

**Department of Religion  
Rice University**

**Graduate Studies  
PhD Program**

**Procedural Handbook  
2020-2021**



Department Chair, Dr. Elias Kifon Bongmba

Directors of Doctoral Studies,

Dr. Matthias Henze (Fall 2020); Dr. William Parsons (Spring 2021)

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## 1. Welcome

### 1.1 Welcome Message from the Chair, Elias Kifon Bongmba



It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Department of Religion and our graduate program in Religion. In keeping with Rice University's open doors and the university's current banner campaign, let me say in IsiZulu, *Siyanamkela*. We are delighted to welcome you to the global quest for excellence in the studies of religion animated by and grounded in critical research in the different areas of our concentrations. We deploy a methodological pluralism to rethink major paradigms and ask new questions on the major religious traditions and lesser-known traditions of the world. The Department of Religion has been at the center of rice's intellectual and community life, and we are proud to continue that

tradition. We welcome you to an intellectual culture and research practices that have gone through different innovations, leading us to a position that is grounded in the best historical traditions in the study of religion that shape our multidisciplinary intellectual engagements.

The History of Religions has offered us a broad place on which to stand, but also built a community of scholars whose critical investigations and articulations put us on the cutting edge of innovative scholarship in the study of religion. The tradition has created space for us to develop theoretical and methodological groundings in historical and critical textual studies in several religious traditions from around the world; psychological and sociological analysis of religious phenomena, historical studies of many religious traditions; cultural and theological analysis of religious traditions and their interaction with our environment as well as the human community.

Our department has a rich tradition of developing research in different religious traditions such as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, African American Religions, and African Religions. Our department, in studying historic traditions has developed critical tools to analyze their core values and sense of community, but more importantly for us as a faculty, promoted the training of the next generation of specialists, who will ask new questions about the human condition, the nature and our common habitat, explore and analyze key texts and traditions that have shaped and will shape our common destiny. In doing this over the years in the department we have created the conditions for all graduate studies initiatives to work with students to ask important questions about science, art, the meaning of life, as they explore new theories and ask difficult questions about the dynamic intersubjective bonds which we must interrogate through prisms like gender, race, sexuality, class, politics, and for the brave, aliens.

The history of our department is a testament to a commitment to excellence in its intellectual inquiries, which have explored religious, social, political, textual traditions, and literary and artistic studies from around the world, even before the conceptualization of the notion of the global in recent decades. To give you only one example from our past, permit me to remind us of the research of the late distinguished Chair of our Department, Professor Niels Nielsen whose

research and publications covered a range of subjects in the Humanities as he studied lectured, and published papers and books on the political and cultural revolutions that took place in Europe, on Human rights, the contribution of the literary imagination to Human rights in the work of Alexandr Solzhenitsyn. Our legacy of inquiry has included studies in medical ethics and humanities and social ethics, to name only a few.

We are delighted to welcome you to the global quest for excellence in the studies of religion animated by and grounded in critical research in the different areas of our concentrations. We deploy a methodological pluralism to rethink major paradigms and ask new questions on the major religious traditions and lesser-known traditions of the world. Our concerns are broad, including but not limited to critical ethics, culture, race, gender, science fiction, emotions and what it means to understand things that are often taken for granted like emotions such as happiness, human well being and thriving, or even how and what to think of the end of life. Our goal is to bring these traditions and themes to the classroom and work with you to build a research and teaching portfolio grounded in the best intellectual traditions of the past but also attuned to the needs of the culture and communities we share in common. As you work on your area of specialization, we invite you to participate in symposiums, seminars, the department's Rockwell Conferences, The GEM Certificate Program, and Seminars and programs offered by the Jewish Studies program, and The Center for Engaged and Collaborative Learning (CERCL). Once more, in KiSwahili, *karibu* to Rice.



## **1.2 Welcome Message from Fall 2020 Director of Doctoral Studies, Dr. Matthias Henze**

Dear Graduate Students,  
Welcome to the Department of Religion! We are delighted that you have chosen to come and join us here at Rice University. You will soon find out, if you haven't experienced this already, that our department is a closely knit community of the most fabulous fellow learners. We come from a variety backgrounds, we speak different languages, and we are interested in vastly different subject matters. But we are all united in our love for learning from and with each other, in our yearning to ask difficult questions, to explore, and to move forward, and in our

desire to grow as human beings. You have come to the right place.

This handbook is designed to help you navigate your way through the PhD program. Your years in graduate school will be among the most rewarding years of your life, during which you are able to devote yourself fully to your studies. But being a graduate student can also be confusing. The purpose of this handbook is to explain the basic components of the PhD programs and to guide you through your years at Rice. You will find all the important information you need in this book, collected in one place. I hope this will prove useful.

In addition, there are several other resources for you here at Rice. Please take advantage of them. Always pay close attention to the messages and emails you will receive from Lydia Westbrook, our Graduate Program Administrator. Check out our RELI homepage (for example, there you can find all the forms you will need to fill out). Also, visit the homepage of Rice's Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies regularly. The chair of the Department of Religion, the

Director of Graduate Studies, and your Advisor are all here to help you, so never be shy to get in touch with any of us, no matter the issue.

Once again, welcome to Rice. We are thrilled that you are here, and we look forward to all the wonderful things you bring to our Reli community.

### **1.3 Welcome Message from Spring 2021 Director of Doctoral Studies, William Parsons**



Now that you've read the wonderful welcoming message from our Chair, Elias Bongmba and Fall 2020 Director of Doctoral Studies, Matthias Henze, I'm sure you're asking yourself the question: What now? Well, many things. After acclimating yourself to your fellow students, your housing, the Rice campus, and the great city of Houston, you will slowly adjust your course schedule to best fit your intellectual trajectory. You will have a lot of help on the way, especially the faculty member you choose to be your academic advisor. That person will help form your program of study, mentor you in your chosen field, and be the dependable guide you need. That noted, in the end what you make of your stay here is mostly up to you.

While you are here, you are part of a large graduate body. The questions you have will be answered by those who matriculated before you, by your advisor, the Chair, and the Director of Doctoral Studies. Do not hesitate to reach out. Remember that this is but the first step in what will be a long and fruitful career. The friendships you make and intellectual maps you traverse will deepen through time, affecting your future work and contribution to humanity. Enjoy the process!

## 2. Contact Information and Important Dates

### 2.1 Department Contact Information

| Title                                      | Name            | Phone        | E-Mail            |
|--|-----------------|--------------|-------------------|
| Chair                                      | Elias Bongmba   | 713-348-2759 | bongmba@rice.edu  |
| Director of Doctoral Studies – Fall 2020   | Matthias Henze  | 713-348-2754 | mhenze@rice.edu   |
| Director of Doctoral Studies – Spring 2021 | William Parsons | 713-348-2712 | pars@rice.edu     |
| Department Administrator                   | Marcie Newton   | 713-348-5201 | mdnewton@rice.edu |
| Graduate Administrator                     | Lydia Westbrook | 713-348-2092 | lydiaw@rice.edu   |

### 2.2 Key Department Dates for 2020-21

**Language Exams** – ALL exams will commence at 9:00am\* in HUMA room 215

Friday, September 11, 2020

Friday, November 13, 2020

Friday, January 22, 2021

Friday, March 12, 2021

\*French and German exam takers will have two hours; all other language exam takers will have three hours to complete their exams.

**Comprehensive Exams** – ALL exams will be 9:00am – 1:00pm in HUMA room 215

Tuesday, October 20, 2020

Friday, October 23, 2020

Tuesday, October 27, 2020

Friday, October 30, 2020

Tuesday, March 23, 2021

Friday, March 26, 2021

Tuesday, March 30, 2021

Friday, April 2, 2021

**Student Service Assignment Form – second Friday of the semester:**

Friday, September 4, 2020

Friday, January 22, 2021

**Annual Report and Second Year Review – last day of class in Spring 2021:**

Friday, April 23, 2021

**Teaching Request Form for AY2021-22 – first Friday of Spring 2021 semester:**

Friday, January 15, 2021

## 3. Rice University Policies

### 3.1 General Announcements

Refer to Rice University's General Announcements for:

- Regulations and Procedures for All Graduate Students: <https://ga.rice.edu/graduate-students/academic-policies-procedures/regulations-procedures-all-degrees/#text>
- Regulations and Procedures for Non-Thesis Master's Graduate Degrees: <https://ga.rice.edu/graduate-students/academic-policies-procedures/regulations-procedures-non-thesis-masters-degrees/>
- Code of Student Conduct: <https://ga.rice.edu/graduate-students/rights-responsibilities/code-student-conduct/>
- Dispute Resolution: Petition and Appeals ([http://ga.rice.edu/GR\\_disputes/](http://ga.rice.edu/GR_disputes/))
- Academic and Judicial Discipline: Petition and Appeals (<https://ga.rice.edu/graduate-students/academic-policies-procedures/regulations-procedures-all-degrees/#text>)
- To change advisors, meet with the Director of Doctoral Studies. If the advisor is the Director of Doctoral Studies, students should meet with the Department Chair.

In addition to being in compliance with the regulations stated in this departmental handbook, students must also follow the General Announcements and the Code of Conduct. In case of conflicting information, university-wide regulations take precedence over department-wide regulations, which take precedence over research group-wide regulations.

If in doubt, students should seek help first at the department level (graduate administrator, Director of Doctoral Studies, advisor, and/or department chair) and then at the central administration level (Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies).

When planning vacations, students should be mindful of ongoing academic obligations and responsibilities. Students should consult with their advisors to be certain that all department obligations are met.

### 3.2 Title IX and Sexual Discrimination

Rice encourages any student who has experienced an incident of sexual, relationship, or other interpersonal violence, harassment or gender discrimination to seek support. There are many options available both on and off campus for all graduate students, regardless of whether the perpetrator was a fellow student, a staff or faculty member, or someone not affiliated with the university.

Students should be aware when seeking support on campus that most employees are required by Title IX to disclose all incidents of non-consensual interpersonal behaviors to Title IX professionals on campus who can act to support that student and meet their needs. The therapists at the Rice Counseling Center and the doctors at Student Health Services are confidential, meaning that Rice will not be informed about the incident if a student discloses to one of these

























































## Checklist for PhD Candidacy in Religion (F-5)

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Graduate Student

Date

- 1. Coursework  
At time of candidacy student must have earned a minimum of thirty-six credit hours in 500 and 600 level seminars.
- 2. Annual Reports (see instructions and form on pages 15-19)
- 3. Required Seminars  
RELI 527 HISTORY & METHODS: 19th CENTURY  
RELI 559 HISTORY & METHODS: 20th CENTURY
- 4. Language Training (see pages 13-14)  
Pass reading exams in both French and German.
  - Language #1 date passed \_\_\_\_\_
  - Language #2 date passed \_\_\_\_\_
  - Original Language Proficiencies (if necessary for area of study) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Second-Year Review (see page 21)  
Each second-year student submits a substantive report in the spring semester and has an hour-long oral interview with the Director of Doctoral Studies and their faculty mentor. A summary of the report is given to the student on his/her progress in the program.
- 6. Comprehensive Exams Declaration Form (see form on page 26)
- 7. Evaluation of Comprehensive Examinations (include form on page 27)
- 8. Completed documents
  - Petition for Approval of Candidacy for a Doctoral Degree (C-2)
  - Candidacy Master's Degree (G-1)

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Graduate Administrator Signature

Date



**Teaching Request Form (F-7)**

Submit to Department Administrator and Director of Doctoral Studies.

Date received: \_\_\_\_\_

It is important to remember that this is a competitive process, and students are not guaranteed a course assignment.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Year in Program: \_\_\_\_\_

YES/NO (circle one) I have successfully completed Pedagogy Practicum RELI 530

YES/NO (circle one) I am currently enrolled in Pedagogy Practicum RELI 530

YES/NO (circle one) I have successfully passed Comprehensive Exams

I plan to take my Comprehensive Exams on \_\_\_\_\_  
(date)

Course Number in Catalog: \_\_\_\_\_

Course Title: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ I would like to teach this coming spring semester

\_\_\_ I would like to teach next fall semester

Time preference: \_\_\_\_\_

Checklist

- Teaching Request Form
- Syllabus
- Statement of Teaching Philosophy
- Course Goals
- C.V.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, understand that teaching this course will be compensated in the amount of \$5,000 contingent upon the availability of funds, and that priority will be given to students in the sixth-eighth year of the program.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature – Student)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature – Advisor)

### Request for GEM Certificate (F-8)

Please submit this completed form to the Department Administrator in HUMA 225 when you have fulfilled the following the requirements.\*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Projected date of PhD graduation: \_\_\_\_\_

- RELI 581: Gnosticism Seminar  
Semester enrolled and completed: \_\_\_\_\_
- RELI 587: Western Esotericism Method and Theory  
Semester enrolled and completed: \_\_\_\_\_
- RELI 588: Mysticism: Theories and Methods  
Semester enrolled and completed: \_\_\_\_\_
- One thematic course from following list.  
Course number and name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Semester enrolled and completed: \_\_\_\_\_

RELI 505: American Metaphysical Religion (Kripal)

RELI 522: Islam's Mystical Tradition (Cook)

RELI 526: People of the Book: Judaism and Scripture

RELI 532: Advanced Tibetan Language & Culture (Klein)

RELI 541: Creating Magic (Fanger)

RELI 551: Divine Sex (Fanger)

RELI 566: Pain, Ecstasy & Embodiment in Religious Experience (Fanger)

RELI 570: Buddhist Wisdom Texts (Klein)

RELI 588: The History of Religions School (Kripal)

RELI 589: Mutants and Mystics (Kripal)

RELI 615: Secret Religion (DeConick)

- 2 semesters (minimum) of RELI 600 GEM Research Forum  
Semester enrolled and completed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Semester enrolled and completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Attach a copy of your transcript from ESTHER.

Attach one paper you have written for a class, conference presentation, or publication that you think implements or incorporates into your own subdiscipline the knowledge and theoretical perspectives you have learned by participating in this certification program.

Attach a 1000 word essay describing how your paper implements or incorporates into your own subdiscipline the knowledge and theoretical perspectives you have learned by participating in this certification program.



# SAMPLE ONLY – (F-9)

Go to <https://graduate.rice.edu/forms>

and download most current version. Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

## PETITION FOR APPROVAL OF CANDIDACY FOR A DOCTORAL DEGREE (C-2)

Candidacy for the Doctoral degree cannot be approved until the applicant has completed all course requirements, all qualifying or preliminary examinations or department equivalent, and any foreign language requirements.

1. Name of applicant \_\_\_\_\_  
(Last) (First) (M.I.)

2. Department/Graduate program \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID # \_\_\_\_\_

- Attach** to this application a current transcript (printed from WebApps; see your graduate coordinator).
- Attach** to this application a statement of all applicable departmental requirements for both course work and qualifying or preliminary examinations.
- Attach** student's departmental checklist to candidacy to document how the student has fulfilled departmental requirements.

3. Proposed thesis topic (tentative title) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Thesis Committee, subject to the approval of the GPS. (**type or print**) Please see the General Announcements for rules regarding the composition of thesis committees.

(a) Thesis Director \_\_\_\_\_

Committee Chair within the department (**if different**) \_\_\_\_\_

(b) Member **within** the department \_\_\_\_\_

(c) Member **outside** the department \_\_\_\_\_

Additional member(s) \_\_\_\_\_

\*Thesis committees may later be changed. See <http://graduate.rice.edu/thesis> for additional information.

5. Signatures:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Original signature of Department Chair or  
Director of Graduate Studies

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Graduate Coordinator signature  
Graduate Studies Procedural Handbook  
2020-2021

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dean of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies

Date \_\_\_\_\_



# SAMPLE ONLY (F-10)

Go to <https://graduate.rice.edu/forms> Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies and download most current version.

## CANDIDACY MASTER'S DEGREE (G-1)

Check one box:

- December conferral - - - - - Deadline: Oct 31
- May conferral - - - - - Deadline: Feb 28

Deadline to turn in this form:

Check one box:

- Master's of Arts (MA)
- Master's of Science (MS)

**This degree will be conferred only if the following conditions are satisfied by the Candidate:**

1. Student must be registered for the semester in which the award is to be made.
2. Ph.D. candidacy must have been approved prior to or in conjunction with submission of this petition form.
3. This form must be returned to the Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies office by **October 31** for December conferral or **February 28** for May conferral.

Name of Candidate \_\_\_\_\_  
Last First Middle

Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_ Department Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Statement of Candidate:**

I wish to accept the Master's Degree. \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Candidate

I have submitted An Application for Degree with the Registrar's Office (available through your ESTHER account) on or before the deadlines listed above.

Signature of Department Chair: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Office Use Only*

GPS Approval and Certification \_\_\_\_\_

(Initial)

Date \_\_\_\_\_