

# **CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL STUDIES OF RELIGIONS**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### ***Degrees Offered***

Ph.D.

This Area embraces both cross-cultural and historical themes, building upon scholarly methodologies that advance critical understandings of interreligious, multicultural, and contextual religious experience. The three tracks of the Area are Buddhist Studies, Islamic Studies, and East Asian Religions. Faculty in the Area also have interests in ethnic studies, anthropology of religion, ritual studies, gender theory, and postcolonial theory.

Most students in Cultural and Historical Studies of Religions are preparing for academic careers in research and teaching. A few graduates are preparing to participate in interreligious dialogue or education, or to work on interreligious issues in a church or other agency in a specific cultural context.

### ***Objectives***

1. Students will learn to recognize the contours of scholarship in the field of religious studies and find their own place within it.
2. Students will demonstrate both a broad grounding and a developed specialization in a particular religious tradition or culture and its history.
3. Students will learn to employ a religious studies methodology suited to their particular research specialization.
4. Students will work through the issues of constructing a syllabus for an introductory course and will formulate a pedagogical philosophy and approach.
5. Students will design and execute an original research project that makes a significant contribution to their field of specialization.

### ***Admissions Requirement***

The Area requires a clear and focused statement of academic purpose, specifying a field for which GTU has appropriate faculty resources and the student has appropriate academic background and basic language preparation.

## **LANGUAGES**

The Area requires two foreign languages, at least one a modern research language (e.g. French, German, Japanese). The second language might be a classical language, a field language, or a second research language.

## **COURSEWORK**

The Area requires that students take IDS 6000 (Seminar on Interdisciplinarity) in their first fall semester. They must also take HR 6006 (Issues in Contemporary Study of Religion), and students doing the teaching preparation comprehensives (below) must take IDS 6016 (Seminar on Course Design and Syllabus Development). Students are also expected to work

with their advisors to identify and take courses that will prepare them for broad certification and comprehensives.

## **COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS**

### 1. *Religious Tradition or Culture of Specialization*

The student will have certified breadth in a particular tradition. The tradition may be a religious tradition (e.g., Buddhism, Islam, Confucianism) or a religious culture, such as that of China or Japan. The broad tradition or culture of specialization should be sufficiently broad to serve as grounding for at least a decade of professional work. This exam will focus on the student's significant specialization within the tradition (an historical period, a major theme -- e.g. Chan or Zen Buddhism, Religious pluralism in contemporary Turkey)

### 2. *Methodology*

Scholars in religious studies use a wide range of methodologies (historical, philological, interpretive, anthropological, feminist, critical, postcolonial, etc.) The two required courses (see above) introduce students to a range of literature in religious studies using various methodologies and approaches, and encourages students to consider these literatures in relation to their own scholarly approaches. This exam will require the student to explore in some depth critical issues in a methodology that s/he intends to use in his/her research. The student will develop a select bibliography in consultation with the comprehensive committee, and write a bibliographic essay or a critical essay on methodological issues. A very preliminary draft of the bibliography will be developed in the Seminar on Interdisciplinarity, and the paper for Issues in Contemporary Studies in Religion (HR 6006) will be a very preliminary version of the methodology paper.

### 3. *Preparation for Teaching*

This examination requires the student to prepare a full syllabus with clearly defined objectives, requirements, expectations, evaluation criteria, and a reading list for an introductory course with no prerequisites. The course can be an introductory course in the student's religious tradition or culture of specialization (see exam 1), an introduction to the study of religion, a course on world religions, or an introductory course whose scope is broader than the student's religious tradition or culture of specialization. The syllabus is to be accompanied by a 15-20 page paper describing the intellectual approach of the course and specifying the decisions made about both content and instruction. The Doctoral Seminar IDS 6016 (Seminar on Course Design and Syllabus Development) serves as a context in which to develop this syllabus and its accompanying paper.

Students whose primary professional goals are other than teaching may petition for an alternative form of this comprehensive, designed to prepare them to meet their professional goals. The petition should include a project or course and paper equivalent in sophistication to the pedagogical requirement.

### 4. *Research Paper*

This paper represents the student's distinctive approach to research in religious studies, using the methodology discussed in examination 2 in conjunction with the religious tradition or culture discussed in examination 1. The paper may be related

to the topic of the dissertation, but should be a self-contained, autonomous 30-40 page research paper.

### **DISSERTATION**

Area students are expected to meet all general GTU requirements and standards for the dissertation proposal and the dissertation. Dissertations will be evaluated using the Dissertation Rubric developed by the Cultural and Historical Studies of Religions Area.

### **ALLIED FIELD REQUIREMENTS**

Students who declare CHSR as an Allied Field will be required to take HR 6006 and a 3000-level and above course, approved by CHSR Area convenor, in one of our CHSR tracks (Buddhism, Islam, East Asian religions) outside the student's field of specialization, as well as the methodology comprehensive (examination 2), which is a revision and updating of the HR 6006 paper.