

Selection of Graduate Students for Stand-Alone Courses
November 3, 2015

The opportunity for a Ph.D. student to teach a stand-alone course in Religious Studies is rare. The department can offer this opportunity to at most a few graduate students per year. However, we encourage qualified students to apply. When there is a departmental need to be met, students who are well-known for their teaching excellence are sometimes encouraged to apply.

Criteria for Application. Requests to teach a stand-alone course are made by application. A Ph.D. student is *eligible to apply* for such an assignment only if the following criteria are met:

- The student reports to his or her academic advisor and to the Administrative Assistant that he or she will take the Comprehensive Examination *prior* to the time when he or she proposes to teach an independent course. If the student fails to pass his or her comps by the relevant date, the proposed course will be dropped from the course offerings. Every effort will be made to arrange for a different T.A. assignment;
- The student is in excellent academic standing and is making strong progress toward the degree, as indicated by the department's "Guidelines and Benchmarks for Ph.D. success."
- The student's academic advisor strongly supports the application and attests to the student's outstanding performance as a Teaching Assistant.

Application Procedure.

- The student submits a one to two page course proposal indicating (1) the course sub-title (the main title for graduate-student taught courses is Religion and Social Life); (2) a course topic and description; and (3) a justification for teaching a course on this topic. The justification should include (a) the recognition that there will be minimal overlap with existing courses taught by faculty; (b) an indication of how the course topic relates to the student's area of expertise; and (c) a reason for thinking that the course will draw a substantial enrollment.
- The student asks his or her advisor to write a paragraph attesting to the student's outstanding performance as a T.A. and, where relevant, the student's prior teaching experience; the advisor must indicate strong support for the teaching assignment and the proposal. This e-letter should be sent to the DEO, with a copy to the Administrator.
- The student submits a copy of his or her course proposal to the DEO via email, with a copy to the Administrator, who places applications in a file on the departmental drive.
- The deadline for application to teach a fall course is September 1 of the preceding fall semester (one year ahead)
- The deadline for application to teach a spring course is February 1 of the preceding spring semester (one year ahead)
- Applications are viewed and ranked by the DEO and the Director of Graduate Studies.

Selection Criteria.

- The applicant consistently receives high evaluations in annual reviews of graduate students for his or her intellectual capabilities, teaching skills, reliability, and professionalism. *These skills and capabilities are measured by student teaching evaluations and the observation of course supervisors. Student advisors' input on academic achievement is also relevant, as are reports from other faculty members about classroom performance and the meeting of assigned deadlines. A student's capabilities are reported verbally at a faculty meeting by faculty members who have supervised the student and can assess preparedness for this role. Examples of the*

qualities of a strong candidate for an independent teaching role are: actively engaged, creative, and enthusiastic in his or her teaching; evidently committed to improving the student experience for each course he or she assists; proactive in preparing strong exams and assignments as requested by a supervisor; effective in grading and responding to students' work; good at taking direction from his or her supervisor, while also being willing to make helpful recommendations; demonstrates a strong intention to improve his or her skills over time; reliable and on time when it comes to performing assigned TA duties in accordance with the spoken or written expectations of the course supervisor; concerned to attract students into additional Religious Studies courses.

- The course is consistent with the department's identify and focus and would thus represent the department well; it meets a need or expands the department's course offerings; ideally, it is also on a topic that is close to the student's area of expertise, which helps to ensure content quality.
- The student is open to further discussion with the DEO regarding course title and description; descriptors may need to be adjusted to meet departmental needs and avoid perceived overlap in course content.
- The course is likely to fill. If the course does not meet the minimum enrollment required by the College, the course will be cancelled.