The program is designed not only for students hoping to pursue doctoral work but also for those aiming to use these skills in any number of other professions – places where the analytic skills gained from working in social theory are enhanced by their communication skills and digital expertise. Rigorous coursework and original research with the mentorship of faculty prepares students for prestigious PhD programs; meanwhile, experience applying digital platforms to those research interests equips students with sought-after skills that can be applied to a number of careers.

Non-credit Colloquium
A required, non-credit Graduate Colloquium meets twice each semester and exposes students to a range of professional issues relevant to higher education today. The kinds of topics covered include, but are not limited to: teaching, C.V. preparation, applying for future graduate study, and career opportunities outside academia.

Internships
Although not required, the degree’s aim to help prepare a wide variety of students for futures beyond their M.A. means that the Department encourages its graduate students to consider participating in an internship at some point in their degree. The Department has already established relationships with a variety of on- and off-campus groups which are eager to work with our graduate students, and our students earn course credit in REL 565. Whether students hope to apply to a Ph.D. or look for work in any number of other careers, the practical experience of putting their various skills to use during an internship will come in hand.

Funding
There are a limited number of graduate teaching assistantships (GTA) – full or partial – that are awarded annually on a competitive basis. Full GTA positions (i.e., 0.5 FTE) come with a full stipend and full tuition waiver (whether in- or out-of-state); partial GTA positions (e.g., 0.25 FTE) come with a half stipend and half tuition waiver.

Contact
For more information, contact Prof. Steven Ramey (steven.ramey@ua.edu), REL’s graduate director.

Admissions
Students seeking an M.A. degree in the study of religion at The University of Alabama must first have earned an undergraduate degree in either the academic study of religion or related field and demonstrate how their areas of interest intersect with the program and REL faculty expertise.

In addition to the minimum Graduate School admission requirements, to be considered for regular admission an application must include:

- CV
- Statement of Purpose including the planned program of study
- Writing sample
- Three letters of recommendation.

Note: students who have graduated from UA’s REL program – if overlapping with current faculty – do not need to submit letters of recommendation. Only one letter of recommendation is required of those students who have not majored in REL but who have taken courses with current faculty.
For full consideration of possible funding, applications to begin the program in the fall semester must be completed no later than **December 1**. Applications to begin in the spring semester are possible as well and must be submitted no later than **October 15**.

See the Admission Criteria section of this catalog for more information.

## Curricular Requirements

It is expected that, in their first Fall semester, all graduate students will enroll in both REL 501 and REL 502 along with an additional graduate seminar. The aim of this first semester is to acquire skills (social theory + public humanities skills) while also beginning to explore, in those courses, the specific historical, regional, or ethnographic e.g. on which each student will focus during their culminating research project.

In all subsequent semesters (i.e., Fall and Spring), students will normally enroll in three courses (for 9 credit hours), so as to complete the degree in 2 academic years.

With permission of their supervisor and in consultation with the Graduate Director, some of these hours may be taken outside the Department, so that students can benefit from campus-wide resources (e.g., language training necessary for carrying out their research).

In their final Spring semester, students pursuing the formal thesis option will usually enroll in 6 hours of Thesis and 3 hours of the Capstone Seminar (a collaborative course dedicated to supporting their research by inviting feedback from a faculty member other than their supervisor as well as from all other students in their cohort). Students pursuing the non-thesis option will take the 3-hour Capstone Seminar, as well as six hours of electives relevant to their research.

### Thesis Option

#### Required Courses

1. Six hours of Foundation courses will be taken in the Fall semester of the 1st year:
   - REL 501 Social Theory Foundations 3
   - REL 502 Public Humanities Foundations 3

2. Nine hours of required courses will be taken in the Spring of the second year:
   - REL 590 Capstone Seminar 3
   - REL 599 Thesis Hours 6

#### Elective Courses

- REL 503 Methods Digital Study of Rel
- REL 504 Special Topics
- REL 511 History of Religious Studies
- REL 512 Debates in Method and Theory
- REL 521 Self & Society
- REL 522 Power & Persuasion
- REL 523 Discourse & Practice
- REL 524 Past & Present
- REL 525 Identity & Place
- REL 560 Independent Study
- REL 561 Independent Study
- REL 565 Religion in Culture Applied
- REL 580 Academic Writing in REL

**Total Hours** 36

### Non-Thesis Option

#### Required Courses

1. Six hours of Foundation courses will be taken in the Fall semester of the 1st year:
   - REL 501 Social Theory Foundations 3
   - REL 502 Public Humanities Foundations 3

2. Nine hours of required courses will be taken in the Spring of the second year:
   - REL 590 Capstone Seminar 3

#### Elective Courses

- REL 503 Methods Digital Study of Rel
- REL 504 Special Topics
- REL 511 History of Religious Studies
- REL 560 Independent Study
- REL 565 Religion in Culture Applied
- REL 580 Academic Writing in REL

**Total Hours** 36

### Transfer Credit

Graduate-level credit earned at an accredited institution where a student was enrolled in the graduate school may be submitted for review for inclusion in the REL degree program.

Evaluation of credit for transfer will be made until the student has enrolled in the graduate school of the University of Alabama. Courses that received a grade of less than a “B” will not be accepted for transfer of credit.

A student initiates at the Office of the Graduate School the request for transfer of graduate credit obtained at another institution. The student must also ensure that the Office of the Graduate School has an official transcript of the credit involved.

With the approval of the student’s advisory committee and the Dean of the Graduate School, up to 12 hours of coursework for a graduate degree may be transferred from another institution. All credit toward the master’s degree must have been earned during the six years immediately preceding the date on which the degree is awarded. Details about the...
Graduate Seminar's policy on Transfer Credit is available in the Degree Requirements section of the Graduate Catalog.

**Capstone Seminar Requirement**
All students in the Spring semester of their final year will enroll in REL 590 Capstone Seminar as their culminating experience in the M.A. Religion in Culture program. This is required for students completing either Plan I or Plan II.

**Internships**
Students are not required to complete an internship. Any student who wishes to learn through an internship should discuss options for enrolling in REL 565 Religion in Culture Applied with their supervisor and the Graduate Director. The Graduate Director will set up each internship in consultation with the advisor and interested student.

**Plan I – Thesis Process Requirements**
In consultation with theGrad Director and supervisor (if applicable), a student can opt to complete a defended thesis as the culminating project (defined as a piece of original research that is potentially publishable as an academic article).

If pursuing the formal/official thesis option, certain deadlines must be met. By the end of the first semester, a student should know what kind of thesis they will pursue (see two options below), as well as its broad research topic.

All MA students who choose Plan I will complete 6 thesis hours in their second/culminating year of study. These hours will be completed under the supervision of a faculty advisor and will require a public defense at its completion.

If choosing Plan I, a student will have a choice between two thesis options: a traditional written thesis or a digital project. In both cases, you will form a committee to direct the development of the project and formally defend both the proposal and the work upon completion. The faculty advisor will oversee the process and offer feedback and guidance along the way.

- Traditional Thesis: This will culminate in an article-length (25-35 pages) project of original, substantive research that can be submitted for peer review publication.
- Digital Project: This will culminate in a substantive, research-based digital project that relies upon social theory and digital skills gained across the degree program.

**Plan II – Non-Thesis Process Requirements**
In consultation with the Grad Director and supervisor, a student can opt to pursue either of the following non-thesis options. 1) the comprehensive exam route, which can entitle a set of exams in the last semester or;
2) participation in the already required REL 590 Capstone Seminar — this later route is recommended, as it can still result in an original seminar paper that you present to faculty and students. If choosing the comprehensive exam route, the student should declare that choice by the end of the second semester. Failure to declare by the end of the second semester will default to the culminating experience in the Capstone Graduate Seminar.

**Time Limit for Degree Completion Requirements**
The Department of Religious Studies normally expects completion of the degree program within two years. However, for multiple reasons, students may take longer to complete their degree. For more details on the general policies of the Graduate School, consult the Degree Requirements section of the Graduate Catalog.

**Academic Misconduct Information**
The Department of Religious Studies expects its graduate students to interact with each other, their professors and the REL staff, and undergraduate students in a professional and courteous manner. Academic misconduct includes all acts of dishonesty in any academically related matter and any knowing or intentional help or attempt to help, or conspiracy to help, another student commit an act of academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, each of the following acts when performed in any type of academic or academically-related matter, exercise, or activity: cheating, plagiarism, fabrication of information, misrepresentation, and abetting any of the above. For more information on academic misconduct, consult the Misconduct section of the Graduate Catalog.

**Withdrawals and Leaves of Absence Information**
Any student considering a leave of absence or withdrawing from the program is encouraged to consult their supervisor and the Graduate Director. For more information about processes in the Graduate School, consult the Withdrawals and Leaves of Absence section of the Graduate Catalog.

**Academic Grievances Information**
Students with a concern about a course or a grade (or similar dispute) should consult the appropriate faculty in the following ascending order. First, the instructor of the course, then the student’s supervisor, then the Graduate Director, and finally the Department Chair. Details about the academic grievance process in the Graduate School are available in the Grievance Information section of the Graduate Catalog.

**Scholastic Requirements**
Scholastic requirements to maintain academic standing are available in the Scholastic Requirements section of the Graduate Catalog.

**Graduate School Deadlines Information**
Student deadlines as set by the Graduate School are available in the Student Deadlines section of the Graduate Catalog.

**Application for Graduation Information**
Each candidate for a master’s degree must apply for graduation (through myBama) no later than the registration period for the semester or the first session of the summer term in which requirements for the degree are to be completed. Consult details in the Degree Requirements section of the Graduate Catalog.

**Funding for Students**
The department of Religious Studies puts significant effort into securing funding for graduate students. The Graduate Committee in the department makes decisions about merit-based funding for graduate students and nominations for university-wide fellowships for each
academic year. Typically, a funding offer is for one year, with GTA and GRA positions for the subsequent years determined in the preceding spring.

Decisions within the committee are merit-based, reflecting the application materials for first year students and current performance of returning students.

Offers of funding can be revoked based on performance not meeting expectations. Failure to make academic progress towards the degree and failure to complete assigned duties in an acceptable time frame (for GTA and GRA positions) are grounds for revocation of funding. Faculty may bring any concerns to the Graduate Director, who will meet with the student as appropriate to address the concerns and to make a plan for resolving the concerns, including a time frame for reevaluation.

If academic progress or the timely completion of duties are not resolved in a timely fashion, the Graduate Director, in consultation with the Graduate Committee, concerned faculty, and the department chair, will make a decision about revocation of continued funding. A student receiving a notice of revoked funding may appeal the decision of the Graduate Committee to the chair.

In extreme cases where the actions or inaction of the GTA / GRA is detrimental to student learning and / or the functioning of the department, the Graduate Committee may revoke funding immediately and without warning. Students facing an immediate revocation may appeal the Graduate Committee decision to the chair.