Religious Studies Honors Program

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Application Deadline: Friday, September 2, 2016
It is strongly recommended that students submit applications well before this date.

The Program

The Honors Program in Religious Studies offers Religious Studies majors with a record of academic excellence the opportunity to conduct in-depth and original research that will result in a written thesis. A senior thesis is a sustained examination of a central idea or question, developed under the guidance of a faculty advisor. As a “capstone” project, your thesis should grow out of your personal interests and passions as you have pursued them in courses, internships, travel, and experiences during your college years. The thesis should be on a topic relevant to Religious Studies and will be developed under the supervision of a faculty member with expertise in your area of interest. The faculty advisor is typically a member of the Religious Studies Department but can also be a faculty member from a related department who has significant research and teaching interests in the study of religion. Writing the thesis, which is both longer and more intellectually sophisticated than other college writing assignments, is for many honors students the most fulfilling experience of their undergraduate careers.

Majors who are candidates for Special Honors in Religious Studies should apply for admission to the Honors Program during the Spring semester of their third year. Although the absolute deadline to apply for the academic year 2012-13 is Friday, September 7, 2012, it is strongly recommended that students apply well before this date. Honors students will enroll in the Honors Tutorial Course 679HA and 679HB during the fall and spring semesters, giving them 6 hours of credit in Religious Studies for the research and writing of a senior thesis. In addition, they will participate in monthly meetings with other honors students in the program, led by the Honors Advisor.

Program Requirements

The Religious Studies Honors Program consists of the following components:

1) Thirty-three hours of Religious Studies coursework
   In order to graduate with “Special Honors in Religious Studies,” students must complete 33 hours—rather than the normal 30—of coursework in Religious Studies.

2) Religious Studies 679HA, 679HB: Honors Tutorial Course (two semesters)
   Honors students enroll in this two-semester course during the fall and spring semesters and receive six hours of Religious Studies credit. This is not a classroom course; rather, it functions like an independent study in which the student meets regularly with the faculty advisor and conducts research and writing on his or her own. Grades are assigned by the student’s faculty advisor. Students must earn a grade of at least a B in 679HA and an A in 679HB. These courses count towards the overall 33 hours of required coursework in Religious Studies.

3) Honors Thesis
   The student’s faculty advisor and a second reader evaluate the thesis. It is usually between 50 and 70 pages in length. The faculty advisor and the student work out a timetable for completing the various stages of the work so that the thesis can be submitted by the end of the spring semester. The two readers will assess the thesis with the following criteria in mind:
   • Quality of argument
   • Breadth of research in primary and secondary sources
   • Quality of writing and organization
   • Conformity with current rules of proper academic conduct
   A completed and bound copy of the thesis must be submitted to the department by the last class day of the Spring semester.
4) **Honors Program Meetings**
All students enrolled in the Honors Program are expected to attend monthly meetings with the Honors Advisor. While attendance is not technically a requirement of the program, it is strongly encouraged and expected. The purpose of these meetings is to allow honors students the opportunity to discuss their projects, ask questions, troubleshoot, and get to know each other.

**Admission Requirements**

We choose participants based on the personal statement, strength of background, evidence of commitment, and grades. We require that applicants have a reasonable chance of meeting the final requirements for graduating with “Special Honors in Religious Studies.” If you are applying to the honors program, you should:

- Have upper-division standing
- Have a University GPA of at least 3.0
- Have a GPA in Religious Studies of at least 3.5, or be able to convincingly demonstrate the ability to increase the RS GPA to a 3.5 by the time of graduation.
- Have strong research and writing skills. Completion of one, preferably two, writing flag courses with a grade of B+ or higher is strongly preferred.

**Special Circumstances:**
- Transfer students may apply for the Honors Program.
- Students interested in both honors and in studying abroad should consult the Honors Advisor.
- Plan II/Religious Studies simultaneous majors wishing to write a Religious Studies thesis should apply. A Religious Studies thesis will satisfy the Plan II thesis requirement. Students pursuing this option will receive Special Honors in Religious Studies (not Plan II).
- It is possible to register for 679HA in the spring semester and 679HB in the fall. Occasionally, a student can enroll in either course over the summer. Students should consult the Honors Advisor in these situations.

**Procedure**

1) Consult the Honors Advisor before or during the Spring of your third year. The earlier you start thinking about your project the better.
2) Find a faculty member who will agree to serve as your faculty advisor. Ideally this person should be a professor who shares your particular interests, and one with whom you have already developed a rapport.
3) Download the **Honors Application** Form from the Department of Religious Studies website and submit the application form with your advisor’s signature and a short personal statement to the Honors Advisor by the deadline.
4) Once approval is obtained, the Academic Advisor will enroll you in RS 679HA. The student and faculty advisor will set up times to meet and discuss the thesis.

**Graduating with Honors**

To graduate with honors, qualified students must fulfill the following requirements:

- Thirty-three semester hours of Religious Studies coursework, including completion of all major requirements.
- Religious Studies 679HA, Honors Tutorial Course, with a grade of at least B.
- Religious Studies 679HB, Honors Tutorial Course, with a grade of A, in which the student completes a senior thesis approved by his or her faculty advisor and second reader.
- Maintain a UT grade point average of at least 3.0 and a grade point average in Religious Studies of at least 3.5.
- Completion at UT of at least sixty semester hours of coursework counted toward the degree.

**Information & Contact**

For more information about the Religious Studies Honors Program, consult the “Senior Thesis Manual,” available for download on the Department of Religious Studies website and in hard copy in the Religious Studies Advising Office. Contact the Honors Advisor and/or the Program Coordinator at any time with questions (contact details at top of page).