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 18th 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 the following 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*
Schleirmacher, *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 Feurbach*
Marx/Engels, *German Ideology*
Feurbach, *Essence of Christianity*
Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*

**Weber**
H. Kippenberg and M. Riesebrodt, eds. Max Weber’s Religionssystematik.
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 Coulangé, 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, Dukheim 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 Gramatogy*
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*
Said, *Orientalism*
Spivak, *Culture and Imperialism*
Wolf, *Europe and People Without History*