

**MU Religious Studies**  
**MA Comprehensive Exam Reading List**

1. Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*
2. Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*
3. Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*
4. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*
5. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*
6. Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*
7. Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances Between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics*
8. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Chapters 1, 4, 5, 6, 7)
9. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*
10. Darlene M. Juschka, *Feminism in the Study of Religion: A Reader*
11. Charles H. Long, *Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion*
12. Russell T. McCutcheon, *Critics not Caretakers: Redescribing the Public Study of Religion*
13. Gananath Obeyesekere, *Medusa's Hair: An Essay on Personal Symbols and Religious Experience*
14. Robert A. Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them*
15. Kimberley C. Patton and Benjamin C. Ray, eds., *A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age*
16. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (just the "Introduction," pp. 1-28)
17. Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown*
18. Michael T. Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America*
19. Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure*
20. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*
21. Harvey Whitehouse, *Modes of Religiosity: A Cognitive Theory of Religious Transmission*

Recommended for overview: Walter H. Capps, *Religious Studies: The Making of a Discipline*

## Comprehensive Exam Procedures

Full-time students should normally take the comprehensive exams before enrolling in their third semester in the program. Part-time students should take the exams when they have completed 18 credit hours in the program, but are encouraged to take their exams earlier if possible. Extra time can be granted under extraordinary circumstances at the discretion of the faculty. An application for extension must be filed with the department by March 15th in the year when the student was scheduled to take the exams.

Only grades of Pass/Fail will be given. Passing the exams is a requirement for continuing in the program. A student who fails the exams may try again, usually at the end of the summer after the first failed attempt. Students who fail for a second time may make a third attempt, usually around six months later. Teaching assistantships may be suspended for students who fail their comprehensive exams twice. A student may attempt the exams a total of three times. A student who fails the exams three times will normally be discontinued from the program.

The exam will consist of essay questions which will be based on a reading list distributed to the students in the early fall. The exam questions will be written and graded by a rotating committee of two faculty members. If the two faculty members do not concur in their evaluation of the student, a third faculty member may be brought in to decide whether the student should pass the exams. Past exam questions will be kept on file in the department.

The exam will consist of three essay questions, which will be emailed to all students taking the exam. The students will then have twelve hours to submit their essays by email. Students will be notified about their exam results in writing, and will also receive a short feedback report.

Students who are eligible to take the comprehensive exams should notify the director of graduate studies by March 15, so that a date can be scheduled. There will normally only be one exam given each year in May. Make-up exams may be scheduled under extraordinary circumstances.