

**Professional Activity Standards  
Religion Department  
Whitman College**

The field of Religious Studies is a “field-embracing field” that values many different approaches to the study of our topic. Consequently, the Religion Department at Whitman College is a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary department whose members study a wide variety of religions, broadly construed, through an equally wide variety of methodological and epistemological approaches. While we focus on nonconfessional approaches to the study of religion, we are not averse to engaged scholarship addressing issues with relevance beyond academe; we also value pedagogical research. Professional activity in our department includes publication, presentation at conferences, professional service activities, research activities such as fieldwork or archival research, and receipt of external grants.

*Publications*

Publication is the top criterion for evaluation of professional activity in the Religion Department; while the categories below are valued, only publication is important enough to be a necessary indicator of acceptable professional activity. However, we value quality over quantity, and believe that the quality of a faculty member’s publications should be judged above all else in this area.

Some members of our field prefer to publish in monograph format and others in article format; we value each equally and do not consider one superior to the other, nor do we believe that both, together, should be required for tenure in our department. That said, we believe that in addition to their intrinsic quality, publications should be judged in part on the quality of the press or periodical in which they appear. We consider equally valuable those published with peer-reviewed journals (print or online) and those published as invited book chapters. In both cases, because of the range of subdisciplines within our field, we cannot enumerate which presses and journals are the best quality; instead, in submitting files, candidates for career advancement are encouraged to address the relevance of particular presses or journals to their area of specialty.

In addition to analytical books and articles, we also value translations of primary source materials and pedagogical publications, though we expect that neither will be the sole published output of a faculty member. Finally, there are a variety of non-peer-reviewed forms of publication that also have scholarly merit, though peer-reviewed work should be prioritized over them. These include book reviews, encyclopedia articles, and articles in bulletins, news publications, and magazines.

*Presentations*

Research presentations (including those on pedagogy) at regional, national, and international conferences and workshops, as well as invited talks at conferences and at other colleges and universities, are also a valued form of professional activity. Because of the interdisciplinarity of our field, the conferences we attend are quite varied, and include major conferences in the field of Religious Studies and conferences relevant to each scholar’s subdiscipline. Faculty members in Religion attend both major, national conferences and smaller, more topically focused conferences; though sometimes less high-profile, the latter are equally if not more valuable in

terms of both networking and the development of our scholarship. Thus, as with publications, candidates for career advancement are encouraged to address the relevance of particular conferences to their specific subfield within Religious Studies.

#### *Professional Service Activities*

Professional service activities in our field range widely. This category includes, but is not limited to, committee service in a professional organization, presiding over or responding to a session at a conference, organizing a session or sessions at a conference, holding an office in a professional organization, serving on a jury (e.g., for a paper or book award), reviewing book or article manuscripts, reviewing and mentoring colleagues off campus, and professional development activities. While such work should not take the place of research-oriented activities, it is nonetheless a valuable form of professional engagement.

#### *Research Activities and Receipt of External Grants*

Although its end result ideally should be publication, research activity in and of itself is a valuable professional activity in the Religion department in that the faculty member engaged in such activity is gathering and processing primary research material. Again because of the field's interdisciplinarity, the nature of research activity ranges widely among the members of our department. It can include, but is not limited to, archival research and the study of archival materials, oral history collection, ethnographic fieldwork and the processing of fieldwork materials, and close reading of primary source materials.

Receipt of external grants is also a valuable aspect of research activity because it indicates the respect commanded in the field by the faculty member's past and present work.