



Teaching and Research Assistantships Policy in the Graduate Department of Religion

Updated: Fall 2022

Teaching and research service as part of a PhD student's program in the Graduate Department of Religion are characterized by four basic considerations:

First, Research Assistant (RA) and Teaching Assistant and Associate (TA) assignments are intrinsic to graduate training. Apprenticing in scholarship and teaching aims to prepare PhD graduates for positions in and beyond the academy. The service that is expected of graduate students is designed to teach skills that will help graduates acquire employment beyond Vanderbilt. We hope you will think of every assignment given as a part of a portfolio of classes one can teach and research activities one can use. As the Graduate School's official letter of admission states: "Teaching experience is an important part of your intellectual development and professional preparation. Accordingly, your department has designed a teaching program that is tailored to your graduate experience, and will communicate this to you. Collectively, your teaching and research experiences form the basis of your Graduate Fellowship award."

Second, there is no set number of TA/RA assignments that students must complete. As is the case with other departments in the Graduate School, students are expected to be available to serve the department in some capacity while receiving a stipend. No Religion student has ever been asked to serve every semester, but they are available for service while they receive funding.

Third, the stipend includes payment for TA/RA service. The GDR does not pay students extra for these assignments. Again, this is consistent with the general policies of other departments in the Graduate School. Exceptions are made when the department asks students to take on more than one discussion session in a class or an additional assignment upon the mutual agreement of the student and the department. (Note that the GDR increased the stipend to \$30K in 2022 in part to set base funding at the same level as the other graduate departments that require service.)

Fourth, the GDR office sets and final approves all TA and RA assignments. If someone from another department requests that GDR students take assignments in their classes, the GDR office must be informed. This is to assure that students receive proper credit for their service. This summer we will return to a process we used in the past in which we make all TA and RA assignments for the entire academic year. You should see the familiar application (with a link to a Redcap form), allowing students to apply for TA and RA positions. We will then seek input from faculty members before making assignments. Some adjustments through the year due to enrollment changes and other developments are to be expected, but we should be able to make most of the assignments in the summer.