

GRADUATE HANDBOOK

DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE RELIGION

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
Western Michigan University



2020-21

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 if you are teaching the Teaching Assistant Union.

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

Yours truly,

Stephen Covell, Ph.D.
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Graduate Students of Comparative Religion

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.

During the 2020/21 academic year, Sacelia Strong-Sangster, will be the coordinator for the group.

Administrative Offices

2004 Moore Hall

Mail Stop 5320, (269) 387-4393

Administrative staff, Lori Diehl, is available in person *by appointment* on Tuesday and Thursday from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. in room 2004 Moore Hall. Lori is working remotely and is available via phone or email Monday through Wednesday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Thursday 8 a.m. to 12 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 will be accessible with a key that will be issued along with your office and building key. 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. During the pandemic the room will remain locked except when the Dept. Office is open (T/TH 8-12). Only one person will be permitted in the room at the same time. Please sanitize the room on your way out (wipe down the copy machine keypad, etc.).

Check your mailboxes regularly (during the pandemic we will do our best to let you know if there is any mail for you to pick up). As much as possible, all department business will be conducted online. We will not be handling outgoing personal mail – only interoffice. Interoffice envelopes are on the cabinet under the mailboxes. 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 and blinds closed. Remember you are sharing this space – please be considerate of others. During the pandemic it is especially important to sanitize your office as you leave. Masks must be worn in all common spaces and if there is anyone else present.

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, email Lori asap.) The student lounge will be closed this fall. Hopefully, we will be able to allow access in the spring semester.

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

The GPS address for Moore Hall is: 1155 Arcadia Road, Kalamazoo, MI 49008.

Our mailing/delivery address is: Western Michigan University, Department of Comparative Religion, 1903 W Michigan Avenue, Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5320. (5320 identifies our department and is essential! Do not use Moore Hall, use WMU's main address as indicated.)

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

(Closed due to Pandemic during fall 2020)

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.

Digital Resource

Room 2012, Moore Hall

(Closed due to Pandemic during fall 2020)

- There is a scanner available for your use in room 2012. Very fast and easy to use. See Lori for room access.

ONLINE ORIENTATION AND RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT FOR RESEARCH COURSE

An online orientation is available for graduate students within the GoWMU portal via the Elearning tab. Once you select Elearning, chose “Transfer and Graduate Student Orientation Modules” in the dropdown menu at the top of the screen. There is no charge for this not-for-credit course. It provides a general orientation designed to familiarize students with the many program and services available at WMU. You will have access to this course as long as you are a student.

The Responsible Conduct for Research course, **required for all new graduate students**, can also be accessed online via the Elearning dropdown menu. This course includes 4 modules and a final exam that must be completed by the end of the semester in which you were admitted. Students who do not complete this course by the deadline will have a hold placed on their account and will be unable to register for classes. Completing this course aligns WMU graduate students with national expectations for higher education and post-graduate careers regarding research ethics and integrity.

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 Graduate Advisor (GA) and, as you advance in your program, with members of your examination 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. Be sure to check out the Graduate College website, Current Graduate Students page. You will find a lot of very useful resources and information here.

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.

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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS HANDBOOK:

GSCR= Graduate Students of Comparative Religion

GA= Graduate Advisor

GSC= Graduate Studies Committee (departmental)

FA= Faculty Advisor

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

All students accepted into the MA program must meet at or near the start of their time at WMU with the GA, who will advise students in choosing a program option, selecting current and future courses, and planning progress through the program.

Graduate Student Permanent Program. At the end of the second semester in the program or no later than after successful completion of 12 hours of graduate course work, all MA candidates must meet again with the GA to review their progress and to have their “Graduate Student Permanent Program-Master’s Level” form approved. It is available online at: <https://wmich.edu/grad/forms>. Once signed and completed, the form will be placed in the student’s permanent file, as well as filed with the Registrar. Thereafter, an annual review of the student’s progress will be made by the departmental GSC in consultation with the GA. Students may be asked, or may request, to meet with the GA or members of the GSC as part of this review. Please note that the Registrar’s office uses this form for the graduation audit, so it must 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 GA.

The Master of Arts in the Department of Comparative Religion at Western Michigan University offers two options:

Option I

Option I has four requirements:

- Completion of 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 and defend, in an oral examination, a master’s thesis under the direction of a thesis advisor (this includes enrollment in at least 6 thesis hour credits).
- Demonstration of reading proficiency in one foreign language relevant to one’s research area.
- Defense of the master’s thesis in an oral examination.

Option II

Completion of Option II requires:

- 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.
- Demonstration of reading proficiency in one foreign language relevant to one’s research area (this requirement is typically waived for Option II).
- Satisfactory completion of a comprehensive examination, in the form of a Portfolio Review and Defense

Complete Portfolios must be submitted to the Administrative Office/Assistant for circulation to the Faculty Portfolio Review Committee **no later than the end (Friday) of the second to last week of classes** in the fall or spring

semester when the student plans to finish their degree. A defense of the Portfolio before the Review Committee (which will be composed of 3 faculty members, with membership rotating annually) will be scheduled during finals week. The graduate advisor will let you know who the committee members are.

The Portfolio must comprise:

1. **Two complete syllabi**, one for a Religions of the World course (introductory or intermediate level) and one for an Introduction to the Study of Religion course (must emphasize either introductory or intermediate theoretical approaches to the study of religion). The syllabi must be class-ready and contain course readings, assignments, policy statements, etc. Each syllabus must also be accompanied by a 3 to 5 page explanation for why the syllabus was designed the way it was (why were the assignments chosen, why those readings and not others, etc.).
2. **One research paper** of at least 15 pages. The paper submitted should reflect the student's best work. It must be typed, double spaced, and include a bibliography of sources cited.
3. **One research proposal** that should include the following: (1) a title page; (2) an abstract; (3) a brief discussion of your goals and why you are interested in this project; (4) a literature review; (5) a statement of your research question and objectives; (6) a description of the significance of the project/the contribution it will make to the field; and (7) an explanation of methodology.
4. **An up-to-date curriculum vitae**. The C.V. should list your educational background, publications= and presentations, relevant work experience, service, awards, etc.

Course requirements

All Master's students are required to complete 33 credit hours of coursework consisting of core and elective courses.

Core courses (required of all students)

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

Electives

Option I requires completion of 15 hours of elective coursework, while Option II requires 21 hours. Electives may be drawn from the following courses:

- REL 5000 Historical Studies in Religion (3 hours)
- REL 5100 Comparative Studies in Religion (3 hours)
- REL 5980 Readings in Religion (variable hours)
- REL 6200 Advanced Writing Seminar in Comparative Religion (if repeated) (3 hours)
- REL 7100 Independent Research (variable hours)
- REL 7120 Professional Field Experience (variable hours)

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 GA. To seek approval for a cognate course, the student must email the GA 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.

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>. 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>. 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.

Languages. Both program options require proficiency in a language other than English, though this requirement is typically waived for students choosing option two. The specific language requirements for students enrolled in “Option I” (the thesis option) will be determined in consultation with the GA and the thesis advisor, and progress toward meeting these requirements will be indicated by the student in the annual Graduate Student Activities 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 credits. 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 of 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 GSAR should be prepared following the guidelines in the Appendices below. To submit their reports, students must send the GSAR as a word document via email to the administrative assistant Lori Diehl by the dates listed above. Students who fail to complete the GSAR in a timely manner may be subject to dismissal from the program.

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 the "Kevin Nestor Study Abroad/Study in the States Scholarship", the International Opportunities Scholarship, the Loew Study Abroad Grant, and the "Bischoff Graduate Professional Award." Details and deadlines for these awards are available on the department website. <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 student 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.

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>. 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. 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 Graduate Faculty

Faculty members who play supporting roles in graduate students education (as seminar instructors, supervisors of teaching assistants, members of exam committees) have responsibilities similar to those of more formal advisors. Some aspects of these roles merit highlighting separately:

1. Faculty who teach graduate courses or serve on examination 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 committees should expect to be asked to write letters of recommendation on behalf of 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 members of MA exam committees should communicate clear expectations about the requirements for the examination or thesis.
4. 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 WMU's annual Humanities Graduate Conference and other local and regional conferences such as the American Academy of Religions' Midwest Regional conference. 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 GAR should be headed with your name, your Faculty's Advisor's name, and the date. 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
 - 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
 - TA responsibilities you discharged
 - What you learned from the experience
 - Research Assistantships held
 - Supervisor
 - Project title
 - RA responsibilities you discharged
 - What you learned from the experience

Language study: Describe your language study goals, if any. Outline your progress made toward meeting language proficiency goals (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.

E. 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, 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; 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, 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; 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 TA ship 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 window 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>.

Do not lose your keys! The loss of keys requires the entire building to be re-cored and everyone in it receive a new building key. The very costly bill would be the departments responsibility.

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 indicated below, and more detailed information on other resources is available through following links provided. *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. This form is found on the department website <http://www.wmich.edu/religion/advising>. 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. The form must be completed before the semester or session begins.

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>. 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. The form must be completed before the semester or session begins.

Important information such as the 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>

Portfolio Review and Defense Completion Form. This form is completed by faculty conducting the Review and Defense. The student is responsible for ensuring the completion of the form and submission to Administrative Assistant. The form will be forwarded to the graduate auditor.

Special Circumstances

Program Time Extension This form can be found on the Graduate College website. <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.

International Opportunities Scholarship. The International Opportunities Scholarship was established through a generous donation designed to support extended research projects abroad for qualified graduate and undergraduate students in comparative religion. Applications can be submitted for: (1) a long-term research project carried out over two semesters or more; (2) a short-term research project that is the culmination of related study abroad experience. Funding requests will be prioritized for projects relating to students' previously demonstrated scholarly focus. See the Comparative Religion website for deadlines and details.

Cornelius Loew Study Abroad Grant. Supports eligible comparative religion or philosophy undergraduate and graduate students to study or conduct research abroad. Study abroad programs must be WMU sponsored or approved. Students selected can use funds for study abroad trips outside of their course of study. Priority will be given to students who plan extended studies of at least one semester in duration and who have taken one or more courses in philosophy or comparative religion.

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 provide the completed application and Graduate Permanent Program to our administrative assistant *by the deadline* (see below) who will email it to the Registrar's Office. 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.