I. Mission Statement

The faculty of the Department of Religious Studies is engaged in the analysis and interpretation of those features of the human experience and expressions of human culture commonly referred to as “sacred” or “religious.” The academic study of religion at USF draws on multi-disciplinary approaches to study a wide range of phenomena – myth, symbol, and ritual; the genesis, transmission and interpretation of religious texts; the formation, history, and character of religious communities; traditions of religious belief and practice; the role of religion in society and culture; religious ethics; philosophy of religion; and religion and the arts. The faculty of the Department of Religious Studies are committed to projects that engage the various communities that are active in the Tampa Bay area.

The B.A. in Religious Studies prepares students to pursue the study of religion as a career and is an excellent pre-professional preparation for fields such as law, teaching, medicine, counseling, social work, conflict resolution, international business, foreign service, journalism, various ministries, and other careers in non-profit. Religious Studies prepares students for any career that requires critical thinking, analysis, oral and written communication skills, and the ability to reflect on questions of meaning and value.

The M.A. in Religious Studies provides opportunities for students with previous backgrounds in the scholarly study of religion to expand their knowledge of the social, cultural, and historical contexts of religion, deepen their knowledge of particular religious traditions, and acquire proficiency in a wide variety of pertinent methodologies and theoretical perspectives. The M. A. in Religious Studies provides students the opportunity to sharpen their critical thinking and analytical skills in connection with the study of religion, which may lead to further graduate work (toward a Ph.D. degree) or serve as preparation for other professional careers.

II. Conducting Departmental Business

A. Departmental Meetings

The department’s faculty meets on a monthly basis, subject to deferral or omission if pertinent business does not warrant a meeting. The department Chair is expected to provide notice of the meeting five days in advance; this may be accomplished by distributing a projected set of
meeting dates each semester. As needed, special meetings may be called; if circumstances permit, at least two days’ notice will be given. The Chair is responsible for developing and distributing a tentative agenda prior to all meetings. Faculty members may add to the final agenda upon request. The Chair is responsible for conducting departmental meetings; however, if circumstances dictate, the Chair may appoint a delegate to conduct meetings or portions of meetings. Business will be conducted in accordance with Robert’s Rules of Order.

B. Minutes of Faculty Meetings

Minutes of all departmental faculty meetings, whether regular or special, shall be recorded. Minutes are distributed to faculty members, preferably within one week following the meeting at which they were recorded. Faculty members may suggest changes to the minutes at the next scheduled meeting. In cases where there is dispute regarding changes to the minutes, proposed changes approved by 2/3 faculty vote will be incorporated into the final minutes. Copies of the approved minutes, and any materials pertinent to the meeting discussed in the minutes, will be retained and filed in perpetuity.

C. Voting Procedures

1. Eligibility for Voting

The voting membership of the Faculty shall consist of all full-time tenured and tenure-earning Faculty, Faculty on phased retirement in the Department, Instructors on renewable contracts, and joint faculty with at least 50% of their salary administered by the Department of Religious Studies. Non-voting membership shall be given to Adjunct Faculty, Visiting Faculty, Emeritus Faculty, and Faculty on courtesy appointments. Regarding faculty personnel decisions, (1) only tenured faculty vote on decisions to tenure and promote a non-tenured faculty member, and (2) only Full Professors vote on decisions to recommend promotion to Full Professor.

2. Quorum

A simple majority of eligible faculty not on leave constitutes a quorum. A quorum is required for a vote to be held on any matter. Throughout the remainder of this document, all proportions required for faculty approval refer to those faculty members present at a meeting, assuming that the necessary numerical quorum has been achieved.

3. Procedure

Votes on any matter may be conducted by voice, by a show of hands, or by secret ballot. Most votes will be by voice, except for personnel and election decisions, where secret ballots will be utilized. However, pending any vote, faculty members may request an alternative voting
procedure, subject to approval by 2/3 of the faculty. Voting on any matter must be done at a
called regular or special faculty meeting. Proxy votes must be submitted in writing to the
Chair before the meeting. A proxy vote may take either of two forms: (1) the faculty member
designates another faculty member to cast votes on his or her behalf; (2) the faculty member
gives his or her vote on a specific, determinate issue to be decided at the meeting.

III. Departmental Administrators

A. Department Chair

1. Appointment

The Department Chair is appointed by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences upon
recommendation of the Department faculty and consent of the appointee. While it is
recognized that the Chair serves at the behest of the Dean, it is recommended that the Chair’s
initial appointment be for a three-year term and the Chair’s service be limited normally to two
consecutive terms. The department’s recommendation for renewal will be made in the next-to-
last year of the chair’s appointed term.

2. Duties

The Chair is the chief administrator of the Department, directing the Department’s teaching,
fiscal, and operational activities; acting as a liaison between the Faculty and the College and
University; and representing the Department outside the University. Duties of the Chair
include, but are not limited to, the following:

a. Recommending salary increases and salaries for newly appointed faculty members.
b. Preparing assigned teaching duties for all faculty. Teaching assignments of tenured
   faculty are to be made in consultation with them, and the Chair will make every
   reasonable effort to accommodate their requests.
c. Preparing other departmental duties assigned to faculty.
d. Allocating departmental funds for travel, equipment, supplies, and temporary service
   expenses. Departmental travel funds may be allocated for reading a paper, presiding at
   a session, functioning as an officer of a scholarly society, and other research and
   scholarly travel. Other things being equal, preference will be given to untenured
   tenure-track faculty.
e. Assigning office space and staff services.
f. Appointing department committees.
g. Preparing annual reviews of the faculty.
h. Transmitting to the faculty University and College guidelines, procedures, and policies
   in a timely manner.
i. Coordinating external reviews of the Department.

j. Preparing departmental recommendations on promotion and tenure.

k. Making available to the faculty on an annual basis or at appropriate times each year, information regarding the following:

   (1). The departmental budget with an itemized breakdown of department resources allocated to individual faculty for travel and other expenses for the previous year.

   (2). Criteria for distribution of travel funds.

   (3). Planned faculty leaves and their budgetary consequences.

   (4). Other administrative and curricular matters as appropriate.

B. Assistant or Associate Chair

   1. Appointment

      An Assistant or Associate Chair may be appointed by the Dean upon nomination by the Chair, 2/3 affirmative vote of approval by the faculty, and consent of the appointee. The Assistant/Associate Chair’s term is fully, or in part, concurrent with that of the Chair, but periods of appointment cannot exceed that of the serving Chair. During a Chair’s term of service, different Assistant/Associate Chairs may be appointed through the process described above. Compensation is negotiable with the Dean of the College, subject to approval by the Chair.

   2. Charge

      The Assistant/Associate Chair assists in the administration of the Department, in implementing University and College policies and procedures, and in initiating and implementing internal policies and procedures. The Assistant/Associate Chair will be responsible for tasks assigned by the Chair, contingent on 2/3 affirmative vote of approval by the faculty. The Assistant/Associate Chair will represent the Chair and the Department, faculty, students, and staff at meetings where the Chair is unable to attend.

IV. Department Committees

A. Standing and Ad Hoc Committees

The department’s standing committees include the Faculty Advisory Committee, Graduate Committee, and Undergraduate Committee. Members of the standing committees are appointed by the Chair, with their consent. Ad hoc committees may be appointed by the Chair as needed.
B. **Faculty Advisory Committee**

1. **Purpose**

The Faculty Advisory Committee (a) serves as a council of advice for the Chair, (b) acts as a mechanism for student, faculty, and staff expression of their views on issues important to departmental functioning, (c) carries out specific tasks the department may at times be required to complete, (d) addresses student and staff grievances when asked to serve in this manner, (e) convenes in matters of academic dishonesty when requested by the Chair in conformance with departmental policies and procedures, and (f) advises the Chair on the composition of faculty search committees.

The Faculty Advisory Committee meets early in the spring of each year to prepare evaluations of the performance of each untenured tenure-track faculty member in the previous calendar year. Tenured faculty and Instructors on renewable contracts may also request such evaluations. The Faculty Advisory Committee will submit to the Chair the USF Annual Faculty Review Summary form and a narrative evaluation for each faculty member being evaluated; it will make this submission at least two weeks in advance of the deadline set by the College of Arts and Sciences for the submission of faculty evaluation forms. If the members of the Faculty Advisory Committee cannot agree in their assessment of any faculty member, they shall prepare separate signed reports for that faculty member.

2. **Membership**

The Faculty Advisory Committee is composed of three tenured faculty members.

C. **Graduate Committee**

1. **Purpose**

The Graduate Committee is responsible for

a. reviewing and making recommendations concerning new graduate courses and proposed changes in graduate curriculum offerings;

b. reviewing applications to the graduate program and making decisions about graduate admissions;

c. reviewing applications for and recommending appointments to graduate assistantships;

d. determining the assignments of graduate assistants in accordance with an equitable policy;

e. undertaking and reviewing evaluations of graduate assistant performance;
f. reviewing any other policies relevant to the graduate program, and making recommendations to the faculty concerning those policies; and
g. recommending to the Chair course sequences for the graduate program for two years in advance.

2. Membership

The committee will consist of three members of the faculty. The Director of Graduate Studies will be Chair of this committee.

D. Undergraduate Committee

1. Purpose

The Undergraduate Committee is responsible for

a. reviewing and making recommendations concerning new undergraduate courses;
b. proposing changes in undergraduate curriculum offerings;
c. undergraduate student advising; and
d. evaluating majors annually and recommending to the Chair those meriting honors and awards.

2. Membership

The committee will consist of three members of the faculty. The Director of Undergraduate Studies will be Chair of this committee.

V. Summer Appointment Policies

A. Every effort will be made to ensure that every faculty member who so desires has the opportunity to teach at least one summer course.

B. Faculty assignments must take into account departmental needs in course scheduling. While faculty preference will be taken into account, faculty must ultimately select from courses that best fit the needs of the department.

C. Revenue, as determined on the basis of Student Credit Hours (SCH), will be a consideration in determining assignments.
VI. ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AND BEHAVIORAL MISCONDUCT BY STUDENTS

A. Academic Dishonesty

When an instructor has reason to believe a student has cheated on an in-class evaluation or plagiarized on an assigned paper, he or she should follow the procedures outlined in the University’s Undergraduate Catalog under “Academic Dishonesty and Disruption of Academic Process.” If the student is a graduate student, procedures outlined in the University’s Graduate Catalog under “Academic Conduct Policies” should be consulted. Instructors may inform the Chair (as well as the Graduate Director or Undergraduate Director, as appropriate) of the alleged incident, and may seek guidance on a course of action. If a departmental employee other than an instructor has reason to believe that academic dishonesty has taken place, he or she should inform the instructor of the relevant course.

B. Behavioral Misconduct

When an instructor or other departmental employee (such as an undergraduate advisor or departmental support staff) encounters instances of student behavioral misconduct that justify an official response, that person should first discuss the issue with the Chair or the Undergraduate or Graduate Director (as appropriate). Considerable discretion should be used in determining the severity of the misconduct in each case and the responses that are appropriate to it. If the infraction is deemed to be minor, but in the opinion of the Chair or Graduate Director rises to a level of unacceptability that justifies an official response, the Department will send a letter to the student that expresses concern about the incident. If the student is a Religious Studies major, a copy of the letter will be placed in the student’s file so as to be available for future reference.

If the student’s misconduct is considered to merit a higher level of sanction, procedures specified in the appropriate codes of student conduct will be consulted.

C. Disenrollment from the Religious Studies Major as a Sanction

The Department of Religious Studies has a vested interest in graduating majors who possess high standards of ethical and behavioral conduct in their employment settings. Therefore, as Departmental policy, disenrollment from the major should be considered as a sanction included in any negotiated settlement regarding instances of academic cheating and/or behavioral misconduct. If the case proceeds to the College/University level, disenrollment from the major may be among the sanctions requested. The decision to pursue disenrollment must be made in consultation with the Chair or other appropriate departmental representatives.
VII. Faculty Evaluation Procedures

A. Criteria and Procedures for Tenure and Promotion

The College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) criteria for tenure and promotion (adopted by the CAS faculty May 19, 1999) are adopted as those for the Department of Religious Studies.

1. Addendum to the College of Arts and Sciences Criteria

The Department maintains a “Recommended Tenure and Promotion Guidelines for Research” document that provides the Religious Studies faculty’s best judgment regarding a successful tenure and promotion portfolio, especially in regards to scholarship. Adherence to these guidelines is assumed to enhance – though not assure – a candidate’s achieving tenure and/or promotion. Because these guidelines are anticipated to change over time, the document may be altered as circumstances dictate. Copies of this document shall be made available to all tenured and tenure-track faculty in the department; copies shall be made available to the same faculty every time that the document is altered.

VIII. Amendments to this Governance Document

This Governance Document may be amended by a two-thirds majority vote of the voting members of the faculty at any regular meeting of the department, provided that the specific amendment has been distributed in writing at the previous regular department meeting and is included on the agenda for the meeting at which the vote takes place.