

MANUAL FOR GRADUATE STUDIES  
2018-19



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DEPARTMENT of  
RELIGIOUS  
STUDIES  
THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA®

<https://religion.ua.edu/>

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The following contains guidelines for graduate study in the Religion in Culture MA program at the University of Alabama. Care has been taken to ensure that the policies and procedures outlined in this manual are current for the Department, College, and the University. However, these policies and procedures can be subject to change, at times with little notice, so with respect to logistical details (e.g., due dates or current forms), it is the student's responsibility to double-check the accuracy of a statement with her/his advisor, with REL's Director of Graduate Studies (Dr. **K. Merinda Simmons**) and with the appropriate College or University handbook or website.

As changes and updates are made to this document, it will be reposted as a PDF on the Department's website and the current version is always available from the REL Graduate Director; the title page makes evident the version that is currently in circulation.

Students are also recommended to make full use of resources posted at the UA Graduate School, such as those found at:

<https://graduate.ua.edu/current-students/>  
<https://catalog.ua.edu/graduate/about/academic-policies/>

*Where policies differ, the Graduate School's policies take priority.*

## **Master of Arts Program**

This MA, which applies social theory to the study of religion with an emphasis on the public humanities and which utilizes expertise of current REL faculty, combines the two specialties of the Department; it will therefore prepare students for doctoral level work in the academic study of religion while also giving them practical writing and online communication skills that they can also use in a variety of alternative careers outside the university. Taking seriously ongoing debates on the relevance of the humanities, this degree ensures that all students not only acquire academic tools to examine religion as a cultural and historical site where social groups are made and remade but also gain expertise in effectively sharing these findings with audiences well beyond the academy (e.g., learning video production, public writing and blog posting, as well as recording/podcasting). This two-fold aim, supplemented also by attention to co-publishing original scholarly research with REL faculty members, learning grant-writing skills, working closely with BA majors and Core Curriculum courses, coincides with the University's goals: to produce new knowledge; communicate it widely across the state and the country; work toward increasing external funding on campus; enhance graduate education; increase undergraduate research; promote the humanities; and teach practical and thus transferable computer-based skills to all students.

## Department Information

### Main Office:

212 Manly Hall  
(205) 348-5271  
Fax: (205) 348-6621  
[religiousstudies@ua.edu](mailto:religiousstudies@ua.edu)

### Mailing Address:

Department of Religious Studies  
Box 870264  
The University of Alabama  
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0264

## Who's Who

### **Dr. Russell T. McCutcheon:** Department Chair

\*Ultimately responsible for all decisions concerning the Department. This is the person to see if you have questions that your advisor and/or graduate director can't answer.

\*[russell.mccutcheon@ua.edu](mailto:russell.mccutcheon@ua.edu), 348.8512

### **Dr. K. Merinda Simmons:** Director of Graduate Studies

\*Responsible for overseeing the MA program, organizing and hosting the monthly graduate colloquium (required of first year students) and reading group (required of all students), teaching REL590 Capstone Seminar (required each Spring semester), and chairing the REL Graduate Committee. This is person to see if you have questions about logistical matters regarding the degree in general or questions that your supervisor can't answer.

\*[merinda.simmons@ua.edu](mailto:merinda.simmons@ua.edu), 348.9911

### **Ms. Betty Dickey:** Administrative Secretary

\*Responsible for overseeing the Department's main office and implementing Department policies and initiatives. This is the person to see for any paperwork signing, questions about course registration (such as issuing permits to register), and/or issues with the MA office.

\*[bdickey@ua.edu](mailto:bdickey@ua.edu), 348.5150

## Graduate Committee

The MA in Religion in Culture is directed by the REL Graduate Committee, appointed by the Department Chair and chaired by the Graduate Director. Along with Prof. Simmons, its members currently include: Profs. Steven Ramey and Michael Altman. The Graduate Committee's duties include functioning annually as the acceptance committee, assigning supervisors to students, and generally overseeing the operation of the graduate program. Students with concerns related to the degree are, of course, free to speak with members of the committee but are recommended to speak directly with the Graduate Director.

## Faculty Advisor

Each incoming grad student will be assigned a faculty advisor, by the Graduate Committee, upon acceptance in the program. The advisor's role is to assist in keeping students on track with

required and relevant curriculum, as well as supervising the process of bringing to successful completion a culminating thesis project. Your advisor will also chair your thesis committee.

If the expertise of the supervisor who is initially appointed differs from the interests or thesis that a student eventually develops, then students can petition, directly with the REL Graduate Director, for a change of supervisor.

Soon after arriving on campus for the start of your degree program, you should meet with your advisor to chart out your degree and get a sense of your course of study (what classes you'll take when). ***At this meeting and based on your conversation, you and your advisor will both sign a degree plan that you will then need to submit to the REL Graduate Director by the end of August.*** This document is prone to change, over time (possibly requiring that it be updated periodically), but it will serve as the road map to ensure your timely completion of the degree. It will also specify courses outside of REL (e.g., language training) that students will need to complete. It can be found online at: <https://religion.ua.edu/degree-plan/>.

The supervisor is also responsible to ensure that, during each registration period, students properly enroll for the coming semester's classes. In some cases, that requires a permit to be issued to the student by the main office. The enrollment form to request such permits and document the coming semester's classes is to be completed and submitted to the main office (note: this form is used only within the Department); it can be found at: <https://religion.ua.edu/degree-plan/>.

### What Questions Go Where

<b>Professor</b>	Content and logistics related to the course at hand
<b>Faculty Advisor</b>	MA course plan; Social Theory Reading Group; Thesis; Questions/Concerns about a class's professor
<b>Graduate Director</b>	General info about MA program or graduate studies at UA; Graduate Colloquium; Questions/Concerns about advisor
<b>Department Chair</b>	General info about Department or the University; Questions/Concerns about Grad Director

## REL Graduate Faculty

Michael J. Altman, Assistant Professor (colonialism; media studies; Asian religions in American culture)

Steven L. Jacobs, Professor (biblical studies; translation and interpretation; Holocaust and genocide studies)

Nathan Loewen, Assistant Professor (globalizing discourses within the philosophy of religion; development studies; digital technology and networked learning)

Russell T. McCutcheon, Professor (myths and rituals; the history of religious studies; secularism; relations between the classification "religion" and the rise of the nation-state)

Richard Newton, Assistant Professor (scripture studies, religion and literature, African American religion, identity studies, Christianity)

Steven Ramey, Professor (migration studies; Hinduism and Islam; South Asian religions in southeastern U.S.; religious subgroups)

K. Merinda Simmons, Associate Professor (rhetorics of authenticity; theories of gender and race, Southern and Caribbean Studies, literary theory)

Vaia Touna, Assistant Professor (ancient Greco-Roman world; modern Greece; methodological issues in the study of religion)

Theodore L. Trost, Professor (American religious history; religion and popular culture; Bible and the category “scripture;” religious rhetoric in literature and film; song writing)

## **Degree Timeline**

*Although adaptable to student needs, the Department advises the following structure and timeline for completing the MA in a timely manner (i.e., two year period). See a summary on the REL website: <https://religion.ua.edu/timetable/>*

*For UA Graduate School deadlines, please also consult: <https://graduate.ua.edu/current-students/student-deadlines/>*

### **SEMESTER 1**

*Be enrolled in at least 9 hours of coursework: REL 501, 502, and 560 (with your advisor)*

**ASAP upon arriving to campus:** Check-in with Betty Dickey in the Main Office (Manly 212), *even if not a GTA*. If you *are* a GTA, she will have some paperwork for you to fill out.

**Required Workshops/Trainings:** (*consult the Graduate Director for annual dates of these required workshops*)

- Department Orientation
- Graduate School Workshop for new GTAs (required every two years)
- GROW (Graduate Orientation and Welcome)
- A&S Mandatory Legal Training for GTAs (take your Action card; required every two years)
- Dave Bauer Grant Writing Seminar

**ASAP (but before the end of the first week of classes):** Meet with your faculty advisor and sign a degree plan based on your conversation.

**By end of August:** Complete and submit signed degree plan to Graduate Director

**During mid-semester registration period:** complete and submit Enrollment Request form to main office.

## **SEMESTER 2**

*Be enrolled in at least 9 hours of coursework*

**During mid-semester registration period:** complete and submit Enrollment Request form to main office.

**By end of first summer:** Complete online educator program course through CCS: <http://itas.ua.edu/teaching-online/online-educator-program.php>; your possible employment as an REL online instructor, depends upon your successful completion of this certificate (see below).

## **SEMESTER 3**

*Be enrolled in at least 9 hours of coursework*

**Oct. 15 or before:** Thesis proposal due to advisor

**During mid-semester registration period:** complete and submit Enrollment Request form to main office.

**Before end of semester:** Thesis proposal defended before committee

## **SEMESTER 4**

*Be enrolled in Capstone Seminar (REL 590) and at least 6 hours of thesis research (REL 599)*

**Before end of January:** Schedule thesis defense date

**By 3<sup>rd</sup> week of March:** Submit completed paperwork to Grad School and submit thesis to Proquest system.

\*See "Thesis" section below for more information on timing the completion, defense, and submission of thesis project.

**Registration period or before:** Apply for graduation through <http://mybama.ua.edu>

**By end of degree:** Complete Digital Humanities certificate through the Alabama Digital Humanities Center (ADHC) in Gorgas Library. See below.

## **Getting Started**

### **STUDENT ID (ACT CARD)**

The Action Card or ACT Card is your student ID. You need it to use the library, recreation center, health center, attend events, obtain tickets and paychecks (if applicable), and to do just

about everything else, too. You can also place money in your student account and use in on-campus dining halls.

To obtain your ACT Card, go to this link: <http://actcard.ua.edu/>. If you have any questions, call the action card main office number at 205.348.2288.

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## **GTA/MA OFFICE**

MA students who are also GTAs will share an office in the Department (Manly 315A) to which each student will have a key. See Betty Dickey in the main office for the key when you first arrive on campus. She is the person to talk to if issues arise with the physical office space (leaks, maintenance issues, etc.) that require a work order to be submitted. The office has one PC and one Mac desktop computer, both of which are on the University's network, allowing students access to the campus-wide "shared" folder and the main office printers.

Office hours will take place in this space, with all GTAs helping to create a shared Office Hours schedule so that GTAs can vacate the space for each other's weekly office hour.

While you are free to decorate or arrange the GTA office as you wish, retaining a cleanly and orderly space is expected. As an older and drafty building, your office is equipped with a dehumidifier that you're expected to manage (though housekeeping will also tend to it as needed).

All MA students will be given a key to the Department Library, which is now understood as the Grad Office; while this room cannot be decorated, MA students are the sole people who will have access to it, though faculty will periodically need to obtain DVDs or research books.

REL also has a Department Lounge and Library (Manly 200); MA students, like all REL students, are free to make use of these spaces; the REL Library can be reserved (e.g., GTA student meetings) by noting times of use on the door's white marker board.

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## **MAIL BOX**

Each MA student has a mail slot in the main office (MA 212) and students are responsible for routinely checking it and removing their incoming mail.

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## **LICENSES AND REGISTRATIONS**

If you are paying in-state tuition, you must get an Alabama driver's license within thirty days of moving here. Contact:

Department of Motor Vehicles  
State Trooper's Office  
2645 Skyland Blvd.

Tuscaloosa  
(205) 553-0729

To obtain an Alabama license plate, bring your car, title or lienholder information, personal identification, and current registration to:

County Tag Office  
Tuscaloosa County Courthouse  
714 Greensboro Ave.  
Tuscaloosa  
(205) 349-3870

Information on voter registration, hunting and fishing licensees, and boat registration is also available at the courthouse.

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## **THE RELIGIOUS STUDIES STUDENT ASSOCIATION (RSSA)**

Graduate students are expected to join the Department's [Religious Studies Student Association](#). It is a group that allows you not only to interact with and mentor REL undergraduates (possibly taking a leadership role in some of their events) but also to apply for professional/research travel funding through the [Student Government Association](#). Please speak with the faculty member who serves as the RSSA Advisor. Ideally, you will be able to attend the annual "Get On Board" Day, in August each Fall, to assist the RSSA to greet incoming UA students.

## **Degree Guidelines**

### **General Requirements**

\*Course Work: Each student must complete a minimum of 36 credit hours of courses numbered 500 or above. 15 of these hours come from REL's graduate core curriculum (see below). An additional 21 hours will be completed in consultation with the student's faculty advisor. These may include independent study courses, seminars in REL, and, depending on the student's program of study, graduate courses from other departments and/or courses in foreign languages (through the Department of Modern Languages and Classics).

\*Core Curriculum: 6 of these credit hours are constituted by two foundations courses to be taken during the first year of graduate study (they are both offered each Fall semester: REL 501 (Social Theory & Religious Studies) and REL 502 (Public Humanities & Religious Studies); 9 additional credit hours of required coursework will be taken in the second year of the program: REL 590 (Capstone Seminar, 3 hours; offered each Spring) and REL 599 (Thesis, 6 hours).

\*Graduate Colloquium: All first-year students are required to attend monthly sessions (lasting approximately 90 minutes) of a non-credit-conferring Graduate Colloquium, led by the Graduate Director. This colloquium consists of meetings at which students and the

Grad Director (along with occasional relevant guests) will discuss a variety of professional issues in the study of religion in particular or higher education in general (e.g., pedagogy, social theory, technology, grant-writing, professional development, job market skills, etc.). Second-year students are not required to attend but are welcome; topics to be discussed will be announced in advance.

\*Social Theory Reading Group: At least once per academic year, and in consultation with their advisors, students will select a contemporary peer-reviewed academic article and present it for discussion with MA student peers and Department faculty. This article should be one that you find useful (whether compelling or problematic) for thinking through your eventual thesis topic/research. At least two weeks in advance of your assigned date to lead discussion, you will submit a PDF copy of the article to the Graduate Director, who will make it accessible to the other grad students and faculty. Although this is not a formal seminar presentation the reading group is an opportunity for students to hone their presentation and discussion skills, to solicit feedback from peers and faculty, to ensure faculty with whom they are not working are familiar with their interests, and to search through the current scholarly literature on their topic of interest.

## **Course Descriptions**

### \*REL 501 Social Theory and Religious Studies (3 credit hours)

This three credit hour graduate seminar introduces students to terms and ideas from social theory and their relevance to the academic study of religion. Throughout the course, students will apply theories to analyze examples relevant in Religious Studies, both ancient and modern. Each student will also select an important work in their chosen field of study in consultation with their advisor and analyze that work in depth in relation to the various issues discussed in the course.

### \*REL 502 Public Humanities and Religious Studies (3 credit hours)

This graduate seminar introduces students to public humanities and digital humanities approaches to the study of religion. Students learn methods and tools for conducting digital research and explore ways to communicate theoretical and religious studies research to public audiences through digital media. Students are introduced to a number of digital tools for research, scholarly communication, and public engagement and will work to apply those tools to their individual research interests and goals.

As part of this foundations course, students will become familiar with and make use of the resources in the [Alabama Digital Humanities Center](#) and the [Sanford Media Center](#).

### \*REL 504 Special Topics (3 credit hours)

To illustrate the gains of applying social theory to the study of religion, this course will draw upon current examples to study in light of the skills gained in the social theory foundations course. Specific content will be determined by faculty responsible for the course each semester. \*This course may be repeated for a maximum of 9 hours for differing topics.

\*REL 560, REL 561 Independent Study (3 credit hours)

Independent studies courses provide students with the opportunity to pursue a topic of their choosing in relation to social theory and its relevance to the academic study of religion. Throughout the course, students will meet with the professor to select and discuss readings and writing assignments. \*These courses may be repeated for a maximum of 9 hours for differing topics.

\*REL 590 Capstone Seminar (3 credit hours)

In this culmination class experience, normally enrolled in final Spring semester, students will present their ongoing original thesis research for the purposes of soliciting feedback from the instructor and classmates. In light of the feedback, students will respond and revise their work. Having begun the degree with two common foundations courses (one on social theory and one on public humanities digital skills), students in this course will integrate and apply the skills learned throughout the degree.

\*REL 599 Masters Thesis (3 credit hours)

REL 599 is an independent research course in which the student conducts Masters Thesis research under the guidance of a thesis advisor. Research projects will include the development of an original research question; in-depth research into relevant secondary and primary sources; the production of an article length essay or equivalent digital project (as approved by the thesis advisor); and an oral presentation of the research. Students will meet regularly with the thesis advisor throughout the semester during which the course is undertaken. This course must be repeated for up to 6 hours.

## **Language/Research Skill Competency**

Depending on your program of study, courses in foreign languages, taught through the Department of Modern Languages and Classics, may be recommended (such as the reading knowledge courses that they regularly offer in some languages, e.g., French and German [these are credit courses but the hours do not count toward a graduate degree]). Such training would be considered in consultation with your faculty advisor. If it is determined to be required, the Department may suggest that you enroll in relevant courses as early in your degree as possible, in order to ensure sufficient proficiency. The initial plan of study that you submit to the REL Graduate Director, in consultation with your advisor, should identify such courses.

## **Thesis**

By the end of your first semester, you should know what kind of thesis you will pursue (see two options below), as well as its broad research topic.

All MA students will complete 6 thesis hours in their second/culminating year of study. These hours will be completed under the supervision of a faculty advisor and will require a public defense at its completion.

You will have a choice between two thesis options: a traditional written thesis or a digital project. In both cases, you will form a committee to direct the development of the project and

formally defend both your proposal and the work upon completion. Your faculty advisor will oversee the process and offer feedback and guidance along the way.

- Traditional Thesis: This will culminate in an article-length (25-35 pages) project of original, substantive research that can be submitted for peer review publication.
- Digital Project: This will culminate in a substantive, research-based digital project that relies upon the social theory and digital skills gained throughout the degree program.

Thesis Timeline: If students intend to graduate in May, the final Spring semester is compressed inasmuch as the Graduate School requires that theses be completed, defended, and submitted to Proquest by approximately **five weeks before the end of the semester**. With that in mind, the Department offers the following timeline for thesis progress and completion in the final semester:

*\*by the end of January*: schedule thesis defense date for no later than the week prior to Spring break (in consultation with Faculty Advisor and Grad Director)

*\*by the end of February*: complete final draft of thesis

*\*by one week prior to defense*: distribute final draft of thesis to committee (allow time before defense and submission of thesis to incorporate any revisions/corrections committee members suggest)

*\*by Spring break*: defend thesis

*\*by 3<sup>rd</sup> week of March*: submit completed [paperwork](#) to Graduate School and [submit thesis to Proquest](#)

Thus, while students enroll in REL 599 Thesis only in the final semester, they will need to focus their last two semesters on the research and writing necessary for a defensible thesis.

### **MA Advisory Committee**

The Graduate School requires a thesis committee of no fewer than three faculty members, one of whom must come from outside the Department. Unless exceptional circumstances arise, your faculty advisor will also serve as your thesis advisor.

By no later than October 15 of your second Fall semester (see schedule above), you will submit a thesis project proposal to your advisor, who will then distribute it to your committee members. Working with your advisor, you will schedule a defense of this proposal that will take place before the end of that Fall semester, in order to receive feedback from your committee en route to your final semester and thesis completion. Note: in consultation with your advisor, these steps can take place before these deadlines.

### **Academic Misconduct**

Academic misconduct includes all acts of dishonesty in any academically related matter and any knowing or intentional help or attempt to help, or conspiracy to help, another student commit an act of academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to; each of the following acts when performed in any type of academic or academically- related matter,

exercise, or activity. For more information on academic misconduct, see:  
<http://provost.ua.edu/academic-misconduct.html>.

REL expects its graduate students to interact with each other, their professors and the REL staff, and undergraduate students in a professional and courteous manner.

### **Advising, Scheduling, and Registering**

Students should seek input from their faculty advisors regarding decisions related to coursework. Your advisor must approve your initial plan of study, revisions to it, and your schedule each semester (i.e., the Enrollment Request form—note: this form is for use only in REL). Each October and March there is a two week Faculty-Student Advising Period. During this time, see your advisor to get your schedule approved. Then, do the following:

- Log into your MyBama account and register.
- Be sure to confirm your schedule when requested to do so by Student Receivables.

### **Required Certifications**

Students will each earn two certificates as part of the MA in Religion in Culture; neither incurs any additional tuition or fees. The latter, below, will normally be earned by the end of the first Spring semester and the former by the end of the degree.

#### \*Digital Humanities (through Alabama Digital Humanities Center, ADHC)

The ADHC (located in Gorgas Library) will be a resource to students throughout the degree, both in REL 502 as well as during other courses (when, with the permission of the Professor, students may opt to work on a digital project) and the thesis. Throughout the degree students will therefore ensure that they attend a variety of workshops offered by the ADHC; their attendance will be recorded and reported to the REL Graduate Director. These workshops will have no assignments or “home work”; they are meant to enhance students’ digital skills, introduce them to others on campus working in the public and/or digital humanities, and model for them the self-initiation needed to acquire and hone new skills. Also, as part of this certificate, a series of required lunches/informal discussions will be hosted by the Department, for MA students and UA staff members, in the College of Arts and Sciences’ etech office, who each use technologies covered in REL 502.

#### \*Online Pedagogy (through College of Continuing Studies)

The College of Continuing Studies (CCS) manages all online courses for the University of Alabama, though content experts within Departments develop and offer these courses. The University requires an Online Pedagogy Certificate for all those who grade or develop these courses. It entails a web-based series of 10 courses (7 of which are required, with 3 electives) taken at a student’s own pace. While obtaining this certificate may assist MA graduates in obtaining work after their graduation, and will at least inform them of current developments in higher education, they will also make them eligible to be instructors-of-record for online REL courses (such as during the summer between their first and second years). If a student hopes to be engaged in such teaching, and the

opportunity to earn income—knowing that the Department prioritizes summer work and work for non-funded REL MA students and that the Department appoints an online mentor to assist the MA student grading the course—they must complete this certificate before the end of their first Spring semester or by the time they have earned at least 18 credit hours in the degree. (See the section below.)

## **Teaching**

Apart from working as a Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA), MA students with at least 18 credit hours in the discipline can, with the permission of the REL Graduate Director and Department Chair, teach an online course of their own (more than likely during their first summer in the program). These online courses (of which REL has several, all aimed at lower-level intro students, providing them with Core Curriculum Humanities credit) are already created and require instructors to interact in online discussion boards and to be responsive to the needs of the students who are enrolled. Having obtained the CCS Online Pedagogy Certificate (see above), MA students are eligible for such work in summers or during their second year (with priority given to unfunded students). At present, one 3 credit hour online course pay (before taxes) \$3,000.

Although the instructor-of-record, all MA students involved in their own online courses will be supervised by an REL online faculty mentor. Their reappointment to this position, in subsequent semester, will depend on their students' Survey of Instruction as well as feedback from the supervising faculty member.

Speak with the Graduate Director, well in advance, if you are interested in this opportunity to gain experience teaching.

## **Grant Writing**

In their first year, students will attend the monthly Graduate Colloquium where grant writing is discussed. This is an open workshop. In their second year, students will be required to attend the College of Arts & Sciences Fall grant writing workshop for graduate students (the Bauer Grant Writing Seminar).

Over the course of the degree program, you will be required to assist, in consultation with the Graduate Director and your advisor, in researching and writing at least one grant application. The Department understands this grant application in a wide sense and can involve a variety of funding opportunities with both on-campus offices (e.g., for travel funding) and off-campus agencies.

## **Transfer of Credits**

Graduate-level credit earned at an accredited institution where a student was enrolled in the graduate school may be submitted for review for inclusion in the REL degree program. Evaluation of credit for transfer will not be made until the student has enrolled in the graduate school of the University of Alabama. Credit will not be accepted from any institution at which

the student failed to receive a “B” average on all graduate work attempted, nor will a grade of less than a “B” transfer for credit.

A student initiates at the Office of the Graduate School the request for evaluation of graduate credit obtained at another institution. The student must also ensure that the Office of the Graduate School has an official transcript of the credit involved.

With the approval of the student’s advisory committee and the Dean of the Graduate School, up to 12 hours of coursework for a graduate degree may be transferred from another institution. All credit toward the master’s degree must have been earned during the six years immediately preceding the date on which the degree is awarded.

See: see: <https://catalog.ua.edu/graduate/about/academic-policies/degree-requirements/#mastersdegreestext>

### **Spring-Start Requirements/Exceptions**

Normally, a student’s program of study will commence in a Fall semester. However, there are certain cases in which beginning the program in the Spring is possible. Consult the Graduate Director for information about submitting an application in the Fall.

### **Part-Time Studies**

Pursuing the REL MA is possible as a part-time student; speak with the Graduate Director for more information.

### **Completion of the Program**

The Department of Religious Studies normally expects completion of the degree program within two years. According to The University of Alabama Graduate Catalog: “All requirements for the Master’s degree must be completed during the six years (18 fall, spring, and summer semesters) immediately preceding the date on which the degree is to be awarded. There is no provision for an extension of the time limit beyond 6 years for master’s students.”

Each candidate for a master’s degree must apply for graduation through [myBama](#) no later than the registration period for the semester or the first session of the summer term in which requirements for the degree are to be completed.

### **Course Loads**

According to The Graduate School, minimum and maximum course loads per semester for full-time graduate students are as follows:

<u>Status</u>	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Maximum</u>
0.5 FTE (“Full”) Assistantship	6 hours	9 hours
0.25 FTE (“Half”) Assistantship	9 hours	12 hours
Regular students	9 hours	15 hours

- Be aware, however, that some federal loan programs require a higher course load for full-time standing (generally 9 hours). The Graduate Director can assist you in meeting these outside guidelines with Pass/Fail options or directed study opportunities.

Graduate Council Fellows, Alumni Association “License Tag” Fellows and McNair Fellows must register for at least 9 but can register for up to 15 semester hours per semester during the year of these fellowships. Note: tuition is covered by these scholarships but fees associated with enrolling are not.

## **Student Support**

### **Graduate Assistantships and Fellowships: Overview**

The Department of Religious Studies attempts to fund as many students as possible with as much support as possible. The Department will award a limited number of assistantships to students annually on a competitive basis. In the second year of the program, if a student is unfunded then there is the opportunity to participate in teaching online courses (see above). Speak to the Graduate Director to learn more.

### **Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTA)**

Graduate Teaching Assistantships that are full-time (20 hours per week = 0.5 Full Time Equivalency) include full tuition, UA-provided health insurance with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama, and a monthly stipend. GTAs typically work with large-enrollment introductory courses. While tasks are ultimately up the supervising professors, typical duties include: 1) communicating with students about minor logistical or content questions; 2) grading student assignments; 3) overseeing a learning platform such as Blackboard, if applicable.

If a half GTA position is awarded (that is, a 0.25 FTE position, requiring 10 hours per week), then half students receive half of the monthly stipend, half of the tuition waiver, and must fund half of their own medical insurance costs. Note: 20 hours per week is the maximum number of hours one can work in an on-campus position.

Additional GTA openings for non-academic departments (e.g., working in the undergraduate residence system) are listed on the UA Human Resources website ([www.hr.ua.edu](http://www.hr.ua.edu)). Work study positions may be available for students who qualify for the Federal Work Study Program through the Financial Aid Office.

### **Graduate Council Fellowships**

Annually the Graduate Council of the Graduate School awards two types of Graduate Council Fellowships (GCF) on a competitive basis. These fellowships pay a stipend worth more than a typical GTA stipend and cover tuition/health care. *Students funded by these fellowships have no duties but to work on their degrees*, and must register for at least 9 but no more than 15 credit

hours of graduate study. Students may not apply directly to the Graduate school for these fellowships; all Graduate School funding is awarded on the basis of a nomination of the student by the Department. There are three rounds of GCF nominations for incoming students, occurring in February, March, and April of each spring semester, and one round for returning students.

### **Other Graduate School Fellowships**

\*National Alumni Association (NAA): The NAA funds graduate fellowships on the basis of income from UA specialty license plates. To be eligible for these fellowships, a student must be a resident of the state of Alabama. Nominations for these awards are solicited from the Department in mid-March and require a statement from the student (students do not apply independently). The stipend for NAA fellowships are \$15,000 and include tuition and fees. Students have no duties other than to pursue their graduate studies, and are required to register for 12 semester credit hours.

\*McNair Graduate Fellowships: The Graduate School funds a limited number of McNair graduate fellowships. These are awarded competitively based on departmental nominations, student statements, and letters of recommendation. As with other fellowships, students should not apply directly to the graduate school. McNair fellowships are preferentially awarded to students who were McNair Fellows at the undergraduate level. However, in some cases students who meet McNair eligibility requirements despite not having been McNair Fellows can apply.

More information about these and other fellowships may be found [here](#).

### **Other University Funding Sources**

Graduate students can seek on-campus employment through the Human Resources Office of Student Employment: [www.uastudentjobs.ua.edu](http://www.uastudentjobs.ua.edu)

### **Intramural Research and Travel Support**

This refers to research and travel support available from UA. There are several primary sources: (1) the Graduate Student Research and Travel Support Fund, administered by the Graduate School; (2) the Graduate Students Association (GSA) Research and Travel Fund; (3) College of Arts & Sciences student travel requests; (4) Student Government Association (SGA) through membership in the RSSA; and (5) Department requests.

#### (1) Graduate Student Research and Travel Support Fund

The Graduate School provides supplemental funding for graduate student research projects and travel to present research results at conferences. Departments may submit as many nominations as they deem appropriate, provided that each nomination be matched at least 1:1 with non-Graduate School funds.

Requests should be submitted [online](#) to the Graduate School.

Travel Awards are reserved for graduate students who have been accepted to present personally their own research (or creative activity) at a national or international meeting of their discipline's major academic/professional organization. For Research Awards, priority will be given to thesis, pre-dissertation, and dissertation research.

Requests for awards should be initiated by the student's faculty adviser and endorsed and submitted electronically by the department chair to the Graduate School. The request must include a budget, information about cost sharing, and, if travel is involved, a confirmation that the student will be personally presenting his or her own work.

Application deadlines are August 31 for Fall proposals, January 31 for Spring proposals, and April 30 for Summer proposals. The Graduate School will consider additional requests, pending the availability of funding.

After the three major deadlines, requests will be reviewed at the end of each month.

Please see the [Graduate Catalog financial assistance page](#) for additional opportunities.

#### (2) Graduate Student Association (GSA) Research and Travel Fund

An application for funding requests can be downloaded from the GSA's webpage: <http://gradservices.sa.ua.edu/rt.cfm>. The GSA meets monthly to consider applications (apply as need arises, knowing that funding can become limited at the end of the year).

#### (3) College of Arts & Sciences Student Travel Requests

The College of Arts & Sciences awards travel funds to students four times per year. These applications are made directly by students to the College; however, they first must be reviewed and approved by the Department Chair. The application form can be found on the College's website here: <https://www.as.ua.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/AS-Student-Travel-Request-Form-2016-2017.pdf>

#### (4) Student Government Association (SGA)

Your membership in the RSSA gives you access to funding from The Financial Affairs Committee (FAC) of the SGA. The FAC allocates funds to registered student organizations like the RSSA. In order to be eligible for funding, groups must be registered with the SOURCE (<https://thesource.ua.edu/>) for at least one month, and the president must attend a Foresight Workshop or Officers Academy training session. All applications for funding come to the FAC through an online form submitted by the group's president, who must then attend the FAC meeting to answer questions from the committee.

#### (5) Department Requests

The Department of Religious Studies has a small amount of resources that may be available to graduate students on a case-by-case basis. Speak with the Graduate Director for more information and to learn about the application process.