

Doctor of Ministry

Degree Handbook

UNION

WHERE FAITH AND SCHOLARSHIP MEET
TO REIMAGINE THE WORK OF JUSTICE

2024-2025

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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

OVERVIEW

Union's Doctor of Ministry (DMin) in Spirituality, Leadership, and Justice is designed for mid-level and senior-level faith leaders serving in various ministries in religious and secular settings. It emphasizes the evolving and emerging nature of spirituality and just leadership practice amidst religious, social, political, and demographic shifts in and across geographic contexts. Developed in collaboration with New York Theological Seminary, this program will equip graduates with the ability to link theory to practice to ground their work in spirituality, justice, and rigorous critical theo-ethical imagination. Graduates will be well-positioned to take on leadership roles in congregational ministry, faith-based and social justice organizations, as well as local and national advocacy, policy, and political action settings.

Design and Delivery of the Program

The DMin is a cohort-based, three-year, 33-credit advanced professional degree that combines six semesters of online learning with three required three-day on-campus residencies in August of each year. The online courses have both synchronous and asynchronous components. Union does not charge additional fees for identity verification for its online courses (disclosure required by Middle States Commission on Higher Education). An MDiv or its equivalent from an ATS-accredited seminary, or a master's degree in a related field, is a prerequisite for the DMin program.

The curriculum includes coursework in leadership, advocacy and community action, applied research methods, and social justice theory, theology, and practice. It culminates with a doctoral project that provides students the opportunity to demonstrate the ability to apply theological, exegetical, and other analytical methods to a vocational social justice challenge facing local communities.

PROGRAM GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Union's faculty has identified program goals within four primary learning areas: **Advanced Theological Integration, Contextual Competency, Leadership Capacity, and Personal and Spiritual Maturity**. The learning outcomes associated with each goal identify the knowledge and skills that students achieve and demonstrate when they successfully complete the program.

Advanced Theological Integration

Goal One: To reflect critically on diverse theological, religious, spiritual, and ethical traditions from an interreligious engagement lens to foster community-building and social change in specific contexts.

Learning Outcome 1: Successful demonstration of advanced graduate-level knowledge and academic competency within theological disciplines that foster critical thinking grounded in cultural and social ministry contexts.

Learning Outcome 2: Successful demonstration of the ability to develop and articulate a contextual theology and practice of spirituality, justice, and leadership that integrates theories and theologies of leadership.

Contextual Competency

attention to cultural and social issues, to global awareness and engagement, and to the multi-religious and multicultural nature of the societies in which students may serve

Goal Two: To analyze the religious and social dimensions of student's context and ecology of ministry in order to identify, frame, and respond to critical and emergent ministry issues.

Learning Outcome 1: Successful demonstration of the ability to articulate and respond to specific and relevant ministry issues.

Learning Outcome 2: Develop, implement, and research to produce a project that demonstrates critical understanding of religious and social dimensions of ecology of ministry.

Leadership Capacity

Goal Three: To strengthen capacities for theological, ethical, interreligious, and social analysis toward just leadership in the relevant social, cultural, and ministry contexts.

Learning Outcome: Successful demonstration of the ability to integrate theology, leadership theory, and social analysis with interreligious awareness in the practice of leadership.

Personal and Spiritual Maturity

Goal Four: To cultivate spiritual wisdom, personal integrity, and competencies necessary for just leadership.

Learning Outcome 1: Successful demonstration of advanced understanding and increased personal capacity in practical skills, cultural, and interreligious competencies necessary for just leadership.

Learning Outcome 2: Successful demonstration of the ability to integrate theological, ethical, interreligious and spiritual reflection for practice of just leadership.

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

The DMin requires 33 credits for the program, as specified below, which includes successful completion of a doctoral project.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS	
	Number of Credits
YEAR ONE	
DMN 401 Leadership for Revolutionary Ministry in Diverse Cultural Contexts - Fall Intensive	3
DMN 403 Theory, Theology, and the Practice of Research I - Fall	3
DMN 410 Interpretation and Methods in/and the Pursuit of Social Justice - Spring	3
DMN 412 Religion and Social Movements (Then and Now) – Spring	3
YEAR TWO	
DMN 421 Moral Leadership, Public Advocacy, and Local Exegesis - Fall Intensive	3
DMN 423 Decoding Power and Intersectionality - Fall	3
DMN 430 Spirituality and Social Justice Work - Spring	3
DMN 432 Theory, Theology, and the Practice of Research II - Spring	3
YEAR THREE	

DMN 501 Applied Research/Doctoral Project I – Fall Intensive	3
DMN 503 Guided Reading/Doctoral Project Writing - Fall	3
DMN 510 Applied Research/Doctoral Project II - Spring	3
TOTAL CREDITS	33

Fall Intensives

The three fall intensive courses comprises two parts: a three-day on-campus residency in August, and virtual class sessions during the fall semester.

Attendance at the three-day residencies is required. Without participating in the residencies, students cannot earn a passing grade in the associated courses that start during the residencies and continue virtually in the semester. Students are expected to make every effort to attend the residencies in person.

There may be exceptional circumstances in which, due to factors outside of a student’s control, a student is prevented from attending the residency in person and may be granted permission by the instructor and program directors to attend remotely. In these events, the instructor and program directors will present an alternate attendance plan based on Union’s general alternative attendance policy (found in the Academic Catalogue), adapted for the intensive residency format.

In the absence of an approved alternative attendance plan, a student who does not attend the on-campus residency must withdraw from the course and take a leave of absence from the DMin program, as the student cannot continue in the program without the residency. See “Policies and Procedures for a Leave of Absence” in this program guide for more information.

Doctoral Project

Each student is required to form a Site Team by the second year of the DMin program. A Site Team is a committee of three to five persons who are engaged in the student’s ministry/work/service. The student puts together the Team following the guidance provided in two courses, Revolutionary Leadership in Diverse Contexts and Moral Leadership, Public Advocacy, and Local Exegesis. The Site Team is an integral part of the student’s learning community. Its responsibilities include: an assessment of the opportunities and needs presented by the student’s ministry, assistance interpreting the culture and mission of the context of practice, an evaluation of the student’s leadership/ministry competencies, and support for the Proposal and Final Doctoral Project.

Doctoral Project

All projects must fulfill the standards mandated by the Association of Theological Schools:

5.4 The Doctor of Ministry degree provides a variety of student learning and formational experiences that include peer learning, self-directed learning, research-based learning, and field-based learning. The degree culminates with a written project that explores an area of ministry related to the student’s vocational calling, utilizes appropriate research methodologies and resources, and generates new knowledge regarding the practice of ministry. An oral presentation and evaluation follow the completion of the written project to reflect mastery of the project and achievement of the program’s outcomes. If any courses in this degree are shared with other degrees, doctoral-level outcomes and assignments specific to students in this professional degree are made clear.

The Doctoral Project involves preparation of an academic paper of approximately 75-100 pages that explores in-depth a particular issue at the intersection of spirituality, leadership, and justice. It includes a description of the context in which the issue arises and is being addressed, analysis of the issue based on research, and a proposal of ways this issue might most adequately be approached.

The anticipated research may involve work with live human subjects (e.g., interviews, focus groups, or a trial educational program). Students should review Union's [Institutional Review Board \(IRB\)](#) guidelines and complete an IRB [application form](#) (see IRB [FAQ](#)). (Even if expedited review is anticipated, a student must complete the application, which includes obtaining an online certificate of training on current rules of law pertaining to the ethical treatment of human subjects.)

The Doctoral Project proposal is developed and approved during the spring semester of the second year, as part of DMN 432 *Theory, Theology, and the Practice of Research II*. The proposal must be approved by the end of the spring semester.

The Doctoral Project Committee consists of a total of three members: one primary reader, and two secondary readers. A DMin Program faculty co-director or another full-time Union faculty member will serve as the primary reader. Additional committee members (secondary readers) will consist of two other Union faculty or, upon approval, faculty at other institutions and/or scholar-practitioners. A DMin Program faculty co-director will always serve as either a primary or secondary reader.

The Doctoral Project is submitted during the semester the student registers for DMN 510 *Applied Research/Doctoral Project II*. The student then defends the Doctoral Project before their Doctoral Project Committee. Refer to the Academic Calendar for the latest possible date to defend a Doctoral Project.

If a student does not submit and defend the Doctoral Project by the completion of the semester in which they register for DMN 510 *Applied Research/Doctoral Project II*, they receive No Credit (NC) for the course. They may request a one-semester extension from the program directors, who in consultation with the Academic Dean may approve or deny the request. If approved, the student may then re-take Applied Research/Doctoral Project II.

ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT

Each student is assigned one of the DMin program directors as their academic advisor. Because the majority of course work in the DMin program is done online, it is vital that students in the program meet each semester with the advisor, either in person or by videoconference. These meetings are occasions for the advisor and student to assess progress in course work and skill acquisition, explore topics for the focus of the DMin project, and also to raise any personal matters that affect the student's studies.

Course Registration

As the DMin program has a set curriculum, students do not require advising in order to register for courses. Students self-register for courses using the online student portal. For registration dates and deadlines, as well as add/drop and withdrawal dates, consult the [academic calendar](#).

Students are not permitted to enroll in courses other than those required for the DMin degree.

Audit Policy

DMin students may audit up to two courses, in total, after Year 1 in the program. Course audit requests must be approved by a faculty co-director and are limited to courses determined to be directly related to the doctoral project.

In addition to the above policy, students may audit one SU 190 1-credit course per term. For the full list of SU 190 courses, consult the course catalog.

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING AND CURRICULAR EFFECTIVENESS

Assessment of student learning at Union is a comprehensive and continuous process that occurs at both the course level and program level (*ATS Standard 2.6*). The purpose of this process is twofold:

1. to provide students with feedback on their progress toward and achievement of personal, course, and program learning goals
2. to provide administration and faculty with a means to continually evaluate program effectiveness so that modifications and improvements to the curriculum can be made.

Students are provided with an ePortfolio where evidence of their fulfillment of degree requirements and learning achievement is collected and periodically reviewed by the student, advisor, and designated administrators in the academic office. The ePortfolio (see appendix) is accessed through Google Drive affiliated with the @utsnyc.edu email.

At the end of each semester, students should deposit at least one assignment per course into their ePortfolio. (It is expected that faculty will create assignments and apply grading rubrics that address both course and program goals and learning outcomes. Program goals and learning outcomes should be referenced on syllabi.) After the final Doctoral Project is completed, the advisor completes a Final Assessment Report (FAR) based on the student's demonstrated achievement of program goals and learning outcomes as evidenced directly by course papers, final grades with narrative evaluations, and indirectly by the student's self-assessment survey (to be completed prior to the conference). The program directors and Assessment Committee review annually the aggregated data from final assessment reports.

The current assessment plan requires the following documents be deposited into the ePortfolio at specified times (by specified persons) over the course of the student's program.

ePortfolio Documents	
Preliminary Documents - <i>deposited one week before orientation advisement</i>	DEPOSITED BY
• Admissions Essay	Academic Office
• Entrance Questionnaire (EQ)	Academic Office
• Current Resume (to be updated periodically as necessary)	Student
Academic Documents – <i>deposited at the conclusion of every semester</i>	
• Leadership for Revolutionary Ministry in Diverse Cultural Contexts assignment	Student
• Theory, Theology, and the Practice of Research I assignment	
• Interpretation and Methods in/and the Pursuit of Social Justice assignment	Student
• Religion and Social Movements (Then and Now) assignment	
• Moral Leadership, Public Advocacy, and Local Exegesis assignment	Student
• Decoding Power and Intersectionality assignment	
• Spirituality and Social Justice Work assignment	Student
• Theory, Theology, and the Practice of Research II	
Doctoral Project – <i>deposited after approval/submission</i>	
• Proposal	Student
• Doctoral Project	Student
Registrar Documents – <i>deposited two weeks after completion of degree requirements</i>	
• Unofficial transcript with narrative evaluations	Academic Office
Assessment Reports – <i>deposited by May 15 of graduating year</i>	
• Final Student Self-Assessment Survey	Academic Office
• Final Assessment Advisor Report	Academic Office

The above Academic Documents must be deposited with *this naming convention*:
Course #_Instructor Name_Assignment Title

Failure to submit required materials may result in a hold on your diploma.

Entrance Questionnaire

The assessment process begins with the Entrance Questionnaire (EQ) which includes a benchmark measure of a student's current competencies in the outcomes associated with the learning goals for the DMin.

Final Assessment

The final assessment process again assesses the goals and learning outcomes at the end of the program. The assessment process is concluded when the student's advisor completes and submits a Final Assessment Report reviewing the progression of the student's learning and skills as evidenced by ePortfolio contents.

Assessment is not a credit-bearing process. The Seminary is required by its accreditation agencies to assess all of its programs. Therefore, ***timely participation in and completion of the assessment process is a requirement for advancement through the program and conferral of the degree.***

ACADEMIC POLICIES

The following policies are specific to the DMin program. Students should also familiarize themselves with the Academic Catalog for Union's general academic policies.

Audit Policy

DMin students are not permitted to audit courses at Union while enrolled in the DMin program, with the exception of *Supplemental Co-Curricular* (SU) courses, which provide opportunities for personal and spiritual enrichment. A maximum of one SU course is permitted each semester at no additional charge during enrollment in the program. Consult the academic catalogue for current SU courses, and register by completing and submitting the appropriate online form: <https://utsnyc.edu/academics/registrar/course-registration-grades/>.

Policies and Procedures for Leave of Absence

Students are generally required to be enrolled continuously from admission to graduation. However, students who are faced with extraordinary personal circumstances may be eligible for a leave of absence. Because the DMin is a cohort-based, fixed curriculum program, leaves must be taken in one-year increments so that upon a student's return, they can take the next courses in the sequence.

Leaves of absence are negotiated through the office of the Dean of Students and approved by the Academic Dean. See relevant policy in the Academic Catalog.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: ePortfolio Access Instructions