

DEGREE PROGRAMS AND REQUIREMENTS

DEGREE PROGRAMS AND ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

Master of Arts in Religious Studies Program (AMRS)

The AMRS Program is designed for students interested in developing a broad basis of understanding in religious studies. The AMRS is a terminal degree and alone is not considered sufficient preparation for the Divinity School's Ph.D Program. Students interested in the doctoral study at the Divinity School should pursue either the MA or MDiv program.

Academic and Curricular Requirements

To earn the AMRS degree, students must satisfactorily complete (at least a B- or better) a minimum of 9 courses. Required coursework includes:

- **Foundation Course:** All AMRS students must satisfactorily complete DVSC 30500 Introduction to the Study of Religion and DVSC 30600 Theory and Method Man. DVSC 30500 is offered every Autumn quarter and DVSC 30600 is offered every Winter.
- **Disciplinary Breadth:** All AMRS students must take courses in three of the four committees of the faculty.
- **Elective Coursework:** AMRS students elect their coursework for the degree. Any credit-bearing graduate-level course at the University may be counted toward the degree. AMRS students should consult with their faculty advisor about which courses would be most beneficial in determining the focus and direction of their work.

AMRS students may create independent reading or research courses with individual faculty members. These courses are credit-bearing and can last for one quarter up to an entire academic year. Students must consult with individual faculty members to create such a course, typically the term before the desired course will take place. If the faculty member agrees, the student will work with the faculty member to design a syllabus with goals and objectives of the course, the required reading list, meeting times, and any required assignments. This syllabus along with the Reading/Research Course Petition Form is submitted to the Dean of Students Office for processing. The petition form and accompanying syllabus are due by Wednesday of Week 3 of the quarter that the student is taking the course. If the course lasts for more than one quarter, the student must submit a new form for each quarter.

- **Reading Courses (DVSC 45100)** allows students to craft a bibliography for advanced study in a particular topic in consultation with the sponsoring faculty member. Typically, students meet with the instructor of record according to a mutually agreed upon schedule to work through the texts in the bibliography.
- **Research (or Independent Study) Courses (DVSC 50100)** enables students to pursue formal individualized work under the direction of a member of the Divinity School faculty. Typically, students produce the equivalent of a seminar paper on the topic identified for the course.

Reading and Research courses count as electives, not as Area distribution courses, unless approved by the faculty advisor.

AMRS students must also satisfactorily complete a one-hour oral examination based on a paper that represents the student's interests in the study of religion. The document is normally the revised version of a paper that the student wrote to complete the requirements of a course or independent research course. The examination paper is chosen by the student, but it must be approved in advance by the faculty member under whose direction the paper was originally written.

Students must apply to take the oral examination no later than Week 3 of the quarter that the examination is to take place. The student may identify two faculty members to participate in the oral examination, one of which must be the instructor for whom the paper is written. If the student does not have a second faculty member, the MA Program Director will be asked to participate in the oral examination. The examination paper should be distributed to the participating faculty no later than 2 weeks before the scheduled oral examination.

At the beginning of the oral examination, the faculty examiners confer privately to develop questions of the student. The student is then admitted into the examination. The student is allowed to introduce themselves, their work in the AMRS program, and offers a 10-15-minute summary of the examination paper. The faculty examiners ask questions and offer comments. The total time of the presentation and questions and answer period should not exceed one hour. The faculty examiners then deliberate privately and complete the AMRS Oral Evaluation Form with the Dean of Students or designee. Afterwards, the faculty examiners inform the student of the results: Pass or Fail. If a student fails an AMRS oral examination, they will be withdrawn from the AMRS program. The AMRS Oral Evaluation Form is added to the student's file.

Language Requirements

There are no language requirements for the AMRS program. AMRS students may engage in language study as elective coursework that will count toward degree progression.

Enrollment and Registration Requirements

AMRS students may enroll full-time (3 or more 100-unit courses) or on a part-time basis (less than 3 100-unit courses). Students are not permitted to take more than four courses per quarter.

The maximum registration enrollment limit for the AMRS Program is 3 academic years. Students studying full-time are expected to complete the program requirements in one (1) academic year. Students studying part-time may take up to three years to complete the program. After 3 academic years, students are administratively withdrawn from the program, and will need to reapply for admission to continue the program. Students must be enrolled in at least 2 courses to be eligible for federal financial aid (loans and work-study).

AMRS students are expected to register in consecutive quarters of the academic year (Autumn, Winter, Spring). Students may take a leave of absence for a maximum of four consecutive quarters, including the Summer quarter. Students who do not register for four consecutive quarters will be withdrawn from the program. Administratively withdrawn students must submit a petition to resume studies. Petitions must be approved by the MA Program Director and the Dean of Students.

AMRS students may withdraw from the program at any time. Students wishing to withdraw from the program should consult with the Dean of Students Office.

Grading and Incomplete Coursework

All Divinity School courses are evaluated using quality grades (A, B, C, D, and F), all of which have + or – modifiers. AMRS students must earn a grade of B- or better in courses that count toward degree completion. Courses grades of C+ or below and audited courses do not count toward degree completion.

Students may elect to take a course on a Pass/Fail basis. To earn a grade of Pass (P), students must earn an equivalent of B- or higher in the course to earn a Pass. Students must obtain instructor approval to take a course on a Pass/Fail. Once instructor approval is obtained, students must submit their request to the Dean of Students Office by Wednesday of Week 3 for processing.

AMRS students may count only one (1) course graded on a Pass/Fail basis toward degree progression. The foundational courses DVSC 30500 Introduction to the Study of Religion and DVSC Theory and Method Man must be taken for quality grades.

Note that the Divinity School modified its grading practices to allow students greater flexibility to deal with the circumstances of the health crisis for the Spring 2020 Quarter. Divinity School students could take any class offered by the Divinity School on a Pass/Fail basis in the Spring 2020 quarter, except those meeting any language requirements. Divinity School students that took courses on a pass/fail basis during Spring 2020 will remain in good academic standing, as long as all other degree requirements are met. Courses taken on a Pass/Fail basis during Spring 2020 will count toward the quality grade course requirement. Hence, Divinity School students will **not** have to take additional courses to make up for any courses taken on a Pass/Fail basis in the Spring 2020 quarter.

Students may also elect to audit a course, which is indicated as (R) on the transcript. Students who audit courses typically complete assigned readings, participate in class discussions, but do not turn in assignments. Audited courses are not taken for credit and do not count toward degree completion. Students must obtain instructor approval to audit a course. Once instructor approval is obtained, students must submit their request to the Dean of Students Office by Wednesday of Week 3 for processing.

Students may request an Incomplete (I) for a course to allow additional time to finish work required for a quality grade. Students who wish to take an Incomplete grade for a course must make a formal request to the instructor of record for the course using the form available on the Forms for Current Students website. These forms must be turned into the Dean of Students Office for processing.

AMRS students have one academic year to complete and submit the unfinished coursework. After the year elapses, the I becomes permanent, and any grade submitted will be placed next to the I (e.g. I/B+). AMRS students with more than three Incomplete or ungraded courses on their transcript at the beginning of the academic year may not register for following quarter.

NOTE: Students utilizing federal student aid should consult with the Graduate Financial Office to determine if and how a grade of “I” will impact loan eligibility.

AMRS students that have completed program requirements are expected to graduate. Students that are ineligible for graduation but will no longer take additional coursework (e.g. finishing incomplete coursework, exams, fieldwork, etc.) may enter Extended Status for up to four consecutive quarters, including Summer. Extended Status confers no privileges such as registering for courses, borrowing federal loans, student loan deferment, access to health insurance, or access to the Student Wellness, and carries no tuition charges. Access to university e-mail accounts is maintained in Extended Status.

Students who have not graduated at the end of the four quarters of Extended Status will be administratively withdrawn from the program. Students administratively removed may petition to graduate once all degree requirements are met.

Annual Reviews

The Dean of Students monitors academic progress for AMRS students. The Associate Dean of Students provides annual reviews and progress reports for AMRS students every spring quarter. Any student who fails to make satisfactory academic progress as evidenced by failing to meet the enrollment and registration requirements or by failing to earn the sufficient quality grades as outlined above must develop a completion plan in conjunction with the faculty advisor, MA Program Director, and Associate Dean of Students.

The student will be given a completion plan in writing that outlines what is required to regain good academic standing and the deadline for doing so, normally 1-2 quarters. If a student has substantial academic work to make-up, they may not be allowed to register for courses. Instead, the Associate Dean will register them for Divinity Advanced Study to maintain enrollment in the program. Failure to meet the terms of the completion plan will result in the student's withdrawal from the program.

Advisor

All AMRS students are assigned a faculty advisor to assist them in determining a cogent course of study. Faculty advisors are assigned before matriculation in the program. Students typically meet with their advisor once per quarter. Students may elect to change their faculty advisor by submitting the Change of Advisor Form on the Forms for Current Students website.

Transfer Among Programs

Because a student's academic and professional interests may change, students may transfer between the master's degree programs at the Divinity School. Students may present transfer petitions at any time after matriculation to the program. Any petition by a student to transfer to another program after admission, but before registration, is subject to review by the Masters Admissions Committee.

Petitions of enrolled master's student are subject to review by the student's faculty advisor and Faculty Program Director of the entering program. Students should complete the Petition to Change Programs Form which is available on the Forms for Current Students website.

If a transfer petition is approved, the student will be given an academic plan for the new program, including an updated graduation date by the Dean of Students Office. Master's students maintain the same divisional aid proportion when transferring programs.

Graduation

Students must apply to graduate in the term in which the degree is completed. The deadline to apply to graduate is Friday of the first week of the quarter. Students graduating in the Summer, Autumn, or Winter quarter are invited to participate in annual convocation exercises in the Spring Quarter. Degrees are conferred in the actual quarter of graduation. The Registrar charges a degree cancellation fee for students who apply for graduation who are not approved to graduate. Students should consult with the Dean of Students Office about eligibility for graduation.

Master of Arts in Divinity (MA)

The Master of Arts (MA) is a two-year program providing groundwork in the study of religion and its adjacent fields. It offers the freedom and the structure for students to develop their interests and hone their linguistic and analytical skills through course offerings within the Divinity School and across the University of Chicago's humanities, social science and natural science divisions as well as its other professional schools. With a requirement of fifteen courses, including the completion of our two-course introductory sequence on the theory and method of the study of religion, students will have the opportunity to study the cultures, languages, thought, practices, and institutions of religious traditions both ancient and modern.

We prepare our students for doctoral study in religion or related fields but also encourage the program as a means to pursue other professions or area of interest for which the study of religion is an important component. Our students go on not only to become professors at the nation's top universities, but also to careers in law, medicine, journalism, public policy, government, education, the non-profit sector, and the arts, among other fields.

Academic and Curricular Requirements

To earn the MA degree, students must satisfactorily complete (at least a B- or better) a minimum of 15 courses. Courses must include:

- Foundation Course(s): All MA students must satisfactorily complete DVSC 30500- Introduction to the Study of Religion and DVSC 30600 Theory and Method Man. DVSC 30500 is offered every Autumn quarter and DVSC 30600 is offered every Winter.

- **Disciplinary Breadth:** All MA students must take courses in three of the four committees of the faculty.
- **Elective Coursework:** MA students elect their coursework for the degree. Any credit-bearing graduate-level course at the University may be counted toward the degree. MA students should consult with their faculty advisor about which courses would be most beneficial in determining the focus and direction of their work. This could include courses that further emphasize the breadth in the study of religion, courses in an Area of Study that the student wishes to concentrate doctoral study, or language study.
- **Research competency in a modern research language.** See language requirements section below.

MA students may create independent reading or research courses with individual faculty members. These courses are credit-bearing and can last for one quarter up to an entire academic year. Students must consult with individual faculty members to create such a course, typically the term before the desired course will take place. If the faculty member agrees, the student will work with the faculty member to design a syllabus with goals and objectives of the course, the required reading list, meeting times, and any required assignments. This syllabus along with the Reading/Research Course Petition Form is submitted to the Dean of Students Office for processing. The petition form and accompanying syllabus are due by Wednesday of Week 3 of the quarter that the student is taking the course. If the course lasts for more than one quarter, the student must submit a new form for each quarter.

- **Reading Courses (DVSC 45100)** allows students to craft a bibliography for advanced study in a particular topic in consultation with the sponsoring faculty member. Typically, students meet with the instructor of record according to a mutually agreed upon schedule to work through the texts in the bibliography.
- **Research (or Independent Study) Courses (DVSC 50100)** enables students to pursue formal individualized work under the direction of a member of the Divinity School faculty. Typically, students produce the equivalent of a seminar paper on the topic identified for the course.

Reading and Research courses count as electives, not as Area distribution courses, unless approved by the faculty advisor.

Language Requirements

A foundational commitment of the Divinity School is the notion that intellectual citizenship requires multilingual proficiency. The Divinity School therefore requires all its MA students to demonstrate academic reading comprehension in a modern research language. MA students may elect from the following languages: French, German, Modern Arabic, Modern Chinese, Modern Hebrew, or Spanish. Modern research languages enable students to engage with scholarly literature across the field of religious studies.

To meet this requirement, students may take either the Academic Reading Competency Assessment (ARCA) or a Reading for Research Purposes course (e.g. FREN/GRMN/SPAN 33333) offered by the University of Chicago Language Center. Students taking the ARCA exam must earn a grade of Pass (P) or higher to satisfy the language requirement. Students who elect to take a Reading for Research Purposes course must earn a grade of A- or better to satisfy the language requirement.

Texts for the ARCA language exams have been selected by the Divinity School faculty. The texts are not particular to a student's Area of study or academic concentration. Instead, the texts selected for the language exams are centered in the theories and methods in the academic study of religion.

If an MA student elects a language that is not assessed through the ARCA or Reading for Research Purposes course, the student may petition to have coursework, or an exam administered by a Divinity School faculty member count toward the language requirement. The petition is subject to approval by the student's faculty advisor and MA Program Director. Students must earn at least an A- in all coursework counted toward the language requirement. Approved petitions must be submitted to the Dean of Students Office.

Students in the MA program may not use prior language coursework or native fluency in a modern research to waive the language requirement. The language requirement must be completed no later than the quarter before the anticipated graduation term. Failure to do so may result in delayed graduation.

Enrollment and Registration Requirements

MA students are expected to enroll full-time (3 or more 100-unit courses) each quarter for six consecutive quarters, thus completing the program in two academic years. Summer enrollment may count toward the residency requirement. Students are not permitted to take more than four courses per quarter.

MA students must petition the Dean of Students Office to register on a part-time basis. If approved, the student will be given an updated degree progression plan, including an updated expected graduation date.

The maximum registration limit for the MA Program is four (4) academic years. Students studying on a full-time basis are expected to complete the program in two (2) academic years. Students studying on a part-time basis may take up to 4 academic years to complete the program. After 4 academic years, students are administratively withdrawn from the program, and will need to reapply for admission to continue the program. Students must be enrolled in at least 2 courses to be eligible for federal financial aid (loans and work-study).

MA students are expected to register in consecutive quarters of the academic year (Autumn, Winter, Spring). Students may take a leave of absence for a maximum of four consecutive quarters, including the Summer quarter. Students who do not register for four consecutive quarters will be withdrawn from the program. Administratively withdrawn students may submit a petition to resume studies. Petitions must be approved by the MA Program Director and the Dean of Students.

MA students may withdraw from the program at any time. Students wishing to withdraw from the program should consult with the Dean of Students Office.

MA students that have completed program requirements are expected to graduate. Students that are ineligible for graduation but will no longer take additional coursework (e.g. finishing incomplete coursework, exams, fieldwork, etc.) may enter Extended Status for up to four consecutive quarters, including Summer. Extended Status confers no privileges such as registering for courses, borrowing federal loans, student loan deferment, access to health insurance, or access to the Student Wellness, and carries no tuition charges. Access to university e-mail accounts is maintained in Extended Status.

Students who have not graduated at the end of the four quarters of Extended Status will be administratively withdrawn from the program

Grading and Incomplete Coursework

All Divinity School courses are evaluated using quality grades (A, B, C, D, and F), all of which have + or – modifiers. MA students must earn a grade of B- or better in courses that count toward degree completion. Courses grades of C+ or below and audited courses do not count toward degree completion.

Students may elect to take a course on a Pass/Fail basis. To earn a grade of Pass (P), students must earn an equivalent of B- or higher in the course to earn a Pass. Students must obtain instructor approval to take a course Pass/Fail. Once instructor approval is obtained, students must submit their request to the Dean of Students Office by Wednesday of Week 3 for processing.

MA students count only one (1) course graded on a Pass/Fail basis for degree progression. The foundational courses DVSC 30500 Introduction to the Study of Religion and DVSC 30600 Theory and Method Man must be taken for quality grades.

Note that the Divinity School modified its grading practices to allow students greater flexibility to deal with the circumstances of the health crisis for Spring Quarter 2020. Divinity School students were allowed to take any class offered by the Divinity School on a Pass/Fail basis in the Spring 2020 quarter, except those meeting any language requirements. Divinity School students that took courses on a pass/fail basis during Spring 2020 will remain in good academic standing, as long as all other degree requirements are met. Courses taken on a Pass/Fail basis during Spring 2020 will count toward the quality grade course requirement. Hence, Divinity School students will **not** have to take additional courses to make up for any courses taken on a Pass/Fail basis in the Spring 2020 quarter.

Students may also elect to audit a course, which is indicated as (R) on the transcript. Students who audit courses typically complete assigned readings, participate in class discussions, but do not turn in assignments. Audited courses are not taken for credit and do not count toward degree completion. Students must obtain instructor approval to audit a course. Once instructor approval is obtained, students must submit their request to the Dean of Students Office by Wednesday of Week 3 for processing.

Students may request an Incomplete (I) for a course to allow additional time to finish work required for a quality grade. Students who wish to take an Incomplete grade for a course must make a formal request to the instructor of record for the course using the form available on the Forms for Current Students website. These forms must be turned into the Dean of Students Office for processing.

MA students have one academic year to complete and submit the unfinished coursework. After the year elapses, the I becomes permanent, and any grade submitted will be placed next to the I (e.g. I/B+). MA students with more than three Incomplete or ungraded courses on their transcript at the beginning of the academic year may not register for following quarter.

NOTE: Students utilizing federal student aid should consult with the Graduate Financial Office to determine if and how a grade of “I” will impact loan eligibility.

Annual Reviews

The Dean of Students monitors academic progress for MA students. The Associate Dean of Students provides annual reviews and progress reports for MA students every Winter quarter. Any student who fails to make satisfactory academic progress as evidenced by failing to meet the enrollment and registration requirements or by failing to earn the sufficient quality grades as outlined above must develop a completion plan in conjunction with the faculty advisor, MA Program Director, and Associate Dean of Students.

The student will be given a completion plan in writing that outlines what is required to regain good academic standing and the deadline for doing so, normally 1-2 quarters. If a student has substantial academic work to make-up, they may not be allowed to register for courses. Instead, the Associate Dean will register them

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for Divinity Advanced Study to maintain enrollment in the program. Failure to meet the terms of the completion plan will result in the student's withdrawal from the program.

Advisor

All MA students are assigned a faculty advisor to assist them in determining a cogent course of study. Faculty advisors are assigned before matriculation in the program. Students typically meet with their advisor once per quarter. Students may elect to change their faculty advisor by submitting the Change of Advisor Form on the Forms for Current Students website.

Transfer Among Programs

Because a student's academic and professional interests may change, students may transfer between the master's degree programs. Students may present transfer petitions at any time after matriculation to the program. Any petition by a student to transfer to another program after admission but before registration is subject to review by the Masters Admissions Committee.

Petitions of enrolled master's student are subject to review by the student's faculty advisor and Faculty Program Director of the entering program. Students should complete the Petition to Change Programs Form which is available on the Forms for Current Students website.

If a transfer petition is approved, the student will be given an academic plan for the new program, including an updated graduation date by the Dean of Students Office. Master's students maintain the same divisional aid proportion when transferring programs.

Graduation

Students must apply to graduate in the term in which the degree is completed. The deadline to apply to graduate is Friday of the first week of the quarter. Students graduating in the Summer, Autumn, or Winter quarter are invited to participate in annual convocation exercises in the Spring Quarter. Degrees are conferred in the actual quarter of graduation. The Registrar charges a degree cancellation fee for students who apply for graduation and are not approved to graduate. Students should consult with the Dean of Students Office about eligibility for graduation.