

Theological & Religious Studies, PHD

Modality

On Campus

Program URL

<https://theology.georgetown.edu/graduate/>

Mission Statement or Program Description

The Ph.D. program in Theological and Religious Studies is an interdisciplinary program that allows students to pursue the critical and comparative study of theology and religion. With over 20 full-time faculty members, the department has specialists in Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism. The doctoral program welcomes students whose research interests grapple with questions of interreligious understanding and contemporary issues of religious pluralism in an increasingly globalized and multicultural world.

Academic Policies

The academic policies and procedures of the Theological and Religious Studies program are those specified in the department handbook and Georgetown University's Bulletin.

Requirements

Program Requirements

The doctoral program ordinarily requires five years of full-time study: two years for course work, one year to prepare for the comprehensive examinations and the dissertation proposal, and two years for writing the dissertation. In addition, the program requires a reading knowledge of two languages apart from English appropriate to the student's field of study.

Coursework

The program requires 36 credits in graduate-level classes, not including language study. Students who have completed a significant amount of relevant coursework prior to entering the program may be eligible for Advanced Standing. Credits are ordinarily distributed as follows:

- Two foundational seminars in religious pluralism: one on religious studies perspectives, the other on theological and philosophical perspectives (6 credits).
- Two core seminars with a methodological focus that cuts across traditions (6 credits).
- Three courses in a primary field of study (9 credits).
- Three courses in a secondary field of study (9 credits).
- Two electives relevant to a student's chosen fields of study (6 credits).

Language Requirement

Reading knowledge of two languages besides English is required. These languages should be relevant to the student's fields of research, especially the dissertation. Reading competence may be demonstrated in three ways:

1. coursework equivalent to the intermediate level completed at an accredited institution;
2. acceptable translation of an appropriate theological or philosophical text to be done within two hours, with the help of a dictionary if necessary;
3. acceptable proof that the foreign language in question is the student's native language.

Students should recognize that these requirements are only a minimum, and that strong language skills are necessary in order to do sophisticated work in theology and religious studies.

Comprehensive Exams/presentations (if applicable)

Upon completing coursework, students must pass four Comprehensive Exams:

- A four-hour written exam on the student's primary field of study
- A four-hour written exam on the student's secondary field of study
- A five-day take-home exam on religious pluralism
- A long paper (8,000 to 10,000 words) that demonstrates the student's preparation to continue to the dissertation

For each of the exams, students will develop a list of readings in conjunction with 1-2 faculty members in the subject area.

Thesis Requirements

In preparing for the fourth comprehensive exam, students should have already begun to determine the area of their dissertation research and should have discussed it with the faculty member that the student wishes to have as a supervisor.

The Dissertation Committee consists of at least three members: the supervisor and two or more readers. The supervisor of record should normally be a full-time member of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, even if the main adviser might belong to another department. One or more of the readers may be from outside the Department, or, when warranted, even outside the university. On balance, the majority of the committee should come from within the Department. While the student can suggest names, the Director is the one who constitutes and appoints the Dissertation Committee.

Once the Committee has been appointed, the student, with the help of the supervisor, formulates the proposal. The length of the proposal should be no more than five pages and should include the following: the title of the dissertation, the statement of the question, the central object of the research, the method, the outline of the chapters, and the project's specific contribution to the field. In addition, the student must submit an essential bibliography. Once the proposal is acceptable to the supervisor, he or she will convene a meeting with the student and the two readers to further refine the proposal.

The defense lasts approximately two hours. The student will begin with a twenty-minute presentation, to be made without notes, of the dissertation, highlighting its topic, its method, its main theses, and

its contribution. The supervisor and the readers will each be allotted twenty minutes to ask questions. Additional questions may be asked by the Chair of the Committee --after which an opportunity must be provided for any of those present to ask questions of the candidate

At the end of the defense, the student and the attending public are asked to leave the room. The chair begins a discussion of the dissertation and the defense. A vote is then taken by the Dissertation Committee (pass or fail) considering both the dissertation and the candidate's performance in the defense. The members of the committee will stipulate what revisions must be made before the dissertation is submitted to the Graduate School. The candidate is responsible for these revisions, and they should be completed promptly and in consultation with the supervisor and/or a delegated reader or readers. The entire committee must sign the Coversheet to affirm that revisions have been satisfactorily completed.