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MISSION STATEMENT

Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York is a seminary and a graduate school of theology established in 1836 by founders “deeply impressed by the claims of the world upon the church.” Union prepares women and men for committed lives of service to the church, academy, and society. A Union education develops practices of mind and body that foster intellectual and academic excellence, social justice, and compassionate wisdom. Grounded in the Christian tradition and responsive to the needs of God’s creation, Union’s graduates make a difference wherever they serve.

CORE VALUES

Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York, founded in 1836, is a historically progressive Christian seminary with increasing commitment to interreligious engagement and spirituality. Our mission is encapsulated by the phrase: “where faith and scholarship meet to reimagine the work of justice.” This quest for justice is broad and includes social justice and activism, responsive care for communities and individuals, the pursuit of collective well-being, and of human and planetary flourishing. In particular, exploring the religious and spiritual dimensions of this quest defines our distinctive mission.

These commitments have allowed defining of “core values” that express this mission and guide our teaching and learning. They are what we aim to teach our students:

- To grasp the substance of the Christian tradition and the other primary traditions of students through the study of scripture/sacred texts, theology, history, and tradition-specific practices
- To be in continued dialogue with other religious traditions on those traditions’ own terms and to dialogue with the spiritually non-affiliated with respect and care
- To develop the ability to theologically engage the human quest for meaning and spiritual connection
- To develop the capacity for self-reflection as well as the capacity to respond to others in ways that are compassionate and open-hearted
- To develop capacities for critical analysis of the ecological, social, and cultural systems in which persons, communities, and traditions exist, recognizing that spiritual and religious beliefs and practices are expressed in ways determined by conditions of time and place
- To cultivate a theological understanding of the earth and its diverse ecosystems in a manner that fosters an informed commitment to planetary well-being and justice
- To form a secure base for both ethical decision-making and spiritual wisdom in service to the needs of the world
- To educate impassioned, informed, and wise leaders and community members capable of engaging the pressing issues of our day with integrity and courage

Developed and approved by the faculty in academic year 2019-2020

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

The Advanced Certificate in Social Justice (ACSJ) allows students to explore the intersections between social ethics, religion and spirituality, and the ongoing struggle for a more just society. The twelve-credit, four-course program can be completed between nine and twenty-four months. This program is designed to meet the needs of part-time students, with professional and personal commitments, looking to pursue advanced study.

Many courses applicable to program requirements occur on weekday evenings and/or weekends, with some online courses. Students may complete the program completely online based on coursework interests, scheduling flexibility, desired time-to-completion, and semesterly course offerings. Students able to attend daytime on-campus courses have a greater selection of offerings and can complete the program in an expedited manner.

Transfer/Degree Admission

The advanced certificate may lead to interest in a degree program. Following admissions criteria and pending acceptance, up to twelve credits from the ACSJ may be applied to one of Union's degree programs, depending on degree requirements. Students may apply for a degree program after the completion of at least one semester in the advanced certificate. Admission to an advanced certificate program does not guarantee admission to a degree program. Contact the Admissions Office at admissions@utsnyc.edu for further questions.

Academic Progress

As an advanced certificate, as opposed to an academic degree, students are exempt from certain policies and related administrative procedures. Unlike full-time degree programs, students in the Advanced Certificate in Social Justice (ACSJ) are not required to follow continuous registration. This part-time program has a more flexible time-to-completion and students may choose to not register for a fall or spring semester (Summer/January optional), without requesting an official leave of absence from the Seminary. Still, it is strongly encouraged that students take at least one course each fall and spring semester to maintain academic progress toward certificate completion. ACSJ students have a maximum of two years to completion. Those not registered for two consecutive fall/spring semesters are withdrawn and must reapply to the program.

Advanced certificate students are assessed against program objectives, but are not subject to official assessment measures required of degree candidates. Successful completion of an advanced certificate does not result in classification of an alumni/ae, as only academic degree-seeking candidates result in official graduation from the Seminary. View the academic catalog on this webpage: <https://utsnyc.edu/academics/registrar/course-catalog-academic-policies/> for more details; certain policies are applicable to advanced certificate students.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

In keeping with the vision of Union's founders that Union students should be equipped by their education to "respond to the claims of the world" with "intellectual and academic excellence, social justice, and compassionate wisdom". Union's curricula for all programs intentionally engage unjust disparities in society based on gender, race, class, sexuality, religion and other divisive or marginalizing forces.

The overall objectives of the program, refined during coursework within several fields of study, are as follows:

- To develop competencies in understanding social and cultural contexts significant for contemporary theology and ethics, the life of religious institutions and community organizations, and the promotion of justice in the world
- To cultivate a vision of professional identity and a pattern of ministry (broadly defined as spiritually grounded service and leadership) appropriate to student abilities, vocational goals, organizational context(s), and faith tradition(s)
- To develop capacity to listen to, interpret, express, and/or critique the transformational goals of a community or organization in public and communal contexts

The Advanced Certificate in Social Justice (ACSJ) assesses student academic progress based on the above objectives as refined by particular courses taken in certain fields of study, as identified in the following section.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

The Advanced Certificate in Social Justice (ACSJ) requires completion of twelve credits with one to two years of part-time study. Students are limited to advanced, 200-level or higher courses; 100-level courses are not permitted to be taken for credit towards program requirements. Generally, each semester consists of one to two courses or three to six credits.

ACSJ students acquire basic social justice knowledge in the theological discipline with a required three credits in a foundational Social Ethics (SE) course as specified below. Additionally, students select three credits in either Social Ethics (SE) or Religion and Society (RS), as well as a total of six elective credits (two courses) from at least two of the following areas:

- a) Theological Studies (TS), Historical Studies (HS), or Bible/Sacred Texts (BX/HB/NT/STX)
- b) Interreligious Engagement (IE) of non-Christian tradition
- c) Practical Theology (PT), Worship, Preaching and Arts (CW), or Religion and Education (RE)

A summary of fields and associated course subject codes is as follows:

Bible/Sacred Texts: Cross-Testament (BX), Hebrew Bible (HB), New Testament (NT), Sacred Texts (STX)

Historical Studies: Historical Studies (HS), Denominational Studies (DS)

Interreligious Engagement: Interreligious Engagement (IE)

Practical Theology: Communication Arts (CA), Worship, Preaching, and Arts (CW), Psychology and Religion (PS), Practical Theology (PT), Religion and Education (RE), Religion and Society (RS)

Theology and Ethics: Philosophy of Religion (PR), Social Ethics (SE), Theological Studies (TS)

Credit Distribution Requirements

The following chart outlines the requirements for the degree including core and concentration distribution:

CREDIT DISTRIBUTION REQUIREMENTS	
	Credits Required
FOUNDATIONAL COURSE	3
Social Ethics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SE 208 – <i>Moral Traditions and Social Ethics</i> OR SE 322 – <i>Social Ethics in the Making</i> 	
CORE ELECTIVE COURSE	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional Social Ethics (SE) OR Religion and Society (RS) 	
DISTRIBUTIONAL ELECTIVE COURSES	6 (from two different field areas below)
a) Social Justice designated course in either Bible, Historical Studies, Philosophy of Religion, or Theological Studies (ACSJ-BHT)	
b) Social Justice designated course in Interreligious Engagement (IE) of non-Christian tradition (ACSJ-IE)	
c) Social Justice designated course in Psychology & Religion, Practical Theology, Preaching, Arts, & Worship, or Religion and Education (ACSJ-PWR)	
TOTAL CREDITS	12

Courses fulfilling a specific distribution requirement are indicated in the Notes portion of applicable course descriptions in the academic catalogue with the specific code as reflected in the above table.

Assessment of progress throughout the program is evaluated based on the above requirements. View the appropriate section below for more details.

Course Load and Planning

Students are generally limited to two courses or six credits in each fall and spring semester, and one course or three credits in the optional January and Summer sessions. ACSJ students are expected to complete the degree in no more than two years. When possible, the Social Ethics foundational course should be completed in the beginning of the program to equip the student with concepts necessary for more specialized study in other courses and fields.

Academic Standing

Awarding of the advanced certificate occurs with successful completion of at least 75% of the program at average or above-average performance. Students who receive more than one deficient final grade (MC/NC) in a course are not eligible to continue in the program. View the academic catalogue for more details on the official Seminary grading scheme.

Supplemental Co-Curricular Courses

Some *Supplemental Co-Curricular* courses (SU 150 and SU 190) provide opportunities for specialized knowledge in social justice areas. ACSJ students may **audit** up to three one-credit SU 150/SU 190 courses at no additional charge during their enrollment in the program.

ADVISEMENT AND COURSE REGISTRATION

Consultation with program advisor takes place for a variety of purposes and students are strongly encouraged to seek advisement as needed. However, established advising requirements must occur prior to the course registration period. Students are responsible for keeping their advisors informed about any changes of plan that may take place along the way, and for seeking advisement as needed.

Incoming ACSJ students are **required** to meet with the program advisor prior to each course registration period. First semester advisement usually occurs during new student orientation. The course registration periods normally are as follows:

- Summer opens in February
- Fall opens in April
- January and Spring open in November

Students in the ACSJ are expected to regularly read their @utsnyc emails. Each semester, the Registrar sends detailed information about the course registration process including self-registration instructions. Questions should be directed to the program advisor or registrar@utsnyc.edu as appropriate.

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Assessment of student learning at Union is a continuous process that takes place at both the course level and program level, with two main objectives:

1. to provide students with feedback on their progress toward and achievement of personal, course, and program objectives
2. to provide administration and faculty with a means to continually evaluate program effectiveness so that modifications and improvements can occur

ACSJ students are provided with an ePortfolio to deposit evidence of their fulfillment of program requirements and achievement. The ePortfolio is accessed through Google Drive affiliated with the @utsnyc.edu email (not personal Gmail accounts). See appendix for more information and instructions.

The current assessment plan requires the following documents be deposited into the ePortfolio as specified:

Preliminary Documents – deposited one week before advisement/orientation

1. Admissions essay – by Academic Office staff
2. Current résumé or CV as available/updated – by Academic Office or student

Registrar's Documents – deposited by final semester

3. Unofficial transcript with narrative evaluations – by Academic Office

Academic Work – deposited by student during final semester

4. At least one assignment **with instructor comments** from each of the following:
 - Foundational Social Ethics (SE) course
 - Core elective Social Ethics (SE) or Religion and Society (RS) course
 - Distributional elective course in two of the field areas as specified above

APPENDIX

Appendix A: ePortfolio Access Instructions