

**Proposal for  
Religious Studies Option  
In B.A. in History Degree**

**PURPOSE:**

To establish a Religious Studies Option in the History Major in the Department of History & Philosophy at Montana State University-Bozeman. The department currently offers a Religious Studies Option in the Philosophy Degree; the proposed option would offer a parallel track for students interested in studying religion from an historical perspective.

**VISION:**

The aim of this proposed option is to offer a program of study to students who want to explore in some depth two historical problems: the first is how religious movements, activities, and thought play their roles in shaping historical events and ideas; the second is how all historical events and ideas are manifestations of religious thought and activity. Thus, the first traces the influences upon and of religious institutions and movements in society. The second explores the more deep-seated religious character of both sacred and (ostensibly) secular aspects of culture.

The study of religion includes not only the histories of religious institutions but also the ground of perceptions of the world. Students who are trained in asking historical questions about religion and culture will be able to negotiate and reflect upon the contexts and ramifications of public discourse and private experience. Students who desire graduate study will find that they will be presenting evidence of an enhanced undergraduate preparation.

**RATIONALE**

1. The proposed option takes advantage of departmental structure, helping students to benefit from the various expertises in a multi-disciplinary department. Colleagues in the various humanities disciplines within the department are active in formalizing and developing cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary studies. (Most prominently, the new major in the department, SETS: Science, Environment, Technology and Society, is one important way this is coming to fruition.)
2. The department already has a similar and effective model that has been in place for years: the Religious Studies Option in the B.A. in Philosophy. The new option offers a balanced opportunity for students, and ensures that students who attempt to piece together themselves the clear and significant correlations and resonances in these two academic areas will have a developed, considered program to follow.
3. The History/Religious Studies option draws upon individual expertise in the department, helping students to focus more finely on particular religio-historical issues. It is an option directly suited to interests in the department, for example: ancient Roman civilization, environmental history, history of science, and traditional Japan. The Religious Studies curriculum has as one of its basic thrusts, the historical contexts of religious phenomena. Examples include

Professor Cohen's archaeology of the Ancient Near East, and Professor Sexson's current study of early nineteenth-century religious and natural history books for children.

4. The first three points indicate the value that this choice will give to students; the fourth point is the benefit that will accrue to faculty. When students and faculty are engaged in a common enterprise, it can enrich the experience for all involved.

## **OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS**

### **Goals and Objectives**

The goal of this proposal is to bring into focus an opportunity that has always been part of the department. It is yet another way the department can take advantage of its unique configuration and generate student reflection and production.

### **Intellectual Basis for the Curriculum**

The History Major with Religious Studies Option will provide students with a broad foundation of course work and research opportunities in the historical and religious aspects of culture. The multi-disciplinarity of the program is its strength, as we strive to foster the use of multiple approaches and methods of analysis. In line with a broad liberal arts education, students will enhance their critical thinking and analytical skills. The faculty will work together to ensure that students receive a well-rounded yet penetrating view of how religion plays a role in the creation, the conflicts, and accomplishments of culture, and how religions are historically-shaped phenomena.

The academic study of religion often begins with historical methodologies, and often historical studies end with the disclosure of the religious foundations of secular society.

### **Course of Study**

The History Major with Religious Studies Option introduces students to the methods of history and religious studies, exploring how the strategies can be compatible or held in tension, in a multi-disciplinary course of study for the analysis of what religion is or does within various cultural contexts. As such, in addition to the core course requirements, students will be required to enroll in a broad base of courses in history and religious studies. Each disciplinary approach and subject-matter emphasis opens up possibilities for students to hone their analytical skills, create research topics, and develop focused reading and writing plans.

## **PROPOSED CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS STUDIES OPTION**

### **Foundation Courses:**

Take **two** of the following:

HIST 105—Origins of West Civ 4

HIST 107—West Civ1600-Present 4

HIST 155—America & Wrld before 1865 4  
 HIST 156—Amer & Wrld Since 1865 4

Take **two** of the following:

RELS 220—Interpretations of American Religion 3  
 RELS 105—Introduction to the Study of Religion 3  
 RELS 110—Religion, Conflict, and Politics 3

Take **one** of the following:

HIST 104—World History 4  
 HIST 109—Modern Asia 4  
 HIST 110—Latin Amer Hist 4  
 HIST 115—History of Japan 4

Take **one** of the following:

RELS 202—Asian Religions-Hinduism & Buddhism 3  
 RELS 203—Asian Religions: From Taoism to Zen 3

Take **one** of the following:

RELS 204—Hebrew Bible 3  
 RELS 205—New Testament 3  
 RELS 206—Origins of God 3  
 RELS 207—Images of Jesus 3

### **Upper Division Courses:**

Take **two** of the following:

RELS 217—Religion and Science 3  
 RELS 321—Gender and Religion 3  
 RELS 325—Literature and Religion 3  
 RELS 326—Mystics, Founders, Reformers 3  
 RELS 330—Religion and Soc in Ancient Egypt 3

Take **one** of the following:

HIST 318—History Ancient Greece 3  
 HIST 319—History of Ancient Rome 3  
 HIST 325—19<sup>th</sup> Century Europe 3  
 HIST 334—Modern Britain 3  
 HIST 335—Middle East/20th Cent 3  
 HIST 368—20<sup>th</sup> Century War: Vietnam Era 3  
 HIST 371—Age of the Shoguns 3  
 HIST 372—Japan's Long 19th Century 3  
 HIST 374—Modern China 3  
 HIST 375—Mod India, Pakistan, Bangladesh 3

Take **two** of the following:

RELS 402—Natural, Unnatural, Supernatural 3

RELS 405—Text and Image 4

RELS 410—Psyche and the Sacred 3

(note: the new Religious Studies seminar, Isms, is planned to be offered for the first time, Spring, 2006; it is a course that builds on the 100-level Conflict offering.)

Take **two** of the following:

HIST 403—Gender in US/Canadian West 3

HIST 408—Gender in America 3

HIST 409—Japanese Women's History 3

HIST 412—Race and Class in America 3

HIST 413—Race in Latin America 3

HIST 419—Family, Gender, Law in Greece/Rome 3

HIST 425—Gender Sexuality and Social Change in Latin America 3

HIST 447—Hist North Amer Indian

HIST 467—Women in Asia

HIST 410—Latin Amer Soc History 3

HIST 422—Hist Amer Constitution 4

HIST 423—Protestant Reformation 3

HIST 426—The Renaissance 3

HIST 431—Sci Tech Soc 1500-1800 3

HIST 432—Modern Science 3

HIST 455—Hist Amer Technology 3

HIST 456—Amer Thgt & Culture 3

HIST 457—Museum History 3

HIST 460—European Intellect History 3

HIST 465—Ecology and Nature in Japan 3

HIST 466—U.S. Environ Hist 3

HIST 468—Animal Histories 3

HIST 469—World Environmental History 3

Required:

RELS 489/90—Individual Problems (Capstone)\*

One Year Modern Language

Core Course Curriculum

A minimum of 120 credits is required for graduation; 42 of these credits must be in courses numbered 300 and above.

\*Once a sufficient number of students have entered the major, we intend to offer regularly a History—Religious Studies Capstone course. Until then, students can take either RELS 489/490, or take an additional 400-level RELS course. Students will work closely with their advisors on this matter.

## Need for the Program

1. This option enables faculty to assist students in completing a rigorous course of study that is tailored to individual student research needs. Students might concentrate on particular geographical or chronological areas; for example, one student in this option might emphasize an area of American history and religion, another might study an aspect of Asian traditions. Or, students who are inclined toward cultural studies might emphasize a topic, such as foundation and reform movements, or literacy and religious institutions.
2. Students regularly combine courses in history and religious studies. It will strengthen graduate school preparations for history, religious studies, seminary, or pre-law.
3. Students who are not preparing for further academic study will find this major well-suited as a foundation for analysis of and participation in their political, religious, educational, and artistic communities.
4. We live in the midst of international risk and tension, fueled in large part by religious rhetoric and activity. The more historically informed our Montana students are, the better prepared they are for taking on the global challenges of the twenty-first century.
5. Whatever their interests and motivations, students flourish with a broad liberal education focused on the primary constituents in the formation of culture.
6. Typically, one of the most frequent outreach requests of our faculty is for public programs in Religion and its Historical Contexts. This is a major that has much potential for returning, experienced students, as well as traditional undergraduates.
7. This Option is ideal for students participating in International Studies programs. Frequently our faculty are called upon by students to help them design Independent Studies courses for their study abroad programs.
8. Recently one of our students, Scott Hyslop, won a grant from Harvard's Pluralism Project, to study the religions of Montana. He was invited to Harvard to deliver the paper, and it is posted on the project's web site. Another recent graduate developed a highly original historical study on schismatic Catholics, particularly in Montana. Ms Haffey, winner of several outstanding student awards, used this project as part of her application to graduate school. These sophisticated research papers indicate how relevant this Option can be utilized by talented students.

## ADEQUACY, ACCREDITATION, AND ASSESSMENT ISSUES

### Adequacy of Present Faculty

There are presently two tenured or tenure-track professors in Religious Studies (Sexson and Cohen). In addition, departmental offerings are supplemented by the courses offered by Miles and Malouf, who supplement the curriculum with courses in New Testament, Introduction to Religious Studies, and American Religions. The history curriculum includes a broad range of offerings from Maskiell's Modern China to LeCain's History of American Technology.

### Adequacy of Present Facilities, Equipment, and Library Holdings

The courses, the faculty, and the library resources are in place. This Option brings into visibility one of the rich possibilities students can pursue in the Department of History & Philosophy. The library holdings in these areas already form a solid foundation on which to support an undergraduate major.

## **IMPACT ON FACULTY, FACILITIES, COSTS, STUDENTS AND OTHER DEPARTMENTS ON CAMPUS**

### **1. Additional Faculty Requirements**

Religious Studies has been down a position for several years. When that position re-opens, it will support all of the Religious Studies programming, including this Option. As it stands, the faculty offer a full, well-rounded curriculum.

### **2. Impact on Facilities**

There is no impact on facilities.

### **3. Costs**

The ability to offer this Option is not predicated on growth as the Option can be fully supported with current resources. Should the option prove popular and increase substantially the number of majors in the department, at best a long-term result, reallocation of resources will be necessary and will be pursued through UPBAC.

### **4. Impact on Enrollment**

We would expect to enroll about 5 new students in the Option in 2005-2006 and about 25 by 2010.

### **5. Relationship to other programs on campus, including the inter-departmental implications of this program's addition to the curriculum, and/or the role other departments play in contributing courses to the program.**

This major will benefit from the courses offered in other humanities and social science disciplines.

### **6. Relationship to other institutions, including duplication and uniqueness.**

This major exploits the unique configuration of this department, and offers a course of study that is current consistent with the study of history and religion on campuses throughout the world. In particular, it coordinates well with the SETS and the proposed Japan Studies options in the department.

Currently, there is no undergraduate program in the region centered in a department of history that is dedicated to training students to understand the complex foundations of religions in culture. With this proposed option, MSU–Bozeman will be able to offer a new and richly diverse learning experience at the undergraduate level.

## **PROCESS LEADING TO SUBMISSION OF THE PROPOSAL**

The proposal was created by faculty in the offering department. With support of the Dean of the College of Letters and Science, the proposal was presented to the University Undergraduate Studies Committee. This committee made recommendations to which the department responded; a revised proposal was endorsed by the committee. The Chair of the Academic Affairs sub-committee of faculty council reviewed and endorsed the proposal.