

Religion Department Writing Plan

What does religious studies value in written communication?

In written communication, the field of religious studies values clarity, creativity, attention to historical context, reasoned argumentation based on evidence, attention to detail, and the ability to accurately represent the voices and ideas of others.

What kinds of texts do scholars in religious studies create?

Scholars in the field of religious studies create many different types of texts. These include: histories, translations, analyses (of texts, visual objects, material culture, rituals, music, and so forth), ethnographies, biographies, websites, theory, critical editions of texts, edited volumes, guidebooks, travelogues, catalogs, articles for academic journals, reference works, textbooks, and articles for popular media.

On the undergraduate level, students in religion classes write essays typical of humanities classes, such as historical analyses, argumentative essays, and interpretive essays.

What kinds of skills or experiences help scholars of religious studies learn to write in those ways?

In terms of skills, scholars of religious studies benefit from practicing: close reading, attention to detail, historical sensitivity, argumentation, the use of evidence, language skills, and patience. Some types of religious studies writing also require specialized or technical skills (such as linguistic skills or computer skills).

In terms of experiences, writers in the field of religious studies may benefit from visiting the communities they study, and developing sympathy for others whose views are different from their own. Reading widely in multiple fields (religion, history, literature, anthropology) is also valuable.

What courses or assignments are best suited to giving students access to and practice in these skills and experiences?

Courses suited to practicing the above skills are: courses that focus on particular religious traditions, comparative courses, and thematic courses. Assignments include low stakes writing assignments, skill building assignments (such as writing summaries of arguments), close reading assignments, historical contextualization assignments, and argumentative essays. More advanced writing assignments are interpretive essays, long format argumentation, and research projects.

Writing Emphasis Classes in Religion

REL-101 Introduction to Religion
REL-103 Belief and Unbelief
REL-108 Western Religions
REL-128 Judaism
REL-136 Religions of China
REL-138 Modern Judaism
REL-206 Buddhist Thought
REL-215 The Rise of Christianity
REL-226 Religions of China: Daoism
REL-236 Zen Buddhism
REL-336 Tibetan Buddhist Culture
REL-105 Introduction to Hebrew Bible
REL-115 Introduction to New Testament
REL-310 Early Christian Gospels
REL-330 Topics in Hebrew Bible
REL-365 The Letters of Paul
REL-217 Religion in America
REL-338 Modern Religious Thought
REL-385 Advanced Topics in Religion
REL-386 Advanced Topics in Religion: Non-Western Perspectives
REL-394 Directed Readings in Religion
REL-444 Independent Study in Religion
REL-494 Internship in Religion