

# The Religion Graduate Organization Constitution

Ratified February 24, 2010

Amended April 16, 2021

## **ARTICLE 1: Name**

The Name of the organization is the **Religion Graduate Organization (RGO)**.

## **ARTICLE 2: Membership**

Membership in the RGO shall be limited to graduate students, in good standing, in the Religion Department at Syracuse University. This includes *full time, part time, and continuing students*. Such membership shall be determined at the beginning of each Semester.

## **ARTICLE 3: Purpose**

The purpose of the RGO is to provide an organized medium for discussion, recommendation, and action on issues directly and indirectly affecting the graduate students of the Department of Religion at Syracuse University.

## **ARTICLE 4: Officers**

1. The RGO will elect two Co-Presidents. The duties of the Co-Presidents shall include, but will not be limited to the following:

- a. Meeting with the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) at the outset of each semester, and periodically throughout each semester, in order to determine the DGS' agenda for the semester in question, to advocate on behalf of religion graduate students, and to develop projects in collaboration with the DGS to benefit religion graduate students.
- b. Organizing periodic meetings throughout the year among the graduate students in the Religion Department pursuant Article 8 on "Meetings."
- c. Attending meetings of the Graduate Committee to both voice student concerns and report the discussions and actions of the Graduate Committee back to the RGO when appropriate.
- d. Facilitating portions of new-student orientation in conversation with the DGS and serving as a resource for incoming students.
- e. Submitting the appropriate renewal forms for official recognition as a student organization to the GSO on a yearly basis when prompted by the GSO Internal Vice-President or relevant GSO officer.

f. Updating the RGO Officer roster, Advisor Contract, and current RGO Constitution with the GSO after RGO Officer elections, and/or as requested by the GSO Internal Vice-President or relevant GSO officer. The RGO Advisor is the sitting DGS. The Co-Presidents shall also update the RGO Officer roster and RGO Constitution on the official Syracuse University Religion department website as needed.

g. Being responsible for facilitating voting throughout the year. This responsibility includes organizing the RGO Officer election pursuant Article 6 of the RGO Constitution and finding a third party to collect and count election results.

h. Planning and executing the RGO Fall Speaker event on a yearly basis. Should the RGO determine that such an event is inadvisable in a given year this event may be omitted or moved to the Spring by majority vote.

i. Forming a committee for planning and executing the RGO graduate conference every two years. The Co-Presidents need not chair this committee. Should the RGO determine that such an event is inadvisable in a given year this event may be omitted by majority vote.

2. The RGO will elect a Senator to the Graduate Student Organization (GSO) who will represent the RGO at all GSO meetings. The GSO Senator will have the following duties:

a. Determining the amount of funds available to the RGO at the beginning of every year in conversation with the GSO Comptroller, and reporting back to the RGO.

b. Attending the GSO's annual financial training when prompted by the GSO Internal Vice-President, Comptroller, or relevant GSO officer.

c. Submitting special funding requests to the GSO on behalf of the RGO in conversation with the RGO Co-Presidents, representing the RGO at GSO Finance Committee meetings that are reviewing RGO special funding requests, and speaking on behalf of the RGO when the GSO Senate votes on RGO special funding requests.

d. Informing the RGO of issues which arise at GSO meetings.

e. Informing the GSO of issues of concern among members of the RGO.

f. Surveying (formally or informally) the members of the RGO on matters being addressed in the GSO in order to communicate to the GSO the opinions of the RGO.

g. Ensuring that votes and statements of position made by the GSO Senator to the GSO shall reflect the opinions and wishes of the majority of the RGO even at times when such opinions may conflict with the personal opinions of the GSO Senator.

3. The RGO will elect an Admissions Representative to the Graduate Committee.

a. The Admissions Representative shall advise the Admissions Committee in the selection of new students.

b. The Admissions Representative may hold another position within the RGO. Because of the confidential nature of the admissions process and the many confidentiality issues involved, the Admissions Representative should not report the actions of the Admissions Committee to the RGO unless specifically requested to do so by the Admissions Committee.

c. Eligibility requirements for this position are determined by the Graduate Committee. Per department policy, to be eligible to hold the Admissions Representative position, a student must be post-doctoral exams/ABD.

d. In the event that a post-doctoral exam/ABD student is unable or unwilling to fill the position, a provisional election of a non-ABD doctoral student may be held. If such a student be elected, the Co-Presidents must seek ratification of the elected student from the Graduate Committee.

e. If the Graduate Committee chooses not to ratify the elected non-ABD doctoral student to the Admissions Representative position pursuant Article 4.3d, the position is vacant. In this case, the vacancy must be filled pursuant Article 4.6 on "Vacant Positions" in conversation with the Director of Graduate Studies.

f. Notwithstanding Article 4.7 on "RGO Officer Terms," a student may not hold the Admissions Representative position more than once.

4. The RGO will elect an Undergraduate Liaison to foster connections between graduate students and undergraduates whose duties will include:

a. Maintaining the SUREL UNDERGRAD listserv (which includes posting emails relevant to undergraduates of religion).

- b. Attending Undergraduate Committee meetings.
- c. Making themselves available to the undergraduate majors, minors and current students in religion classes.
- d. Organizing events involving undergraduates in our department and on campus in general.
- e. Advising the Undergraduate Religion Student Organization (URSA).

5. The RGO will elect a Social Chair to provide optional, informal social opportunities to RGO members and to foster departmental community. Their duties will include:

- a. Surveying RGO members at the beginning of each year to determine the social opportunities members might be interested in and to determine optimal times during which to hold events.
- b. Inquiring the Religion Department Chair at the beginning of each semester about availability of department funds to support RGO social opportunities (at the Social Chair's discretion). Additionally, the Social Chair can network with the GSO Senator and RGO Co-Presidents to request additional funds from the GSO (if desired).
- c. Planning and holding at least two optional, informal social opportunities for RGO members each semester.
- d. Planning and holding at least one optional, informal social opportunity for RGO members each semester to which Religion Department faculty will also be invited. The Social Chair may wish to consult the Departmental Calendar and DGS if needed.
- e. Collaborating with the Co-Presidents to plan and hold a welcome event for new students, such as the traditional NY State Fair visit, before the beginning of the Fall semester.
- f. Communicating with RGO members about these social opportunities in ample time and generating enthusiasm.

6. Vacant Positions: If any position becomes vacant at a time when elections are not typically scheduled, the Co-Presidents, or in the case that there are no Co-Presidents, any other executive officer, will run an election for replacement according to the guidelines for election within three weeks of vacancy. Such an election will be run by the Director of Graduate Studies.

## 7. RGO Officer Terms:

- a. An individual may not hold the same RGO officer position more than twice. It is not necessary that they be consecutive terms.
- b. Notwithstanding Article 4.7a above, an individual may run for an officer position that the individual has previously held twice only if each of the following conditions occur:
  - i. No other candidates run for the particular position in accordance with the provisions of Article 6 (this circumstance is referred to as a “State of Emergency”);
  - ii. The Co-Presidents currently in office announce, at least seven days in advance of a regularly-scheduled RGO meeting, a vote as to whether there is a “State of Emergency” (i.e., that no candidates are available for a particular officer position other than individuals who have previously served in that position); *and*,
  - iii. The RGO membership votes that there is a State of Emergency, by a two-thirds majority but otherwise in accordance with the procedures set forth in Article 7 below;
- c. An individual may serve multiple terms in a particular office pursuant to Article 4.7(b) only if the individual remains available on campus to carry out the duties of the office.

## **ARTICLE 5: Executive Committee**

1. The RGO Executive Committee shall be defined as both Co-Presidents of the RGO, the Admissions Representative, the Undergraduate Liaison, and the GSO Senator.
2. The Executive Committee must be comprised of four individuals.
3. The Executive Committee is primarily in charge of organizational duties concerning the RGO, though they shall obviously work with other elected officers and student members when appropriate.
4. All requests for funds from the RGO may be made to the Executive Committee and may be approved by simple majority of the Executive Committee.
  - a. In the case of a tie, the proposal for funds will be put to a vote of the entire RGO membership.

## **ARTICLE 6: Election Procedures**

### **1. RGO officers, representatives, and liaisons:**

- a. Towards the end of the Spring semester, the RGO will post information about its current officers and representative positions via electronic means. Each standing officer and committee member will explain their position, and give some examples of the type of situations that their position dealt with during the previous year.
- b. Allowing ample time for consideration of these positions (and optionally calling a meeting for discussing these positions), nominations will be called for.
- c. Nominees will then make short statements about their candidacies and make themselves available for questions in general. These brief statements about their candidacy will be published via electronic means.
- d. The Co-Presidents will organize all nominations, statements and platforms to be distributed via electronic means.
- e. All positions serve a term from June 1 to May 31st.
- f. Election procedure applies to all officer and representative positions.

### **2. Election Results:**

- a. Each officer position will be separately balloted.
- b. Any candidate running unopposed for any office will be considered to have been elected to that office if they receive 50% or more of the total ballots cast. Candidates running for a position against one or more opponents will be considered to have been elected if they receive a simple plurality of the votes cast.
- c. For any position in which no candidate attains the number of votes required to fill a position, RGO will seek new candidates and hold a second election. A nomination notice to find candidates for this second election will be distributed via electronic means within one week of the original election.
- d. A blank ballot cast for an officer running unopposed in this election will be considered a vote of "no confidence" in that officer.

e. If any position remains unfilled after this second election attempt, nominations will be reopened during a nomination meeting to be held early in the Fall semester.

## **ARTICLE 7: Legislative Voting**

1. Voting will take place via electronic ballot. In-meeting votes will be held if a motion is made by one RGO member, and seconded by another. Paper ballot votes can be called for by the RGO Co-Presidents or by the RGO members through an in-meeting vote. Voting by electronic ballot is required for the following issues: the election of officers, Constitutional amendments (see Article 6 and 10 for relevant procedures), and budgetary spending over \$250. Voting by proxy is not allowed.

a. *In-Meeting Voting*: If an issue to be voted on is clearly defined in advance, members that are unable to attend the meeting may submit their votes to the meeting on paper or by electronic means. All votes will be by hand and measured by simple majority.

b. *Electronic Voting*: The announcement that a vote will be taken must be made at least 7 days prior to the start of voting. The relevant documents or lists of candidates must be distributed before the start of the vote. The starting and ending dates for the vote must also be announced before the vote. The starting date shall be at least 7 days before the ending date.

c. *Availability of Voting Related Materials*: In the case of officer elections, relevant material will be posted via electronic means. In the case of document or report approval, the proposed version(s) will be posted electronically and hard copies will be available from the Co-Presidents.

## **ARTICLE 8: Meetings**

1. Meeting times:

a. Regular meetings of the RGO will occur at least three times a semester at a time chosen to minimize conflicts with graduate student obligations.

b. Meetings will be scheduled by the RGO Executive Committee.

c. Any member can request a meeting of the RGO by petitioning the RGO Executive Committee.

2. Meeting procedures:

a. The RGO Executive Committee will make every reasonable effort to run meetings as openly and accessibly as possible.

b. All meetings of the RGO will be announced beforehand by email to the SURELSTUDENTS LISTSERV.

i. This announcement will contain a preliminary agenda, mention of items of discussion, or reason for calling the meeting.

ii. Any member of the RGO may add an item to the agenda at any time prior to or during the meeting.

c. Meetings will be moderated by the RGO Co-Presidents.

i. Meetings will be run casually, unless there is a request to use Robert's Rules of Order.

ii. Any RGO member in attendance may make such a request at any time.

d. No regular meeting of the RGO will exceed two hours in length.

i. A member of the Executive Committee must produce a written record of each meeting. This record must consist, at minimum, of action minutes (i.e. a record of all votes taken), attendance of the RGO officers, and the total attendance of the meeting.

ii. Before adjourning a meeting, a preliminary agenda for the next meeting must be established.

e. A request to use Robert's Rules may apply to discussion and to voting on the Current agenda item, or the remaining portion of the meeting.

### 3. Special Meetings:

a. A special meeting, for the purpose of Constitutional amendment, may be requested by any member of the RGO.

b. Proposed amendments must be in writing and circulated to the members of the RGO at least 7 days prior to the meeting.

### **ARTICLE 9: Ratification**

Ratification of the constitution is made by majority vote.

### **ARTICLE 10: Amendments to the Constitution**

1. All changes to the RGO constitution must be made during a special meeting of the RGO.



2. Changes must be ratified by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of all members in attendance.

#### **ARTICLE 11: Impeachment**

In the case of gross misconduct of any officer, that officer may be impeached by petition of 20% of the members of the RGO. Such petition should lay out the reasons for impeachment and can be presented to any executive officer. The officer will be informed of the charges against them at least 7 days before a vote for removal is put to the RGO membership. The officer will be immediately removed if a simple majority of the entire membership votes so.

#### **ARTICLE 12: Statement of Non-Discrimination**

Syracuse University is an equal-opportunity, affirmative-action institution. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, gender, national origin, religion, marital status, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, or status as a disabled veteran or a veteran of the Vietnam era to any extent discrimination is prohibited by law. This nondiscrimination policy covers admissions, employment, and access to and treatment in University programs, services, and activities.

#### **ARTICLE 13: Statement of Non-Hazing**

This organization will not conspire to engage in hazing, as defined by New York Penal Law 120.16 and New York Penal Law 120.17, or commit any act that causes or is likely to cause bodily danger, physical harm, or personal degradation or disgrace resulting in physical or mental harm to any fellow student or person attending the institution.

#### **ARTICLE 14: Statement of Compliance with Campus Regulations**

This organization shall comply with the Syracuse University Code of Student Conduct.

#### **ARTICLE 15: Not-for-Profit Statement**

This is not-for-profit organization.

#### **ARTICLE 16: Financial Obligation**

A majority of voting members of this organization may determine reasonable dues and fees assessed to each member at the beginning of each semester. A specific member or members designated by this organization shall be responsible for payment in full of all debts accumulated by the organization not covered by funds on deposit.