

## **Ph.D. Program in History of Religions**

### **1. General Remarks**

Each faculty member in the History of Religions (HR) Area maintains both a general interest in certain key theoretical problems within the discipline and an interest in a particular area of specialized research. Similarly, the programs of study designed for the students enrolled in the doctoral program are structured to provide training for both aspects of academic work. In addition to taking courses offered by faculty within the Area, students are encouraged to take advantage of the resources of other Areas of the Divinity School and other segments of the larger University in order to acquire the specialized knowledge and linguistic skills they need.

### **2. Definition of the Area**

HR approaches religion as an exclusively human phenomenon, via the methods of the social sciences and the humanities. It is concerned to theorize at a high level of generalization, informed by broadly comparative and empirical research, and to carry out high level empirical research informed by theoretical reflection. It pays self-conscious and explicit attention to problems of epistemology, terminology, category formation, method and motive. Irreverent by temperament and sometimes on principle, it insists that [a] the Western monotheisms should not be the only paradigms and/or objects of legitimate study, [b] religion cannot be reduced to belief, but also includes issues of practices, institutions, communities, habitus and other factors that often operate below the level of consciousness, and [c] interpretation involves critical probing and systematic interrogation of the idealized self-representations of any religious phenomenon.

### **3. Application to the Ph. D. Program**

The application should demonstrate a sound theoretical understanding of the student's project and a sound beginning in any special area that the student intends to study. All HR students applying from within the M. A. program should take courses with as many members of the HR faculty as possible.

### **4. The Colloquium and the Theory Courses**

The HR Area requires all students to participate in a colloquium with the HR faculty approximately midway between entering the field and taking the qualifying examinations; this moment generally falls during the second year of Ph.D. study. This is not an exam, but a collective evaluation of a student's progress and future course of study. The student should submit an essay that constitutes a serious piece of research, to be discussed at the colloquium; it is often an expanded, or refined, version of a paper submitted for a course. The colloquium paper should, ideally, be empirically grounded in the student's special area and engage theoretical issues. Students will inaugurate the discussion with a statement of their academic purpose and objectives. The paper will be circulated to all faculty (including associated faculty in HR) and all faculty are invited to take part, but a quorum of three is necessary. Discussion will extend to all

aspects of the student's academic performance. The colloquium is intended to provide constructive advice to help the student prepare for Ph.D. exams and dissertation. In some cases, the faculty may ask the student to revise and resubmit the colloquium paper and, in rare cases, the faculty may advise the student to transfer to another academic program or to withdraw from the HR program.

MA students who plan to apply for admission to the Ph.D. in HR should take, in their first year if possible, and no later than the end of their second year, at least the first and if possible the second of the two basic theory courses offered in sequence by the HR faculty, namely the courses in Classical Theory and Contemporary Theory. This will count as one (or two, if both are taken) of the three courses required for application to the Ph.D. field. The Classical Theory course will be offered in every year and is a pre-requisite for the Contemporary Theory Course. Students who enter the Ph.D. program from outside the Divinity School should take the Classical Theory course and, if possible, the Contemporary Theory class before the colloquium and must complete both theory courses before the qualifying examinations. If similar coursework has been completed elsewhere, the student may petition the HR faculty to accept this as fulfilling one or both of the two basic theory courses. Students who took only the Classical Theory course in the MA program should take the Contemporary Theory course before scheduling their colloquium.

## **5. Qualifying Examinations**

### **A: Orals Statement**

The paper submitted at the time of qualifying examinations, known as the Orals Statement, should satisfy the same criteria as that of the colloquium paper, but on a larger scale, sometimes closer to the area of the student's intended dissertation.

### **B: Distribution**

Each student will take at least two, and no more than three, HR exams, within the total of four exams, including at least one theory exam and one Special Area exam. Students will choose faculty members to administer each of the exams in such a way that there are at least four Divinity School faculty members, including at least two HR faculty members, involved in the examinations as a whole.

### **C. Bibliographies for the Qualifying Examinations**

#### **Exam 1: Special Area**

The student will, in consultation with the appropriate faculty, select a bibliography of 20 books that focus on various aspects--theoretical, practical, and communal--of the religious tradition(s) within the chosen Special Area. These should cover both pre-modern times and (in cases where the relevant tradition is still alive) the contemporary period, and both primary and secondary materials.

These Examinations include some religious traditions that are relatively narrowly geographically bounded and some that extend over a broad geographical area. In both cases, the examinations cover the diversity of religious phenomena within the given tradition as they have developed over an extended period of time. Students must have, and demonstrate, knowledge of the relevant languages of the tradition on which they intend to write their dissertation. Examples of Special Areas that have the scope

required, and in which the present faculty work, include: Hinduism, Buddhism, South Asian Religions, Southeast Asian Religions, Tibetan Religions, Chinese Religions, Japanese Religions, Islam, Greek Religions, Roman Religions, Germanic Religions, Zoroastrianism, North American Native Religions, South American Religions, Sub-Saharan African Religions, and aspects of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Students who wish to arrange for an Examination in a Special Area in which the HR Area does not have obvious faculty resources must demonstrate sharp focus and strong determination. Such students should first consult with an appropriate member of the HR faculty concerning possible strategies; they must forge a good working relationship with some faculty member outside the HR Area or outside the Divinity School who has expertise in the student's chosen area and who has made a serious commitment to serve as the student's co-advisor and to assist in writing and/or grading the Special Area Examination. HR students who specialize in Christianity, Judaism, or Islam will work with the History of Religions faculty to devise individual ways of meeting the Special Area requirement; this may involve substituting for the HR Special Area Examination one or more of the Examinations given by the Committee on the History of Religious Traditions.

## **Exam 2: Theory**

### **A. Contemporary Theory**

This examination covers representative works that have broad and ongoing significance in the discipline of history of religions. Students will choose four clusters of five books, each cluster dealing with a coherent theoretical focus. The content of each cluster will be decided upon by the student in consultation with the examiners. Some clusters (such as Structuralism or Psychoanalysis) may fall in either the Contemporary or Classical period, depending on the books selected. Examples of such clusters are: Structuralism; Post-structuralism; Psychoanalysis [Neo]; Neo-Marxism; Cultural Hermeneutics; Feminism; History and Historiography; Post-Colonialism; History and the Imaginaire; Language Theory.

### **B: Classical Theory**

This examination provides an opportunity to take account of some important authors, issues, and trends in the field, and to set them within their historical context. Students will choose four clusters of five books, each cluster dealing with a coherent theoretical focus. The student will decide upon the content of each cluster in consultation with the examiners. Typically, the exam begins in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but it might well stretch to include pre-modern texts. Examples of clusters are: Hegel and Marx, Enlightenment and Romanticism, Max Weber, Psychoanalysis, Durkheim and the École Sociologique; Early Anthropology; Phenomenology; Pre-modern theories of religion; Dumézil.

## **Exam 3.**

This examination may take any of four basic forms:

- A. Whichever of the two Theory exams was not chosen for Exam 2.
- B. An exam in a second Special Area.

C: In consultation with the advisor, a student may choose a second exam in the same Special Area as Exam 1, such that one of the two deals with primary sources and the other with secondary.

D: Other Foci. Exam 3 may be defined in terms of specific themes or categories (e.g. myth and symbol, communities and practice, comparison, purity and pollution). It may consist entirely of theoretical material on selected topics or of a combination of such theoretical materials with primary material within a particular religious tradition. Each student will negotiate a topic and reading list (four clusters of five books) with the faculty member[s] who will administer the examination.

The following lists are merely intended to give a general idea of some sample clusters:

### **History of Religions Exam Clusters**

#### **Classical Theory**

##### **The Enlightenment and Romanticist Reformulation of Religion**

P. Gay, *The Enlightenment*

Herder, *Ideas toward a Philosophy of History*

Hume, *Natural History of Religion*

Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*

Kant, *Conflict of the Faculties*

M. Müller, *Introduction to the Science of Religion*

Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals* and *Twilight of the Idols* and/or *Beyond Good and Evil*

Richardson and Feldman, *Modern Mythology*

Rousseau, *Social Contract*

Schleiermacher, *Speeches*

N. Smart et al. (eds) *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West*, 3 vols.

##### **Hegelian and Marxist**

Marx and Engels, *German Ideology*

Marx, *Capital*

Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*

Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*

Marx/Engels, *German Ideology*

Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity*

Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*

##### **Weber**

H. Kippenberg and M. Riesebrodt, eds. *Max Weber's Religionssystematik*.  
W. Schluchter, *Rationalism, Religion, and Domination*. Translated by  
Neil Solomon.  
N. Smart, ed. Weber and German Sociology of Religion. In *Nineteenth Century  
Religious Thought in the West*. Weber, *Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism*  
Weber, Protestant Sects, Social Psychology of the World Religions, and Religious  
Rejections of the World and Their Directions. In *From Max Weber*, Gerth/Mills eds.  
Weber, *Religions of China*  
Weber, *Religions of India*  
Weber, *Ancient Judaism*  
Weber, *Economy and Society*  
M. Weber, *Max Weber. A Biography*. Translated by Harry Zohn.  
S. Whimster and S. Lash, eds. *Max Weber, Rationality and Modernity*. Roland  
Robertson, Max

### **Psychoanalytic**

Freud, *Totem and Taboo*  
Freud, *Future of an Illusion*  
Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*  
Freud, *Civilization*  
Gay, *A Godless Jew*  
Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*  
Noll, *The Jung Cult*  
Rieff, *Mind of the Moralist*  
Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*

### **Durkheimian**

Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*  
Durkheim, *Division of Labor*  
Fustel de Coulange, *Numa Denis, the Ancient City*  
Halbwachs, *Collective Memory*  
Lukes, *Emile Durkheim*  
Mauss and Durkheim, *Primitive Classification*  
Mauss and Hubert, *Sacrifice*  
Mauss, *General Theory of Magic*  
Mauss, *The Gift*  
Pickering, *Durkheim on Religion*  
W. Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*

## Early Anthropological Approaches

Ellen, ed., *Malinowski Between Two Worlds*  
Evans-Pritchard, *Nuer Religion*  
Evans-Pritchard, *Theories of Primitive Religion*  
Frazer, *The Golden Bough*  
Gluckman, *Custom and Conflict in Africa*  
Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience*  
Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Pacific*  
Malinowski, *Magic, Science, and Religion and Other Essays*  
Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function*  
Stocking, *After Tylor*  
Turner, *Schism and Continuity*

## Phenomenological

Csordas, *The Sacred Self*  
Dubuisson, *Mythologies du XXième siècle* (section on Eliade)  
Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*  
Eliade, *Myth of the Eternal Return*  
W. James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*  
McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion*  
Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of perception*  
Otto, *Idea of the Holy*  
Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*  
Wach, *Comparative Study of Religions*

## Dumézilian

Littleton, *New Comparative Mythology*  
Dumézil, *Mitra-Varuna*  
Dumézil, *Destiny of the Warrior*  
Puhvel, *Comparative Mythology*  
Benveniste, *Vocabulary of Indo-European Institutions*  
Lincoln, *Death, War, and Sacrifice*

## Contemporary Theory

### Structuralist

Detienne, *Gardens of Adonis*  
Douglas, *Purity and Danger*  
Goody, *Domestication of the Savage Mind*  
Hénaff, *Claude Lévi-Strauss and the Making of Structural Anthropology*  
Leach, *Culture and Communication*  
Lévi-Strauss, *Totemism*  
Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*  
Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*  
Vernant and Detienne, *Cuisine of Sacrifice*  
Vidal-Naquet, *The Black Hunter*

### Neo-Marxist

Adamson, *Hegemony and Revolution*  
Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*  
Althusser, *For Marx*  
Anderson, *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism*  
Benjamin, *Illuminations*  
Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into Air*  
M. Bloch, *Ritual, History, and Power*  
Eagleton, *Ideology*  
Eagleton, *Literary Theory*  
Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*  
C. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*  
Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*  
F. Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*  
Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and socialist strategy*  
Lanternari, *Religions of the Oppressed*  
Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society*  
Morley, *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*  
E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*  
Spivak and Guha, *Selected Subaltern Studies*  
Williams, *Marxism and Literature*  
P. Worsley, *The Trumpet Will Sound*

## **Culturalist-Hermeneutic**

Appadurai, *Worship and conflict under colonial rule*  
Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*  
Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*  
Barthes, *Mythologies*  
Doniger, *Other Peoples' Myths*  
Geertz, *Interpretation of Culture*  
F. Ginburg, *Contested Lives*  
Messick, *The Calligraphic State*  
M. Rosaldo, *Knowledge and Passion*  
Scott, *Formations of Ritual*  
Strathern, *Gender of the Gift*  
Turner, *Ritual Process*  
Tambiah, *Culture, Thought, and Social Action*  
W. C. Smith, *Imagining Religion*  
Van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism*

## **Post-structuralist**

Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*  
Bourdieu, *Distinction*  
Bourdieu, *Genesis and Structure of the Political Field*  
J. Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*  
de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*  
de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable*  
Derrida, *Of Grammatology*  
Derrida, *The Gift of Death*  
Dreyfus and Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*  
Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*  
Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*  
Foucault, *History of Sexuality*  
Rabinow, ed. *Foucault: Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth*  
D. Swartz, *Culture and Power*



## Psychoanalytic

Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*  
Deleuze, *Anti-Oedipus : capitalism and schizophrenia*  
Irigaray, *Face to Face with Levinas*  
Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*  
Zizek, *The Ticklish Subject*  
Zizek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*

## Feminist

Brown, *Mama Lola*  
Bynum, *Holy Feast, Holy Fast*  
Bynum, *Fragments of History*  
Butler, *Bodies that Matter and/or Gender Trouble*  
Butler and Scott, *Feminists Theorize the Political*  
Doniger, *Splitting the Difference*  
C. Eller, *Myths of Matriarchy*  
L. Mani, *Contentious Traditions*  
Morles and Courtivron, eds. *New French Feminism: An Anthology*  
Ortner, *Making Gender*  
Rosaldo and Lamphere, *Women, Culture and Society*  
Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*  
Spivak, *In Other Worlds*  
Yanagisako and Collier, *Gender and Kinship : Essays toward a Unified Analysis*

## Historiography

G. Agamben, *Homo Sacer*  
M. Bloch, *The Historian and his Craft*  
M. Bloch, *The Royal Touch*  
H. Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*  
D. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*  
N. Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*  
Ginzburg, *Cheese and the Worms*  
Ginzburg, *The Night Battles*  
Harrison, *'Religion' and the Religions in the English Enlightenment*  
K. Jenkins, ed. *The Postmodern History Reader*  
Ladurie, *Carnival in Romans*

LeGoff and Nora, eds., *Constructing the Past*  
Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*  
Ranciere, *The Poetics of History*  
Sahlins, *Islands of History*  
Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*  
P. Veyne, *What is History*  
White, *Tropics of Discourse*  
Young, *Tropics of Discourse*

### **History, the Imaginal, and the Imaginaire**

B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*  
E. Casey, *Imagining: A Phenomenological Study*  
S. Collins, *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities*  
H. Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi*  
B. Faure, *Visions of Power*  
S. Gruzinski, *The Conquest of Mexico*  
M. Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism*  
J. Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*  
K. Popper, *Objective Knowledge*  
G. Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*  
S. Wasserstrom, *Religion After Religion*

### **Post-colonial Theory**

Arendt, *Totalitarianism*  
Bhaba, *Nation and Narration*  
Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*  
Clifford, *Predicament of Culture*  
Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*  
Comaroff & Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*  
E. Muir and G. Ruggiero, *Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe*  
Said, *Orientalism*  
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Spivak, *Culture and Imperialism*  
Wolf, *Europe and People Without History*