

# Department of Religious Studies

## Graduate Handbook

### 2022/2023

#### Director of Graduate Studies

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**I.**

**Dr. Paul Schneider, Associate Professor of Instruction Religious Studies**

Ph.D., Religious Studies, Columbia University, 1990

Teaching interests: Christian Apocrypha, Gnosticism and the earliest Christian communities within Jewish sectarianism of the Late Second Temple Period.

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***Affiliate or Courtesy Graduate Faculty***

Affiliate faculty members are eligible to teach graduate courses, to serve on master's, specialist, and doctoral level committees, to direct master's committees, and to co-direct doctoral level committees, at the discretion of the College.

See USF Graduate Catalogue <https://www.usf.edu/graduate-studies/faculty-and-staff/graduate-catalog-archives.aspx>

**Dr. James Cavendish, Associate Professor of Sociology**

Ph.D., Sociology, University of Notre Dame, 1997

Research interests: Sociology of religion, religion and social change, religion and immigration, religion and sexuality, social justice and social activism, Roman Catholicism.

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**Dr. Michael Decker, Professor of History**

Ph.D., Oxford University, 2011

Research Interests: Byzantium; Ancient-Medieval Mediterranean History and Archaeology; History of Middle East and North Africa

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**Dr. David Jacobson, Professor of Sociology**

religion, develop in-depth knowledge of particular religious traditions, and acquire proficiency in a wide variety of pertinent methodologies and theoretical perspectives. The department offers two tracks toward the MA degree. The thesis track is intended for those students preparing for college or university teaching and research careers. The non-thesis track serves students preparing for professional careers (e.g., as teachers in public or private schools, journalists, foreign service workers, etc.) in non-academic settings.

### **III. Admission to Graduate Study in the Department of Religious Studies**

Application for admission to graduate study is ava

International applicants should note that they need to adhere to additional requirements set by the Office of Admissions and the International Services Office.

#### **IV. Graduate Advising in Religious Studies**

Once admitted, a graduate student should seek academic advice from the Director of Graduate Studies.

Students are reminded that according to the USF Graduate Catalog “it is ultimately the responsibility of the student to be acquainted with all policies and regulations, and be responsible for completing requirements”  
<https://www.usf.edu/graduate-studies/faculty-and-staff/graduate-catalog-archives.aspx>

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

A limited number of Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTA) are available from the Department of Religious Studies. Interested students should complete the Application for Graduate Teaching



## **VII. Other Financial Aid Resources**

Additional forms of financial aid, such as scholarships, grants, and loans, are available from other sources. Students are urged to contact the USF University Scholarships & Financial Aid Services at <http://usfweb2.usf.edu/finaid/> and the Office of Admissions at <http://www.usf.edu/admissions/graduate/graduate-assistantships.aspx>.

## **VIII. Requirements for the Masters of Arts Degree in Religious Studies**

### **A. Coursework**

The MA in Religious Studies consists of a minimum of thirty (30) credit hours of approved coursework. A full-time student may complete the MA program in two years. See Appendix I for the recommended time sequence.

Candidates for the MA must successfully complete “Theory and Methods in Religious Studies” (RLG 6035), during the first semester it is offered following admission to the program. In addition, the seminar “Religion, Culture, and Society” (RLG 6143) is required to take at any point during the course of study for degree completion.

Additional courses toward the MA should be selected on the basis of individual research interests and goals. The majority of the student’s courses toward the MA must be taken from the course offerings of the Department of Religious Studies, according to the following restrictions:

1. Six (6) hours of courses in Abrahamic Religions (Christianity, Judaism, or Islam)
2. Six (6) hours of courses in Eastern non-Abrahamic Religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Daoism, or Confucianism)

Courses from other departments with direct relevance to the student’s research interests may be counted toward the degree upon approval by the Director of Graduate Studies. The following restrictions apply when counting courses

credits and to pass the comprehensive examination which is administered in RLG 6035. In accordance with the coursework requirements above, a minimum of 18 credits must come from Religious Studies graduate courses.

#### **D. Thesis Track Requirements**

The student wishing to receive an MA degree with a thesis is required to take a minimum of 30 credits, six (6) of which can be “Thesis Hours” (RLG 6971), which are graded on a pass/fail (S/U) basis. Before enrolling in “Thesis Hours,” the student must pass a comprehensive examination, successfully defend a thesis proposal, and complete the “Thesis Proposal Authorization Form” (See Appendix IV), which should be signed by the members of the student’s thesis committee and the Director of Graduate Studies.

The student who decides to complete a thesis should also:

consider taking thesis hours over two semesters in order to allow plenty of time for planning, writing, revising, and defending the thesis.

become informed about the Office of Graduate Studies’ deadlines for completing the mandatory ETD workshop (which is the semester prior to defending/submitted the electronic thesis), applying for graduation (which is early in the student’s final semester), defending the thesis and submitting “the certificate of approval” to the Office of Graduate Studies (which is in late March for those seeking to graduate in May), and submitting an electronic copy of the thesis to the ETD Resource Center <https://www.usf.edu/graduate-studies/students/electronic-thesis-dissertation/current-etd-deadlines.aspx>

anticipate that the thesis will probably have to go through a few drafts before all committee members are willing to approve. Therefore, a student wishing to graduate in May should plan to have a complete draft of the thesis to his/her thesis director in February and to the rest of the committee by the end of February, and a student wishing to graduate in August should plan to have a complete draft of the thesis to his/her thesis director in May and to the rest of the committee by the end of May.

### **IX. Language Study**

Although there are no language requirements for the MA

## **XI. General Guidelines for Research for the MA Thesis**

The thesis for the MA in Religious Studies must show

for the Department of Religious Studies library.

## **XII. Successful completion of graduate coursework**

Graduate students must attain an overall average of 3.0 (or B average) for all courses. Only courses in which the student receives a letter of B or better will be counted toward the degree requirements for the MA in Religious Studies. Letter grades assigned for graduate courses have the following values: A=outstanding; B=good; C=below expected standards. No grade below B will be accepted toward a graduate degree, but all grades are counted in computing the overall grade point average (GPA).

## **XIII. Incomplete grades**

An Incomplete grade ("I") is exceptional and granted at the instructor's discretion only when students are unable to complete course requirements due to illness or other circumstances beyond their control. This applies to all gradable courses, including pass/fail (S/U).

Students may only be eligible for an "I" when:

1. The majority of the student's work for a course has been completed before the end of the semester.
2. The work that has been completed is qualitatively satisfactory.
3. The student has requested consideration for an "I" grade as soon as possible but no later than the last day of finals week.

The student must request consideration for an Incomplete grade and obtain an "I" Grade Contract Form from the instructor of record. Even though the student may meet the eligibility requirements for this grade, the course instructor retains the right to make the final decision on granting a student's request for an Incomplete. The course instructor and student must complete and sign the "I" Grade Contract Form that describes the work to be completed, the date it is due, and the grade the student would earn factoring in a zero for all incomplete assignments. The due date can be negotiated and extended by student/instructor as long as it does not exceed one semester from the original date grades were due for that course.

The instructor must file a copy of the "I" Grade Contract in the department that offered the course and the Office of Graduate Studies by the date grades are due. The instructor must not require students to either re-register for the course or audit the course in order to complete the "I" grade. Students may register to audit the course, with the instructor's approval, but cannot re-take the course for credit until the "I" grade is cleared.

An "I" grade not cleared within the next academic semester (including summer semester) will revert to the grade noted on the contract. "I" grades are not computed in the GPA, but the grade noted on the contract will be computed in the GPA, retroactive to the semester the course was taken, if the contract is not fulfilled by the specified date. When the final grade is assigned, if applicable, the student will be placed on academic probation or academically dismissed (refer to Automated Academic Probation Procedures for information). Students cannot be admitted to doctoral candidacy or certified for graduation with an "I" grade.

## Appendix I

### Contract for Independent Study (RLG 6909) and Directed Research (RLG 6911) Courses

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

STUDENT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

SEMESTER/YEAR: \_\_\_\_\_

U #: \_\_\_\_\_

Independent Study and Directed Research courses are designed to provide opportunities for the student to pursue a course of study beyond what can be achieved in regular classroom activity. The instructor is granting permission because he/she feels that the st

## Appendix II

### Suggested Two Year Sequence for Completion of the MA —Thesis Track

The MA program can be completed in two years by fulltime students (9-12 credit hours per semester). The sequence below provides a time model for planning the course work, comprehensive exam, and thesis writing.

#### First semester

Take “Theory and Methods” in addition to other courses of interest. If “Theory and Methods” is not offered in the first semester, then it should be taken in the second semester.

Engage faculty members in discussions about area of interest.

#### Second semester

Take “Religion, Culture, & Society” in addition to other courses of interest. If “Religion, Culture, & Society” is not offered in the second semester, then it should be taken in the next available semester.

Start exploring and identifying thesis committee members that consist of three graduate faculty members, one of which may come from another academic unit.

Submit a thesis proposal to Graduate Director for initial approval and select members of the thesis committee.

#### Summer

Complete revisions on the thesis proposal, defend the proposal, and complete the “Thesis Proposal Authorization Form” (See Appendix IV), which should be signed by the members of the student’s thesis committee and the Director of Graduate Studies before enrolling in “Thesis Hours” (RLG 6971).

Students planning to pursue Ph.D. level work may use the summer to study languages relevant to their research interest.

#### Third Semester

If the thesis proposal has not yet been defended, complete revisions on the thesis proposal, defend the proposal, and complete the “Thesis Proposal Authorization Form” (See Appendix IV), which should be signed by the members of the student’s thesis committee and the Director of Graduate Studies before enrolling in “Thesis Hours” (RLG 6971).

If the thesis proposal has been defended, enroll in 3 credits of “Thesis Hours” (RLG 6971).

Attend the Office of Graduate Studies’ mandatory ETD Workshop. Students need to attend this workshop during the semester before they plan to graduate in order to be certified by the Office of Graduate Studies for graduation.

#### Fourth Semester

Take remaining thesis hours.

Schedule thesis defense after the final draft of the thesis is approved by the thesis committee.

Make final revisions after thesis defense.

Submit the final thesis electronically according to procedures (and before the deadline) established by the Office of Graduate Studies.

## Appendix III



J. Bibliography

Identify the relevant scholarly literature about the problem that you will be addressing based on the parameters you have established above.

## Appendix IV

### Thesis Proposal Authorization Form

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#### AUTHORIZATION OF MASTERS THESIS PROPOSAL/PLAN OF RESEARCH

The undersigned verify that the thesis proposal (i.e., research plan) has been successfully completed by the following candidate and authorize the candidate to enroll in Thesis Hours.

	Name <i>(print or type clearly)</i>	USF ID#	Degree
<b>Candidate</b>			

<b>Graduate Program</b>	
<b>Graduate Department</b>	
<b>Thesis Title</b>	

#### Examining Committee

	Name <i>(print or type clearly)</i>	Signature of Approval
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Major Professor <input type="checkbox"/> Co-Major Professor		

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**SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE OF THE MASTERS THESIS**

The undersigned verify that the final oral defense of the thesis has been successfully completed by the following candidate and that the thesis is ready to submit to the Graduate School pending revisions.

Candidate	Name <i>(print or type clearly)</i>	USF ID#	Degree

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