

Integrated Baccalaureate Degree in Religious Studies (BA) and Master of Liberal Arts and Sciences (MLAS)



The Integrated Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies and Master of Liberal Arts and Sciences Program at Western Illinois University provides an opportunity for outstanding undergraduate religious studies majors to complete both the BA in Religious Studies and Master of Liberal Arts and Sciences (MLAS) degrees in five years. This program gives religious studies majors with a multidisciplinary orientation an opportunity to explore selected philosophical topics more thoroughly and to develop an appreciation and understanding of the methodologies of a variety of disciplines in the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and mathematics as they pursue graduate-level study.

Admission Requirements

Undergraduate Religious Studies students may apply for admission into the Integrated Baccalaureate and Master's Degree program after completing 60 SH of undergraduate coursework. Application for admission to the integrated BA Religious Studies/MLAS degree program requires a cumulative grade point average of 3.25 or higher as well as a major GPA of at least 3.25.

To apply to the integrated program, students are to submit the following documents to the School of Graduate Studies:

- A School of Graduate Studies application form (available at wiu.edu/grad)
- Official transcripts from each college or university previously attended
- A one- to two-page personal statement that explains their larger personal career goals and how the MLAS degree will further those objectives
- An academic paper of at least 5-10 pages that demonstrates an ability to develop a thesis and make a sustained, well-researched argument
- Three confidential letters of recommendation

Benefits of an Integrated Degree

- **Start graduate courses earlier** – Upon acceptance, integrated degree students may take up to three graduate courses that can count toward both undergraduate and MLAS degrees (called “bridge” courses). As a result, integrated degree students get a jump start on their graduate degree and eventual career.
- **Save money** – Integrated degree students have 9 SH fewer of tuition/fee expenses, and they can lock in the tuition rate in the *Graduate Catalog* from when they first continually enroll at WIU.

- **Acquire a unique credential** – Integrated degree students acquire concrete, practical language skills while developing higher-order analytical skills as they work across disciplines. This broad range of skills and flexibility is in demand by employers.

Integrated Degree Requirements

Students in the BA Religious Studies/MLAS integrated program may use up to 9 SH of the following bridge courses in both the BA Religious Studies and the MLAS degrees:

- REL 405G/B (cross-listed with PHIL 405G)
Philosophy of Religion (3 SH)
- REL 451G/B Contemporary Theology (3 SH)
- REL 452G/B Great Jewish and Christian Thinkers (3 SH)
- REL 456G/B Religion and War (3 SH)
- REL 457G/B Ritual and Performance in Religion (3 SH)
- REL 458G/B Comparative Asian Religious Thought (3 SH)
- REL 464G/B (cross-listed with SOC 464G)
Sociology of Religion (3 SH)
- REL 492G/B (cross-listed with ENG 492G)
Religion, Literature, and Film (3 SH)

If taken after the undergraduate degree has been completed, these courses should not be taken with the “B” designator.

Undergraduate Degree Requirements– Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies

The minimum semester hour requirement for the baccalaureate degree is 120 SH. All students seeking the integrated BA Religious Studies/MLAS degree must fulfill the requirements for the BA in Religious Studies (for a complete explanation of requirements, please refer to the *Undergraduate Catalog*):

Contact Information

Questions about the undergraduate portion of the program:

Ellen Poulter, academic advisor
Simpkins Hall 124, Macomb Campus
(309) 298-2189

Questions about the graduate portion of the program:

Liberal Arts and Sciences Program
Sarah Haynes, graduate director
Morgan Hall 203E, Macomb Campus
(309) 298-2214
grad-las@wiu.edu
wiu.edu/las

General admission questions:

School of Graduate Studies
(309) 298-1806 or (877) WIU GRAD
Grad-Office@wiu.edu
wiu.edu/grad



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*Higher Values in
Higher Education*

Academic Excellence
Educational Opportunity
Personal Growth
Social Responsibility



**WESTERN
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- I. University General Education and College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) Curriculum Requirements (60 sH)
- II. Core Courses: REL 110, 111, 312† (7 sH)
Note: REL 312 must be taken in conjunction with any 300- or 400-level course taught by Religious Studies faculty.
- III. Electives (27 sH)
 - A. Departmental (At least 21 of the 25 sH must be at the 300 or 400 level.) Students must select at least two courses from each of the areas one through three. At least one course from among all courses chosen must be a course compatible with REL 312.
 1. World Religions: REL 203, 350, 355, 365, 370 (6 sH)
 2. Religion and Culture: REL 301, 303, 454, 456, 457, 492 or 494 (6 sH)
 3. Religious Thought: REL 300, 380, 405, 451, 452, 455, 458 (6 sH)
 4. Three additional electives must be taken from any of the department's course offerings provided at least one of the courses is an upper-level course. Additional courses not listed above include REL 101, 207, 490, 499 (9 sH)
 - B. Open (6-10 sH)
- IV. Any Minor (16-20 sH)
 †REL 312 fulfills the Writing Instruction in the Discipline (WID) graduation requirement.

Graduate Degree Requirements—Master of Liberal Arts and Sciences

- I. Core Courses (9 sH)
 - LAS 501 Tradition and Change: Focus on the History and Religious Studies of the Sciences (3 sH)
 - LAS 502 Tradition and Change: Focus on the Social Sciences (3 sH)
 - LAS 503 Tradition and Change: Focus on the Humanities (3 sH)
 - II. Electives (18 sH)
 Any CAS post-baccalaureate certificate and/or directed electives approved by the director of Liberal Arts and Sciences – no more than 3 sH of electives may be independent work. No more than 9 sH of bridge courses in Religious Studies may count toward both the BA in Religious Studies and the MLAS.
 - III. Select one of the following exit options (6 sH):
 - A. *Thesis*
 LAS 667 Thesis (6 sH)
 - B. *Internship*
 LAS 695 Internship Preparation (3 sH)
 LAS 696 Internship (3 sH)
 - C. *Applied Project*
 LAS 699 Applied Project (6 sH)
- Total Program:** 33 sH



Distinctive Features

The BA Religious Studies/MLAS integrated program has many distinctive features and opportunities for its students:

- **Personalized Education**—The strong commitment to undergraduate teaching and student learning by Religious Studies faculty is evidenced by its small class sizes, which make it possible for students to participate actively in class discussions and for faculty to get to know students on an individual basis. Faculty members are accessible to students, and individualized advising and career counseling are provided by the department.
- **Research and Scholarly Activities**—There are many activities in which students in the MLAS program can participate: annual departmental conferences; WIU Graduate Research Conference; departmental, college, and University speaker events; professionalization workshops; and graduate organizations and clubs. LAS students are active in the LAS Graduate Student Organization (LASGO) in Macomb and the LAS Student Organization (LASSO) in the Quad Cities.
- **Flexible Program Structure**—For their exit option, students can write a thesis, develop an applied project or pursue an internship. Through a close mentoring relationship with a faculty director, individuals choose and tailor their exit options to meet their personal or professional goals, including preparation for further graduate work, a new career or advancement within a current career.

Career Opportunities

Extensive study in religious studies can provide an excellent background for a variety of careers. Our graduates work in many fields, including business, government, academia and technical writing. Many of our students go on to do further graduate work in religious studies and others seek professional degrees in law, the ministry, business and public administration, counseling and other areas.

“The integrated program has provided me with many opportunities. I enjoyed taking graduate courses as an undergraduate because the courses were challenging and rewarding. Also, the dual credits and time length for the program were appealing because it allowed me to not only challenge myself as a student but also consider my financial needs. Overall, this program has allowed me to customize my degree without financially straining myself.”

—Ashley Clinton, BLAS/MLAS integrated degree student