Proposal for a Designated Emphasis in the Study of Religion

Administrative Home: Graduate Group in the Study of Religion

Approved by Graduate Council: June 16, 2017

I. Description of the Designated Emphasis

The proposed Designated Emphasis in the Study of Religion would allow students to focus their studies on religion and society. Its thematic emphases and curricular structure would be closely aligned with those of the new Graduate Group in the Study of Religion at UC Davis. Much like the Graduate Group, a DE in the Study of Religion would help graduate students specialize in some aspect of the study of religion in a way not currently available through other existing Ph.D. programs. Some programs do offer training in religious traditions from specific disciplinary perspectives; these include history, English, Native American Studies, anthropology, and sociology. Unlike these programs, however, the DE in the Study of Religion provides graduate students with an interdisciplinary understanding of how religion in general has been conceptualized and studied historically and how these understandings continue to inform basic categories of thought, behavior and identity across the world and especially in the West. Rather than approaching religion as a fixed entity that informs change in other more dynamic fields (e.g. literature, culture, society, behavior), our DE would help students think about the study of religion as historically variable, contextualized, and itself constitutive of the subject of inquiry.

II. Description of the Academic Nature of the Designated Emphasis

A. Affiliated Ph.D. Programs

- Anthropology
- Comparative Literature
- Cultural Studies
- English
- History
- Music
- Performance Studies
- Philosophy
- Sociology

B. Dean’s Letter

See Appendix 1

C. Chairs’ Letters

See Appendix 2
D. Affiliated Faculty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affiliated Ph.D. Program</th>
<th>Affiliated Faculty</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anthropology</td>
<td>Suad Joseph, Smriti Srinivas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative Literature</td>
<td>Jocelyn Sharlet, Archana Venkatesan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Studies</td>
<td>Allison Coudert, Suad Joseph, Heghnar Watenpaugh, Keith Watenpaugh, Diane Wolf, Elizabeth Freeman</td>
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<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Elizabeth Freeman, A. Katie Harris</td>
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<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>David Biale, John Smolenski, Daniel Stolzenberg, Baki Tezcan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Henry Spiller</td>
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<tr>
<td>Native American Studies</td>
<td>Ines Hernandez-Avila</td>
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<tr>
<td>Performance Studies</td>
<td>Lynn Roller, Archana Venkatesan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>Jan Szaif</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>John Hall, Diane Wolf</td>
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<td>Additional DE faculty</td>
<td>Emily Albu, Catherine Chin, Mark Halperin, Naomi Janowitz, Flagg Miller, Meaghan O’Keefe, Mairaj Syed</td>
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See Appendix 3 for signed individual letters

E. Admissions Criteria

Admission will be open to graduate students in affiliated programs in good standing. The primary criteria for admission will be a commitment to pursue a dissertation topic that integrates the study of religion with their subject of inquiry. Required courses must be taken prior to the PhD qualifying exam, and students must have a DE representative on the QE committee. Interested students should thus apply to the DE as soon as possible after being admitted to their PhD program so they can complete the DE requirements in the appropriate time frame.

F. Curriculum

1. REQUIRED COURSES

The minimum requirements to complete the DE in the Study of Religion are four courses. Students are required to take two of the three foundational courses of the Graduate Group in the Study of Religion. Although this is not required, students are recommended to complete the series.

REL 200A: Historical Roots of the Study of Religion (4 units)
REL 200B: Foundational Theories of Religion (4 units)
REL 200C: Contemporary Approaches to the Study of Religion (4 units)

It is recommended (but not required) that students take REL 200A first as a foundation for further study.

2. ELECTIVE COURSES

Students are required to complete two additional REL courses, where one of the courses may be the third course from 200 series (REL 200A, 200B, 200C). Alternatively, students may take approved courses focusing on religion from their home department or from one of the departments affiliated with the DE. For approval of an elective from outside of the Graduate Group in the Study of Religion, please students must submit the relevant syllabus and the reading list to the staff contact for the DE. With it, also append a brief statement (150-200 words) clarifying its relation to the study of religion. A course must engage in substantial ways with religion as a category of analysis. In case of ambiguity with regard to course content, the Chair of the DE may request a sample of written work from the course. The Chair will review the documents to ensure that they focus on issues related to the study of religion and will notify students about their request on a case-by-case basis.

3. QUALIFYING EXAMINATION REQUIREMENTS

All four of the required courses for the DE (two courses from the REL 200 series and 2 electives) must be completed before the Qualifying Examination. Students in the program are also expected to incorporate religion as a central category of analysis in their qualifying examination lists and dissertation topics. The Executive Committee will recommend one DE faculty member to serve on the Qualifying Examination committee. The DE chair will review student coursework to ensure satisfactory completion of requirements and will record the name of the faculty member serving on the student’s committee before signing the Qualifying Examination Application form. The Ph.D. program Graduate Adviser will also sign the application form. The Qualifying Examination itself will assess the student’s level of knowledge within the area of the DE, as well as in the Ph.D. program. Satisfactory performance on the Qualifying Exam for the Ph.D. will be judged independently from performance on the DE. Thus, an allowable outcome of the Qualifying Examination is that the student’s performance may be “passing” for the Ph.D. but “not passing” for the DE.

In the event that a student passes the PhD qualifying exam, but receives a “not pass” for the DE, the Executive Committee of the DE will define a plan for remediation. The plan may include, but is not limited to re-examination by the DE Executive Committee, coursework, teaching, or preparation of a paper. If
the student is re-examined, the outcome is limited to “pass” or “fail”. If the student receives a “fail”, the student is disqualified from the DE.

Once the student has successfully completed both the Ph.D. and the DE, the DE Chair will sign the student’s Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy form and, in coordination with the student’s Graduate Advisor, ensure the form’s submission to Graduate Studies as soon as possible.

4. DISSERTATION REQUIREMENTS

The dissertation topic shall incorporate study within the DE. The student’s Dissertation Committee shall be selected in accordance with the regulations of the PhD program, but must include at least one member of the DE. The major professor may be a member of the DE. If this is not the case, in consultation with the student and the appropriate affiliated PhD program, the Executive Committee will recommend a DE member to the Dissertation Committee.

5. DEGREE CONFERRAL PROCESS

The Designated Emphasis will be awarded solely in conjunction with the Ph.D. and will be signified by the degree designation “Ph.D. in X with Emphasis in the Study of Religion,” where X is the Ph.D. program.

G. Student Advising

The Chair of the DE in consultation with the DE Executive Committee will review the academic progress of each student on an annual basis. Working with the Chair of the DE, the student will be required to develop an annual work plan to direct progress towards the completion of the DE requirements. This work plan will be evaluated and revised annually to ensure that the student is making adequate progress towards degree completion. This evaluation will be done in a meeting with the DE Executive Committee, which may or may not include the student’s advisor. Progress will be based on the student’s ability to complete required coursework and to achieve research goals, and in particular, meeting timelines for dissertation writing. The DE Chair will confirm to Graduate Studies and the student’s PhD program that the student has fulfilled all the DE requirements prior to graduation by signing the DE Final Verification Report Form.

III. Administrative Matters

A. Bylaws

The DE shall be governed by Bylaws, which will direct its administration, and define the requirements for both student and faculty participation in the program. See Appendix 4.
B. Resources
   The administrative home for the Designated Emphasis is the Graduate Group in the Study of Religion. Support is provided from Graduate Studies (see supporting letter – Appendix 1).