

MA IN RELIGIONS & CULTURES AND JUDAIC STUDIES

ORIENTATION AND REFERENCE DOCUMENT

Welcome to the MA program in the Department of Religions and Cultures! Please be sure to discuss your professional goals with your Graduate Program Director (GPD) and mentor so we can do our best to help you achieve them! It is our hope that not only will the program contribute to you fulfilling your plans, but your presence will contribute to our department. Your participation in academics and extra curriculars is a chance to put your unique stamp on our culture and help build our friendly and highly engaged intellectual community.

Structure of the Program

- **General Map:**
Method/Theory Course+5 more courses→Guided Research Project Proposal→Guided Research Project (GRP)
- **Information:**
See the document produced by the department which gives more detailed information on the program requirements and structure. Official rules and regulations can be found in the Graduate Calendar, and students should familiarize themselves with all relevant rules for the faculty of Arts and Science and for the University found in the calendar.
Full, current calendar: <http://www.concordia.ca/academics/graduate/calendar/current.html>.
Religions and Cultures section: <http://www.concordia.ca/academics/graduate/calendar/current/fasc/reli-ma.html>.
Judaic Studies: <http://www.concordia.ca/academics/graduate/calendar/current/fasc/reli-judaic-ma.html>.
- **Charting your progress:**
You will determine how fast or slow you go through the program. Please make use of “refrigerator”- document to help you chart out your progress through this path.
- **Timing of the GRP:**
You can start working on your Guided Research Project as soon as you like. The earlier the better. In addition to integrating your own interests and specific project into the work you do for your classes, you can already start a conversation with your mentor. In addition, you need not necessarily wait until all coursework is completed to begin the proposal, especially if you have an available summer to work on the proposal.
- **What classes to take?**
Every Winter semester, we publish a list of our graduate-level classes for the coming year. In addition to RELI courses, you may take as many as two classes in another department at Concordia (MA-level) or a graduate class at McGill or any other university. The classes offered in Religions and Cultures are designed such that you may write a final paper applying the perspective of the course to your own research area.
- **Thesis Option**
The thesis option is designed for much more intensive research and writing. A thesis is likely not necessary for application to most PhD programs, and for just about all students, it is unnecessary. You can accomplish the same in your GRP, but with less pressure. If you are interested in this option, please speak with your mentor and the GPD to receive more information.

Mentor, Supervisor, GPD and GPA (Your advising support)

In addition to the Graduate Program Assistant (GPA, aka Tina), who deals with all administrative matters, and the Graduate Program Director (GPD), who serves as a general academic advisor, every student is assigned a mentor (a full-time faculty member) whose primary function is to guide them in their particular area of interest. A mentor is suggested in the initial advising meeting, and it is your responsibility to initiate contact, determine if it is a good match, and secure agreement from the faculty member to be your mentor. A student may change to a different mentor, for whatever reason. Once your GRP proposal is approved, your mentor becomes your supervisor.

Internships (equivalent to one 3-credit course)

Our department currently has a handful of internship opportunities. These are not paid internships, but count as a 3-credit course, with particular requirements. These opportunities include: an internship at the Multi-faith and Spirituality Centre at Concordia (directed by a former Religions and Cultures Student); an internship at the Canadian Jewish Archives; an internship at the Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies. Other opportunities may arise in the future.

TA and RA Opportunities

Many MA students will have the opportunity to serve as a teaching assistant (TA). If you are interested, you must fill out the form distributed by Tina in the spring and submit it by the deadline. Note that PhD students are given priority. TAships are not necessarily assigned based on your research or background; however, the more specific you are on the form, the more helpful for those making the assignments. If you do have the opportunity to be a TA, you will likely need to lower your course load in the semester in which you take the job. Not only does a TA-ship earn you some cash, but it is an invaluable professional development opportunity. There will be separate information for TAs regarding rights and responsibilities of the job.

A different opportunity is to serve as a research assistant (RA) for a faculty member who holds a grant. This may be especially likely if your mentor/supervisor holds a grant.

Extra-Curricular Opportunities

In our department we have a plethora of invaluable extra-curricular academic opportunities. You are highly encouraged to get involved in these groups/activities and build up your experience in what are important aspects of being an academic scholar. As you will notice, our faculty members do not only teach and write but participate and play leadership roles in scholarly societies, organize and run conferences, and participate in the running and editing of journals. These experiences are part of your professional training and will help you in job interviews.

(1) **Graduate Religion Student Association (GRSA)**

Create and work within a student governance structure and plan events (academic and non-academic), using funds set aside from fees paid by every student.

(2) **Annual Graduate Interdisciplinary Conference**

Every year, PhD students in our department spearhead a one-day conference for graduate students from across Canada and from the US. These conferences are always a great success. There are many ways to get involved, whether volunteering to check in participants, set up, give a paper, or many other roles.

(3) **Journal of Religion and Culture**

Our Department has its very own graduate student scholarly journal. Get involved with every stage of planning and production. And in the meantime, check out the impressive work in the latest volume!

Resources (Outside of the Department)

- **Concordia-wide orientations:**

General Hub site: <http://www.concordia.ca/students/success/new/orientation.html>

Graduate School Base Camp: <http://www.concordia.ca/students/gradproskills/events/grad-school-base-camp1.html>

Fall Term Welcome (Sept. 3): <http://www.concordia.ca/students/success/new/fall-term-welcome.html>

- **GradProSkills:** <https://www.concordia.ca/students/gradproskills.html>

NUMEROUS free workshops (that you've paid for with your school fees) for attaining a variety of skills, from French language, to teaching skills, to computer skills.

- **Student Success Centre:** <https://www.concordia.ca/students/success.html>

Includes Learning Support, such as writing assistance, Career and Planning Services, and more

- Health Services: <https://www.concordia.ca/students/health.html>
- Counselling and Psychological Services: <https://www.concordia.ca/students/counselling.html>
- Campus Security: <https://www.concordia.ca/campus-life/security.html>
- Sexual Assault Resource Centre: <https://www.concordia.ca/students/sexual-assault.html>
- Dean of Students (with further links): <https://www.concordia.ca/offices/dean-students.html>

Applying for Federal and Provincial Funding

Even if you did not receive a SSHRC or FRQSC grant for your first year, you are still eligible to apply for the second year. Further, if you are considering applying for the PhD program, it is important to get started working on a proposal and to submit on time. Remember that you apply for scholarships a year before you start the degree, since results are announced in April or May. A failed application provides an excellent rough draft to be edited into a successful application. Our department offers a workshop on preparing funding applications, and less personalized workshops are offered by the university. For more information on the workshop and on deadlines, please speak with Tina and read her emails.

Financials (Your financial responsibilities)

It is your responsibility to be aware of the costs of your program, as it shifts over time, and to pay on time. The general fee-calculator page: <http://www.concordia.ca/admissions/tuition-fees/calculator.html>

Work-School-Life Balance

Many (most) of you are working part time in addition to schooling. Further, life has a way of throwing plenty of proverbial curveballs. Your GPA, GPD, mentor/supervisor, professors, and colleagues want to support you. Further, Concordia offers a variety of professional counselling options (see above). If something happens or you are struggling, it is particularly important to get in touch with the GPD to deal with any administrative issues as soon as possible and to try to get you the support you need before things snowball.

Further Responsibilities

- Please read your emails
Tina regularly sends out emails with important information. This is not spam. Tina carefully selects information relevant to the students in our program to send out, even if each message may not be relevant to every single student in the program. You must read all emails carefully to be sure you are apprised of important events, information, deadlines, and other key information, such as additional funding opportunities.
- Make a plan
In addition to charting your progress, and keeping track of how you will fit your requirements into the semester-by-semester flow of your 2 (or 1 or 1.5) year course of study, it is important to make a specific plan for completing your proposal and project. Once you are ready to begin your proposal, you should create a timeline with specific activities and when you will complete them, and discuss with your mentor. Once you begin the project itself, you should create a similar plan for what activities you must do and the specific month-by-month (or even portions of months) timeline of when you will complete each step. Ultimately, your success in the program (as in life) is your responsibility, so please take the initiative and chart out your own path.