

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES - MASTER OF ARTS (MA)

The curriculum in the Department of Religious Studies at CU Boulder trains students in the scholarly understanding and interpretation of the complex phenomenon we call religion through careful study of history, texts, rituals, narrative, art and media. The program offers the skills to approach the comparative study of religion with the option of gaining deeper knowledge in Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, religions in America, religions in the Mediterranean, religions in Asia, and several indigenous traditions. We also allow students to develop expertise in thematic areas such as religion and the body; ritual studies; religion and the environment; ethics, politics and law; religion, gender and sexuality; and ancient and medieval religions.

The graduate degree in religious studies emphasizes the application of various theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of religion; the understanding of religious practices and traditions with attention to historical context and present-day impact; and the development of media literacy, critical thinking, effective oral and written communication, and research skills in our increasingly globalized and religiously diverse world.

In addition, students with a degree in religious studies are expected to achieve basic religious literacy: the ability to communicate and analyze practical information regarding religious diversity as educated citizens of a pluralistic society and thereby to effectively understand and participate in public debates and discussions about religion.

## Requirements

### Course Requirements

The student must successfully complete 30 credit hours of academic work, at least 27 of which must be completed at the 5000 level or above. Up to 6 credit hours of coursework may be taken outside the department or transferred from another accredited institution, consistent with the student's special needs and interests and with the advisor's approval. Independent study credit hours shall not exceed 6 credit hours.

A graduate degree represents the mastery of a significant body of knowledge and interpretation within an academic discipline. A degree is not granted merely because a student completes a specific number of courses. The student is expected to acquire both breadth and depth in religious studies.

A student who has not completed at least 12 credit hours, or the equivalent, of undergraduate academic coursework directly related to the study of religion will be required to do remedial work to make up this deficit before beginning graduate study or, with the director of graduate studies' permission, after beginning the program. This can be done by attaining a grade of B or better in an appropriate 2000- or 3000-level course taken within the first year. Remedial courses may not be counted toward the degree.

Courses for each term must be approved by the student's faculty advisor and be in compliance with the requirements of the Graduate School where necessary. In order to register for any given term, the student must have the course of study for that term approved in writing by the advisor on the student's Record of Progress Toward the MA Degree Form. No changes can be made to registration without the advisor's approval.

### Required Courses and Credits

Code	Title	Credit Hours
<b>Required Courses</b>		
RLST 6830	Introduction to the Academic Study of Religion	3
RLST 6945 or RLST 6950	Portfolio: Non-Thesis Option Portfolio: Thesis Option	3-6
<b>Electives</b>		<b>24-21</b>
<b>Total Credit Hours</b>		<b>30</b>

### Residency Requirement

All students must fulfill the residency requirement. In general this can be fulfilled by either two full-time semesters or four part-time semesters of study. A full-time program is defined as 5 credit hours of coursework at the 5000 level or higher, 8 credit hours of total coursework or at least one credit hour of thesis research.

### Degree Plans

In the second year of graduate study, students will select either the MA portfolio option or the MA portfolio with thesis option.

#### Plan I: Portfolio with Research Paper

Students selecting the portfolio with research paper option will take a 3-credit portfolio preparation course on secondary scholarship in a specific field (theoretical topic, geographic area or religious tradition) that will culminate with a portfolio defense. The portfolio defense, to be completed in accordance with the deadline set by the graduate school each semester, will involve a three-member committee, and will be overseen by the advisor.

#### Plan II: Portfolio with Thesis

Students selecting the portfolio with thesis option will take 6 credits of thesis coursework over two semesters (RLST 6950). The first semester of RLST 6950 (3 credit hours) will result in a thesis prospectus with the thesis committee. After successfully completing the prospectus defense, the student will enroll in the second semester of RLST 6950 (3 credit hours), which will result in the full portfolio defense, which includes defending the thesis.

## Plans of Study

### Plan I: Portfolio

Course	Title	Credit Hours
<b>Year One</b>		
<b>Fall Semester</b>		
One seminar		3
RLST 6830	Introduction to the Academic Study of Religion	3
<b>Credit Hours</b>		<b>6</b>
<b>Spring Semester</b>		
Three Seminars		9
<b>Credit Hours</b>		<b>9</b>
<b>Year Two</b>		
<b>Fall Semester</b>		
Three Seminars		9
<b>Credit Hours</b>		<b>9</b>

**Spring Semester**

One Seminar		3
RLST 6945	Portfolio: Non-Thesis Option	3
<b>Credit Hours</b>		<b>6</b>
<b>Total Credit Hours</b>		<b>30</b>

**Plan II: Portfolio with Thesis**

Course	Title	Credit Hours
--------	-------	--------------

**Year One****Fall Semester**

One Seminar		3
RLST 6830	Introduction to the Academic Study of Religion	3
<b>Credit Hours</b>		<b>6</b>

**Spring Semester**

Three Seminars		9
<b>Credit Hours</b>		<b>9</b>

**Year Two****Fall Semester**

Two Seminars		6
RLST 6950	Master's Thesis	3
<b>Credit Hours</b>		<b>9</b>

**Spring Semester**

One Seminar		3
RLST 6950	Master's Thesis	3
<b>Credit Hours</b>		<b>6</b>
<b>Total Credit Hours</b>		<b>30</b>

(Note: Students who have not already established Colorado residency at the time they begin the program may wish to consider taking 12 credits during their first year and 18 credits during their second year.)

## Learning Outcomes

By the completion of the program, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate mastery of knowledge about the historical and global diversity of religious ideas, practices and dimensions of cultures and demonstrate ability to synthesize arguments through academic writing.
- Design and conduct high quality original research in a religious tradition and/or topic of developing expertise in the academic study of religion.
- Effectively communicate and present research to academic and public audiences in both written and oral form.

## Dual Degree Programs

The Department of Religious Studies also participates in a dual master's degree program with the Departments of History and Asian Languages and Civilizations. Students interested in exploring this option should contact the graduate director of the department for specific requirements.

For more information visit the department's Dual MA (<https://www.colorado.edu/rlst/graduate/dual-ma/>) webpage.