Requirements

This 36 credit hour (2 year) M.A. is normally structured as follows:

Required Courses
• REL 501 Social Theory Foundations (3 hours)
• REL 502 Public Humanities Foundations (3 hours)
• REL 500 Thesis (6 hours)
• REL 590 Capstone Graduate Seminar (3 hours)
• Monthly Graduate Colloquium & Reading Group
  (non-credit)

Electives
• Seminars/Readings in each student's specialty
  (including any necessary languages; 21 hours)

The thesis will be either an original digital project or a potentially publishable paper of the student's own original research. All students will be encouraged to publicize their findings for audiences of their choosing.

A limited number of Graduate Teaching Assistantships are available annually, on a competitive basis.

All students will gain supervised teaching experience as well as experience in grant-writing and in writing and publishing.

For more information on the M.A. in Religion in Culture, contact us at religiousstudies@as.ua.edu

religion.ua.edu

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA ®

DEPARTMENT of
RELIGIOUS
STUDIES

M.A. in Religion in Culture

Social Theory and the Public Humanities

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA ®

Studying Religion in Culture

Our motto takes on new significance with the M.A. in the academic study of religion. For although "studying religion in culture" means seeing religious claims, practices, and institutions as instances of wider historical and cultural trends and techniques, it also signifies an awareness of the location of those very studies—seeing scholarship itself as part of a wider context, influenced by a variety of factors.

The M.A. in Religion in Culture therefore emphasizes two sets of skills: (i) social theory to understand religion's causes and effects and (ii) the digital skills necessary to communicate those findings to wide audiences. So, while preparing students to pursue further graduate work in the study of religion (or related fields), we also recognize that some who enroll will creatively use these skills in a variety of settings—from working in education, communications, and an array of private sector jobs, to careers with government and NGOs.

Social Theory and the Study of Religion

Because we don't agree that religion is best understood as a unique domain, descriptive and comparative studies don't exhaust the tools that scholars can use to understand the effects of religious actors and institutions. Over the past few generations, a wealth of social theory has been produced to help us study the workings of identity on many fronts—from having a gender and race to being citizens and consumers. The M.A. in Religion in Culture ensures students are trained to use these critical tools to produce novel and informative studies of the specific groups and time periods in which they are interested.

The degree presents theory and topics of study as intimately linked. In so doing, it prepares students for conversations across disciplines, ensuring that they have a nuanced grasp of the customs or texts on which their work is focused. The program therefore defies old caricatures of data and theory as mutually exclusive domains.

Public Humanities

The degree also invites students to reflect on the relevance of their work for their own situation as scholars, challenging them to convey it to other scholars and the public at large—because our findings are not just interesting to us but also relevant and consequential to others. And because the broadest medium in which those findings can be communicated is through digital technologies, this program ensures that its social theory foundation is complemented by a foundation in the practical skills of the digital humanities.

Students therefore learn website design, creating and managing a blog and a podcast, using Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and working with "big data." While some courses will emphasize these skills and final thesis projects can showcase them, it is expected that all students—even those producing traditional research papers—will be equally comfortable working in the digital environment.