



We Want Great Things for You

MASTER OF ARTS IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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http://liberalarts.udmercy.edu/religiousstudies/mars_description.php

Master of Arts in Religious Studies

The Master of Arts program in Religious Studies at the University of Detroit Mercy has been designed to meet needs for advanced study of religion in the Detroit/Southeast Michigan area. The program welcomes students from various traditions and backgrounds and with differing career goals. It offers graduate education that requires and develops personal insight, scholarly research and critical analysis in areas of religious and theological inquiry. The program offers four major areas of concentration:

1. Biblical Studies
2. Theology and Spirituality
3. Comparative Religion
4. Religion and Culture/Ethics

Each student is assigned a faculty advisor to help design a program that best meets his/her professional and intellectual interests and needs. The program must include an area of concentration as well as representative courses from each of the other three areas. In consultation with an advisor, the student may take graduate courses in other disciplines (e.g., Psychology, Liberal Studies) which will meet particular academic needs and interests.

Admission Requirements

- (1) Applicants to the Master of Arts in Religious Studies (MARS) program usually must have completed 30 hours of undergraduate work in Religious Studies, Philosophy or related humanities with a grade of B or above, and meet the requirement of an overall 3.0 undergraduate grade point average.
- (2) Each applicant must submit an admission essay in which s/he discusses her/his individual background preparation for this program and goals in choosing to pursue the MARS degree.
- (3) Applicants lacking in any of the background requirements may be asked to take the GRE or MAT, required to complete further specified undergraduate courses in

Religious Studies, and/or be granted probationary standing in the department after evaluation by members of the faculty and consultation with the departmental representative. Those admitted to probationary status will be admitted to degree candidacy after their satisfactory completion of 12 hours of approved coursework.

Degree Requirements

The MARS degree requires successful completion of 30 credit hours of coursework in 5000-level courses. Each student is required to take RELS 5000 ("The Academic Study of Religion") within the first nine hours of MARS coursework. Further, one course must be taken from each of the program's four areas of concentration (Biblical Studies, Theology and Spirituality, Comparative Religions, and Religion and Culture/Ethics); and the student must choose one of those four areas of concentration as the focus of his/her remaining coursework.

Students may choose between two options for degree candidacy: Plan A and Plan B. Plan A requires 24 credit hours of regular coursework, six credit hours of thesis research (RELS 5990), and the successful completion and defense of a master's thesis. This plan is recommended for students entering with a strong background in Religious Studies, excellent research and writing skills, well-defined research interests, and/or who may plan to go on to a Ph.D. program.

Plan B requires 30 credit hours of regular coursework, plus the successful completion of comprehensive exams based upon the four areas of program concentration and the student's individualized focus of concentration.

The MARS degree program does not include a formal foreign language requirement. All degree requirements are to be completed within five years after the student begins coursework in the program. The dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Education may, for a sufficient reason, allow an exception to this rule.

Related Programs

The Religious Studies Department also participates in the University's interdisciplinary Master of Arts in Liberal Studies (MALS) program. In addition, the University of Detroit Mercy's participation in the Michigan Intercollegiate Graduate Studies Program permits students to take courses in area programs which offer training for church ministries, such as Marygrove College's M.A. program in Pastoral Ministry and the Manresa Center's internship in Ignatian Spirituality. Students have further access to faculty and courses in other local graduate programs, such as those offered by the Ecumenical Theological Seminary.

For further information, please write, call or e-mail:

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Representative Courses for Graduate Students

RELS 5000 Seminar: the Academic Study of Religion 3 cr.

This course introduces the student to the discipline of religious studies and explains how it differs from theology. It outlines the history of the discipline from the 19th century onwards and the views of those writers (like Friedrich Schlegel, Rudolph Otto, and Mircea Eliade) who have contributed to its growth and development. Contributions to major areas of study such as the essence, origin, function, and language of religion, are discussed. Further, the various methods (such as the historical, phenomenological, and linguistic) used in religious studies are examined and evaluated. How these methods are applied to the study of various religious fields, such as religious experience, the concept of God, and human nature and destiny, are a major focus of the course.

RELS 5010 Anthropology of Religion 3 cr.

An introduction to current anthropological approaches to the study of religion. Symbolism, myth, ritual, magic and witchcraft. Contemporary viewpoints on primitive religions and on the great religions.

RELS 5020 Contemporary Religious Movements 3 cr.

The “cults” of the 1970s and their impact on traditional religion. Understanding their excesses, financial successes and appeal.

RELS 5025 World Religions 3 cr.

An introduction to the major religious traditions of the world. After an introduction to the study of religion, this course will explore the cultural and historical settings and the various forms of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Special attention will be given to the spirituality and values fostered by each. The concepts of God and the holy,

the human condition and destiny, ritual practices, and ethical behavior will be among the major topics dealt with and compared.

RELS 5030 Hinduism 3 cr.

History of Hinduism from its classical and pre-classical origins to contemporary manifestations. The religious and philosophical movements change and continuity in the development of religious thought and institutions.

RELS 5050 Islam 3 cr.

Understanding and living with religion. Politics and culture in the Middle East. Origin and growth of Islamic civilization, emphasizing the principal teachings, including selections from the Qu’ran. The life of Prophet Muhammad, later developments in Sufi mysticism, sectarian differences and the recent Black Muslim experience in America.

RELS 5060 Buddhism 3 cr.

History of Buddhism from its origins to later manifestations and differentiations into Mahayana and Theravada. Major philosophical schools and Buddhist Institutions in South and East Asia.

RELS 5062 Traditions in China 3 cr.

An exploration of the historical and contemporary currents of thought and practices in Chinese culture. The development of each of the “Three Teachings”, i.e. Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism, will be traced, and the interactions among them and their manifestations in the daily lives of Chinese people will be examined. A brief survey of popular and minority religions in China will also be included.

RELS 5063 Gender in Asian Religions 3 cr.

Diverse Asian traditions such as Hindu traditions, Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, Shinto, and Shamanism, are often intertwined with one another. Together they present a complicated mixed picture when it comes to a woman and gender relation. This course focuses on the tension between the elevation of the life-giving feminine, the “cosmic” subordination of women in the male scripts, and the confluence and contestation among different subtraditions.

RELS 5070 Judaism 3 cr.

Essentials of basic Judaism; the beliefs, practices, customs, ceremonies, holidays and institutions. Current trends in contemporary Jewish life and the concerns of Jewish people today. The different denominations within Judaism. The place of modern Israel. The Holocaust. Modern masters of Jewish thought.

RELS 5130 Interreligious Dialogue 3 cr.

An examination of current efforts to promote interreligious dialogue. Various Christian interpretations (or theologies) of other religions will be examined with reference to major official church documents published over the past half

century. The meaning of dialogue and arguments put forward to support it, along with its risks and the efforts to harmonize it with Christian evangelization, will be considered. Also, understandings of interreligious dialogue from the viewpoints of non-Christian religions are also examined.

RELS 5210 The Old Testament (First Testament) I: Torah and Historical Writings 3 cr.

A study of the Torah (Genesis through Deuteronomy) and the historical books (Joshua through II Kings). Use of contemporary methods of critical interpretation of the major stories and their theological insights, humor and enduring power.

RELS 5225 The Old Testament (First Testament) II: Prophets, Wisdom, Apocalyptic 3 cr.

A study of the major and minor prophets, the Wisdom literature and the emergence of the Apocalyptic in the book of Daniel.

RELS 5235 The New Testament (Second Testament) I: The Four Gospels 3 cr.

A survey of modern scholarship on the Gospels. Religious and political conditions of the Greco-Roman world of the first century of the Common Era. The formation of the Gospels, the quest for the historical Jesus and for information about the Jesus movement. The distinctive approaches of the four evangelists, and the relationship of canonical to non-canonical gospels.

RELS 5236 The New Testament (Second Testament) II: Acts, Letters, Revelation 3 cr.

A study of the development of the primitive church, its Christologies/theologies, lifestyles and leadership conflicts in the context of the political, religious and social currents of the Greco-Roman world of the first century of the Common Era. RELS 5235 is not a prerequisite for this course.

RELS 5240 Feminist Biblical Interpretation 3 cr.

Female subordination/male dominance, images of God, power and leadership in institutional religion, differences in the ways African Americans and White Americans read the Bible. Women in Israelite societies, in early Judaism, in the Jesus movement, and in Gnosticism. Major American and European feminist/womanist literacy criticism.

RELS 5260 Gospel Studies 3 cr.

An examination of one of the canonical or non-canonical Gospels (its sources, composition, distinctive christological and theological emphasis, historical community contemporary relevance), or of a specific topic in Gospel research (parables, roots of Christian anti-Semitism, search for the historical Jesus, etc.). Attention will be given to gender issues. See specific course description for the semester in which this course is offered.

RELS 5310 The Christian God (The Trinity) 3 cr.

A study of the experience of God as Father, Jesus and Spirit, New Testament formulations (as well as Jewish scriptural background), Patristic development and Conciliar definitions. Medieval theological elaboration, contemporary reinterpretation and relevance.

RELS 5319 Classical and Contemporary Catholicism 3 cr.

Exploration of the historic Catholic tradition from the patristic to the modern era, with special attention to the philosophical and theological foundations and implications of key beliefs, symbols, doctrines, and rituals. Focus on the distinctiveness of Roman Catholicism.

RELS 5340 Theology of Death and Resurrection 3 cr.

An approach through literature and theology to the deepest of life's mysteries: the dying and rising of Jesus and of every human being. Biblical material as well as psychological and literary analogues to the experience of death and resurrection.

RELS 5370 Black Liberation Theologies 3 cr.

Investigation of some contemporary theologies in development by people of the African Diaspora, drawing on critical race theory, gender constructions, and social analysis, as direct responses to oppression.

RELS 5380 Latin American Liberation Theologies 3 cr.

Investigation of some contemporary theological constructions and principles in development by people in various Spanish-speaking countries, as responses to the sociocritical analysis of multiple oppressions.

RELS 5401 Christian Ethics 3 cr.

An introduction to the foundations of Christian morality in the New Testament and their later development, including contemporary theology and present-day issues and questions (nuclear war, abortion, social justice, etc.)

RELS 5440 Gender and Religion 3 cr.

Examination, from women's perspective, of women's experience in various religious traditions. The relationship between religious definitions of women and their social status. Feminists' and womanists' critical theories relating to dogmas, traditions and ethics.

RELS 5470 Christian Social Thought 3 cr.

The positions of major Christian thinkers on the responsibilities of men and women toward each other, government, the legitimacy of dissent, issues of justice.

RELS 5480 Justice: Contemporary Issue 3 cr.

Contemporary problems of justice in the areas of economics, law, government and international relations in relation to philosophical and religious theories of justice.

- RELS 5500 Religion and Psychology** 3 cr.
Areas of intersection between religion and psychology, especially as interpreted by the psychodynamic and humanistic schools of thought. Faith development, conscience and superego, the notion of healthy human behavior, origin of the idea of God, quest for meaning, moral development.
- RELS 5550 Poets, Mystics and God** 3 cr.
God as revealed to the intuitive vision of great poets and mystics, chiefly of the English tradition. Works to be read includes *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Eliot's *Four Quartets*, and the poetry of G.M. Hopkins and Dylan Thomas.
- RELS 5570 Spiritual Autobiographies** 3 cr.
A careful reading of some of the great religious autobiographies beginning with Augustine's *Confessions* and moving on to such 20th century giants as Gandhi and Dorothy Day, followed by an attempt to write one's own spiritual history in order understand God's presence in one's life more clearly.
- RELS 5580 Theology of the Imagination** 3 cr.
A study of the process of human creativity and of the ways in which the imagination functions in religious revelation, art and literature to disclose the divine.
- RELS 5590 Violence, Nonviolence and Religion** 3 cr.
Exploration of different relationships between religion and Violence through the consideration of various theories about the origins and nature of violence. This course examines the various ways in which different religious faiths have both encouraged violence and condemned it, while proposing ways of ending the cycle of violence and enabling its victims to heal.
- RELS 5600 Christian Love** 3 cr.
Exploration of the traditional doctrines of love, agape and caritas, and their related doctrines of grace and sin. Special attention paid to issues made by gender differences, and to recent attempts to reconstruct a model of Christian love in terms of care.
- RELS 5601 Sexuality and Love in Contemporary Christian Thought** 3 cr.
The nature of human sexuality and its relationship to love. Contemporary theories of psychosexual development. History of Christian teaching regarding sex. Changing attitudes toward sexuality, homosexuality, married love and celibacy. Sexuality and gender roles. Sexual love and its relationship to religious love.
- RELS 5610 Modern Roman Catholic Theology** 3 cr.
Exploration of traditional and modern Roman Catholic theology since Vatican II. Focus on the theologies of Karl Rahner, Francis Florenza, David Tracy, and Elizabeth Johnson.
- RELS 5620 Religion and Film** 3 cr.
Introduction to the task of interpreting film theologically. Emphasis on the ways in which cinematographic techniques can convey religious meanings and perspectives.
- RELS 5630 Religion, Health and Healing** 3 cr.
Exploration and comparison of healing traditions in indigenous cultures with modern medical culture. Emphasis on shamanism, Jesus Christ as healer, Christian healers and their methods, and energy medicine.
- RELS 5700 Sex, Race and Class: Christian Feminist/Womanist Ethics** 3 cr.
An introduction to Christian feminist and womanist ethics. Topics may include the revisioning of love, justice, sexuality, and the common good.
- RELS 5950 Directed Readings** 3 cr.
Readings on a selected issue or problem. Permission of instructor required.
- RELS 5960 Topics in Biblical Studies** 3 cr.
Topics may include Apocalyptic Literature in The First and Second Testaments; Wisdom Literature in both Testaments, or the Passion and the Resurrection Narratives.
- RELS 5970 Topics in Theology** 3 cr.
Topics may include Contemporary Christologies; Protestant Theology; Modern Christian Theologians; or the Theology of Karl Rahner.
- RELS 5980 Topics in Ethics** 3 cr.
Topics may include Ethics and Economic Theories; Contemporary Ethical Theories, or American Religious Social Thought.
- RELS 5990 Master's Thesis** 6 cr.
Student should consult chairperson for format requirements.