

M O N T A N A B O A R D O F R E G E N T S

LEVEL I REQUEST FORM

Item No.:	142-1005+R0309	Date of Meeting:	March 5-6, 2009
Institution:	The University of Montana—Missoula		
Program Title:	Religious Studies Option		

Level I proposals are those that may be approved by the Commissioner of Higher Education or the Commissioner's designee. The approval of such proposals will be conveyed to the Board of Regents at the next regular meeting of the board. The institution must file the request with the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education by means of a memo to the Deputy Commissioner.

- A. Level I action requested (check all that apply):** Level I proposals include campus initiatives typically characterized by (a) minimal costs; (b) clear adherence to approved campus mission; and (c) the absence of significant programmatic impact on other institutions within the Montana University System and Community Colleges.
- 1. Re-titling existing majors, minors, options and certificates; (e.g. from B.S. in Mechanized Agriculture to B.S. in Agricultural Operations Technology);
 - 2. Eliminating existing majors, minors, options and certificates via a Program Termination Checklist;
 - 3. Adding new minors or certificates where there is a major;
 - 4. Adding new minors or certificates where there is an option in a major;
 - 5. Departmental mergers and name changes;
 - 6. Program revisions; and
 - 7. Distance delivery of previously authorized degree programs.
- B. Level I with Level II documentation:** With Level II documentation circulated to all campus chief academic officers in advance, the Commissioner or designee may propose additional items for inclusion in the Level I process. For these items to move forward, the Commissioner or designee must reach consensus with the chief academic officers. When consensus is not achieved, the Commissioner or designee will move the item to the Level II review process.
- 1. Options within an existing major or degree;
 - 2. Eliminating organizational units within larger institutions such as departments, divisions and colleges or schools *with the exception of the five Colleges of Technology where changes require Board action;*
 - 3. Consolidating existing programs and/or degrees.
- C. Temporary Certificate or A.A.S. degree programs:** Certificate or Associate of Applied Science Degree Programs may be submitted as Level I proposals, with memo and backup documentation, when they are offered in cooperation with and/or at the request of private or public sector partners and the decision point to offer the program is not consistent with the regular Board of Regents program approval process. Level I approval for programs under this provision will be limited to two years. Continuation of

a program beyond the two years will require the normal program approval process as Level II Proposals.

All other Certificate or Associate Degree programs may be placed on submission at any Board of Regents meeting. They will be placed on action agendas at subsequent meetings. All campuses agree to insure that all other campuses receive program information well in advance of submission.

Item No.: 142-1005+R0309	Institution: The University of Montana—Missoula
---------------------------------	--

Specify Request:

The University of Montana requests permission to add a Religious Studies Option to the major in Liberal Studies.

March 5-6, 2009

ITEM -142-1005-R0309

Approval To Create An Option In Religious Studies To The Liberal Arts Major

THAT:

The Board of Regents of Higher Education authorizes The University of Montana to create an Option in Religious Studies to the Liberal Arts major.

EXPLANATION:

An important part of educating students for global citizenship is exposure to the breadth and depth of the world's religious traditions. This exposure encompasses education in the fundamental data of religious--myth, symbol, ritual; the formation and interpretation of religious texts; the historical development and character of religious communities; doctrine and practice; the interface between religion and culture, politics, ethics, the arts, literature, and philosophy. Current and proposed courses comprise the following traditions: Biblical Studies, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Chinese Religions, Japanese Religions, Native American Religions, and African American traditions. Students participating in this program would graduate with a Liberal Studies B.A. with a Religious Studies Option.

ATTACHMENTS:

Course Requirements

Proposal for a Religious Studies option within the Liberal Studies major**Overview**

Since the closing of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Montana in 1989 it has not been possible to major or minor in Religious Studies although the University has continued to offer a streamlined curriculum with two tenureline faculty in Religious Studies. Under the leadership of the current UM administration there has been a push for educating our students for global citizenship. An important part of that education includes religious literacy, exposure to the breadth and depth of the world's religious traditions. Two recent hires in Religious Studies within the Liberal Studies Program bring our faculty strength in this area to three tenureline faculty as well as one long term adjunct. This strength is complemented by recent hires in other departments. Current and proposed courses now encompass the following traditions: Biblical Studies, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Chinese Religions, Japanese Religions, Native American Religions, and African American traditions. The time seems auspicious for a Religious Studies option within the Liberal Studies major to supplement the other options within Liberal Studies: the General (or Traditional) option, the Asian Studies option, and the Women's Studies option. Students would graduate with a Liberal Studies B.A. with a Religious Studies option. They would fulfill a number of requirements which apply to all LS students such as two years of a foreign language and successful completion of our Introductory Humanities sequence, LS 151 & 152. Additionally, RS students would take Introduction to Asian Humanities, LS 161, as well as three other lower level introductory courses to religions of the world and nine upper division courses from a list of nineteen courses. (See attached list of requirements).

Need

The following language has been in the UM catalogue for nearly four decades and remains a cogent description of religious studies in an academic setting,

"The academic study of religions is coextensive with the broad field of humane learning in which questions pertaining to the meaning of human existence are most prominent. The study of religions in the University is therefore taken up in close conjunction with the humanities, arts, letters, and the several sciences.

In course offerings, two emphases prevail: first, the scholarly analysis and transmission of the literature and forms of the world's religions; second, the sensitization of the student to the value of religious studies for appreciating his/her cultural and social existence. Thus, the courses are designed to illuminate religious traditions in historical depth as they inform modern cultures generally, and the individual within American cultural situations in particular.

The offerings do not constitute a pre-professional program. They are intended to extend and deepen the student's education in the liberal arts."

The proposal for a Religious Studies option has assumed special urgency in the wake of September 11, 2001. We in the academy are newly aware of the fact of global interdependence and the responsibilities of instilling in our students a sense of global

citizenship. We are aware of the role that religious literacy plays in this task. We take religious literacy to include: education in the fundamental data of religions – myth, symbol, ritual; the formation and interpretation of religious texts; the historical development and character of religious communities; doctrine and practice; the interface between religion and culture, politics, ethics, the arts, literature, and philosophy.

Faculty members teaching in Religious Studies since the demise of the Department of Religious Studies have heard a constant drumbeat of support from students for a formal program and increased offerings in religious studies. We hear this when we advise incoming students, transfer students and current students each semester and during the summer orientation programs for new students. We frequently field telephone inquiries from interested students as well as citizens in the community with queries of their own. Indeed other affected constituencies besides students who would be served by a RS option include alumni and community groups in Missoula, western Montana and the region. (Since 9/11 religious studies faculty have given dozens of invited talks and presentations from Billings to Eureka, Great Falls to Hamilton, Kalispell to Helena.) Anticipating the demand for an academic option in RS is an art rather than a science, based on anecdotal evidence of an expressed need. Given the enrollments in some of our introductory courses, however, we are convinced that “if we build it, they will come.” New faculty and courses and an advertising campaign will acquaint the current generation of UM students as well as prospective students.

Institutional and System Fit

Religion has been taught as a subject matter at UM uninterruptedly since 1924, making it one of the oldest subject matters taught at UM. From 1924 until 1969 religion was taught under the auspices of the School of Religion, a collaborative ecumenical effort of mainline denominations - Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Methodists. The SOR offered courses in biblical studies, contemporary religious thought, and world religions. One longtime head of the School went on to teach at Middlebury College in Vermont. In 1968, following a major U.S. Supreme Court ruling allowing the teaching of religion in public universities, a UM Faculty Senate committee chaired by Henry Bugbee (Philosophy) recommended that the University replace the School of Religion with a Department housed in the College of Arts and Sciences. Prominent faculty from Yale, Vanderbilt, and Indiana were hired and the department quickly rose to national prominence. Scholars Press was founded by department members in conjunction with UM's Printing Department. The Press, now housed at Emory University, has been closely associated with the two principal academic organizations in the field, the Society of Biblical Literature and the American Academy of Religion. When UM was hit by a state mandated retrenchment in the late 1980's the decision was made to close the Department and maintain an abbreviated curriculum within the Liberal Studies Program with two faculty members. Since 1989 courses have been offered in eastern and western religious traditions with an emphasis on Buddhism and Christianity. Three College of Arts and Sciences Deans have continued to fund additional courses by adjunct faculty in biblical studies and comparative ethics.

The courses listed in our proposed option are intentionally multidisciplinary. RS courses have been cross-listed with Philosophy, History, English, Sociology, Asian Studies, Women's Studies, Native American Studies, Environmental Studies, the

Davidson Honors College, Art, Pharmacy and COT. Other UM departments and programs offering courses with religious studies content or focus (to borrow the useful distinction used by WS) include Anthropology, Geography, Political Science, Journalism, Music, Counselor Education and the Ethics Center. The Liberal Studies Program, our home base, is inherently interdisciplinary in faculty training, pedagogical philosophy and course offerings. We will continue to encourage faculty in other departments and programs to contribute to the RS curriculum, however we will shoulder the bulk of the course load within LS. Approval of a RS option within LS will therefore not require changes to existing programs.

Our proposal advances the strategic goals of UM insofar as UM's responsibility as the flagship liberal arts institution in the state obliges us to offer instruction in the traditional humanities and cognate social sciences. The study of the world's religious traditions is an integral part of any definition of this academic mission. Educating our students for citizenship in a global community requires a sustained commitment to offerings in global religious cultures and traditions. The 20c philosopher Paul Tillich once defined culture as the *form* of religion and religion as the *content* of culture. Global citizenship requires religious literacy.

Montana State University – Bozeman offers a minor in Religious Studies and a RS option in their History Major in the Department of History and Philosophy as well as an option in their Philosophy major. In the History degree four lower level courses in RS are required and two upper level courses. In the Philosophy degree two lower level courses in RS are required and two upper level courses. There are two tenureline faculty members in Religion. According to the current MSU catalogue five of RS courses are taught in alternate years and twenty are taught "on demand". In contrast our twenty-seven courses in Religious Studies will be offered annually or every other year. Our students will be required to take a minimum of twelve RS courses instead of four or six. They will also be required to take two years of a foreign language rather than one. Our proposal calls for the completion of a substantial RS curriculum within the LS major rather than a History or Philosophy degree with the addition of a few RS courses. The strength of MSU's program in the area of biblical archeology with Professor Cohen may provide an opportunity for collaboration with our recent hire in Hebrew Bible, Professor Levtow, who knows Professor Cohen.

Program Details

(See attached Requirements for Proposed RS option w/in Liberal Studies Program.) The Religious Studies option within the Liberal Studies Program would parallel our three current options. In addition to the General Education requirements all students fulfill, our students have an additional year of foreign language required. All LS students also must take the introductory humanities sequence, LS 151 and 152. RS students will also take LS 161, Intro. to Asian Humanities. We intend that students recognize the close interrelationship between religion and the subject matter of the traditional humanities disciplines. At the two hundred level students will take one or more courses encompassing the religious traditions of South and East Asia and one or more courses covering traditions of the Near East and the Mediterranean basin. At the upper level students would take a required course in theory and method in the study of religion, a senior capstone course, and seven courses at the 300 or 400 level out of a possible seventeen courses covering a wide variety of topics and subject matters: Native American religions, biblical studies, advanced topics in Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism,

Hinduism, East Asian religions, mysticism and contemplative traditions, African American religion, contemporary social and political topics, and comparative ethics. We intend to have our program in place by next fall for entering students and hope to attract an increasing number of students each year as they learn of the new opportunity.

Resources

We do not require additional faculty resources to implement our option. With our hire this past year of Professor Clough (PhD., Columbia), a seasoned teacher who will be offering a wide array of courses in Asian religions, and our hire two years ago of Professor Levtow (PhD., Brown) with primary responsibility in Hebrew Bible, New Testament, and Judaism in addition to Professor Dietrich's (PhD., Chicago) courses in the history of Christianity and comparative mysticism, the Liberal Studies Program is well positioned to offer the foundational courses in the option. In addition, Professor Justman (PhD., Columbia) and Professor Vanita (PhD., Delhi) also teach courses on cross-cultural topics with an emphasis on Arabic literature and Medieval European literature and traditions of Hindu epic and popular literature. Strong adjunct support from Professor Hanson (PhD., Virginia) in religious, comparative, and medical ethics is supplemented by offerings in Native American religions by Professor Beck and others in NAS and African American religion and religion and politics by Professor Shearer in the History Department. Discussions with other departments and programs at UM may increase the number of interdisciplinary cross-listings in the option.

Since 1989 the University has continued to list RS courses separately in the catalogue. We have had our own library budget line and UM Foundation accounts for student scholarships and discretionary spending by RS faculty. There will be no need for additional resources, although the presence of a new option in LS will allow for greater visibility that will facilitate fundraising.

Assessment

The success of the program will be measured by its impact on the University and the community and by our anticipated number of students enrolling in the new option. Within the past several years we have sent students on for further training at Harvard, Yale, Chicago, Indiana, and Boston College, to name a few institutions. Other students have gone into the Peace Corps and other service organizations. We anticipate a growth in these contacts. More concretely, as part of the Liberal Studies Program, the new option falls under the LS Mission Statement and Learning Goals which delineates the means of measuring those goals.

Process Leading to Submission

We have drafted proposals for undergraduate programs in the study of religion on several occasions since the closing of the Department of Religious Studies, however it was not until Provost Lois Muir's series of cluster committees convened in 2002 that public support was expressed for an augmentation of curricular offerings in world religions. Dean Shirley Howell of the School of Fine Arts chaired a committee on "Human Values and Human Expression". Professors Dietrich and Vanita served on the committee. Provost Muir endorsed our recommendation of an additional faculty line in religion and we were able to search for and hire the first new faculty member in religious

studies in fifteen years. Liberal Studies as a unit has discussed our priorities and agreed on the expertise needed during our recent searches. In addition, we have held discussions about the possibility of enhanced offerings with our faculty and students, students and faculty in other departments, and CAS Dean Gerald Fetz and Associate Provost Arlene Walker-Andrews as well as long-suffering members of the Missoula community who have presumably concluded that reports of a *forthcoming* religious studies option would occur sometime after the second coming.

Paul A. Dietrich
9/19/08

Course Requirements for Proposed Religious Studies Option w/in Liberal Studies Program

Basic Skills

Foreign Language (18-20 cr.) Two years of a single foreign language, i.e., same requirement as all LS majors.

Lower Division Requirements – 20 credits

1. Three 100 level Introductory Humanities courses:
LS 151 Intro. to the Humanities – Ancient
LS 152 Intro. to the Humanities – Medieval /Modern
LS 161 Intro. to Asian Humanities
2. Three 200 level introductory religion courses: one course in religions of Near Eastern/Mediterranean origin and one in South or East Asian origin and one in either of the above.
RELS 210 Old Testament/Hebrew Bible
RELS 211 New Testament
RELS 220 Judaism
RELS 225 Christianity
RELS 232 Buddhism
RELS 234 Hinduism
RELS 236 Chinese Religions
RELS 238 Japanese Religions

Upper Division Requirements – 27 credits

3. RELS 300 Theory and Method in the Study of Religion
4. Seven courses (21 cr.) selected from among the following:
RELS 301/NAS 301 American Indian Religion and Philosophy
RELS 310 Topics in Biblical Studies
RELS 320 Ancient Judaism/Early Christianity
RELS 335 Western Religious Thought I: Ancient/Early Medieval
RELS 336 Western Religious Thought II: Late Medieval/Early Modern
RELS 353 Topics in South Asian Religions
RELS 354 Topics in East Asian Religions
RELS 360 Classics of Buddhist Literature
RELS 366 Tibetan Civilization
RELS 367 Approaches to the Study of Zen
RELS 368 Contemporary Buddhism in South and Southeast Asia
RELS 369 Contemplative Traditions of Asia
RELS 370 Mysticism
AAS 374 African American Religious Experience
RELS 376 Contemporary Religious Thought
RELS 381 Comparative Ethics
AAS 450 Prayer and Civil Rights
5. RELS 400 Senior Capstone