

### PROGRAM PROFILE

The degree program in religion, culture and values is designed for students who are interested in the world's major religious traditions. Students study the development and interaction of the global religious traditions that influence human identity, behavior, culture, and values. They investigate the effects that historical crises and the forces of change have on religions, emphasizing contemporary religious pluralism and inter-religious dialogue in a global context.

The courses introduce students to the study of religion as a unique and rigorous intellectual discipline. Students learn to evaluate critically a variety of perspectives on religion and gain a clear understanding of the dimension of the sacred in all aspects of human life, including those commonly designated "secular." Students discover how religious perceptions of the sacred respond to an evolving world and relate to and influence cultures, institutions, and values. Finally, they gain a comprehensive knowledge of specific traditions and a clear understanding of values and world views from the viewpoint of cultural diversity and religious pluralism. The degree program is enriched by courses in other disciplines offered by the affiliate faculty.

Because the core classes are small, students have a great deal of personal interaction with faculty and individualized attention in the development of their programs of study. In addition, graduate classes are taught late afternoon or evening once a week in order to accommodate the busy schedules of working professionals.

### MAIS CONCENTRATION

The 36-credit master's degree program in interdisciplinary studies with a concentration in religion, culture, and values requires three core courses, a research methods course, electives, and a culminating project or thesis. Students focus their program of study around a specialization that they design in close collaboration with a faculty advisor.

In keeping with the interdisciplinary nature of the this degree, specializations in the concentration in religion, culture, and values include courses from a wide range of disciplines such as anthropology, communication, conflict analysis, English, government, history, philosophy, public policy, sociology, and women and gender studies. In designing their specializations, students link the courses in religion to courses in other disciplines that have special relevance for the concentration. Students continue their work in a specialization by designing theses or projects that build on all they have learned.

A student with a specialization in communication, for instance, might focus a project on one aspect of religious communication in the media or create a comparative religious database for reporters and commentators. A student with a specialization in philosophy or conflict analysis or government, for instance, might choose to explore a more complex theme by doing a thesis on a topic such as "the possibility of resolving divisive ethical issues by setting them within a comparative religious context" or "the effects of globalization on national/ethnic forms of traditional religious expression."

### GRADUATES OF THE PROGRAM

Religion is a vigorous force in the world and graduates of the MAIS concentration in religion, culture, and values are well equipped to contribute to their expertise in wide variety of careers. Graduates go on to careers in law, national and international government, print and media journalism, library sciences, archives and museums, public and social service, and teaching. Others pursue careers in religious communities and institutions. The concentration also provides a solid foundation for advanced graduate studies.

### FACULTY

Reflecting the multi-disciplinary nature of MAIS, this program is governed by an executive committee composed of George Mason faculty with diverse academic backgrounds. The research and publications of the faculty reflect their collective expertise in the world's major religious traditions. Fac-

ulty members are dedicated teachers, committed to mentoring their graduate students. For a complete listing of the faculty in the Department of Religious Studies, along with their areas of specialization, see the department web-site ([gmu.edu/departments/religious\\_studies](http://gmu.edu/departments/religious_studies)).

#### Director

**John Barclay Burns** (St. Andrews University, Scotland) -- ancient near Eastern religions, early Judaism, mythology, religious fundamentalism

#### Executive Committee

**Young-chan Ro** (University of California, Santa Barbara) -- East Asian religions, Confucianism, Daoism, mysticism, conflict and dialogue in global religions

**Maria Massi Dakake** (Princeton University) -- Islam, Shi'ite Islam, Islam in Iran, Sufism, women in world religions

**John Farina** (Columbia University) -- religion and civil society, western spirituality, religion in America

**Cuong Tu Nguyen** (Harvard University) -- South Asian religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Hindu and Buddhist ethics, Tibetan religion

**Randi Rashkover** (University of Virginia) -- Jewish philosophy and theology, Jewish-Christian relations, Jewish feminism

**Whitney T. Shiner** (Yale University) -- Christian origins and development, spirituality and healing

#### Affiliate Faculty

**Lawrence E. Butler** (University of Pennsylvania) -- art history

**Marc Gopin** (Brandeis University) -- world religions, diplomacy and conflict resolution

**Sumaiya Hamdani** (Princeton) -- history, Islam

**Hugh Heclo** (Yale University) -- public affairs

**Yehuda Lukacs** (American University) -- global education, public and international affairs

**John Paden** (Harvard University) -- international studies

**Debra L. Shutika** (University of Pennsylvania) -- folklore and mythology

**Margaret Yocom** (University of Massachusetts) -- folklore and mythology

*"If all believed the same things, our planet would lose half its excitement...Much of history and hope is formed by the ways humans perceive themselves and their world."*

—Ninian Smart, *The Long Search*

## WHY RELIGION, CULTURE, AND VALUES AT GEORGE MASON?

The faculty members in the Department of Religious Studies at George Mason represent the main global religious traditions in their classical and contemporary forms. Their diverse teaching and research interests combine to make this concentration stimulating and interesting. The presence of many major religious traditions and their places of worship make the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area an excellent location for the study of religion and culture.

Graduate students in this program work closely with faculty mentors to create a research and learning path that meets their particular career or life goals. Because of this personalized approach, students receive valuable guidance from faculty in their professional development through presentations at conferences, publishing and other creative activities, and expanding their network of colleagues and collaborators.

Named the #1 national university to watch by *U.S. News & World Report*, George Mason University is an innovative, entrepreneurial institution with global distinction in a range of academic fields. Located in the heart of Northern Virginia's technology corridor near Washington, D.C., Mason prepares its students to succeed in the work force and meet the needs of the region and the world.

See [mais.gmu.edu](http://mais.gmu.edu) for program requirements and courses.

## HOW TO APPLY

Along with the completed Application for Graduate Admission and application fee, applicants to the MAIS degree with a concentration in religion, culture, and values should submit: official transcripts from previous institutions of higher education attended, goals statement, three letters of recommendation, and a resume. See [chss.gmu.edu/howtoapply](http://chss.gmu.edu/howtoapply) for complete details on the application process.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

### Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies Program

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Enterprise Hall 414

Fairfax, VA 22030

703-993-8762

[mais@gmu.edu](mailto:mais@gmu.edu)

[mais.gmu.edu](http://mais.gmu.edu)

## GRADUATE ADMISSIONS

### College of Humanities and Social Sciences

4400 University Drive, MSN 2D2

College Hall C119

Fairfax, VA 22030

703-993-3699

703-993-8714 (fax)

[chssgrad@gmu.edu](mailto:chssgrad@gmu.edu)

[chss.gmu.edu/howtoapply](http://chss.gmu.edu/howtoapply)