

Guidelines for Submitting a Proposal for a RELS 399/499 Project

Students must submit a one page proposal to be reviewed by all Religious Studies faculty prior to the semester in which the tutorial begins. The submission deadlines for all RELS 399 or 499 project proposals are as follows: November 15th for projects carried out in the following Spring semester, and March 25th for those undertaken in the following Fall semester. These deadlines will be strictly followed, with exceptions granted only in extraordinary cases. A draft of the project proposal must be submitted to an individual faculty mentor before the deadline; the student and the faculty member must agree on the proposal and the faculty member must tentatively agree to supervise the project. The faculty member's willingness to supervise the project is the first step toward final approval, which is dependent upon endorsement by the Department faculty. A proposal that does not have the support of an individual faculty member will generally not be approved by the Department. If multiple projects are submitted to one faculty member, that faculty member may then select the proposal best suited to his or her area of expertise and then seek Department approval for that proposal. Projects will not be approved before the submission deadline. Normally, a faculty member does not mentor more than one such project per semester. Visiting and Adjunct faculty in Religious Studies do not supervise RELS 399/499 projects.

The correct procedure for a proposal includes all of the following: (1) identify the title of your project, the faculty mentor, and the semester(s) during which you would enroll for the project; (2) a brief overview or summary of the topic you wish to explore; (3) a set of critical questions you intend to answer in your research; (4) an explanation of how your project will be evaluated, either as a research project or as an Internship; and (5) a preliminary bibliography of books and other source materials that you plan to read over the course of the semester(s). The summary and research questions should be understandable to faculty in Religious Studies who lack expertise in the specific tradition(s) identified in the proposal. The proposal should not exceed one page; a separate bibliography page should accompany the proposal. The proposal and bibliography should be submitted as an email to the faculty advisor (who will forward it to other faculty), then, after approval, the proposal must be submitted on the correct written form (see below). The second and third tasks mentioned above - providing an overview of your project and identifying a set of questions that your research will address - is of course a challenge when you have not yet read all of your research material. Moreover, you may find that your questions change as you progress in your research. Regardless, it is important that you make explicit in your proposal what you hope to learn in your project, and what questions are motivating your research. You will understand your research topic and its significance through the questions you raise. These questions give your project some direction and are helpful in articulating your thesis statement and supporting arguments.

The Department of Religious Studies reviews each project proposal and evaluates whether it is clear, well-organized, and understandable; whether it is well written and typed (not carelessly written and poorly proofread); and whether the proposal shows familiarity in the bibliography with the scholarship that is most important to the proposed topic of research. For examples of well written RELS 399 and 499 project

proposals see the Research page of the RELS web site, also on this same page is a printable form for the 399 and 499 Application for Individual Enrollment.