

RELIGIOUS STUDIES, BA

Banner Code: LA-BA-RELI

3200 Horizon Hall
Fairfax Campus

Website: religious.gmu.edu/programs/la-ba-reli

Religious studies provides students an understanding of the traditions of religions across the globe. Areas of study offered by the department include Asian religious traditions, Near (Middle) East religious traditions (Judaism, Islam, and Christianity), and comparative aspects of religion. Students develop skills in reading and interpreting sacred texts. They explore the historical and social dimensions of religion along with a consideration of religious values and ethics from comparative and cross-cultural perspectives, and with relation to global issues. Students go on to work in the government, service, or nonprofit sectors, as well as pursue graduate work in the humanities and social sciences.

Admissions & Policies

Policies

Students in this major complete at least 33 credits within the major, earning a minimum grade of 2.00 in each course. No course applied to the major in religious studies may be used to fulfill more than one requirement.

For policies governing all undergraduate degrees, see AP.5 Undergraduate Policies (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/undergraduate-policies/>).

Requirements

Degree Requirements

Total credits: minimum 120

Students should be aware of the specific policies associated with this program, located on the Admissions & Policies tab.

Core Courses in the Major

Introductory Courses to the Study of Religion

Code	Title	Credits
RELI 211	Introduction to Religions of the "West" (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
RELI 212	Introduction to Religions of Asia (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
RELI 300	Theories and Methods in Religious Studies	3
Total Credits		9

Religious Studies

Code	Title	Credits
Select four courses (12 credits) from any religious studies courses (RELI) at the 300 and 400 level other than those used to fulfill the requirements above.		12
Total Credits		12

Capstone or Synthesis Course

Code	Title	Credits
Choose one of the following:		3
RELI 420	Capstone Seminar in Studies of Religion (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	
RELI 490	Comparative Study of Religions (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	
Total Credits		3

Electives in the Major

Code	Title	Credits
Select 9 credits of electives from the following:		9
300- or 400-level courses in religious studies not used to fulfill other requirements (http://catalog.gmu.edu/courses/reli/)		
up to 6 credits of scriptural language ¹		
ANTH 307	Ancient Mesoamerica (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	
ANTH 309	Peoples and Cultures of India (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/) (when topic is relevant with prior written approval of the undergraduate director)	
ANTH 313	Myth, Magic, and Mind (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	
ANTH 324	Warfare, Violence, and Sacrifice in Antiquity	
ARAB 440	Topics in Arabic Religious Thought and Texts (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	
ARTH 320	Art of the Islamic World (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	
ARTH 333	Early Christian and Byzantine Art (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	
ARTH 382	Arts of India (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	
ARTH 383	Arts of Southeast Asia (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	
ARTH 384	Arts of China (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	
ARTH 385	Arts of Japan (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	
CLAS 250	Classical Mythology (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	

ENGH 316	Topics in Myth and Literature
ENGH 320	Literature of the Middle Ages (when topic is relevant with prior written approval of the undergraduate director)
ENGH 414	Folklore and the Supernatural
ENGH 421	Topics in Medieval and Renaissance Literature (when topic is relevant with prior written approval of the undergraduate director)
ENGH 422	Chaucer
ENGH 428	Milton
GOVT 345	Islam and Politics
HIST 306	The Reformation
HIST 462	Women in Islamic Society (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)
PHIL 151	Introduction to Ethics
PHIL 251	Happiness and the Good Life
PHIL 336	Twentieth-Century Continental Thought: Existentialism (when topic is relevant with prior written approval of the undergraduate director)
PHIL 339	Recent Continental Philosophy (when topic is relevant with prior written approval of the undergraduate director)
SOCI 385	Religion and Society
SOCI 388	Violence and Religion
Total Credits	9

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such as Arabic, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, or Sanskrit.

Writing-Intensive Requirement

The university requires all students to complete at least one course designated "writing intensive" in their majors. Students majoring in religious studies fulfill this requirement by successfully completing RELI 420 Capstone Seminar in Studies of Religion (Mason Core) (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/>).

Upper Level Requirement

Students seeking a bachelor's degree must apply at least 45 credits of upper-level courses (numbered 300 or above) toward graduation requirements.

Additional Electives

Any remaining credits may be completed with elective courses to bring the degree total to 120.

College Level Requirements for the BA Degree

In addition to the Mason Core (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/>) program, students pursuing a BA degree must complete the coursework below. Except where expressly prohibited, a course used to fulfill a college level requirement may also be used simultaneously to satisfy other requirements (Mason Core (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/>) requirements or requirements for the major).

Philosophy or Religious Studies

Code	Title	Credits
Select 3 credits from the following:		
PHIL (http://catalog.gmu.edu/courses/phil/)	¹	3
RELI (http://catalog.gmu.edu/courses/reli/)		

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Note that the following courses may not be used to fulfill this requirement:

- PHIL 323 Classical Western Political Theory
- PHIL 324 Modern Western Political Theory
- PHIL 327 Contemporary Western Political Theory
- PHIL 393 Humanities College to Career
- PHIL 460 Senior Seminar in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics

Additionally, PHIL 253, RELI 235, RELI 333, and RELI 339 cannot be used to fulfill both the philosophy/religious studies requirement and the Mason Core literature (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/#literature>) requirement.

Social and Behavioral Sciences

Code	Title	Credits
Select 3 credits of social and behavioral sciences from the following (additional to the Mason Core social and behavioral sciences requirement) ¹		
ANTH (http://catalog.gmu.edu/courses/anth/)		3
CRIM (http://catalog.gmu.edu/courses/crim/)		
ECON (http://catalog.gmu.edu/courses/econ/)		
GOVT (http://catalog.gmu.edu/courses/govt/)		
HIST (http://catalog.gmu.edu/courses/hist/)	²	
LING (http://catalog.gmu.edu/courses/ling/)		
PSYC (http://catalog.gmu.edu/courses/psyc/)		
SOCI (http://catalog.gmu.edu/courses/soci/)		

Or choose from the following GGS courses:

GGS 101	Major World Regions (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)
GGS 103	Human Geography (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)
GGS 110	Introduction to Geoinformation Technologies
GGS 301	Political Geography (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)
GGS 303	Geography of Resource Conservation (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)
GGS 304	Population Geography (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)
GGS 305	Economic Geography
GGS 306	Urban Geography
GGS 315	Geography of the United States
GGS 316	Geography of Latin America
GGS 320	Geography of Europe
GGS 325	Geography of North Africa and the Middle East
GGS 326	Geography of Eastern Europe and Russia

GGG 357	Urban Planning
GGG 380	Geography of Virginia

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The two courses used to fulfill the combined college and Mason Core (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/>) requirements must be from different disciplines in the social and behavioral sciences.

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HIST 100 and HIST 125 may not be used to fulfill this requirement.

Foreign Language

Code	Title	Credits
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Intermediate-level proficiency in one foreign language, fulfilled by:¹

Completing 3 credits in a foreign language numbered 202 (or higher level courses taught in the language) (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/colleges-schools/humanities-social-sciences/modern-classical-languages/>)

Or achieving a satisfactory score on an approved proficiency test

Or completing the following ASL three course sequence:

EDSE 115	American Sign Language (ASL) I
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EDSE 116	American Sign Language (ASL) II
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EDSE 219	American Sign Language (ASL) III
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Students who are already proficient in a second language may be eligible for a waiver of this requirement. Additional information on waivers can be found at the Office of Undergraduate Academic Affairs (<http://chssundergrad.gmu.edu/>).

Non-Western Culture

Select 3 credits of an approved course in the study of a non-Western culture (additional to the Mason Core requirement in global understanding)

Code	Title	Credits
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Select 3 credits (additional to Mason Core Global Understanding requirement)¹

ANTH 114	Introduction to Cultural Anthropology (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
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ANTH 300	Civilizations	3
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ANTH 302	Peoples and Cultures of Latin America (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
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ANTH 307	Ancient Mesoamerica (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
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ANTH 308	Peoples and Cultures of the Middle East (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
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ANTH 309	Peoples and Cultures of India (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
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ANTH 313	Myth, Magic, and Mind (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
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ANTH 314	Zombies	3
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ANTH 317	East Asian Cultures	3
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ANTH 330	Peoples and Cultures of Selected Regions: Non-Western	3
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ANTH 332	Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Globalization (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
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ANTH 381	Medical Anthropology	3
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ANTH 396	Issues in Anthropology: Social Sciences (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
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ARAB 360	Topics in Arabic Cultural Production	3
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ARAB 365	Black and Minority Cultures in Arabic Literature (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
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ARAB 420	Survey of Arabic Literature	3
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ARAB 440	Topics in Arabic Religious Thought and Texts (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
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ARTH 203	Survey of Asian Art (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
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ARTH 204	Survey of Latin American Art (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
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ARTH 206	Survey of African Art (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
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ARTH 317	The Black Pharaohs: Art and Archaeology of Ancient Nubia (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
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ARTH 318	Art and Archaeology of Ancient Egypt	3
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ARTH 319	Art and Archaeology of the Ancient Near East (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
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ARTH 320	Art of the Islamic World (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
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ARTH 382	Arts of India (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
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ARTH 383	Arts of Southeast Asia (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
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ARTH 384	Arts of China (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
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ARTH 385	Arts of Japan (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
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ARTH 482	RS: Advanced Studies in Asian Art (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
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CHIN 318	Introduction to Classical Chinese (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
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CHIN 320	Contemporary Chinese Film	3
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CHIN 325	Major Chinese Writers (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
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CHIN 470	Special Topics in Chinese Studies	3
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DANC 118	Global Dance Perspectives I (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
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ECON 361	Economic Development of Latin America (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
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ECON 362	African Economic Development (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3	HIST 357	Postwar Japan (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
FREN 454	Topics in Caribbean Francophone Literature and Culture	3	HIST 358	Post-1949 China (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
GGG 101	Major World Regions (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3	HIST 360	History of South Africa (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
GGG 316	Geography of Latin America	3	HIST 364	Revolution in Latin America (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
GGG 317	Geography of China (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3	HIST 365	Conquest and Colonization in Latin America (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
GGG 325	Geography of North Africa and the Middle East	3	HIST 366	Comparative Slavery	3
GGG 399	Select Topics in GGS	3	HIST 377	The Vietnam War (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
GOVT 332	Politics of the Middle East and North Africa	3	HIST 384	Global History of Christianity (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
GOVT 333	Politics of East Asia	3	HIST 387	Topics in Global History (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3-6
GOVT 338	Politics of Eurasia	3	HIST 461	Arab-Israeli Conflict	3
GOVT 340	Central Asian Politics	3	HIST 462	Women in Islamic Society (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
GOVT 341	Chinese Foreign Policy	3	HIST 465	The Middle East in the 20th Century	3
GOVT 345	Islam and Politics	3	JAPA 310	Japanese Culture in a Global World (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
GOVT 433	Political Economy of East Asia	3	JAPA 340	Topics in Japanese Literature (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
HIST 251	Survey of East Asian History (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3	JAPA 380	Japan in Motion	3
HIST 252	Survey of East Asian History (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3	KORE 300	Korean Culture and Society	3
HIST 261	Survey of African History (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3	KORE 320	Korean Popular Culture in a Global World	3
HIST 262	Survey of African History (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3	KORE 385	Introduction to Korean Linguistics	3
HIST 271	Survey of Latin American History (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3	MUSI 103	Musics of the World (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
HIST 272	Survey of Latin American History (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3	RELI 211	Introduction to Religions of the "West" (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
HIST 281	Survey of Middle Eastern Civilization (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3	RELI 212	Introduction to Religions of Asia (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
HIST 282	Survey of Middle Eastern Civilization (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3	RELI 312	Islam (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
HIST 326	Stalinism	3	RELI 313	Hinduism (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
HIST 327	The Soviet Union and Russia Since World War II	3	RELI 314	Chinese Philosophies and Religious Traditions	3
HIST 328	Rise of Russia (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3	RELI 315	Buddhism (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
HIST 329	Modern Russia and the Soviet Union (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3	RELI 317	Daoism	3
HIST 353	History of Traditional China	3	RELI 318	Korean Philosophy and Religions	3
HIST 354	Modern China (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3	RELI 338	Qur'an and Hadith	3
HIST 356	Modern Japan (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3	RELI 342	Comparative Study of Mysticism	3
			RELI 344	Muhammad: Life and Legacy	3
			RELI 358	Islamic Thought (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3

RELI 367	Islamic Law, Society, and Ethics	3	Global History (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/#global-history)	3
RELI 368	Islam, Democracy, and Human Rights (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3	Literature (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/#literature)	3
RELI 384	Global History of Christianity (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3	Natural Science (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/#natural-science)	7
RELI 490	Comparative Study of Religions (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3	Social and Behavioral Sciences (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/#social-behavioral-science)	3
RUSS 353	Russian Civilization (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3	Just Societies (optional) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/#justsocieties) ¹	
RUSS 354	Contemporary Post-Soviet Life (Mason Core) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3	Integration Requirements	
WMST 407	Transnational Sexualities	3	Written Communication (upper-level) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/#written)	3
			Writing Intensive (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/#wi) ²	3
			Mason Apex (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/#apex) ³	3
			Total Credits	40

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A course used to fulfill the Mason Core global understanding (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/#global>) requirement may not be simultaneously used to satisfy this college-level requirement. A course used to fulfill this requirement may be used simultaneously to fulfill any other requirements (Mason Core requirements, college-level requirements, or requirements for the major). Additional information on waivers can be found at the Office of Undergraduate Academic Affairs (<http://chssundergrad.gmu.edu/>).

Mason Core

Some Mason Core (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/>) requirements may already be fulfilled by the major requirements listed above. Students are strongly encouraged to consult their advisors to ensure they fulfill all remaining Mason Core (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/>) requirements.

Students who have completed the following credentials are eligible for a waiver of the Foundation and Exploration (lower level) requirement categories. The Integration category (upper level) is not waived under this policy. See Admissions (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/admissions/undergraduate-policies/#transfertext>) for more information.

- VCCS Uniform Certificate of General Studies
- VCCS or Richard Bland Associate of Science (A.S.), Associate of Arts (A.A.), Associate of Arts and Sciences (A.A.&S.), or Associate of Fine Arts (A.F.A.)

Code	Title	Credits
Foundation Requirements		
	Written Communication (lower-level) (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/#written)	3
	Oral Communication (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/#oral)	3
	Quantitative Reasoning (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/#quantitative)	3
	Information Technology and Computing (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/#information-technology)	3
Exploration Requirements		
	Arts (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/#arts)	3
	Global Contexts (http://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/#global-contexts)	3

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In addition to covering content related to the designated category, Exploration level courses marked with a *Just Societies* "flag" are specifically designed to help students learn how to interact effectively with others from all walks of life, including those with backgrounds and beliefs that differ from their own. Courses marked with the Just Societies flag are available for students starting in Fall 2024. Students admitted prior to the Fall of 2025 are not required to take courses with a Just Societies flag but may wish to do so to increase their knowledge and skills in this important area. Students interested in this approach to completing their Mason Core Exploration Requirements should work closely with their advisor to identify the appropriate Just Societies-flagged courses.

2

Most programs include the writing-intensive course designated for the major as part of the major requirements; this course is therefore not counted towards the total required for Mason Core.

3

Minimum 3 credits required.

4-Year Plan

Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies Sample Plan of Study

A sample four year graduation plan and degree planning worksheet can be found at <https://academicaffairs.chss.gmu.edu/undergraduate-students/advising/advising-sheets> (<https://academicaffairs.chss.gmu.edu/undergraduate-students/advising/advising-sheets/>). The plan is a recommended sequencing of courses based on prerequisites and scheduling. This may not fit every student's needs and is a guideline, not a requirement. Students should confirm major requirements with their academic advisor each semester and their PatriotWeb Degree Evaluation to ensure they enroll in the proper courses and are on track to graduate.

Program Outcomes

Program Outcomes

1. **Inter-religious Literacy:** Students will demonstrate nuanced knowledge of the various defining dimensions of religion both within

specific religious traditions and comparatively across different religious communities.

2. **Knowledge of Key Concepts and Questions:** Students will be conversant in the history, formation, and significance of foundational ideas, terms, and questions within the interdisciplinary field of Religious Studies.
3. **Critical and Comparative Thinking:** Students will be able to critically and comparatively analyze particular religious phenomena via different theoretical approaches and methods in the academic study of religion, including historical, textual, and social scientific analysis.
4. **Research Methods and Assessment:** Students will be able find appropriate scholarly sources in the field of Religious Studies, learn to critically evaluate secondary sources, and consider how to respectfully engage with primary source materials.
5. **Argument-oriented Writing:** Students will be able to read for, evaluate, and professionally write an argument with support of scholarly evidence and reasoning within the field of Religious Studies.

Accelerated Master's

Many accelerated master's programs are available for any bachelor's degree at Mason. See the full list of degrees (http://catalog.gmu.edu/programs/#filter=filter_24) with accelerated programs at George Mason.