

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