

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

About the School of Religious Studies

Cultivating a thorough understanding of the world's religions and the roles of religion throughout history and in contemporary society is at the heart of the School of Religious Studies' teaching at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The school takes a multidisciplinary approach to scholarship on a plurality of religions, and incorporates a broad range of perspectives and methods. In studying the world's religious traditions, we emphasize the ways in which religious expression and practices are embedded in culture, politics, aesthetics, and social change.

The School of Religious Studies has enjoyed a long history at McGill providing a wide range of programs, including B.A. programs, theological programs, and several specialized graduate degree programs. The School's expertise in world religions engages many methods and disciplines, combining the rigorous and historically-focused study of religious traditions and contexts with approaches that explore contemporary expressions of religions.

The School is affiliated with the Montreal Diocesan Theological College of the Anglican Church of Canada, the Presbyterian College Montreal, and the United Church Studies at Montreal Diocesan College (United Church of Canada). Each of these colleges is located close to campus.

The School of Religious Studies is located in the handsome William and Henry Birks Building, erected in 1931, formerly known as Divinity Hall, at 3520 University Street. Besides the usual classrooms, offices, and common rooms, this building accommodates the Birks Heritage Chapel and the Birks Reading Room.

History of the School

During the 19th century, several Theological Colleges in Montreal became affiliated with McGill. In 1912, they formed a Joint Board for the academic study of Theology, leaving each denominational College to provide its own professional training for Christian ministry. This relationship between the Colleges and the University led naturally to the creation in 1948 of a Faculty of Divinity, which assumed the academic functions of the Joint Board. In keeping with this goal the School offers the Bachelor of Theology and several graduate degree programs.

The original Faculty of Divinity taught theological courses for ordinands and also engaged in teaching undergraduates in other faculties a selection of courses of more general interest, such as philosophy and psychology of religion, and comparative religion. This selection grew over the years into the present B.A. Honours, Major, and Minor programs in Religious Studies within the Faculty of Arts. In 1970, the name of the Faculty was changed to the Faculty of Religious Studies in order to reflect the new emphasis on the academic study of religion.

By reason of its close collaboration with the Faculty of Arts, the faculty formally became the School of Religious Studies, within the Faculty of Arts, in 2016. The School offers the Bachelor of Theology (B.Th.) degree, Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree programs, and several graduate degree programs.

Religious Studies Programs

The School of Religious Studies offers programs leading to the following degrees:

- Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in Religious Studies
- Bachelor of Theology
- Master of Divinity

Prospective students seeking advice should contact an advisor from the School of Religious Studies.

Birks Lectures

An annual series was established in 1950 through the generosity of the late William M. Birks. The lectures are given by distinguished visitors, usually in late September or early October.

The first lecturer was the Right Reverend Leslie Hunter. Subsequent lecturers have included Huston Smith, Northrop Frye, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Gregory Baum, Robert McAfee Brown, Krister Stendahl, Charles Adams, Jon Levenson, David Little, Azim Nanji, Paul Griffiths, Bernadette J. Brooten, Harvey Cox, John S. Hawley, Gabriel Vahanian, Oliver O'Donovan, Jan Assmann, Donald Lopez, Rémi Brague, David Fergusson, John J. Collins, David Shulman, Talal Asad, Robert L. Wilken, Jens Schröter, Rachel Fell McDermott, Tomoko Masuzawa, and Thomas Joseph White, O.P.

Numata Visiting Professor in Buddhist Studies

In recognition of the strong Buddhist Studies program in the School of Religious Studies, the Numata Foundation has given a 20-year grant to the School to bring a visiting scholar in Buddhist Studies to McGill each year.

The visiting professor teaches one course at the 500 level, gives a public lecture, and is available to students for conferences and consultation.

The first Numata Professor, in 1999–2000, was Dr. Mahinda Deegalle (Ph.D., Chicago), a Theravada Buddhist Sri Lankan monk. Subsequent visiting professors have included John Pettit, Robert Morrison, Thupten Jinpa, Kate Crosby, Ven. Yifa, Robert Kritzer, Andrew Skilton, Joel Tatelman, Miriam Levering, Hiroko Kawanami, Dorji Wangchuk, Martin Adam, Jin Park, Roger Jackson, Burkhard Scherer, Andre van der Braak, Rinpoche Sherpa, Gregory Samuel, Martin Seeger, Robert Rhodes, Lawrence Y.K. Lau, Martina Draszczyk and Pamela Winfield.

The visiting professor for FALL 2025 to be announced.

Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in Religious Studies

Bachelor of Arts programs in the School of Religious Studies explore the many cultural, historical, and political issues related to both Eastern and Western religions, and to religion in comparative perspective. Major and Minor concentrations in Religious Studies are available, as well as Honours and Joint Honours programs in Religious Studies.

The B.A. program in religious studies is highly flexible, allowing you to design the selection of courses to your intellectual interests and future career objectives. The program introduces you to different theories

as well as a wide variety of courses on diverse religious cultures around the world, from ancient to contemporary times. A student can also explore thematic areas across diverse religious traditions at the intersections of politics, philosophy, gender, colonialism, conflict, and transregional networks.

Many of our graduates use the degree as a foundation for careers in law, development work, human rights advocacy, research/public policy advisory, education, medicine, and social work, to name a few. A degree in religious studies can open up opportunities to work in the religious sector, a massive but often overlooked sector in terms of career opportunities. In addition to careers in specifically religious institutions (churches, mosques, retreat centres, etc.), this sector also includes careers in faith-based organizations such as the major faith-based NGOs in development and relief, human rights, healthcare, chaplaincy, and the immense array of educational institutions from primary schools to universities.

Courses available to students pursuing the B.A. in Religious Studies (partial listing):

Expand allContract all		
Course	Title	Credits
RELG 252	Hinduism and Buddhism.	3
RELG 311	Formation of the New Testament.	3
RELG 309	World Religions and Cultures They Create..	3
RELG 456	Theories of Religion.	3

Students can add a complementary minor to their degree. Several possibilities are: International Development Studies, Indigenous Studies, African Studies, Jewish Studies, Anthropology. Students can also add a major or honours. The related joint major or honours possibilities are: Philosophy, East Asian Studies, Islamic Studies, Political Science.

Bachelor of Theology

The Bachelor of Theology program offers academic instruction in the disciplines of Theology, Biblical Studies, and Church History, and provides a more intensive study of Christianity than is available in the Bachelor of Arts degree programs.

Students interested in completing a Major Concentration, Minor Concentration, Honours, or Joint Honours in the broader field of Religious Studies should pursue a Bachelor of Arts program.

The Bachelor of Theology (B.Th.) may be taken as a first or second baccalaureate degree.

As a first degree (90 or 120 credits), it offers a more intensive study of Christianity than is available within the Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) programs, while also permitting the student to combine this specialization with other academic or professional interests, whether in Religious Studies or in other faculties and schools of the University.

As a second bachelor's degree (60 credits), the Bachelor of Theology (B.Th.) program is designed primarily for those who intend to qualify for the ordained ministry in a Christian denomination, although here too, some students pursue the degree out of an interest in the academic study of theology for its own sake, or with a view to combining these studies with proficiency gained in other disciplines. The 60-credit program forms the core of the Bachelor of Theology (B.Th.) degree.

The Bachelor of Theology program can be pursued independently, or in affiliation with one of the three Theological Colleges affiliated with McGill University in the Montreal School of Theology. Those studying for the ordained ministry normally pursue the Bachelor of Theology (B.Th.) as part of the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) program offered by the colleges of the Montreal School of Theology:

- Montreal Diocesan Theological College (Anglican Church of Canada)
- Presbyterian College (Presbyterian Church in Canada)
- The United Church Studies at Montreal Diocesan College (United Church of Canada)

Tuition Fees and Funding

Information concerning current tuition fees can be found at mcgill.ca/student-accounts. Applicants for admission to one of the affiliated colleges should contact the institution concerned for information regarding college-related fees.

ATS Accreditation

The B.Th. program offered by McGill is applicable to the M.Div. program offered by the Theological Colleges. The M.Div. is fully accredited by the Association of Theological Schools in the U.S. and Canada (ATS).

Evaluation

Competence in a course may be determined by examinations and/or essays, or by other means chosen by the instructor and approved by the Director.

Admission Requirements and Application Procedures

The B.Th. program has three points of entry:

1. To enter the 120-credit degree program from outside Quebec, you must hold a high school diploma, unless you qualify as a mature student. A maximum of 60 credits from another institution of higher learning can be considered for transfer into the 120-credit program.
2. To enter the 90-credit first-degree program, you are expected to have completed the Diploma of College Studies (DCS) from a Quebec CEGEP with a minimum average Cote R of 24, or the equivalent elsewhere. A maximum of 30 credits from another institution of higher learning can be considered for transfer into this program.
3. To enter the 60-credit program, you must have completed a B.A. or other bachelor's degree with a minimum CGPA of 2.7 (B-). No credits can be transferred from another institution of higher learning into the 60-credit program.

Any McGill student in Good Standing, with a minimum of 30 credits, may apply for transfer from their current degree program into the B.Th. program. B.Th. students entering the 120- or 90-credit program are free to pursue minors in other departments, schools, or faculties, in consultation with their B.Th. advisor(s).

The B.Th. program extends over three academic years of full time studies for those admitted with a Diploma of College Studies and over two academic years for those admitted with a bachelor's degree. For all other students it requires four years. The normal load consists of five 3-credits courses (15 credits) each term.

Mature Students Admissions Policy

Prerequisite courses and McGill's competitive admission process:

- two courses appropriate to the proposed area of study, each with a minimum grade of B or equivalent.

The Mature Student category is available to applicants who:

- do not possess a conventional basis of admission such as a high school or CEGEP diploma; or
- have academic credentials that do not meet the minimum requirements and have no academic studies within the last five years that would constitute a basis for admission.

Applicants with regular academic studies completed during the last five years must apply under the regular high school, CEGEP, or university transfer categories.

Conditions for eligibility:

- Canadian citizenship or Canadian permanent residency;
- 23 years of age or older at time of registration (21 years of age for the Faculties of Management and Music);
- No college- or university-level studies within the last five years that would constitute a basis for admission;
- Two letters of reference;
- Letter of intent, including description of previous educational experiences;
- Complete record of employment and personal history, highlighting points relevant to the application;
- Demonstrate academic potential by successfully completing a minimum number of appropriate courses within the three-year period prior to admission. These courses, which may be completed at CEGEP or university, will also fulfill prerequisites for the intended program.

Each student is assessed individually, considering all the factors in their file.

Application Procedures

The online application process should take about 20 minutes and a credit card is required for payment of the application fee. Once completed, the online application form may be printed for your own records.

Required Documents

- Transcript(s) of all previous post-secondary academic work. Applicants to the B.Th. program as a first degree must submit high school and/or CEGEP transcripts. Copies of your unofficial transcript(s) can be uploaded to complete your application. Official transcript(s) are required only if you are admitted, and must be mailed directly from the institution to the mailing address below or e-mailed to officialschooldocs@mcgill.ca.
- Personal Statement, according to the directions in the application. Please download and use the Personal Statement Form (available at mcgill.ca/religiousstudies/theology/bth).

After your application has been received, you will be given access to your Minerva account, where you will be able to upload your unofficial transcripts and personal statement to complete your application. You can find full instructions on how to prepare, upload, and submit relevant documents at mcgill.ca/applying/nextsteps/documents.

- Two letters of recommendation including at least one from an instructor in an academic institution previously attended. Your referee must download and use the B.Th. Reference Form (available at mcgill.ca/religiousstudies/theology/bth).

The two letters of recommendation can be mailed to the address below or e-mailed to studaffairs.relg@mcgill.ca:

Bachelor of Theology Program
Enrolment Services
Student Records
McGill University
3415 McTavish Street, Room MS-13
Montreal QC H3A 0C8
Canada

If you are applying to one of the Theological Colleges, another complete set of these required documents must also be sent to the College concerned.

Please note that your file will not be considered by the Admissions Committee until all the required documents have been received.

Application Deadlines

Applicants to the B.Th. program may be accepted into the Fall or Winter term. The online application deadlines are:

September admission (Fall term)

Canadian and International applicants: January 15

January admission (Winter term)

Canadian and International applicants: November 1

Please note that all required documents listed in Application Procedures must be received by the School of Religious Studies prior to these deadlines in order for the applicant to be considered by the Admissions Committee.

Admissions Review Procedure

An unsuccessful applicant—or a School of Religious Studies Council member acting on behalf of an unsuccessful applicant—who believes that not all factors having a bearing on the application have been fully considered, may submit a request for a review of the decision.

The request must be made in writing and directed to the Chair of the B.Th. Admissions and Awards Committee. A CAD \$40 certified cheque or money order made payable to McGill University must accompany the request. The request must include information in support of reconsideration, such as a description of significant change in the applicant's circumstances since the initial consideration, correction of any missing or erroneous information in the application, or information that the applicant believes may have been overlooked when the original decision was made.

Requests for reconsideration must be received at McGill no more than two weeks after notification of refusal.

The review procedure will be carried out by the B.Th. Admissions and Awards Committee. Please note that the original admission decision will stand unless the Committee is persuaded that admissions standards have been misapplied or that an applicant's academic record has been misapprehended.

Decisions on Special, Visiting, and Exchange applications are final; requests for reconsideration will not be considered.

Registration Procedures

All students register using Minerva, McGill's web-based registration system. Further information regarding registration is available at University Regulations & Resources > *Undergraduate* > Registration or mcgill.ca/accepted.

Course Selection

You are to seek the guidance of your advisor(s) when registering for courses. Dropping or adding courses must be done via Minerva, prior to the deadline listed at Registration Periods. You must have your courses approved and your B.Th. Audit Sheet signed by the Chair of the Bachelor of Theology (B.Th.) Committee before classes begin. If you are affiliated with one of the Theological Colleges, your B.Th. Audit Sheet must first be approved and signed by your College advisor.

Withdrawal Procedures

In case of withdrawal from the University prior to the published course withdrawal deadline, you must withdraw from all courses via Minerva. In addition, you must contact the Chair of the Bachelor of Theology (B.Th.) Committee and complete the necessary withdrawal form.

Academic Standing and Course Loads

For information about academic standing and course loads, please refer to Academic Standing: Faculties of Arts and Science (including B.A. & Sc.).

Master of Divinity

The Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degree is offered by the Colleges affiliated with the School of Religious Studies through the Montreal School of Theology.

Students who have completed a first degree prior to the B.Th. with a minimum CGPA of 2.7 are eligible to apply the B.Th. degree toward the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degree conferred by the Theological Colleges.

The Master of Divinity Program is divided into two years of foundational studies at McGill's School of Religious Studies (i.e., the Bachelor of Theology degree) and a year of professional studies, known as the "In-Ministry Year", offered jointly by the three affiliated theological Colleges under the auspices of the Montreal School of Theology. The program is supervised by the Academic Committee of the Montreal School of Theology, on which all three Colleges and McGill's School of Religious Studies are represented.

Students from the affiliated colleges may be eligible for bursary assistance if they are properly registered candidates for the ministry. Information about church requirements and the professional year should be sought from the principals of the appropriate colleges.

One biblical language, usually Greek, is required by some of the colleges. Ministerial candidates should consult with the College advisors regarding biblical language requirements.

Prospective candidates for ordination with a B.A. Honours or Major in Religious Studies and a CGPA of 3.3 (B+) may apply for the Master of Sacred Theology (S.T.M.) degree upon completion of the professional In-Ministry Year (IMY).

Applicants for the M.Div. program must apply to the McGill B.Th. program, as well as to one of the Theological Colleges. College application forms should be requested from the Colleges themselves.

The Montreal School of Theology
(formerly the Joint Board of Theological Colleges)
École théologique de Montréal (affiliée à l'Université McGill)
3475 University Street
Montreal QC H3A 2A8

Montreal Diocesan Theological College
Séminaire Diocésain de Montréal
3475 University Street
Montreal QC H3A 2A8

The Presbyterian College
Le Collège Presbytérien
3495 University Street
Montreal QC H3A 2A8

The United Church Studies at Montreal Diocesan College (United Church of Canada)/*Le séminaire Uni* at Montreal Diocesan College/au Collège Diocésain de Montréal
3475 University Street
Montreal QC H3A 2A8

Available Programs

- Religious Studies Joint Honours Component (B.A.) (36 credits)
- Religious Studies Major Concentration (B.A.) (36 credits)
- Religious Studies Minor Concentration (B.A.) (18 credits)

Location

School of Religious Studies
William and Henry Birks Building
3520 University Street
Montreal QC H3A 2A7
Telephone: 514-398-4121
Email: web.relgstud@mcgill.ca
Website: mcgill.ca/religiousstudies