Welcome to the Department of Comparative Religion!

On behalf of the faculty I want to welcome you to the department and congratulate you on your acceptance into the program. Our goal is to provide the highest quality education experience and we hope your time here will be productive and help you to meet your goals whether they are to advance on to a Ph.D. program, teach at a local community college, or pursue a career outside of education.

The faculty and staff want to make sure your time here is the best it can be and that you are able to progress through your program as smoothly as possible. Towards that end, we have put together this package. In here you will find forms you will need during your time here at WMU as well as helpful information about the department, campus and community. When the time comes to complete a form(s), please be sure to check websites for the most up-to-date version.

You can keep up with events and other information by “liking” us on Facebook (Department of Comparative Religion). Also be sure to ask fellow students about the Religion Student Organization and the Teaching Assistant Union if you are teaching.

If you have any questions or need anything during your time in the department, please do not hesitate to ask me.

Yours truly,

Stephen G. Covell, Ph.D.
Chair, Department of Comparative Religion
Mary Meader Professor of Comparative Religion
Western Michigan University
Moore Hall 2002
269-387-4365
s.covell@wmich.edu
Welcome to the graduate studies program in the Department of Comparative Religion at Western Michigan University. There are a vast number of resources available to help make your experience at WMU as meaningful as possible. One of those resources is our student organization, the Graduate Students of Comparative Religion (GSCR).

Our group was created to enhance the graduate studies program by sponsoring events and activities that benefit the endeavors of our members. In the past, we have held social events, sponsored guest speakers, and sponsored a film series. Our group is also active with the Graduate Student Advisory Committee, a campus-wide organization that constantly works to make graduate education at WMU competitive and high-quality.

Membership is open to all graduate students in the Department. There are no additional membership requirements or dues. Group meetings are held four times per year, with subcommittee meetings held as needed.

If you have questions, please contact Zach Smith at zacharyt94.smith@wmich.edu.
Administrative staff, Lori Diehl, is available during office hours. The office is open during the fall and spring semester **Monday through Friday 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.**

Staff supports faculty, instructors, undergraduates and graduate students. We are here to assist you and will help in any way we can. We assist with administrative issues, general office, forms, processes, etc… If you don’t know, ask and we will point you in the right direction.

The copier/mailbox room is open during business hours but you will get a key for after hour use. You use your course CRN (five-digit course code) as the code to make copies relating to the course. Personal copying is not permitted. Some paper is kept in the drawer beneath the mailboxes. If it runs out, there is more in room 2004. Paper supply is monitored.

Check your mailboxes regularly. Outgoing mail goes in “out box” near the mailboxes. Personal outgoing mail is not permitted unless it is stamped. If you unlock the mailroom door then please be sure to lock it when you leave.

Your offices should be kept clean and organized. Please do not store cans, bottles, food, etc. There is a recycling bin in copier/mailbox room for clean plastic and glass. There should be a paper recycling bin in your office. The earth thanks you for using both! Keep the office door locked when not in use and the windows closed. Remember you are sharing this space – please be considerate of others.

There is a desktop computer for each office space. There is also a desktop Mac and PC, and printer in the Student Lounge area for your use. (If you notice toner for the printer is getting low, please leave a note for Lori in her box.)

These resources are being supplied to assist you with your graduate studies and teaching responsibilities; we trust that you won’t take advantage.

Any questions, please don’t hesitate to ask. We look forward to getting to know each of you and are excited about another great semester. We hope you find the department to be friendly, helpful and supportive.
Department of Comparative Religion

Student Study Lounge

Room 2022, Moore Hall

• The lounge is for use by Comparative Religion minors, majors, graduate students, the Religion Student Organization, as well as students enrolled in Comparative Religion courses.

• The lounge will be open during regular office hours. Those wishing to use it after hours must get permission from the department chair and request a key from the administrative assistant. Permissible after-hour uses include department related meetings, lectures, talks, workshops, and film showings. An effort will be made to keep the lounge open during finals week.

• The computers and printers are there for student use. Abuse of these privileges will result in the removal of one or both. Please refrain from using the printer for large print jobs or any printing that is not associated with your studies in the department.

• The television and AV equipment are for student use. Please refrain from using the TV if others are studying.
GRADUATE HANDBOOK INTRODUCTION

This handbook supplements information in the current Graduate Catalog about programs, courses and faculty in the Western Michigan University Department of Comparative Religion. Neither this handbook nor Graduate College publications can answer every question or provide absolutely up-to-date information about every matter pertaining to graduate education in Comparative Religion. New academic and professional opportunities as well as potential sources of financial assistance for graduate students continually appear. Once enrolled in a department program, be certain to consult regularly with your Faculty Advisor (FA), the department’s Graduate Advisor (GA) and, as you advance in your program, with members of your examination or thesis committee. You can also learn a great deal by participating regularly with the activities of the Graduate Students of Comparative Religion (GSCR); the department office can put you in touch with current GSCR officers. The Graduate Student Association (GSA) of the Graduate College also is an important source of information.

The Graduate Advisor is available during office hours and by appointment during the regular academic year. The Department Chair is available during most of the calendar year by appointment. Written, telephone and electronic inquiries from active and prospective graduate students are most welcome at all times. Regular consultation of the Comparative Religion Department website: <https://wmich.edu/religion> and the Graduate College website: <http://www.wmich.edu/grad> will answer many questions, provide needed forms and suggest opportunities.

Dr. Stephen Covell, Chair
Western Michigan University
Department of Comparative Religion
2002 Moore Hall
Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5334
269-387-4365
s.covell@wmich.edu

Dr. Alisa Perkins, Graduate Advisor
Western Michigan University
Department of Comparative Religion
2005 Moore Hall
Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5334
269-387-4396
alisa.perkins@wmich.edu

Ms. Lori Diehl, Administrative Assistant II
Western Michigan University
Department of Comparative Religion
2004 Moore Hall
Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5334
269-387-4393
lori.diehl@wmich.edu

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS HANDBOOK:
GSCR= Graduate Students of Comparative Religion
GA=Graduate Advisor
GSC=Graduate Studies Committee (departmental)
FA=Faculty Advisor
PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

MASTER OF ARTS IN COMPARATIVE RELIGION (33 hours)
Two courses of study are available to students enrolling in the MA in Comparative Religion program:
(1) Exam Option (2) Thesis Option

All students accepted into the MA program are assigned to a Faculty Advisor (FA) or to a preliminary advisor who will offer advice in choosing a FA. The FA will advise the student in selecting courses and setting language requirements, if necessary, which will fulfill the requirements of the option the student has selected.

Graduate Student Permanent Program. At the end of the second semester in the program or no later than after the successful completion of 12 hours of graduate course work, all MA candidates must meet again with the FA and GA to review their progress and to approve their “Graduate Student Permanent Program-Master’s Level” as recorded on the Registrar’s Program form, which is available online at: https://wmich.edu/grad/forms. Once signed by the student, the form will be forwarded to the GA, who will place it in the student’s permanent file; the form will also be filed with the Registrar. Thereafter, an annual review of the student’s progress will be made by the departmental GSC, in consultation with the FA. Students may be asked, or may request, to meet with the GA or members of the GSC as part of this review. When the student has completed the course of study, and passed the MA Examination or defended the Thesis, the Graduate Student Permanent Program Master’s Level form shall be reviewed by the student, the Faculty Advisor, and the Graduate Advisor, and filed with the Registrar, the Faculty Advisor, and the GA (Department). The Registrar’s office uses this form for the graduation audit, so it should be filed well before the student has completed the program requirements. If there are changes to the program, students should use the “Program of Study Change Form” or re-submit the modified “Permanent Program Form” in consultation with the Graduate Advisor.

Option 1: Exam Option

All students are strongly encouraged to pursue Option 1: Exam Option. Following this option does not require preparation of a thesis or reading proficiency in a foreign language. It does require you to complete:

• A total of at least 33 hours of course work, including 12 hours of required core courses and 21 hours of electives chosen from approved courses.
• Comprehensive examinations.

Required Courses: Option 1

REL 6000 - Comparative Religion Professional Seminar Credits: 3 hours
REL 6100 - Theory and Method Credits: 3 hours
REL 6150 - Pedagogy: Teaching World Religions Credits: 3 hours
REL 6200 - Advanced Writing Seminar in Religion Credits: 3 hours
Electives: Option 1

Twenty-one hours of electives chosen from below or other approved cognate courses. Approved cognate courses may be drawn from related disciplines such as anthropology, philosophy, sociology, psychology, English, history and art history in consultation with the student's advisor. To seek approval for a cognate course outside this list, the student must email the Graduate Advisor and gain written consent. *No more than three approved cognate courses from outside the department may be taken as part of the 33 credits needed to graduate.* These three courses do not include any transfer credits that the student has elected to include in her/his program.

REL 5000 - Historical Studies in Religion  
REL 5100 - Comparative Studies in Religion  
REL 5980 - Readings in Religion  
REL 7100 - Independent Research  
REL 7120 - Professional Field Experience

Comprehensive Exam: Option 1

Satisfactorily complete a comprehensive examination in the area or areas of concentration.

**Option 2: Thesis Option**

All students are strongly encouraged to pursue Option 1: Exam Option. Entry into Option 2: Thesis Option is by permission of the GSC, and must be approved by the second semester of the program or before the completion of 12 credits. This option is only recommended for students who have come into the program with a strong and active program of independent research.

Option 2 requires a thesis and four additional requirements:

- Complete a total of at least 27 hours of course work, including 12 hours of required core courses and 15 hours of electives chosen from approved courses.
- Prepare a master's thesis (six hours) under the direction of a thesis advisor.
- Demonstrate reading proficiency in one foreign language relevant to the student’s research area.
- Defend the master's thesis in oral examination.

**Required Courses: Option 2**

REL 6000 - Comparative Religion Professional Seminar Credits: 3 hours  
REL 6100 - Theory and Method Credits: 3 hours  
REL 6150 - Pedagogy: Teaching World Religions Credits: 3 hours  
REL 6200 - Advanced Writing Seminar in Religion Credits: 3 hours

**Electives: Option 2**

Fifteen hours of electives chosen from below or other approved cognate courses. Approved cognate courses may be drawn from related disciplines such as anthropology, philosophy, sociology, psychology, English, history and art history in consultation with the student's advisor. To seek approval for a cognate course outside this list, the student must email the Graduate Advisor and gain written consent. *No more than three approved cognate courses from outside the department may be taken as part of the 33 credits needed to graduate.*
graduate. These three courses do not include any transfer credits that the student has elected to include in her/his program.

REL 5000 - Historical Studies in Religion  
REL 5100 - Comparative Studies in Religion  
REL 5980 - Readings in Religion  
REL 7100 - Independent Research  
REL 7120 - Professional Field Experience

**Master's Thesis (6 hours)**

Prepare and defend, in oral examination, a master’s thesis under the direction of a thesis advisor.

REL 7000 - Master's Thesis Credits: 1 to 6 hours

**Foreign Language Proficiency**

Demonstrate reading proficiency in one foreign language relevant to the research area.

**Course Levels.** MA candidates are eligible to register for 5000, 6000, and 7000 level courses. MA candidates are also eligible to enroll in one upper level undergraduate course for graduate credit. This course must be at the 3000 or 4000 level. The student must gain written approval for taking a 3000 or 4000 level course from the Graduate Advisor before enrolling in the course. The student must also submit a completed “Permission to Elect a 3000- or 4000- Level Course For Inclusion in a Master’s Degree Program” form signed by the Course Instructor, the Graduate Advisor, and the Departmental Chair before enrolling in the course. The form may be found here: [https://wmich.edu/grad/forms](https://wmich.edu/grad/forms). After all the signatures have been collected, the form will then be sent by the department’s Administrative Assistant to the Graduate College.

**COURSE WORK**

**Online Courses/Extended University Program (EUP) Courses.** MA candidates are eligible to register off-campus and online courses for inclusion in graduate programs of study. Students who are on graduate appointment and want to receive tuition assistance for an EUP course must submit a completed “Permission to Elect Extended University Programs off-campus or online course for inclusion in a Graduate Program of Study” form signed by the Graduate Advisor or the Departmental Chair before enrolling in the course. The form may be found here: [https://wmich.edu/grad/forms](https://wmich.edu/grad/forms). After the Departmental Chair signs the form, it will then be sent by Comparative Religion to the Graduate College.

**Independent Study Courses (Comparative Religion 5980, or 7000 level).** Independent Study Courses are available to enhance a student’s program of study. They should be carefully planned and agreed on by the Student, the Instructor, and the Graduate Advisor. To register for these courses students must obtain the appropriate form from the Administrative Assistant and complete it with all required signatures before returning it to the Administrative Assistant. Copies of the form are distributed to the Department office, the instructor, the student’s file, and the student. The actual registration is done in the Comparative Religion Department office. Be sure to register for these courses well before the semester or summer session begins.
Transfer credits. With the prior approval of the Graduate Advisor and the Department Chair, up to six transfer credit hours from other universities may be applied toward the MA.

Language Requirements. Requirements for proficiency in a language other than English vary by option (see above), with students electing “Option 1- Exam Option” exempt from any language requirement. The specific language requirements for students enrolled in “Option 2-Thesis Option” will be determined in consultation with the Graduate Advisor and the Faculty Advisor, and progress toward meeting these requirements will be indicated by the student in the annual Graduate Student Activity Report. The language requirement shall be finalized by members of the Thesis Committee when they are appointed. The language proficiency requirement must be completed before the student may register for Thesis credit. Proficiency is to be demonstrated by successful completion of coursework in the appropriate language department. For those languages not offered by WMU departments, language experts will be identified and asked to administer language/translation exams.

Incompletes. Graduate students should avoid Incomplete grades except in cases of emergency. These are temporary grades intended to indicate that illness or other circumstances beyond the student’s control prevented completion of course requirements by the end of the semester or session. If the Incomplete grade is not changed within one calendar year, it automatically becomes a failing grade. The accumulation of such grades can seriously impede progress in the graduate program, and, over time, too many incomplete grades may result in dismissal from the department. The Graduate Advisor, Faculty Advisor, and Department Chair carefully monitor the progress of students with Incomplete grades on their transcripts. To request an incomplete grade, the student should first schedule an in-person meeting with the professor if at all possible to discuss the issue. After the meeting, a formal request for an incomplete grade must be made in writing. This request should be sent via email to the professor. In cases where serious illness or other situations result in repeated incomplete grades, it is suggested that the student file a request for a leave of absence. The form for this is available on the Graduate College website.

ASSESSING PROGRESS TOWARD PROGRAM COMPLETION

Annual Review. The departmental Graduate Studies Committee assesses the progress of each student annually. As part of its annual assessment of students’ progress in the program, the Graduate Studies Committee reviews the student’s grades, Graduate Student Activities Report (see below), and all relevant program forms. Students may be asked, or may request, to meet with the Graduate Advisor or members of the Graduate Studies Committee as part of this review. Each student will be informed of the result of the annual review before the beginning of the next regular academic semester (Fall or Spring). The Annual Review will indicate if the student’s progress is satisfactory, satisfactory with reservations, or unsatisfactory, by assigning a rating of “continuation, continue with reservations, or dismissal. For more information about how students will be assessed, please see annual review sample in the forms page o the Graduate College website.
**Graduate Student Activities Report.** As part of the annual review, all students enrolled in the MA program are required to submit each year an annual Graduate Student Activities Report (GAR), adhering explicitly to the guidelines indicated in the Appendices to this handbook. During a student’s first year the GAR is due on February 15; for all subsequent years the GAR is due October 15. The report shall include all relevant activities undertaken in the previous calendar year and will identify progress in the course of study outlined in the Graduate Student Permanent Program. In the case of funded students it should also include all Teaching and Research Assistant evaluations and a report of academic and employment obligations in addition to those required by the award. The purpose of such reporting is to enable the Faculty Advisor, the Graduate Advisor, and the departmental Graduate Studies Committee to better monitor students’ progress through the program and to facilitate timely completion of degrees. The Graduate Student Activities Report should be prepared following the guidelines in the Appendices below. To submit their reports, students must send the GAR as a word document by email to the Administrative Assistant Lori Diehl by the dates listed above. Students who fail to complete the Graduate Student Activities Report in a timely manner may be subject to dismissal from the program.

**Change of MA Program Option.** Students may change between the two MA program options with the approval of the Graduate Advisor and Faculty Advisor. Failure to form a Thesis Committee and present an acceptable Thesis proposal to the Department, including all required paperwork and signatures, before the completion of 18 hours of coursework (or by the end of the third semester of full-time enrollment in the program of study) will result in the student's transferal to the Exam Option track. Students who fail to produce a satisfactory Thesis may count completed course work (except Thesis hours) toward the Exam Option degree. Students may change from the Exam Option to the Thesis Option by filing the appropriate form, with all required signatures. In some cases, a program change may require the student to take appropriate additional coursework.

**Instructor of Record Teaching Observations/Evaluations.** Master’s students who are Instructors will be evaluated each semester. These evaluations will be included in the student’s Portfolio and the student’s file. The classroom observation should be arranged for a day and time agreed upon by the student and observing faculty. The observation should include: comments on the quality of classroom performance and content of the observed lecture; an evaluation of the course syllabus for pedagogical soundness and correlation with established department expectations in terms of skills, content, course material and evaluation; and areas for improvement. The faculty member should meet with the graduate student following the observation and a written evaluation must be included in the student’s Portfolio and in the student’s file. Preferably, the evaluation should be given to the graduate student one week after the observation. For Instructor of Record evaluations, the graduate student should sign off on the evaluation. In the case of some disagreement about the evaluation, the graduate student has the option to submit a written statement. Any dissenting statement by the graduate student will also be placed in the Portfolio and the student’s file.

**RESOURCES FOR STUDY AND TRAVEL**

**Requests for Travel for Research and Professional Development.** The Comparative Religion Department
has limited funding to support student’s travel for independent research and professional development such as conference attendance. The department currently has a “Study Abroad/Study in the States Scholarship” and the “Bischoff Graduate Professional Award.” Details and deadlines for these awards are available on the department website, [https://wmich.edu/religion/scholarships](https://wmich.edu/religion/scholarships). The criteria used by the Graduate Student Committee to evaluate funding requests are outlined in the Appendices. There are also several College Level Scholarships and Travel Grants that are available, such as the WMU Dames Endowed Scholarship, the Graduate Student Research Grant, the Student Travel Grant and others. Please visit the Graduate College website for more information.

**Departmental Scholarships and Grants Requirements**

Please note that in order to be granted the funding associated with Departmental awards, further steps must be taken. Students must submit travel receipts and a budget justification, meaning a brief paragraph or bulleted list explaining how the funding was used to the Administrative Assistant. The receipts and budget justification are due within two weeks, or ten business days, after the end of the travel dates specified in the application. Usually, the full amount of the awarded funds will be credited to the student account at Western Michigan University. However, if students do not travel or do not make use of the award, or fail to submit the receipts and justification for the trip or expenditure within the specified period, these funds will be deducted in full or in part from the student’s account. In short, any funding amount in excess of the receipts that students provides will be deducted from the student’s account. Students should be sure to provide receipts for all activities and purchases for which they expect to be reimbursed. Students who fail to follow these procedures will not be considered for other awards.

**FINAL PROJECTS**

To complete the Master of Arts in Comparative Religion, students must demonstrate their mastery of 1) theories and methods used in the academic study of religion and 2) a specific area of study within the field of Religious Studies. The means by which students demonstrate this knowledge differ depending on whether they are following the Option 1: Exam track or the Option 2: Thesis track. Students pursuing the Exam track demonstrate their proficiency through two comprehensive exams while students who have received permission to undertake the Thesis track demonstrate proficiency by completing a master’s thesis. The following pages describe the requirements for completing each option.

**Option 1 Exam Option (33 HOURS)**

**Comprehensive Examinations, (also known as Qualifying Examinations).** Students in the Exam Option MA program must, at the conclusion of their studies, pass a comprehensive examination within two areas as determined in consultation with their Faculty Advisor and Graduate Advisor. One of these two examination areas must be “Theory and Method” and the other exam area may be chosen from the list below.

- Buddhism
- Early and Medieval Christianity
- Islam
- Religions of America
- Religions of China
- Religions of Japan
- Religion and Health
Reading lists for each of these exams are available on the department website: https://wmich.edu/religion/academics/graduate/requirements. Examination Committee members may assign further readings in addition to the ones on the list.

Comprehensive examinations for the Department of Comparative Religion will be scheduled for either Monday and Wednesday or Tuesday and Thursday in the second-to-last week of classes during the fall and spring semesters. Each exam will be scheduled for four hours and in a space provided by the department. Exams will ordinarily require two to four essay responses, though the precise format of each exam will be worked out in consultation with the student and examining faculty member.

To schedule an exam, students must consult with their examining professors no later than the end of the semester prior to taking the exam (i.e., end of fall for a spring exam, end of summer II for a fall exam). It is preferable to have this consultation at the beginning of the academic year prior to the date of the exam (i.e., early fall for a late spring exam, early spring for a late fall exam).

An oral exam with both examining faculty will be held within one week of completion of the written exams. The oral exam is an opportunity for the faculty and student to explore the written responses in more depth and clarify questions raised by the answers. Students will receive an assessment of high pass, pass, low pass, or fail, according to the results of their exam (both written and oral). Examining faculty will notify the department chair of the result and the chair will submit the results to the registrar. If a student should fail an exam, the examining faculty may determine whether the student may be offered a one-time re-examination. A single faculty evaluation of “fail” necessitates that the student retake the entire examination. The examination may be retaken once; a second failure will result in dismissal from the program. The same evaluation system, and provision for repeating in the event of failure, applies to oral examinations as to written examinations. After the conclusion of the Examinations, the Committee Chair will submit the Examination result forms to the Department Chair for his/her signature. The Administrative Assistant will then place one copy in the student’s file and forward copies to the Graduate College and the Registrar.

Students are responsible for every stage of planning the exam in consultation with the exam committee. This includes proposing exam dates and securing an appropriate exam location and proctor. To do so, students must send an email to all members of the exam committee proposing dates for the exam in a timely manner. The written portions of the exams are normally proctored by the Administrative Assistant. After dates are confirmed with the Examining faculty, the student is responsible for emailing the Administrative Assistant to ask if s/he is available to proctor the exam during these dates, and to schedule an appropriate time.

The oral portion of the exam is administered directly by the Examining faculty and no additional proctor is needed. The oral exam is two hours in length. It is proctored by all members of the exam committee. The student is responsible for scheduling the oral exam and for reserving a room. Typically the oral portion takes place in 2016 Moore Hall. To schedule the oral exam, students must send an email to all members of the exam committee soon after the dates for the written exam are secured proposing a date, time, and place.

**Examination Committee.** The Examination Committee, to be formed in consultation with the Faculty Advisor and the Graduate Advisor, shall consist of at least two members of the Comparative Religion Department. This
Committee guides the student in preparing for the examination. Students should consult their Faculty Advisor as early in their program as possible regarding the composition of this Committee. Final selection of the Examination Committee shall take place in the second semester of the program and no later than at the completion of 15 hours of graduate course work. Once the Examination Committee has been formed, the student is responsible for filing with the Department Chair a “Graduate Exam Faculty Selection Form” signed by all Committee Members. This form becomes part of the student’s permanent record. The MA Examination Committee form is available from the Administrative Assistant.

Option 2 Thesis Option (33 Hours)

Language Requirement. All Thesis Option MA students must demonstrate facility in at least one language other than English appropriate to that student’s course of study. The Faculty Advisor, with the concurrence of the thesis committee, sets the language requirements for each student's chosen course of study (see Requirements for all MA candidates, above). Ordinarily this is demonstrated either by passing an approved fourth-semester language course at WMU with a grade of B or better or by passing a language/translation examination to be administered by the appropriate Language department. Any student who has completed 30 hours of course credit work but has not fulfilled the language requirement will be transferred to Exam Option.

Thesis: (6 Hours) A thesis represents original research and a substantial investigation of a subject within the student’s major field of study. At the beginning of their second term, students should consult their Faculty Advisor regarding the formation of a Thesis Committee. This Committee consists of a Chair and at least two other Graduate Faculty who have expertise in the major field or in related fields. If appropriate to the thesis subject, Graduate Faculty outside the department may be members of the Committee. Overall direction of the thesis lies with the Chair of the Thesis Committee. The formation of the Thesis Committee requires the submission of the Notification of Appointment to a Dissertation, Project, or Thesis Committee form, with all required signatures.

Thesis Proposal. Once a thesis topic has been chosen in consultation with the FA and the Thesis Committee, the student is required to submit a written thesis Proposal. This shall be done by the end of the student’s second semester of residence (after successfully completing 15 graduate hours) or, at the latest and without exception, by midterm of the third semester of enrollment.

The Proposal shall consist of a narrative and a bibliography. The narrative portion should be roughly three thousand words in length, and must include: a statement of the thesis; a survey of scholarly work on which this thesis will build; a description of the methodology to be followed; and a statement of the contribution the thesis is intended to make to scholarly research. The preliminary bibliography shall be created by the student in consultation with the Faculty Advisor and Thesis Committee. The Proposal shall be submitted in writing to members of the Thesis Committee, who may require changes. Once the Proposal has been provisionally approved by all members of the Committee, the student is required to make an oral presentation of the proposal to the Committee. The Graduate Advisor and Department Chair are the only permitted outside observers. The Thesis Committee may request modifications at the conclusion of the presentation. At the end of a successful presentation, or acceptable revision, the student and Committee must submit the Dissertation, Thesis, or Special Project Proposal Approval Form. This form, which is signed by all committee members, is forwarded to the GA, who shall place one copy in the student’s permanent record, and forward one copy to the Graduate
College. Filing the form together with the Application for Permission to Elect form (see below) indicates approval of the proposal by the Thesis Committee and permission for the student to register for the first time for REL 7000. Failure to present an acceptable Thesis proposal to the Department, including all required paperwork and signatures by the end of the third semester of full-time enrollment in the program will result in the student's transferal to the Exam Option track. Any appeal for readmission to the Thesis Option must be made in writing to the Graduate Studies Committee, whose decision is final.

**Thesis Registration.** A student whose Proposal has been approved may register for REL 7000 MA Thesis. Permission to register for the thesis requires the submission of two forms: an Application for Permission to Elect form to be submitted to the Faculty Advisor, the Departmental Chair, and the Graduate College; and a Registration Form for Graduate Individualized Courses, to be submitted to the GA. One copy of these forms shall be placed in the student’s permanent file. Having once registered for the thesis, the student must re-register each fall and spring semester until the thesis has been completed, and must be registered for the semester in which the degree is awarded. Six and only six thesis hours count toward the degree.

See **Appendices** for information on **Thesis Mechanics and Human Subjects Institutional Review Board.**

**Guidelines for MA Theses.** The Master’s thesis represents a high level of development in a Comparative Religion graduate student’s training, providing an opportunity to refine essential disciplinary skills in independent historical research, analysis, and writing, thereby preparing the student for the next steps in a professional career. The thesis may provide the basis for doctoral research, conference presentations, or a scholarly article. A successful thesis:

1. clearly articulates an original argument or interpretation
2. is based on analysis of appropriate primary sources
3. demonstrates the student’s ability to conduct independent research in comparative religion
4. demonstrates the student’s critical understanding of relevant scholarly literature, which might include methodology and theory, as appropriate to the topic
5. is coherently organized and clearly written
6. adheres to the most recent edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style*
7. typically falls in the range of 12,500 to 25,000 words (approximately 50 to 100 pages), exclusive of notes, bibliography, and other scholarly apparatus

**Thesis Defense.** A final draft of the thesis must be submitted to and approved by all members of the Thesis Committee before an oral defense is scheduled. Any major changes requested by any Committee member must be incorporated into the thesis and accepted by all members before a defense is scheduled. Additional minor corrections may be requested at the conclusion of successful defense; corrected text shall then be submitted to the Committee Chair before recommendation to award the degree is forwarded to the Department. No defense may be scheduled, and no degree recommended, without the unanimous agreement of the Thesis Committee.

All thesis defenses shall be announced to the Department at least two weeks in advance of the defense date. All committee members must be present for the defense unless excused for compelling reasons by the GA. Successful defense of the thesis shall be noted on the Thesis Approval Form required by the Graduate College, one copy of which shall be deposited in the student’s permanent record. One copy of the final and approved thesis must be submitted to the Graduate College and one to the Department of Comparative Religion.
**Thesis Rejection.** Students who fail to produce a satisfactory thesis may apply coursework successfully passed (except REL 7000) toward a Option 1: Exam Option MA degree and will be required to sit for an MA examination.

**APPENDICES: GENERAL INFORMATION**

A. **GUIDELINES FOR FACULTY ADVISORS AND GRADUATE FACULTY**

Faculty who supervise graduate students use many approaches, even adopting different stances depending on the student’s abilities or their own career stages. Any set of guidelines must therefore allow for a broad spectrum of approaches by faculty, as well as the variety of students’ goals. However, as supervising is one of the most significant professional relationships of faculty members and graduate students, it is important to highlight the rights and responsibilities of both advisors and advisees.

I. **General Rights and Responsibilities**

1. Graduate faculty and graduate students should observe the American Academy of Religion’s *Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct*. [http://rsn.aarweb.org/responsible-research-practices-statement-standards-professional-conduct-aar-members](http://rsn.aarweb.org/responsible-research-practices-statement-standards-professional-conduct-aar-members). Both advisor and advisee should understand that their relationship is professional rather than personal. All faculty members advising graduate students must know and abide by Western Michigan University’s policies, including provisions of the AAUP, TAU, and PIO Agreements.

2. Graduate faculty should be candid with their advisees about their performance and career prospects. Faculty Advisors should provide prompt feedback on research and writing for coursework, including timely reading of thesis drafts. Whenever discussing a student’s situation with other faculty or university staff, graduate advisors should use discretion and respect for a student’s privacy.

3. Good, accurate advising from faculty depends on willingness of graduate students to initiate communication, identify key issues, and listen to advice with an open mind. All graduate students should recognize that they, in the end, have primary responsibility for their own graduate education and for their development as scholars and teachers.

4. Graduate faculty and graduate students should know the rules of the programs of study contained in the *Comparative Religion Graduate Handbook* and the *Graduate College Catalogue*, especially the required coursework, comprehensive examinations, and, if applicable, all stages of thesis preparation from proposal to completion. Faculty should keep themselves informed about the current program requirements. Graduate students are responsible for knowing and abiding by the rules of their program of study, even if they have been misinformed on a particular issue by a faculty member.

5. Faculty Advisors should insure that their students make timely progress in completing their program of study. Both Faculty Advisors and graduate students need to be familiar with deadlines for the different stages of the student’s program and should allow ample lead time for meeting such deadlines, which are detailed in the *Comparative Religion Department Graduate Handbook* and the *Graduate College Catalogue*. 
II. Responsibilities of Faculty Advisors
1. Faculty Advisors should advise their students on how to develop and sustain an intellectual agenda and build a professional career. In addition to regular communication with their advisees, Faculty Advisors should discuss the full range of issues relating to the chosen program of study and professional development as a historian. Such issues will vary depending on advisees and circumstances, but would usually include: course selection, fields of study, conducting and presenting research, teaching, developing and completing a thesis, grant seeking, publication venues, and potential job market and career strategies. When faculty advisors or student advisees are not in residence, Faculty Advisors and graduate students should continue to communicate regularly.

2. Faculty Advisors should expect to write letters of recommendation on behalf of their students for grants/fellowships and employment opportunities. When making a request to Faculty members for letters of recommendation, the request should generally give the faculty member at least two weeks lead time.

3. The Faculty Advisor provides a written response to the advisee’s annual Graduate Activities Report to the student and to the Graduate Advisor and Graduate Studies Committee, for inclusion in the student’s permanent file. While such evaluations occur formally each year, they should be part of the ongoing supervising dialogue between advisor and advisee. The Faculty Advisor mentors the advisee during the academic program to promote engagement with scholarly activities and professional development as well as the completion of the graduate degree.

III. Responsibilities of Supporting Graduate Faculty
Faculty members who play supporting roles in the graduate student’s education (as seminar instructors, supervisors of teaching assistants, members of exam or thesis committees) have responsibilities similar to those of Faculty Advisors. Some aspects of these roles merit highlighting separately:

1. Faculty who teach graduate courses or serve on examination and thesis committees have an obligation to provide complete, candid evaluation of all students in a timely fashion.

2. Faculty who teach graduate courses or serve on examination and thesis committees should expect to write letters of recommendation on behalf of their students for grants/fellowships and employment opportunities. When making a request to Faculty members for letters of recommendation, the request should generally give the faculty member at least two weeks lead time.

3. Faculty who serve on thesis committees should provide written responses to the thesis in a timely fashion, including the kinds of revision required for approval.

4. Faculty members of MA exam or thesis committees should communicate in writing clear expectations about the requirements for the examination or thesis.

5. Faculty who supervise teaching or research assistants should provide a written evaluation of the student’s performance at the end of the assignment, which becomes part of the student’s annual evaluation. Such faculty should discuss the evaluation with the student to help develop the student’s professional skills. When appropriate, faculty should help students develop their teaching-related skills. Faculty supervising TAs and RAs should know departmental and university regulations governing such roles.

B. EVALUATION OF GRADUATE RESEARCH AND TRAVEL FUNDING APPLICATIONS
In addition to other stated guidelines and requirements, applications for awards from the Department will be based on the following criteria: Those who advise students should also be aware of these criteria and guidelines.

1. Student’s award applications will be rated and ranked according to criteria such as: Clarity and completeness of proposal; Evidence of student’s potential to succeed at this research and contribute to
the field; Potential of the proposed activity to advance the student’s professionalization; Timeliness and relevance of the research project to the field.

2. Students applying for research support must demonstrate the necessity of travel to acquire the relevant materials and adequate preparation and skills to conduct the proposed research, including sufficient facility with relevant languages and research techniques, appropriate preparatory coursework, and knowledge of specific archival holdings necessary for the applicant’s project.

3. Students applying for travel support for conference presentations, particularly those new to graduate study, are encouraged initially to hone their presentation skills and content mastery by giving papers at graduate student conferences such as the Comparative Religion Department’s Graduate Student Hosted “Threesis” (3sis) WMU’s annual Humanities Graduate Conference 
https://wmich.edu/humanities/graduate-humanities-conference-0 and other local and regional conferences such as the American Academy of Religions’ Midwest Regional conference 
https://www.aarweb.org/membership/midwest-region. Conference presentations typically should be based on original research.

4. The Comparative Religion Graduate Studies Travel Funding Committee will assess each application for funding with regard to the application’s adherence to these guidelines.

C. REQUESTS FOR EXTENSION OF FUNDING

Students in the MA Program. Funding for Masters students is normally for two years, dependent upon satisfactory progress towards completion of the degree and availability of funding. Students in their second year of the MA Thesis option may request of the departmental Graduate Studies Committee an extension of their funding. The requested extension may be for single or multiple semesters, but no request can be for more than one full academic year. The request must include: a copy of the last Graduate Student Activities Report submitted, including a course list and grades; a statement of progress on the comprehensive exam or thesis, a curriculum vitae; a rationale for the funding request, including a clear outline of the work to be completed during the funded period; and a letter of support from the Graduate Advisor.

The GSC will consider such requests on a case-by-case basis. The main criteria for granting requests will be availability of funds, evidence of satisfactory progress towards completion of the degree, and the merit of the case provided by the student to justify extended funding. Requests for Extended Funding must be submitted, in writing, to the GA by November 30th of the second year of the student’s program.

Students Originally Admitted without Funding. Students who were originally admitted to the Graduate Program without funding may also apply for funding by submitting the materials indicated above for each degree program. The GSC will consider such requests on a case-by-case basis. The main criteria for granting requests will be availability of funds, evidence of satisfactory progress towards completion of the degree, and the merit of the case provided by the student to justify an extension. Requests for an Extension of Funding must be submitted, in writing, to the Graduate Advisor by February 15 to be considered for funding in the following year.
D. GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE STUDENT ANNUAL ACTIVITIES REPORT (GAR)

This report should be prepared as a word document and sent as an attachment to Administrative Assistant Lori Diehl by the due date. Missing, late, or incomplete submissions may result in the discontinuation of funding. During a student’s first year the GAR is due on February 15; for all subsequent years the GAR is due October 15. Each page of the Report should be headed with your name, your Faculty’s Advisor’s name, and the date of the Report. The following information should be provided (where relevant):

I. Academic Activities

Courses completed and grades received
Courses in progress
Courses not completed (provide a reason for any incompletes or drops)

Comprehensive examination/thesis progress:
• Exam areas (identify subfields)
• Research completed or planned
• Planned date of MA or comprehensive examination
  o Composition of Faculty Examining committee, or Thesis committee. The Faculty examining committee is usually composed of two members of the Comparative Religion Department
• Thesis Proposal written, accepted; public presentation

Teaching and Research
• Classes taught as instructor of record (title, number, enrollment)
• Teaching Assistantships held (course title and number; student enrollment)
• Instructor(s) of record
  o TA responsibilities you discharged
  o What you learned from the experience
  o Research Assistantships held
  o Supervisor
  o Project title
  o RA responsibilities you discharged
  o What you learned from the experience

Language requirements (Only for Option 2- thesis track). Describe your language requirement as set by your examination/thesis/dissertation committee. Outline your progress made towards meeting language proficiency requirement (course work, summer programs, examination schedule, and completed examination results).

II. Professional recognition

Include in all cases the title of the paper/presentation; its thesis; the venue, date (projected or past), and the sponsoring agency/journal, using proper bibliographic format.
• Papers written, submitted, or accepted for presentation at conferences
• Papers presented at professional conferences
• Papers written, submitted, accepted for publication; include the name of the Journal, and which stage
you have reached

• Papers published, works prepared for, accepted or presented publicly
• Other professional works prepared for, accepted or presented publicly
• Research grants: applications pending; grants made. Include subject and précis of the research projected.
• Honors, awards, memberships

III. Professional Service
   Include dates.
   • Professional consultation, asked or given
   • Service to professional organizations
   • Service to the Department (including committee work) the College; the University
   • Service to the community beyond the University

IV. Special Activities
   List any activities related to your career as a scholar, which do not fit into the categories listed above. Funded students should include academic and employment responsibilities other than those required by their award.

V. Faculty Advisor Report and Signature
   In this section, the student must record the name of the faculty advisor and make a request for the faculty advisor to review the student’s report, provide the signature, and send it on to the Graduate Advisor.

E. THESIS AND DISSERTATION MECHANICS.
As is standard for theses and dissertation, the Department of Comparative Religion uses the current edition of The Chicago Manual of Style. The shorter standard for writing mechanics is the current edition of Kate L. Turabian, A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations, which includes many elements from The Chicago Manual of Style in succinct form. Supervising faculty in the department may require either of the two major citation systems described in The Chicago Manual of Style.

For theses and dissertations, the Graduate College has set certain standards of its own in such areas as pagination, margins, chapter/section headings, abstracts, acknowledgments, and copyright. These are described in the current edition of the Graduate College Guidelines for the Preparation of Theses, Projects, and Dissertations, which may be purchased in the bookstore in the Bernhard Center. The Graduate College meticulously examines each thesis submitted and may return theses to writers with instructions for correction. This review process can be lengthy, and must be completed to the Graduate College's satisfaction before the Master of Arts degree will be awarded.

F. HUMAN SUBJECTS INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD.
Research in comparative religion often involves the use of human subjects, for example, oral interviews. Other activities such as consulting, public policy research, archaeological research, and the use of archival materials not in the public domain also may be subject to Human Subjects restrictions. Before a student begins a research project involving human subjects, the project must be reviewed and the procedures approved by the
Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) of the University. The HSIRB, and not the researcher, has final authority to determine whether a project falls under the policy for protection of human subjects. In planning the research, students should consult the office of the Board if they are in any doubt. Application for clearance of a research project is the responsibility of the graduate student and the faculty member directly supervising the research.

The GA will determine from the Proposal whether a thesis research plan falls under the review jurisdiction of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. If it does, clearance by the Board must precede initial thesis registration. Western Michigan University administers a comprehensive policy, approved by the Board of Trustees, for the protection of individuals who serve as subjects in research conducted by or under the direction of faculty, staff, or students in connection with institutional programs and other responsibilities.

Graduate students and supervising faculty who contemplate research that may involve human subjects should be familiar with the document "A Guide to the Use of Human Subjects in Research at Western Michigan University." The document is available from the HSIRB office, A220 Ellsworth Hall (387-5926). This office can also advise students of the calendar of the HSIRB, which meets about once a month and requires proposals to be submitted a week in advance of the meeting. More information on HSIRB policies and procedures is available at <http://www.wmich.edu/research/hsirb.html>.

University policy identifies students conducting human subject research as co-investigators. In each case the faculty member is considered the principal investigator and is responsible for compliance with review policy.

G. PROGRAM DISMISSAL AND REMOVAL OF FUNDING

Students may be dismissed from the Comparative Religion graduate program by the Department Chair on the recommendation of the Graduate Advisor, Graduate Studies Committee, Faculty Advisor, and other relevant faculty members. Reasons for dismissal typically relate to the student’s failure to make adequate progress toward completing degree requirements. The minimum standard for adequate progress is the completion of 3 credits for every semester enrolled in the program. Other reasons for dismissal may include failure to meet deadlines in establishing committees or submitting required paperwork; accumulation of multiple Incomplete grades; failure to maintain minimum GPA requirements; or failure to identify a Comparative Religion faculty member willing to serve as Faculty Advisor; among others. Evaluation of progress is determined based upon the department’s annual review of students in accordance with the WMU Graduate College policy regarding annual reviews of graduate students https://wmich.edu/grad/forms. Violations of the WMU Student Code may also provide grounds for dismissal http://wmich.edu/conduct/code/. Any appeal of the dismissal must begin with a written appeal to the Graduate Studies Committee, which must include a rationale and any appropriate documentation. The GSC will then review the appeal and make its recommendation to the Chair. Procedures for appeal beyond the department are as provided for in the Graduate Catalog and WMU Student Code.

Procedures for, and appeals of, dismissal for reasons related to student performance as employees, are as provided for by the TAU Agreement.
Funding is subject to the terms and limitations in the Letter of Appointment. Student funding may be removed by the department chair on the recommendation of the Graduate Advisor, Graduate Studies Committee, Faculty Advisor, and other relevant faculty. Reasons for removal of funding typically relate to the student’s failure to make adequate progress toward completing degree requirements. The minimum standard for adequate progress is the completion of 3 credits for every semester enrolled in the program. Other reasons for dismissal may include failure to meet deadlines in establishing committees or submitting required paperwork; accumulation of multiple Incomplete grades; failure to maintain minimum GPA requirements; or failure to identify a Comparative Religion faculty member willing to serve as Faculty Advisor; among others. Evaluation of progress is determined based upon the department’s annual review of students in accordance with the WMU Graduate College policy regarding annual reviews of graduate students https://wmich.edu/grad/forms. Violations of the WMU Student Code may also provide grounds for dismissal http://wmich.edu/conduct/code/. Any appeal of the revocation of funding must begin with a written appeal to the GSC, which must include a rationale and any appropriate documentation. The GSC will then review the appeal and make its recommendation to the department chair. Procedures for appeal beyond the department are as provided for in the Graduate Catalog and Student Code.

Procedures for, and appeals of, revocation of funding for reasons related to student performance as employees, are as provided for by the TAU Agreement.

**H. GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES FOR GRADUATE READING PROFICIENCY EXAMS IN LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH**

Graduate Reading Proficiency Exams in Languages other than English for which exams are offered at WMU (see language requirements in front section of Handbook) are held once each semester, in late October and mid-to-late March on exact dates and at locations specified by the Departments of World Languages and Literatures and Spanish. A student interested in taking these exams must register for them by completing the first four lines of a Form for Graduate Reading Proficiency Exam in Languages Other than English and submitting the form to his/her FA by September 5 or February 5.

a) If one or more faculty members on the student’s committee have proficiency in that language, that individual or the individuals will choose three primary and three secondary texts and by October 1 or March 1 deliver them to the Department of World Languages and Literatures or Spanish Department and send a copy of the form to the GA for the student’s file.

b) If no one possesses proficiency in that language, the student will submit to his/her FA a one-page statement indicating his/her interests and how he/she expects to use that language in his/her studies, research, and future career. The FA will then contact a member of the department who possesses proficiency in that language from a department list or notify the GA that assistance is needed and assistance will be sought from the list of approved individuals. The FA or GA will provide that individual with a copy of the student’s statement. The individual will choose three primary and three secondary texts and submit them to the FA or the GA by September 26 or February 26. The FA or GA will by October 1 or March 1 deliver the texts to the Department of World Languages or Spanish and submit a copy of the form and student’s statement to be placed in the student’s file.
The Department of Comparative Religion will arrange to pay the exam fee established by the Department of World Languages and Literatures or Spanish for the first time, only, that the exam is taken.

The examiner from the Department of World Languages and Literatures or Spanish will select from the texts provided a primary passage to translate of 300-400 words and a secondary passage to translate of 300-400 words, for a total of 600-800 words. The exam will last up to three hours. One hard-copy dictionary may be used. The exam will be graded on a pass-fail basis, with pass being a level corresponding to a grade of “B.” The Department of World Languages and Literatures or Spanish will notify the GA of the results of the exam, who will then notify the student and student’s FA. The original texts will be returned to the owners and copies of the selected passages and student translations will be placed in the student’s file.

Students interested in passing a proficiency exam in a language not offered by the Departments of World Languages and Literatures or Spanish will seek assistance from his/her committee and the GA in identifying a suitable external examiner, which must be approved by the student’s FA, the GA, and the Chair of the Department. The procedure for the selection of texts and the number and types of texts will follow the guidelines for exams offered at WMU (see above).

Office Use Policy
Graduate student Teaching Assistants, Research Assistants, or Instructors of Record will be assigned to an office in the department for their use. Graduate Student Offices are typically shared by 2 or 3 students. Desks may be shared as well. Graduate Students without an appointment may also be assigned office space if there is room available. In the case of students without an appointment, office space is assigned on a first-come, first-served basis, depending on seniority in the program or date of admission into the program. Student office assignment is on a per-semester basis only. Students should return their office keys at the end of the semester unless they have another TAship or RAship already assigned in the next semester and the same space happens to be available. Please check with the Administrative Assistant at the end of the Fall semester to see if your key return is required. Students may be asked to vacate their office and return their office key at the end of any semester or at any time to allow the department to re-arrange and re-assign offices. Students should vacate their offices and return their office keys at the end of Spring semester. Only those students with a Summer RAship or TAship should have office space during the summer.

Students are not permitted to use their offices for sleeping overnight. Your offices should be kept clean and organized. Please do not store cans, bottles or food in the office. For these, please use the recycling bin in copier/mailbox room for clean plastic and glass. Please also use the paper recycling bin in your office. Keep the office door locked when not in use and the windows closed. Remember you are sharing this space and please be considerate of others. Failure to meet any of these guidelines may result in suspension or loss of office privileges. Failure to adhere to University Policy on Alcohol or Drug Use as defined in the WMU Student Code in the office may result in the suspension or loss of office privileges. https://wmich.edu/conduct/code.
2016-2017 Graduate Student Guide to Required Forms and Information

Please become familiar with these forms and resources available to graduate students. Many of these forms are available online as interactive PDFs, as indicated below, and more detailed information on other resources is available through following links provided. Hard copies of some forms listed below are available in the Comparative Religion Administrative Office (Moore Hall 2004). All forms must be completed, signed and handed into the Administrative Office for tracking and/or routing purposes. Keep a copy for your records.

For All Students

Permission to elect a 3000-4000-level course for inclusion in a master's degree program. This form is found on the Graduate College website https://wmich.edu/grad/forms. Students must receive permission and signatures from the Graduate Advisor, Departmental Chair, and the Course Instruction prior to enrolling in the course. Students are responsible for completing the form and obtaining all departmental required signatures.

Permission to Elect 5980 Readings in Religion. Available in hard copy format only, room 2004. Students must consult with the instructor with whom they wish to take this class before beginning the process of collecting signatures. Students are responsible for obtaining all departmental required signatures prior to taking the class. The original, signed copy should be given to Administrative Assistant for registration.

Permission to Elect Courses 7000, 7200 and 7300. This form can be found on the Graduate College website. https://wmich.edu/grad/forms. Students must consult with the instructor teaching the class before beginning the process of collecting signatures. Students are responsible for obtaining all departmental required signatures prior to taking the class. This form is completed once – the first time of enrollment – and then added to thereafter. A copy will be kept in the student’s file.

Graduate Student Permanent Program (Master's level). This form can be found on the Graduate College website. https://wmich.edu/grad/forms. Students must consult with the Graduate Advisor before completing this form. This form must be completed and submitted by the end of the first semester. Students are responsible for obtaining all departmental required signatures.

Graduate Certificate Program Outline. Students must consult the Graduate Certificate Advisor in order to complete this form. This form must be completed and submitted by the end of the first semester. Students are responsible for obtaining departmental required signature. Turn the form into the Administrative Assistant after the form is complete for routing.

Program of study course change. Students may use this form to make changes to the Graduate Student Permanent Program once it is submitted to the Registrar. Alternatively, it is also acceptable to resubmit the Graduate Student Permanent Program Form. This form can be found on the Graduate College website. https://wmich.edu/grad/forms. Students must consult with the Graduate Advisor before completing this form.

For Graduate Appointees

Under-enrollment form for Graduate Appointees. This form can be found on the Graduate College website. https://wmich.edu/grad/forms. Students must consult with the graduate advisor before completing this form. Students are responsible for obtaining all departmental required signatures.
Elect Extended University Program off-campus and online courses for inclusion in graduate programs of study. This form can be found on the Graduate College website. [https://wmich.edu/grad/forms](https://wmich.edu/grad/forms). This form should be completed and approved before enrolling in the course. Funding will not cover this course without approval. All Spirituality Culture and Health Program students must complete this form, but can do this once per year. Students are responsible for obtaining all departmental required signatures.

Important information such as the 2016-2017 Graduate Appointee Information Sheet, Policies Governing Graduate Appointees, Teaching Assistants Union, and Training Booklets may be found at [https://wmich.edu/grad/current-students/appointments](https://wmich.edu/grad/current-students/appointments)

For Students Taking the Exam Option

Graduate Exam Faculty Selection Form. This form should be completed at least one semester before exams are scheduled. This form is available in room 2004. Student is responsible for ensuring the completion of the form by faculty.

Graduate Exam Completion Form. This form is completed by faculty conducting the exams. Student is responsible for ensuring the completion of the form and submission to Administrative Assistant. The form will be forwarded to the graduate auditor.

For Students Taking the Thesis Option

Committee Appointment. For Students in the Thesis Option Only. This form can be found on the Graduate College website. [https://wmich.edu/grad/forms](https://wmich.edu/grad/forms). The Department of Comparative Religion recommends the exam option. In special cases students may elect the thesis option. Please consult the Graduate Advisor. The Committee Appointment Form must be completed by end of the first semester.

Proposal Approval. For students in the Thesis Option Only. This form can be found on the Graduate College website. [https://wmich.edu/grad/forms](https://wmich.edu/grad/forms). This form must be completed in the second semester or very early on in third semester. The proposal should include the following: 1) Title 2) Thesis Statement 3) Literature Review 4) Bibliography 5) Outline of Chapters 6) Schedule of Completion. Students are responsible for obtaining all departmental required signatures.

Final Dissertation/project/thesis approval. For students in the Thesis Option Only. This form can be found on the Graduate College website. [https://wmich.edu/grad/forms](https://wmich.edu/grad/forms)

Thesis/Specialist Project check-in form. For students in the Thesis Option Only. This form can be found on the Graduate College website. [https://wmich.edu/grad/forms](https://wmich.edu/grad/forms)

Special Circumstances

Program Time Extension This form can be found on the Graduate College website. [https://wmich.edu/grad/forms](https://wmich.edu/grad/forms). This form is for students who wish to request an extension beyond 6 years for the master's degree. Students must consult with the Graduate Advisor. Students are responsible for obtaining all departmental required signatures.
Repeating a Course. This form can be found on the Graduate College website.  
https://wmich.edu/grad/forms. This is for students who wish to take the same course more than once for credit toward their degree requirements. Students are responsible for obtaining all departmental required signatures. The original, signed copy should be given to Administrative Assistant after the form is complete for registration and/or routing.

Student Leave of Absence Policy and Application. This form can be found on the Graduate College website. https://wmich.edu/grad/forms. For students who are temporarily unable to complete their programs. Students must consult with the Graduate Advisor.

Grants and Scholarships

WMU Dames Endowed Scholarship. For female graduate students who have already completed 15 or more credit hours toward their degree. This form can be found on the Graduate College website. https://wmich.edu/grad/forms.

Graduate Student Research Grant This form can be found on the Graduate College website. https://wmich.edu/grad/forms.

Student Travel Grant This form can be found on the Graduate College website. https://wmich.edu/grad/forms.

Bischoff Graduate Professionalization Award. The Bischoff Award was established to support the professional development of graduate students in Comparative Religion. Applications can be submitted for travel to conferences or for research expenses related to an independent research project, field practicum, or thesis project. Requests for conference travel will be prioritized when students are presenting a poster or paper, or when the subject matter is related to the student's scholarly focus. Maximum award is $1,000.00. See the Comparative Religion website for deadlines and details.

Study Abroad/Study in the States Scholarships, Department of Comparative Religion. Graduate students in the department of comparative religion are invited to apply for the Study Abroad/Study in the States Scholarship. The maximum award amount is $1,000. Award amount will be determined based on the costs of the program, the merit of the application, and availability of funding. Applications will be accepted for any Study Abroad/Study in the States program, including language study, cultural immersion, or academic coursework away from WMU. However, in years that the department offers specific Study Abroad or Study in the States programs, applications for department-sponsored programs are prioritized for funding. See the Comparative Religion website for deadlines and details.

Graduate Graduation Application

Graduate Degree Application and Graduate Certificate Application may be found online at https://wmich.edu/registrar/graduation-graduate. These must be completed one year from the anticipated graduation date. Students must deliver the completed application and Graduate Permanent Program to the Registrar’s Office, Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. by the deadline (see below). A completed Graduate Permanent Program form must be on file in the Registrar's Office before the academic record can be audited for degree requirements. See the link above for more deadlines and details. Graduation applications will not be accepted past the established deadline dates.