____

Examiner's Signature: _____

Exam 4: Thematic Concentration

Examiner's Signature: _____

Examiner's Signature: _____

Additional Comments:

Candidacy Procedures

In order to be awarded a Candidacy Master's Degree and achieve Ph.D. Candidacy, the Comprehensive Exams must be successfully passed. When the student is ready to petition for Candidacy she/he should contact the Graduate Administrator who will assist with compiling and submitting the appropriate paperwork.

The student must meet with the Graduate Administrator to compile the following:

1. The Checklist for PhD Candidacy (with appropriate documentation)
2. Petition for Approval of Candidacy for a Doctoral Degree (C-2) (Note: if an additional dissertation committee member is non-Rice faculty, include a copy of CV).
3. Candidacy Master's Degree (G-1)

All students are required achieve candidacy no later than the second semester of their fourth year, but are encouraged to do so sooner. This should be done in consultation with their Advisor.

Checklist for PhD Candidacy, Religion

Graduate Student

Date

- 1. Coursework
At time of candidacy student must have earned a minimum of thirty-six credit hours in 500 and 600 level seminars.
- 2. Annual Reports (see instructions and form on pages 15-19)
- 3. Required Seminars
RELI 527 HISTORY & METHODS: 19th CENTURY
RELI 559 HISTORY & METHODS: 20th CENTURY
- 4. Language Training (see pages 13-14)
Pass reading exams in both French and German.
 - Language #1 date passed _____
 - Language #2 date passed _____
 - Original Language Proficiencies (if necessary for area of study) _____
- 5. Second-Year Review (see page 21)
Each second-year student submits a substantive report in the spring semester and has an hour-long oral interview with the Director of Doctoral Studies and their faculty mentor. A summary of the report is given to the student on his/her progress in the program.
- 6. Comprehensive Exams Declaration Form (see form on page 26)
- 7. Evaluation of Comprehensive Examinations (include form on page 27)
- 8. Completed documents
 - Petition for Approval of Candidacy for a Doctoral Degree (C-2)
 - Candidacy Master's Degree (G-1)

Graduate Administrator Signature

Date



SAMPLE ONLY
Go to <https://graduate.rice.edu/forms>
and download most current version. Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

PETITION FOR APPROVAL OF CANDIDACY FOR A DOCTORAL DEGREE (C-2)

Candidacy for the Doctoral degree cannot be approved until the applicant has completed all course requirements, all qualifying or preliminary examinations or department equivalent, and any foreign language requirements.

1. Name of applicant _____
(Last) (First) (M.I.)

2. Department/Graduate program _____ Student ID # _____

Attach to this application a current transcript (printed from WebApps; see your graduate coordinator).

Attach to this application a statement of all applicable departmental requirements for both course work and qualifying or preliminary examinations.

Attach student's departmental checklist to candidacy to document how the student has fulfilled departmental requirements.

3. Proposed thesis topic (tentative title) _____

4. Thesis Committee, subject to the approval of the GPS. (**type or print**) Please see the General Announcements for rules regarding the composition of thesis committees.

(a) Thesis Director _____

Committee Chair within the department (**if different**) _____

(b) Member **within** the department _____

(c) Member **outside** the department _____

Additional member(s) _____

*Thesis committees may later be changed. See <http://graduate.rice.edu/thesis> for additional information.

5. Signatures:

Original signature of Department Chair or
Director of Graduate Studies Date _____

Graduate Coordinator signature Date _____

Graduate Studies Procedural Handbook Page 30
2018-2019 Date _____
Dean of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies



SAMPLE ONLY
 Go to <https://graduate.rice.edu/forms> and download most current version.

Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

CANDIDACY MASTER'S DEGREE (G-1)

Check one box:

- December conferral - - - - - Deadline: Oct 31
 May conferral - - - - - Deadline: Feb 28

Deadline to turn in this form:

Check one box:

- Master's of Arts (MA)
 Master's of Science (MS)

This degree will be conferred only if the following conditions are satisfied by the Candidate:

1. Student must be registered for the semester in which the award is to be made.
2. Ph.D. candidacy must have been approved prior to or in conjunction with submission of this petition form.
3. **This form must be returned to the Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies office by October 31 for December conferral or February 28 for May conferral.**

Name of Candidate _____
Last First Middle

Student ID: _____ Department Name: _____

Statement of Candidate:

I wish to accept the Master's Degree. _____
Signature of Candidate

I have submitted An Application for Degree with the Registrar's Office (available through your ESTHER account) on or before the deadlines listed above.

Signature of Department Chair: _____ Date _____

Office Use Only

GPS Approval and Certification _____
(Initial)

Date _____

Dissertation Prospectus Procedures

It is strongly advised that candidates for degree complete the dissertation prospectus in cooperation with their Advisor within six months following the completion of their Comprehensive Exams. The prospectus is required to be submitted no later than a year after achieving candidacy.

- The student, in consultation with their Advisor, will write and submit a prospectus to the Director of Doctoral Studies for the Department. The student then enrolls as a candidate for degree in RELI 800: Research and Thesis.
- The prospectus will be reviewed by a committee consisting of the Director of Doctoral Studies, the Advisor, and the other members of the Dissertation Committee.
- The prospectus will be submitted to the members of the committee at least one week in advance of the review meeting. The committee will meet with the candidate to discuss the proposal. At the end of the meeting, the prospectus will either be passed or returned for modifications or resubmission.
- Minimum Prospectus requirements: 4000-5000 words

Abstract

Articulate the question and the thesis in 500 words. State Question/Literature Review Section outlining the secondary research on the student's question and/or a literature review, with a discussion of the student's contribution to the state of the question.

Approach

Explain the student's approach to the materials, with reference to theorists and/or methods appropriate to the student's question.

Contents

Describe the planned content of each chapter of the dissertation.

Timetable

Set up timetable for completion of the project, with real deadlines for completion of each chapter.

Dissertation Prospectus Approval Form

After completion, this form must be turned in to the Department Administrator to be placed in the student's file.

Student Name: _____

Date of Prospectus Review Meeting: _____

Faculty Present (including Director of Doctoral Studies):

Comments:

Prospectus Approval:

Thesis Advisor (printed) Signature Date

Director of Doctoral Studies (printed) Signature Date

RELI 800 – Research for Dissertation

While writing their dissertation, students will be enrolled in RELI 800. Students are required to submit their chapters in progress to their advisor by the last day of classes each semester.

Dissertation Defense Procedures

The dissertation defense, also called the oral defense, is a public event that is announced to the Rice Community via the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. The event's length is usually between an hour and a half and two hours and is moderated by the Advisor of the particular candidate.

The event proceeds in four simple stages:

1. Dissertation writer will briefly (in no more than 10-15 minutes) summarize his/her dissertation topic and research.
2. The committee members engage the student via any questions that they choose to ask. Normally, each committee member will be given a separate turn to query the writer.
3. After the questions are exhausted and the committee feels like it has heard what it needs to hear, the writer and any audience members will be asked to leave the room, at which time the committee will deliberate and come to a decision about the dissertation.
4. Finally, the Ph.D. candidate is brought back into the room and informed of the results of the deliberation.

Three outcomes are possible: (1) pass; (2) fail; and (3) revise. If the outcome is “revise,” the candidate has six months from the date of the defense to make all necessary revisions and submit their dissertation.

For full details of all the requirements and procedures around the oral defense, see graduate.rice.edu/thesis.

NOTE: Students should contact the department's Graduate Administrator to review ALL university requirements related to the dissertation defense, thesis submission, and degree conferral, *no later* than the beginning of the semester they intend to defend.

Checklist for Graduation (for student reference)

Dissertation Prospectus Approval Form

Date: _____

Dissertation Approved by Committee to schedule oral defense

Date: _____

Oral Defense

Date: _____

Final revisions submitted and approved

Date: _____

Thesis Director approval:

(printed name)

(signature)

(date)

Teaching Opportunity - Graduate Student Instructor (GSI)

Each student may apply to teach a total of one to two courses.

- The student teaching the course will receive \$5,000 in compensation.
- Students must select courses offered by his/her advisor in consultation with the advisor.

Qualifications

- The student must be in at least the fourth year of the Religion Ph.D. program at the time the course is taught.
- The student must be in good academic standing at the time the course is taught.
- The student must have successfully completed the Pedagogy Practicum (RELI 530) and register for the appropriate advisor's section at the time the course is taught. Note that the Graduate Student Teaching opportunity does not substitute for the Pedagogy Practicum.

Application

- The application must be made in consultation with the student's advisor.
- The student must apply to teach a course from the Course Catalog (available online from the Registrar's Office).
- The student must submit the GSI Request Form (next page), a letter of support from the student's primary advisor, the syllabus, a statement of teaching philosophy (no more than two pages in length), and a CV.
- The deadline for applications is:
 - **The first Friday of the Spring semester for courses to be taught in the following academic year (Fall/Spring).**
- Applications are to be submitted to the Department Administrator, with a copy to the Director of Doctoral Studies and the Chair of the Department.

Selection Process

- Final approval of courses will be made by the Chair and the Graduate Director.
- Students will be notified of the results.

Graduate Student Instruction Request Form

Submit to Department Administrator and Director of Doctoral Studies.

Date received: _____

It is important to remember that this is a competitive process, and students are not guaranteed a course assignment.

Name: _____ DATE: _____

Year in Program: _____

YES/NO (circle one) I have successfully completed Pedagogy Practicum RELI 530

YES/NO (circle one) I am currently enrolled in Pedagogy Practicum RELI 530

YES/NO (circle one) I have successfully passed Comprehensive Exams

I plan to take my Comprehensive Exams on _____
(date)

Course Title: _____

___ I would like to teach this coming spring semester

___ I would like to teach next fall semester

Time preference: _____

Checklist

- Teaching Request Form
- Syllabus
- Statement of Teaching Philosophy
- Course Goals
- C.V.

I, _____, understand that teaching this course will be compensated in the amount of \$5,000 contingent upon the availability of funds, and that priority will be given to students in the sixth-eighth year of the program.

(Signature – Student)

(Signature – Advisor)

Additional Funding

Graduate students may apply for additional funding through the following Rice sources:

- Conference and Research Travel Support – limited funds are available for students to travel to present at conferences. Funding is facilitated through the Dean’s office. Information can be found at <https://humanities.rice.edu/student-life/graduate-students/funding-for-research>.
- Gnosticism, Esotericism, Mysticism (GEM) Certificate from the Department of Religion. Students can apply for a \$5,000 stipend upon completion of requirements. Stipends are awarded based on availability of funds.
- Certificate in the Study of Women, Gender, and Sexuality from the Center for the Study of Women, Gender, Sexuality (CSWGS). One-time stipend of \$5,000 upon completion.
- 3CT Certificate Funding Opportunities; Graduate Certificate Program;. Students can apply for a competitive \$5,000 stipend upon completion of requirements.
- Instructor of Record in a Freshman Writing Intensive Seminar (FWIS) administered by the Program in Writing and Communication (PWC).
- Tutoring work at the Center for Written, Oral, and Visual Communication (CWOVS).

Special Graduate Fellowships for Continuing Students

Each spring, department chairs are invited to nominate continuing graduate students for the following special endowed fellowships; the final recipients are chosen by the Graduate Council. The amount of the fellowship and the number of recipients vary from year to year.

- **Lodieska Stockbridge Vaughn:** To provide a fellowship for a graduate student whose record at Rice shows evidence of outstanding achievement and promise. Four or five awards are usually given university-wide.
- **Mellon Graduate Research Seminar:** The Mellon Graduate Research Seminar provides an opportunity to apply for a research stipend of approximately \$6,900 as well as conference funding upon completion. Students should preferably be in their third or fourth year of study. Applications are through the Humanities Research Center in the spring semester for the following academic year and require a one-page statement of research interest and a one-page CV. See <http://hrc.rice.edu/seminars> for further information.
- **James T. Wagoner Fellow- Foreign Study Scholarships:** Applicant is expected to enroll in a foreign university or conduct research in a foreign country. Funding ranges from \$3,500-\$15,000 and is related to the scholar’s projected expenses for a year, semester, or summer.

Prizes

- **John Gardner Prize:** The School of Humanities awards the \$1,000 John Gardner Prize to the student with the best dissertation in the School of Humanities. Nominations are determined by department. Dissertations are read by a committee of Humanities faculty from departments with graduate programs, and a joint recommendation is made to the Dean of Humanities for final approval.

School of Humanities Review & Approval Form for Independent Study Courses

Submit a copy of this completed form to the Office of the Dean of Humanities.

Department and Catalog Number: _____

Title: _____

Level: _____ Undergraduate Credit hours: _____
 _____ Graduate

Faculty Member: _____

Student: _____

Year and Term to be offered: _____

Include a description of project, research, or reading assignments or attach a plan of study or syllabus to this form.

The course plan or assignments as outlined above or attached hereto, has/have been discussed and agreed to by both parties as the work which must be successfully completed to receive course credit.

Faculty Member's signature

Date

Student's signature

Date

APPROVAL

Department Chair

Date

Gnosticism, Esotericism, Mysticism (GEM) Certificate Program

The GEM Certificate provides students with a theoretical orientation, which they then can apply to their chosen concentrations (i.e., African-American religions; African religions; Bible and Beyond; Buddhism; Christianity; Hinduism; Islam; Judaism; American Religion; New Age and New Religious Movements; etc.). Traditionally the study of religion has privileged the authoritative voices of the religious experts and the scriptural texts that uphold orthodox faith traditions. This traditional approach ignores, marginalizes, and even sometimes literally demonizes religious expressions that are against the grain or cannot be fit into the normative worldview. These same expressions have also been identified by orthodox faith traditions as "heresy." For too long, scholars have been reluctant to consider this "other" material central or vital to academic discussions of religion, while these alternative religious expressions have been pejoratively labeled as the stuff of charlatans, the mentally ill, or ignorant folk.

It is our opinion that such an approach has failed to consider fully the process of the construction of orthodoxy and heresy out of a plurality of competing religious voices. This failure creates and sustains political narratives of religion that serve to protect orthodoxies from criticism and promote their biases as historically sound. It disregards religious voices that are vibrant historical witnesses to the shaping of religious landscapes.

GEM is a new approach to the study of religion that does not privilege the public orthodox framings but takes seriously the heterodox and esoteric currents that have been actively repressed, censored, or marginalized in a variety of sociological, psychological, philosophical, and political ways. GEM takes into account the plurality of religious voices and expressions, including the neglected currents, in order to reconceive religion. This approach also engages the psychology and the phenomenology of religious experience, rather than relying exclusively on the authorial framings taught by the faith traditions and transmitted in their scriptural texts, interpretations and rituals. While we recognize that the comparative categories of gnosticism, esotericism and mysticism are modern constructs, each provides us with different nuances that can assist in asking the sort of dialectical questions that will result in a more honest assessment and thick description of religion and the religious traditions we study.

Requirements for the Certificate

12 credits of coursework and 2-semester enrollment in RELI 600 GEM Research Forum (1 credit course) are required.

- **3 Theory-Intensive Core Courses**

Students are required to complete one course in Gnosticism (RELI 581), one course in the Esotericism (RELI 587), and one course in Mysticism (RELI 558).

- **1 Thematic Course** (from list of approved courses; see April DeConick or Jeff Kripal)

- **2 semesters of RELI 600 GEM Research Forum**

Students are required to enroll in consecutive Fall and Spring semesters during the same academic year. Although only one year of enrollment is required, students are encouraged to participate in the Forum throughout their time at Rice.

- **Submission of *Intention of Completion of GEM Certificate*** (in-house form) to the department coordinator, a semester in advance of bestowal. Certificates will be awarded each spring at our departmental graduation ceremony.

Courses

Theory-Intensive Core Courses (3)

These courses are essential to the certificate because they theorize the constructed categories under study: Gnosticism, Esotericism and Mysticism. They do so from the ancient world to the modern period, giving students the necessary historical sweep to fully engage the categories and the debates surrounding them.

RELI 581: Gnosticism Seminar (DeConick)

What is Gnosticism? This course covers the construction of the category Gnosticism by scholars since the 1600s and its long-standing association with the concept of heresy and the literature and religions that people who call themselves Gnostics form. Literary, social, historical and cognitive methods are used to examine Gnostic religious currents and their survival into modernity.

RELI 587: Western Esotericism Method and Theory (Fanger)

This course explores the relation between esoteric texts and the idea of "Western Esotericism." Examines primary writings from Agrippa to Madame Blavatsky and considers the historical and methodological approaches emerging as Esotericism is constructed as an academic area.

RELI 558: Mysticism: Theories & Methods (Kripal or Parsons)

This course is a history of the development of the modern category of "mysticism" from the seventeenth century to today, with side studies of cognate terms like "spirituality," "metaphysical religion," and the "paranormal," as these forms of extreme religious experience are by social-scientific and humanistic methods.

Thematic Courses (1)

Students are asked to select one additional thematic course which focuses on the study of one particular area in detail. This focus should reflect the student's interest. This list is kept updated annually by the Department.

List of Thematic Courses

- RELI 505: American Metaphysical Religion (Kripal)
- RELI 522: Islam's Mystical and Esoteric Tradition (Cook)
- RELI 526: Magic and Popular Religion (Cook)
- RELI 532: Advanced Tibetan Language & Culture (Klein)
- RELI 541: Creating Magic (Fanger)
- RELI 551: Divine Sex (Fanger)
- RELI 562: Kabbalah Seminar (Ogren)
- RELI 566: Pain, Ecstasy & Embodiment in Religious Experience (Fanger)
- RELI 570: Buddhist Wisdom Texts (Klein)
- RELI 574: The Bible and the Brain (DeConick)
- RELI 588: The History of Religions School (Kripal)
- RELI 589: Mutants and Mystics (Kripal)
- RELI 602: The Sacred Spaces of Secular Modernism (Brennan)
- RELI 615: Secret Religion (DeConick)

RELI 600 GEM Research Forum (2 consecutive semesters)

This forum meets monthly throughout the semester. Its purpose is for faculty and students to share, discuss and critique their current research (pre-publication) in GEM subjects in order to improve the quality of the papers and to mentor students in formal academic etiquette and oral communication skills. Students are asked to write academic reflections of each event, identifying key insights and issues that may impact their own research as scholars. At the end of the year, a conference is hosted on a GEM subject. An external keynote speaker is invited. Students are asked to participate as presiders, organizers, and speakers. This is meant to provide students with the opportunity to learn how to organize and host conferences, improve their oral communication skills, and to network with scholars at other institutions.

Request for GEM Certificate

Please submit this completed form to the Department Administrator in HUMA 225 when you have fulfilled the following the requirements.*

Name: _____

Projected date of PhD graduation: _____

- RELI 581: Gnosticism Seminar
Semester enrolled and completed: _____
- RELI 587: Western Esotericism Method and Theory
Semester enrolled and completed: _____
- RELI 588: Mysticism: Theories and Methods
Semester enrolled and completed: _____
- One thematic course from following list.
Course number and name: _____
Semester enrolled and completed: _____

RELI 505: American Metaphysical Religion (Kripal)

RELI 522: Islam's Mystical and Esoteric Tradition (Cook)

RELI 526: Magic and Popular Religion (Cook)

RELI 532: Advanced Tibetan Language & Culture (Klein)

RELI 541: Creating Magic (Fanger)

RELI 551: Divine Sex (Fanger)

RELI 562: Kabbalah Seminar (Ogren)

RELI 566: Pain, Ecstasy & Embodiment in Religious Experience (Fanger)

RELI 570: Buddhist Wisdom Texts (Klein)

RELI 574: The Bible and the Brain (DeConick)

RELI 588: The History of Religions School (Kripal)

RELI 589: Mutants and Mystics (Kripal)

RELI 602: The Sacred Spaces of Secular Modernism (Brennan)

RELI 615: Secret Religion (DeConick)

- 2 semesters (minimum) of RELI 600 GEM Research Forum
Semester enrolled and completed: _____
Semester enrolled and completed: _____

Attach one paper you have written for a class, conference presentation, or publication that you think implements or incorporates into your own subdiscipline the knowledge and theoretical perspectives you have learned by participating in this certification program

Attach a 1000 word essay describing how your paper implements or incorporates into your own subdiscipline the knowledge and theoretical perspectives you have learned by participating in this certification program