

# RELIGION AND SOCIETY – M.A.

**Program director**  
Zdravko Plantak

The Master of Arts in religion and society offers customizable options of study and is designed for those seeking to serve the church and world in the 21st century in a variety of capacities. The program is ideal for individuals seeking deeper biblical, theological, and philosophical insight; spiritual growth; practical competency; and cultural literacy in the context of a range of vocational settings—health care, the local church (non-ordained ministry), non-profit organizations, secondary education (teaching certifications must be obtained independently), and further graduate study.

Students may complete this program prior to beginning professional or graduate school. Students enrolled or enrolling in other Loma Linda University programs may be interested in pursuing this program as part of a dual degree. Others may seek to complement courses of study already completed.

The curriculum covers the basic areas of theology, biblical studies, and Christian spirituality, and may also be customized for a particular area of interest. Using the resources of the School of Religion and the entire University, each student and mentor will formulate and acquire faculty approval for a personalized area of emphasis that matches personal interests and qualifications. Possible areas of emphasis include:

- Biblical studies
- Christian theology
- Science and religion
- Health care
- Wholeness/whole-person care
- Spirituality
- Social ethics
- Bioethics

Students may progress through the program at their own pace (up to five years maximum). All students must have a demonstrated proficiency with technology and have access to personal computers and the Internet.

Professors in the program represent areas of expertise such as biblical studies, theology, philosophy, world religions, practical theology, marriage and family therapy, cultural psychology, American church history, health education, nursing, spiritual care, and ethics. This diversity of specialists provides students with a rich and balanced program of study.

A mutual and shared respect for various cultures and beliefs is emphasized on the campus and in the classroom. Small class sizes allow for personalized instruction and engaged participation.

The program draws upon resources across the Loma Linda University campus. These include the Center for Whole Person Care, the Center for Christian Bioethics, and the Center for Understanding World Religions that offer multiple programs, conferences, and lecture series intended for student enrichment.

## Mentors

Before the student has completed half of the program or sooner, the program's administrative committee will link the student to a mentor who will provide support and guidance. Until then, the program director will mentor the student.

## Program learning outcomes

By the end of this program, the graduate should be able to:

1. Responsibly interpret the Bible in an increasingly scientific, globalized, and pluralistic society.
  - a. Analyze major themes of Old Testament theology.
  - b. Analyze major themes of New Testament theology.
  - c. Apply basic principles of exegesis and hermeneutics to the Bible.
2. Assess Christian reflection and praxis as it engages with culture(s):
  - a. Identify core tenants of classical Christian theology from a Seventh-day Adventist perspective.
  - b. Evaluate models of the relationship between church and culture.
  - c. Analyze one instance of cultural/theological contextualization and preservation.
3. Demonstrate a broad, basic knowledge of the field of ethics:
  - a. Compare major schools of normative ethics—deontological, consequentialist, and virtue.
  - b. Articulate ethical emphases in Christian Scripture.
  - c. Address a contemporary ethical issue utilizing Christian Scripture.
4. Demonstrate growth in spiritual maturity:
  - a. Develop a personal theology of wholeness.
  - b. Engage in practices that help attune one's self to the spiritual meaning of everyday activities.
  - c. Recognize a commitment to community involvement and service as a crucial component of wholeness.

## Periodic review

In addition, each student's achievements will be assessed every 12 units to determine the advisability of continuing in the program.

## Prerequisite

There are no prerequisites for this program. However, those who enter having taken few or no courses in religion must structure their programs considering the requirements. The opposite will be true for those who enter the program after having extensively studied religion—but not the other subject(s) they desire to explore.

## Core courses

Four of this program's 12 courses are required: RELT 501, 502, 503; and RELG 696. The religion and society cluster—RELT 501 Religion and Society, RELT 502 Religion and Society, and RELT 515 Faith and Flourishing—which may be taken in any sequence, provides intensive introductions to the field. One course is offered each quarter during the academic school year, and a course may also be offered during the summer. The fourth required course is the final project (RELG 696 Project). These four, 3-unit courses, totaling 12 units, constitute a fourth of the program. The remaining twelve courses, totaling 36 units and three-fourths of the program, fulfill core and course distribution requirements.

## Transfer credits

Students are permitted to transfer up to 8 units of approved graduate-level courses from other accredited institutions into the Religion and Society Program.

## Admissions

In addition to Loma Linda University (<http://llucatalog.llu.edu/about-university/admission-policies-information/#admissionrequirementstext>) and School of Religion (<http://llucatalog.llu.edu/religion/#admissionstext>) admissions requirements, the applicants to the M.A. in Religion and Society Program are expected to present/complete:

- A bachelors degree from an accredited institution. An undergraduate degree in religion is not required.
- An overall undergraduate Grade Point Average (G.P.A.) of at least 3.25.
- A personal statement (~750 words) that specifies why the applicant is interested in this program, relevant background experiences, and how the program fits into personal and professional plans.
- A writing sample (usually drawn from previous academic work) emailed directly to religion@llu.edu.
- An interview.
- Three letters of recommendation from previous teachers or mentors.

In addition to these considerations, acceptance into this program depends upon whether, at the time the student wishes to study, the School of Religion's resources and their interests and goals overlap enough to make it a mutually beneficial experience.

### Provisional Admission

A student who is promising, even though they do not meet one or more of the admission requirements, may be given provisional acceptance for up to 12 units of study after which the administrative committee will determine whether or not they will be permitted to continue.

## Program requirements

In order to receive the Master of Arts in Religion and Society, the student will complete a minimum of 48 units of coursework as herein specified, with an overall grade point average of B+ or better, and no core course lower than a B.

### Required

RELE 588	Philosophical Ethics	3
RELE 589	Biblical Ethics	3
RELR 536	Spirituality and Everyday Life	3
RELR 540	Wholeness and Health <sup>1</sup>	3
RELT 500	Biblical Hermeneutics	3
RELT 501	Religion and Society	3
RELT 502	Religion and Society	3
RELT 515	Faith and Flourishing	3
RELT 520	Church History	3
RELT 558	Old Testament Thought	3
RELT 559	New Testament Thought	3

### Individual area of emphasis <sup>2</sup>

Select from the School of Religion or another school on campus	12
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RELG 696	Project	3
<b>Total Units</b>		<b>48</b>

<sup>1</sup> Fulfills service learning requirement

<sup>2</sup> Approved clusters of courses that focus on an area of student interest. Twelve units may be taken either at the School of Religion or elsewhere on campus, with approval.

### Individualized Program Proposal

Before completing half of the program (24 units), with the mentor, the student will submit an individualized program for approval to the administrative committee. This will detail courses and other experience that will fulfill the degree's requirements as well as establish the acceptable area of emphasis.

### Normal time to complete the program

Two (2) years (six [6] academic quarters) – based on full-time enrollment; part time permitted