

**Bylaws of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Pittsburgh**  
**Adopted by the Faculty on September 30, 2005**  
**Amended and Adopted by the Faculty on March 17, 2006**  
**Amended and Adopted by the Faculty on October 28, 2010**  
**Amended and Adopted by the Faculty on November 8, 2013**

**Preamble**

To make its procedures as clearly defined, open and participatory as possible, the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Pittsburgh adopts the following Bylaws and regulations.

**I. Full Department**

- A. All powers and responsibilities delegated by the University of Pittsburgh to the Department shall reside in the body of its voting members.
- B. The voting membership of the Department shall consist of all full-time T/TS faculty members whose primary appointment is in this department, full-time NTS faculty members, and full-time graduate students in residence.
- C. Votes are allocated as follows:
  - i. Each full-time T/TS faculty member with a primary appointment in the Department and each full-time NTS has one vote.
  - ii. Graduate students as a body have a total of one vote. Graduate students may exercise that vote in one of two ways: (a) by designating a representative or representatives to cast a single vote or (b) by splitting the vote among those in attendance at a given departmental meeting. In the latter case, for example, should two graduate students participate in a meeting that calls for a vote, each student would have a half vote.
  - iii. Part-time, visiting appointments, and/or adjunct faculty members are not voting members of the Department.
  - iv. Faculty at the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary who are adjunct members of the PhD Cooperative Program in Religion are voting members with one vote each on matters pertaining to the administration of the PhD program *only*. The PhD Cooperative Program in Religion is bound and governed by the more general regulations established by the Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences at the University of Pittsburgh.
- D. Matters pertaining to general departmental policy and all particular administrative, procedural and/or substantive questions brought before the Department, including faculty hiring, shall be determined by the full department.
  - i. Matters that are *not* brought before the full department include tenure and promotion of faculty and evaluation of specific graduate students.
  - ii. Tenure, promotion and evaluation of faculty must be handled by all T/TS and full-time NTS faculty of the appropriate rank.

- iii. Departmental deliberations that involve the evaluation of graduate students and/or the disclosure of graduate student records are open to all T/TS faculty members who belong to the Graduate Faculty of Arts & Sciences.
  - iv. Departmental deliberations that involve the evaluation of PhD students in the Cooperative Program in Religion and/or the disclosure of PhD student records in the Cooperative Program in Religion are also open to the adjunct members of the Cooperative Program in Religion at the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.
- E. Protocol
- i. The full department shall meet approximately once per month during the academic year.
  - ii. Each meeting as well as an agenda for that meeting shall be announced at least three days in advance.
  - iii. Minutes recording the proceedings of Department meeting shall be taken, maintained and made accessible to all faculty.
  - iv. Meetings shall be open unless specific matters have been determined by the full department to be confidential and to require restricted attendance and/or participation in whole or in part.
  - v. Any voting member of the Department may, in consultation with the Chair, have an item placed on the agenda.
  - vi. At the discretion of the Chair, persons who are not voting members of the Department may place an item on the agenda if it merits the attention of the full department.
  - vii. A quorum shall exist when one-half of the total possible voting members are present to cast votes at a meeting.
  - viii. Only members of the Department present at a meeting, in person or by real-time conference call, shall vote on issues decided at that meeting.
  - ix. Questions that come before the full department for a vote shall be determined by simple majority, except in cases where a larger percentage of the vote has been explicitly required by the Bylaws or regulations of the Department.
  - x. Voting on matters of faculty hiring and promotion and on the selection of a departmental Chair shall be by secret ballot.
  - xi. Voting on other matters shall be by voice or show of hands, unless a voting member requests a secret ballot. In such cases, the request for a secret ballot shall be honored.
  - xii. Short-term and part-time faculty appointments are at the discretion of the Chair in consultation with relevant members of the faculty.

- xiii. Where procedural matters not covered by any departmental Bylaws or regulations, transactions shall be governed by Robert's Rules of Order upon request by any voting member.

F. Election of the Chair

- i. One term in advance of an upcoming election, the sitting Chair shall notify all voting members of the Department of the upcoming election.
- ii. Shortly after such notification, the Chair shall designate an "Election Chair" from among the full-time, tenured faculty members who have decided not to run.
- iii. The Election Chair shall receive nominations and arrange a meeting or a series of meetings, which allow for a statement or statements by the candidate or candidates and discussion by department members.
- iv. Voting shall be by secret ballot and the votes of T/TS and NTS faculty shall be distinguished when the results are reported to the Dean of the Dietrich School.

**II. Executive Officers**

A. The executive officers of the Department include the Chair, the Director of Graduate Studies, and the Director of Undergraduate Studies.

- i. The Chair is appointed upon recommendation by the Dean of Arts & Sciences after consultation with the Department. Upon appointment, the Chair shall serve a term of three years, renewable by mutual agreement of the Department, the Dean and the Chair him or herself.
- ii. The Director of Graduate Studies and the Director of Undergraduate Studies shall be appointed by the Chair with the advice and consent of the full department and each shall serve as long as is agreeable to the Department, the Chair and the officer.

B. The Chair is the Chief Executive Officer of the Department.

- i. S/he shall be responsible for the administration of departmental business and shall represent the Department to the administration, the University at large and the profession.
- ii. S/he shall preside over meetings of the full department.
- iii. S/he shall prepare the departmental budget, shall inform the Department in writing of its general dimensions, and shall exercise jurisdiction over the expenditure of departmental funds in consultation with the Department.
- iv. S/he shall exercise jurisdiction over the department staff.
- v. S/he shall be responsible for keeping written records and correspondences that concern the Department on file in the Department Office.
- vi. In general, the Chair shall be responsible for the execution of the Bylaws, regulations, policies and procedural guidelines of the Department; for the day-to-

day functioning of the Department; and for keeping the Department informed of matters that concern it.

- C. The Director of Graduate Studies is responsible for the general management of the MA and PhD programs.
  - i. S/he shall preside over meetings and other activities relating to the MA program in Religious Studies and the PhD Cooperative Program in Religion, including serving as Chair of the Admissions Committee, the Curriculum Committee, the Committee of Eleven and the Fellowship Committee.
  - ii. S/he shall be responsible for the day-to-day detail of administering the regulations of the graduate program, including the advising of course registration and the overseeing of annual reviews for all graduate students prior to their advance to PhD candidacy.
  - iii. S/he shall be responsible for maintaining the *Graduate Student Handbook* and for keeping graduate students informed of events, scholarships, and so forth, relevant to their education.
  - iv. S/he, in consultation with the Director of Undergraduate Studies and the Chair, shall be responsible for organizing the schedule of courses and the allocating of TA/TF/TR awards.
  - v. S/he shall report annually to the full department all milestones and concerns pertaining to graduate students and to the Committee of Eleven all milestones and concerns pertaining to PhD students in the Cooperative Program in Religion.
  - vi. S/he shall be responsible for maintaining graduate student records and for keeping written records and correspondences pertaining to the administration of the graduate program on file in the department office.
  - vii. In general, s/he shall handle all questions pertaining to procedure and graduate student status and serve as the gateway between PhD students in the Cooperative Program in Religion and the Curriculum Committee and the Committee of Eleven.
- D. The Director of Undergraduate Studies is responsible for the general management of the undergraduate program.
  - i. S/he shall be responsible for the day-to-day detail of administering the regulations of the undergraduate major and minor programs, including the advising of course registration for all students in the major and minor programs.
  - ii. S/he shall preside over meetings and other activities pertaining to the undergraduate program.
  - iii. S/he shall report annually to the full department all milestones and concerns pertaining to undergraduate students.
  - iv. S/he shall be responsible for maintaining the undergraduate curriculum requirements for majors and minors.

- v. S/he, in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies and the Chair, shall be responsible for organizing the schedule of courses and the allocating of TA/TF/TR awards.
- vi. S/he shall be responsible for keeping written records and correspondences pertaining to the undergraduate program on file in the department office.
- vii. In general, s/he shall handle all questions pertaining to procedure and undergraduate student status.

### III. Committees

- A. All voting members of the Department are eligible to serve on committees.
  - i. The full department shall serve on the Undergraduate and Graduate standing committees.
  - ii. Other standing committees: Graduate Admissions Committee, Fellowship Committee, Planning and Budget Committee, New Undergraduate Course Approval Committee, Library and Media Resources Committee, Colloquium Series Committee.
  - iii. At the discretion of the Chair, or by request of the Department, the Chair may appoint *ad hoc* committees to study particular issues that fall outside the purview of the standing committees.
  - iv. As voting members of the Department, graduate students are invited to serve on committees.
    - 1. The Graduate Student Representative shall be responsible for conducting elections or designating a graduate student representative or representatives to serve on these committees.
    - 2. These students shall take part in policy discussion and decisions, but shall not participate in discussions or actions affecting other graduate students individually and shall not have access to the records of other students.
    - 3. The sole exception to (III.A.iv.2) relates to the Graduate Student Representative's participation in a grievance complaint brought by another graduate student. The student bringing the complaint may request that the Graduate Student Representative be present at any stage of the grievance process. Neither the student nor the Graduate Student Representative may however be present during faculty deliberations.
  - v. MA Admissions Committee
    - 1. All full-time faculty members participate in the selection of candidates to the MA program.
  - vi. PhD Admissions Committee

1. The PhD Admissions Committee consists of five members: three full-time T/TS faculty from the Department and two adjunct faculty members of the Cooperative Program in Religion at the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.
2. The Director of Graduate Studies annually designates the two additional departmental members of the committee; the two members from the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary are annually selected from among their ranks.
3. All full-time faculty members in the Department and Pittsburgh Theological Seminary adjuncts shall make recommendations to the Director of Graduate Studies regarding candidates for admission into the PhD program but do not have a vote on admissions.

vii. Fellowship Committees

1. Fellowship Committees consist of the Director of Graduate Studies, the Chair and one full-time T/TS faculty member appointed annually by the Director of Graduate Studies to ensure balanced representation among research areas and minimize conflicts of interest.
2. The TA/TF/TR Fellowship Committee consists of the Director of Graduate Studies, the Director of Undergraduate Studies and the Chair.

viii. Planning and Budget Committee

1. The Planning and Budget Committee consists of the Chair and one full-time faculty member appointed by the Chair with the advice and consent of the faculty. The Department administrator shall be present at committee meetings. An alternate shall also be designated.

ix. New Undergraduate Course Approval Committee

1. The New Undergraduate Course Approval Committee is comprised of three full-time faculty members of the Department: the Director of Undergraduate Studies and two additional faculty members, appointed annually by the DUS in consultation with the Chair. At least one member of the Committee must be tenured.
2. Proposals will be reviewed once each term: by the end of October in the Fall Term and the end of February in the Spring Term.
3. A new course proposal should consist of a course description; course goals that conform to the stated missions of the University and the Department; course requirements; explanations of grading and other course policies; a complete syllabus including reading and other assignments; the targeted enrollment and course level; and a rationale explaining how the new course serves the long-term pedagogical aims of the Department.
4. Proposals should be submitted to the Director of Undergraduate Studies, along with the paperwork required by Arts and Sciences Undergraduate

Council for applying to satisfy General Education Requirements, if applicable. The proposal will be brought to Committee at the next scheduled meeting for new course approval.

5. Proposals will be evaluated on whether or not they advance the ongoing instructional aims of the Department, adhere to rigorous academic standards, have clear standards for grading and other course policies, and reflect topics or approaches different from those of existing courses. To be approved, new course proposals should have appropriate levels and amounts of reading and writing; clear assignments, grading standards, and course policies; and clear statements on academic integrity and on student requests for accommodations for disabilities.
  6. The Committee will meet to discuss and come to consensus on each proposal. The Committee may vote to reject the proposal, or recommend revisions and resubmission, or approve the proposal.
  7. The Committee will return proposals that are not approved to the sponsoring faculty member with an explanatory memo and suggestions for improvement, as appropriate.
  8. The Director of Undergraduate Studies will inform the full faculty of newly approved courses at the next scheduled faculty meeting.
  9. Arts and Sciences Undergraduate Council (and the Registrar's Office) shall be notified of all new courses that have been approved.
  10. All courses that are intended to satisfy Arts and Sciences General Education Requirements will require GER approval by Arts and Sciences Undergraduate Council.
- ix. Library and Media Resource Committee
1. The Library and Media Resource Committee consists of one faculty member appointed by the Chair.
- x. Colloquium Series Committee
1. At the beginning of each academic year, the Chair shall appoint a faculty member to serve as the Coordinator of the Colloquium Series.

#### **IV. Waiving Provisions of the Bylaws**

##### **A. Procedures**

- i. Any provision of the Bylaws may be waived at any meeting of the Department for the duration of that meeting or part thereof by the consent of three-quarters of the voting members present in person or by real-time conference call.
- ii. Any provision of the Bylaws may be waived outside a departmental meeting by the consent of three-quarters of the total possible votes in the Department.

- iii. Voting shall be by signed envelope, secret ballot in response to a written proposal to waive a provision, which shall include the duration of the proposed waiver.

**V. Amendments**

- A. Any voting member of the Department may propose an amendment or amendments.
  - i. Copies of the proposed amendment shall be distributed to all members of the Department and the date of the meeting at which it is to be acted upon shall be announced at least two weeks in advance of any formal action.
  - ii. A two-thirds majority of the votes cast shall be required for passage of an amendment.