

Master of Arts in Religion

Program Guide

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

The Master of Arts in Religion (MAR) is designed as a full-time, residential, two-year academic degree with a minimum completion of fifty-one (51) credits. The purpose of this degree is to prepare students for “graduate study of one or more theologically related disciplines” that enriches work in their chosen professions (*ATS Standard 4.7*). While primarily an academic degree that prepares students for advanced studies and teaching, students are also ready for various other professional positions in diverse academic and non-academic contexts.

While Union uses the acronym MAR, in alignment with NYSED, the degree issued is a Master of Arts (MA) in Religion; see *ATS Standard 4.7* here: <https://www.ats.edu/files/galleries/standards-of-accreditation.pdf>.

PROGRAM GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

In keeping with the vision of Union’s founders that Union graduates 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 degree programs intentionally engage disparities in society based on gender, race, class, sexuality, religion and other divisive or marginalizing forces. Studying in this environment is both a strength and a challenge. The goal is to cultivate the ability to respond to these disparities with analytic rigor, historical consciousness, sensitivity to tradition, and equanimity and compassion. The Seminary’s urban location and university affiliation also help to shape study at Union.

The Master of Arts in Religion (MAR) has clearly articulated student learning outcomes appropriate to a graduate theological degree, and consistent with Union’s mission and resources. The program goals identified reflect the faculty’s general aspirations for student learning. The desired learning outcomes associated with each goal identify the knowledge and skills that students are expected to demonstrate upon successful completion of the program. Graduates of the MAR degree should be well equipped to apply their learning in contemporary contexts both within and beyond academia.

Goal One: To develop a broad and critical understanding of the Bible as foundation of the Christian traditions, and for Buddhism and Interreligious Engagement or Islam and Interreligious Engagement concentrators, a broad and critical understanding of their respective sacred texts/interpretations; to engage in and interpret exegetically-informed and contextually-sensitive Bible/sacred texts in historical, literary, contemporary global, and multi-religious contexts; to demonstrate the capacity to establish connections between the Bible and other sacred texts.

Learning Outcome: Successful completion of courses in Bible: Cross-Testament (**BX**), Hebrew Bible (**HB**), New Testament (**NT**); and/or Sacred Texts (**STX**); and other relevant evidence (such as sermons, liturgy, or other presentations).

Goal Two: To demonstrate the capacity to: understand and reflect on the Christian tradition within the context of one’s own culture through cultural, religious, and moral pluralism, including consideration of relativism and dialogue with science; to identify and describe the concepts involved in the basic doctrines of Christian faith and show connections between them; to understand classic and contemporary methods of moral decision-making.

Learning Outcome: Successful completion of courses in Theological Studies (**TS**), Social Ethics (**SE**), Philosophy of Religion (**PR**), and/or Anglican Studies (**AS**); and other relevant evidence.

Goal Three: To demonstrate knowledge of historical events and developments that gave rise to diverse forms of Christianity; to use historical techniques to analyze and understand how inherited beliefs and faiths are expressed and lived conditioned by the circumstances of time and place; to demonstrate how cultural context

shapes stories that people of faith share about themselves and their communities.

Learning Outcome: Successful completion of Historical Studies (**HS**) courses and other relevant evidence.

Goal Four: To demonstrate the capacity to learn about and from diverse religious traditions on their own terms; and the capacity to engage in sustained self-reflection and acknowledgment of one's own assumptions when encountering manifestations of religious diversity.

Learning Outcome: Successful completion of Interreligious Engagement (**IE**) courses and other relevant evidence.

Goal Five: To gain knowledge and critical awareness of existing power dynamics and structures in terms of gender, sexuality, race, class, and identities targeted for oppression, and how they shape theology, ethics, history and other forms of theological engagement; to effectively and constructively engage the world's serious issues such as racial and sexual/gender injustice, mass incarceration, and the climate crisis, in ways informed by deep theological, historical, and critical study; to build theological, theoretical, critical, and contextually accountable foundations for the study of religious communities, movements, and societies.

Learning Outcome: Successful completion of Social Ethics (**SE**), Religion and Society (**RS**), Field Education (**FE**), and other direct relevant evidence (recognizing that all of Union's curriculum addresses this goal in some way).

Goal Six: To attain competency in the student's chosen concentration in preparation for advanced studies, teaching, or for application in non-academic public and organizational contexts.

Learning Outcome: Successful completion of a minimum of fifteen credits in a concentration as identified by a field, or combination of fields as an interdisciplinary concentration.

Goal Seven: To attain competency in academic research and writing skills.

Learning Outcome: Successful completion of a critically and constructively written scholarly thesis.

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

The Master of Arts in Religion (MAR) degree requires completion of a minimum of fifty-one credits with two years of full-time study. MAR students acquire broad and basic knowledge and academic skills by taking a common core of courses in the "classical" theological disciplines of *Bible/Sacred Texts* (**BX/HB/NT/STX**), *Historical Studies* (**HS**), and *Theology and Ethics* (**PR/SE/TS**) and in the interdisciplinary field of *Interreligious Engagement* (**IE/BU/IS**). Students must take a minimum number of credits in each of these fields. Students are also encouraged to take courses in disciplines within the *Practical Theology* (**PT/CA/CW/DS/FE/RE/RS/PS**) field as appropriate to their individual learning goals.

Usually offered in August just prior to the start of Fall classes, UT 101-*Introduction to Theological Studies* is required.

In addition to degree requirements, a concentration consisting of a minimum of fifteen credits is required. As an academically oriented degree, a thesis is required (ATS Standard 4.9), and participation in the two-semester thesis seminar is strongly encouraged.

Successful completion of an exam in either French, German or Spanish is recommended for further academic study but is not a degree requirement. Courses in French, German, and Spanish are offered each Fall semester. Exams in these languages are offered twice each semester (Fall and Spring).

Credit Distribution Requirements

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

CREDIT DISTRIBUTION REQUIREMENTS	
	Number of Credits Required
CORE	
Bible/Sacred Texts	7-8
Historical Studies	6
Theology and Ethics	6
Interreligious Engagement	3
CONCENTRATION	
Advanced courses (level 200+)	15
Thesis	6
GENERAL ELECTIVES	7-8
TOTAL CREDITS	51

Course Load and Planning

First-year students are generally limited to four (4) three-credit courses each fall and spring semester. Students are not permitted to take more than fifteen credits in any semester without permission from the Dean/Vice President of Academic Affairs. MAR students are expected to complete the degree in two years.

Students are expected to complete their core course requirements as early as possible. The early completion of the foundational courses equips the student with the basic vocabulary, data, and concepts necessary for closer or more advanced and specialized study in the core fields, the area of concentration, and/or in other subjects in the curriculum.

Some legitimate reasons may exist for not being able to complete the degree in two years. Financial or family obligations or special educational needs may result in the need to spread the degree over three or four years. Decisions about the duration of the program should be made in consultation with the faculty advisor and director of financial aid. There are federal regulations that Union has a responsibility to follow when administering federal student loans. Additionally, the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) policy, especially the maximum time to completion, should be carefully reviewed as documented in the academic catalog.

The degree planner (see appendices) lists required courses and credit distribution requirements to facilitate course planning for each semester. Students are expected to use the degree planner to track progress toward completing degree requirements.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The following provides a general overview of course requirements. Students must carefully **read and utilize the appropriate degree planner** for details and comprehensive requirements. Certain concentrations may require additional courses.

Core Field Requirements

Bible/Sacred Texts – 7-8 credits:

- Introductory requirement of HB 101-*Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* and NT 101-*Introduction to the New Testament* **OR**
- (For Buddhism and Interreligious Engagement and Islam and Interreligious concentrators) Introductory requirement of BX 101-*Introduction to the Bible* and a Buddhist or Islamic Sacred Text course

Historical Studies – 6 credits:

- Introductory requirement of HS 116-*History of Christianity to 1500* or HS 117-*History of Christianity 1500-2000* or approved alternative
- Additional upper-level (or approved introductory) Historical Studies course

Interreligious Engagement – 3 credits

- Minimum of 3 credits with any course in the field

Theology and Ethics – 6 credits:

- Introductory requirement of either TS 102-*Theological Thinking Across Traditions* or TS 104-*Introduction to Systematic Theology*, depending on concentration
- Additional upper-level course in Philosophy of Religion, Social Ethics, or Theological Studies

Practical Theology:

- Recommended minimum of 3 credits in the field

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),

Interreligious Engagement: Interreligious Engagement (IE), Buddhism (BU), Islam (IS)

Practical Theology: Communication Arts (CA), Worship, Preaching, and Arts (CW), Denominational Studies (DS), 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)

Concentration Requirements

Students are required to take a minimum of fifteen credits in advanced (200-level or above) courses within their concentration area. Concentration courses should not be taken in a given field until that field's requirements have been met. A concentration allows students to focus studies in a particular field or one of the faculty-approved program foci.

Students also have the option to work with their faculty advisor to design an interdisciplinary concentration around some organizing principle or idea. A **Declaration** form must be submitted here:

<https://utsnyc.edu/academics/registrar/course-catalog-academic-policies/declare-m-concentration/> by the spring of the first year of study. View the appropriate section for course requirements in these areas of concentration.

General Electives

Through general electives, students may exceed the minimum requirements for the degree to pursue particular interests and to prepare for the professions they intend to pursue. Students not concentrating in a discipline

within the *Practical Theology* field are not required, but are encouraged, to include one or more practical theology courses among their general electives.

General/Supplemental Co-Curricular/Denominational Studies Courses

A variety of *General* (UT), *Supplemental Co-Curricular* (SU), and *Denominational Studies* (DS) courses provide opportunities for professional, spiritual, and personal enrichment. Students may take as many SU courses as they wish, **but only three SU credits count toward the general elective requirements**. To register for SU courses, students complete an online form: <https://utsnyc.edu/academics/registrar/course-registration-grades/> on the Registrar website. Consult the academic catalog for the complete UT, SU, and DS courses list.

Guided Reading

Students may propose a guided reading for one, two, or three credits with approval and under the direction of a faculty member. View the full policy in the academic catalog. To register, students submit the online *Guided Reading* form: <https://utsnyc.edu/academics/registrar/course-registration-grades/>.

Cross-Registration

With the approval of the faculty advisor and Dean/Vice President for Academic Affairs, MAR students may take up to twelve graduate-level credits in courses offered at other accredited schools. In the absence of exceptional circumstances, courses available at Union must be taken at Union; students may not substitute courses taken at other schools for courses fulfilling field distribution requirements. Registration for outside courses is normally limited to one course per semester. Students should refer to the Academic Catalogue and website (<https://utsnyc.edu/academics/registrar/course-registration-grades/cross-registration/>) for complete information regarding the conditions, limitations, and procedures for cross-registration.

Thesis Requirement

A formal thesis paper in the area of concentration is required. A two-semester thesis writing seminar (UT 150 and UT 151) is strongly recommended with exemption only by advisor permission (see* below). Instructions about the thesis, including submission forms, are available on the **Thesis & Project** portion of this webpage: <https://utsnyc.edu/academics/registrar/academic-resources/>.

The thesis totals six credits over two semesters with one of the following options:

- UT 150 + UT 422 in fall and UT 151 + UT 425 in spring
- UT 423 in the fall and UT 426 in the spring*

ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT

Each student is assigned a faculty advisor to provide academic support, guidance toward program completion, and assistance in achieving curricular and individual learning goals. Academic advisement may occur at any time, and students are strongly encouraged to seek advisement as needed and to develop and maintain a relationship with their faculty advisor. However, the Seminary has established specific requirements for academic advisement regarding course registration, as specified below.

Students are encouraged to regularly update their degree audits with their advisors using the appropriate degree planner and deposit the degree audit into their ePortfolio (see appendix). Students are responsible for keeping their advisors informed about any changes to the plan that may take place along the way and for seeking advisement as needed. Beyond the required advisement sessions with faculty advisors, all faculty members, the Dean/Vice President for Academic Affairs, and the Assistant Dean for Academic Administration are ready and willing to offer advisement in their areas of expertise and competency.

Course Registration - Fall

Incoming students receive advising from the academic office the summer before their degree program begins regarding first-semester course selection and registration. They are then **required** to meet with their assigned faculty advisor in August at new student orientation, and the initial conversation focuses on vocational and overall academic goals.

Fall course registration for the second year of study normally takes place in April, and academic advisement is **required**. At this meeting, students and advisors should review the remaining distribution and concentration requirements and discuss plans for the thesis.

Course Registration - Spring

Spring course registration usually takes place in November. First-year students must meet with their advisor before the first Spring semester’s course registration opening. A hold will block course registration for the first Spring semester until the advisement session has taken place and the advisor removes the hold.

Second-year students are **strongly encouraged**, but not required, to consult with their advisors, especially for general advisement purposes, *at least once* before the last day of classes in the Fall semester of the final year.

The Academic Office completes a pre-graduation degree audit before Spring registration in the final Fall semester and shares it with the student and advisor for their review.

See the following two-year schedule and timeline for advising throughout the degree.

<i>STUDENT-FACULTY ADVISEMENT SCHEDULE</i>			
	August/September	October/November	April
1 st year	☑ curricular/general advisement	☑ advisement for Spring (hold)	√ advisement for Fall
2 nd year	√ advisement (if not registered in April)	√ advisement before end of Fall (pre-graduation degree audit)	SSAS due by May 1 FAR due by June 1
☑ = advisement required √ = some meaningful consultation			

CONCENTRATION

Master of Arts in Religion (MAR) degree program goal six and the corresponding learning outcome relates to a specialized competency. Goal six is designed to enable students “to attain competency in the student’s chosen concentration in preparation for advanced studies, teaching, or for application in non-academic public and organizational contexts.” Information about program concentrations is below.

Students declare a concentration by the end of the second semester of study, even though most advanced electives begin in the second year. This declaration is intended to assist the Seminary in curricular development and planning, to maximize from the outset the fruitfulness of individual student advisement, course, and career planning, and to allow sufficient lead time for students to develop their thesis proposal.

The following concentrations have been approved by the faculty:

Bible: Hebrew Bible	Bible: New Testament	Bible: Cross-Testament
Buddhism & Interreligious Engagement	Historical Studies	Interreligious Engagement
Islam & Interreligious Engagement	Philosophy of Religion	Psychology and Religion

Students complete at least fifteen credits in a concentration at the advanced level (200 and above). Courses counted toward other requirements cannot be counted again toward a concentration. Concentration courses should be taken at Union, with exceptions subject to approval by the faculty advisor and the Dean/Vice President for Academic Affairs. Courses counted toward the concentration must be taken for full credit, not as audit or reading credit. A student's thesis is usually related to the declared concentration. Students' concentrations are recorded on their official transcripts.

See below for each concentration including a description and specific requirements.

Bible

This concentration is intended for students with a particular interest in deepened study of the Bible, whether in spiritual/religious settings, teaching, preparation for academic study of the Bible, or other interests. Students are provided with initial ancient language skills, an introduction to the academic study of the Bible, and specialized experience in interpretation needed for doctoral-level study or possible teaching of the Bible in religiously affiliated secondary schools.

Course Requirements

Bible/Hebrew Bible:

- HB 101-*Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* and NT 101-*Introduction to the New Testament* as core requirements
- HB 204-*Elementary Biblical Hebrew II* – 3 credits
- Additional advanced Bible courses, at least two specifically in Hebrew Bible (HB) – 12 credits
 - Recommended: HB 313A-*Intermediate Hebrew I* and HB 313B-*Intermediate Hebrew II* – 3 credits

Bible/New Testament:

- HB 101-*Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* and NT 101-*Introduction to the New Testament* as core requirements
- NT 204-*Elementary Biblical Greek II* – 3 credits
- Additional advanced Bible courses focused on a book, text(s), or topic in the New Testament – 12 credits
 - Recommended: NT 315A-*Intermediate Greek I* and NT 315B-*Intermediate Greek II* – 3 credits

Bible/Cross-Testament:

- HB 101-*Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* and NT 101-*Introduction to the New Testament* as core requirements
- Three (or more) semesters of biblical Hebrew and/or biblical Greek – 9 credits
 - (*Note: HB 111-Elementary Biblical Hebrew I and NT 111-Elementary Biblical Greek I do not count towards the 15 credits of advanced coursework required for the concentration*)
 - Additional advanced Bible (HB/NT/BX) courses – minimum 6 credits

Thesis Requirement

A thesis on a biblical topic in their subdiscipline (Hebrew Bible; New Testament; Cross-Testament) chosen in consultation with an advisor is required. Theses are graded on the extent to which they develop a compelling and focused argument, integrate language knowledge appropriately, and demonstrate excellent knowledge of and engagement with relevant secondary literature.

Buddhism and Interreligious Engagement

This concentration prepares students for diverse leadership roles within and within Buddhist communities, and it brings Buddhist practices and principles to communities that may not identify as Buddhist. These roles include religious and spiritual leadership, teaching, and careers in interreligious/interfaith cooperation, policy-making, social justice advocacy, journalism, non-profits, and government.

Course Requirements

- Core requirements per field as specified on the degree planner (see appendix)
- IE 221-*Introduction to Buddhist Meditation Practices*
- IE 240-*Socially Engaged Buddhism*
- Additional advanced Buddhist and interreligious engagement courses – minimum 9 credits

While a language is not required, based on student interest and intended vocation, the study of certain languages – including Pali, Sanskrit, and Chinese – is advised when possible.

Thesis Requirement

A thesis on a Buddhist and interreligious engagement topic chosen in consultation with an advisor in the field is required. The thesis should demonstrate knowledge of and engagement with relevant theories, methods, and sources in the interreligious engagement discipline and develop a compelling and focused argument.

Historical Studies

This concentration is aimed at students who intend to deepen their knowledge of and reflection upon historical processes that have shaped Christian churches and other religious communities. Some students consider doctoral study in history in a context of seminary theological education, religious studies, or religious history as practiced in history departments. Students have the opportunity to acquire skills in evaluating primary sources and to compare and contrast analytical arguments and theories as applied to historical questions.

Historical courses on traditions beyond Christianity are a recent expansion in the curriculum, and long-term faculty expertise has focused on Christian churches of antiquity, Reformation, and early modern periods, as well as modern United States contexts. While many courses foreground Christianity, students may shape their concentration around another tradition or combination of traditions as course offerings allow.

Concentrators acquire both breadth and depth, selecting coursework in consultation with an advisor that includes a primary area of focus (such as a specific historical period, religious tradition, or thematic area) and coursework of other periods, groups, and/or methods.

Students take at least nine (9) credits of historical studies at the 200-level or higher in the primary area and at least three (3) credits of historical studies at the 200-level or higher in another area. A minimum of fifteen credits is needed. Therefore, a course in an adjacent field (see examples below) is strongly encouraged.

Course Requirements

- HS 116-*History of Christianity to 1500* and HS 117-*History of Christianity 1500-2000* as core requirements
- Advanced historical studies courses in a primary area such as a broadly defined historical period, tradition, or thematic area – minimum 9 credits
- Advanced historical studies course in another period/area – minimum 3 credits
- An applicable course in an adjacent field that enriches/complements the primary area is strongly recommended (e.g., focused on a historical span or period of scriptural exegesis, liturgical practice, art and architecture, intellectual thought, or categories of social difference) – minimum 3 credits

Thesis Requirement

A thesis on a historical studies topic chosen in consultation with a faculty member in the field is required. The thesis should demonstrate an effective grasp and deployment of primary sources drawn from records of the period, movement, or historical process being studied. If important to the objective of the thesis, students should include languages besides English in analysis and research. The thesis is graded on the extent to which a compelling and focused argument is developed that discusses primary sources, integrates language knowledge as appropriate, and engages with relevant secondary literature.

Interreligious Engagement

This concentration is intended for students planning to pursue advanced studies, teach, or work in applied contexts that require competency in interreligious engagement. Students in this concentration cultivate:

1. competence in fostering meaningful and ethical interactions amidst religious diversity
2. understanding of and competence in the theories and methods of interreligious engagement
3. substantial knowledge of and familiarity with at least two religious traditions

Course Requirements

- IE 102-*Religions in the City: Introduction to Interreligious Engagement* as a core requirement
- Advanced interreligious engagement course in theories and methods – minimum 3 credits
- Tradition-specific course(s) other than in Christianity (e.g., IS/STX 242-*The Qur'an: Engaging a Sacred Text*, BU 240-*Socially Engaged Buddhism*) – minimum 3 credits
- Advanced interreligious engagement course in comparison (e.g., IE/RE 344-*Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations*, IE/TS 326-*Comparative Feminist Theology: Islam and Christianity*, IE/TS 313-*Hindu-Christian Dialogue*) – minimum 3 credits
- Advanced courses in religious traditions other than one's own – minimum 6 credits

Thesis Requirement

A thesis on an interreligious engagement topic chosen in consultation with an advisor in the field is required. The thesis should demonstrate knowledge of and engagement with relevant theories, methods, and sources in the interreligious engagement discipline and should develop a compelling and focused argument.

Islam and Interreligious Engagement

This concentration is intended for students planning to pursue advanced studies, teach, or work in professional contexts that require competency in this area. Students in this concentration cultivate:

1. Robust and nuanced understanding of the foundational sources, disciplines, practices, diversity, and contextual realities of Islamic traditions and Muslim practice
2. the ability to critically engage Islamic traditions and Muslim practice in relation to social disparities based on gender, race, class, sexuality, and other marginalizing forces
3. substantial knowledge of and familiarity with at least one other religious tradition
4. understanding of and competence in the theories and methods of interreligious engagement

Course Requirements

- Core requirements per field as specified on the degree planner (see appendix)
- Advanced Islam-focused courses – minimum 9 credits
- Advanced interreligious engagement courses in theories and methods and/or comparison – minimum 6 credits

While a **language** is not a requirement, based on student interest and intended vocation, the study of certain languages – inclusive of, but not limited to, Arabic – is strongly advised. Arabic may be offered through Hunter College and other summer programs.

Thesis Requirement

A thesis on Islam and interreligious engagement, chosen in consultation with an advisor in the field, is required. The thesis should demonstrate knowledge of and engagement with relevant theories, methods, and sources in the interreligious engagement discipline and should develop a compelling and focused argument.

Philosophy of Religion

This concentration equips students to analyze theological traditions and trends from the standpoint of philosophy. Course offerings use philosophical arguments and methods to engage a variety of discourses and thinkers in both philosophical theology and the philosophy of religion.

Course Requirements

- Advanced courses in philosophy of religion (PR) – 15 credits

A thesis on a philosophy of religion topic chosen in consultation with an advisor in the field is required. The thesis is graded on the extent to which a compelling and focused argument is developed, integrates language appropriately, and demonstrates knowledge of and engagement with relevant secondary literature.

Psychology and Religion

This concentration is intended for students with a strong interest in pursuing a deeper understanding of a dialogue/integration between psychoanalytic theory and religion (with Christian and Jewish roots, but also embracing the study of the religious and philosophical roots of a range of spiritual traditions). As a concentration in an academic master's degree, this is neither a clinical training program for counseling licensure nor an empirical religious studies research program. The focus is theoretical and theological.

Concentrators develop the ability to deploy in their research, writing, and chosen professional or advanced academic contexts the basic content, perspectives, and analytical tools of both psychoanalytic theory and theology, with an accent on the student's own religious tradition, and to bring the disciplines of psychology and theology into fruitful intellectual dialogue. Students become familiar with foundational models for both theory and practice.

Examples of contexts in which this concentration could be deployed include but are not limited to spiritual care specialist or consultant (non-ordained) in congregational settings; consultant to faith-based nonprofit and community organizations; further graduate work in pastoral counseling, clinical counseling, social work, or psychoanalytic training; further graduate work toward lay chaplaincy certification; advanced Clinical Pastoral Education training; researcher in faith-based institutions.

Undergraduate coursework in psychology and/or professional experience in mental health services is desirable but not required.

Course Requirements

- PS 110-*Pastoral Listening Practicum* as a core requirement (required in the first year)
- PS 101-*Introduction to Pastoral and Spiritual Care* as a core requirement (strongly recommended in the first year), especially for students focusing on pastoral practice; a prerequisite for many concentration electives
- One basic unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) to understand theory and pastoral theology from within a supervised practice experience
- Additional advanced psychology and religion (PS) courses
- PS 415-*Readings in Psychoanalysis: From Object Relations to Relationality* is strongly recommended in the second year, especially for students focusing on psychological theory

Some practical theology and supplemental co-curricular courses with substantial related content may count towards this concentration. Consult the faculty advisor or academic office for review/approval.

Thesis Requirement

A thesis on a psychology and religion topic chosen in consultation with an advisor in the field is required. The thesis should display a solid and equal understanding of the historical foundations, concepts, and methods of both (1) a specific psychological theory and (2) a chosen theology/faith tradition. An argument should be made for a thoughtful integration and critical correlation of both the above in relation to the student's concentration.

Religion and Black Experience

This concentration is for students who intend to deeply engage with and learn more about the religious experience of the people of the African diaspora. As a transdisciplinary concentration, students have the opportunity to study a wide range of religious ideas and practices of the African diaspora. Students are exposed to the transnational, multifaith and gendered dimensions of Black religious practices and theologies of African and African-descended people in the fields of *Bible/Sacred Texts*, *Interreligious Engagement*, *Practical Theology*, *Psychology and Religion*, *Religion and Society*, and *Theology and Ethics*.

Course Requirements

- Advanced course in **African or African diasporic religion** (e.g. BX/IE 321-*Bible and West African Religions*, IE/RS 335-*African Religions in the Americas*) outside the Christian tradition – minimum 3 credits
- Advanced course in **Black Christian thought or practice** (e.g., CH/SE 257-*Black Social Gospel, 1870-1940*, CH/SE-*Black Social Gospel, 1940-Present*, CW 339-*Proclamation and Black Experiences*) – minimum 3 credits
- Advanced course with attention to **race, gender and sexuality** (e.g., TS 214-*Womanist Theology*, RS 262-*Methods in the Study of Urban Life and Religion*) – minimum 3 credits
- Additional applicable courses as identified in the academic catalogue

Elective or Final Project Requirement

A thesis on a topic chosen in consultation with an advisor in the field is required. The thesis is graded on the extent to which a compelling and focused argument is developed, integrates language appropriately, and demonstrates knowledge of and engagement with relevant secondary literature.

Religion and Society

This concentration focuses on the roles of religion and Christianities in relation to structures of oppression, and potentialities of liberation for individuals and society. Opportunities for engagement with ministries in various contexts in New York City provide praxis-oriented pastoral/ministerial learning for students. Students study churches as social institutions and consider religion from sociological perspectives. Undergraduate coursework in sociology, religious studies and/or professional experience in church/religious work is desirable but not required.

Course Requirements

- RS 262-*Methods in the Study of Urban Life and Religion*
- RS 325-*Liberation Theologies and Pentecostalism*
- RS 335-*African Religions in the Americas*
- Additional advanced religion and society (RS) courses – minimum 6 credits

Thesis Requirement

A thesis on a topic relevant to the intersectionality of religion and society (e.g. poverty, gentrification, race/racism, gender, church growth, marginalized religions and immigration) chosen in consultation with an advisor in the field is required. The thesis assists students to make use of sociological theories of religion acquired in their coursework in conjunction with qualitative methodology.

The thesis should deepen student's understanding of current religious beliefs and practices, generating broader awareness of the multifaceted, bidirectional impact of these upon the lived realities of individuals and communities.

Social Ethics

This concentration equips students to identify multiple sources, methods, and norms for social ethics. Some theological studies courses with substantial ethics content may count towards a social ethics concentration. Consult the faculty advisor or academic office for review/approval.

Course Requirements

- Foundational social ethics course (e.g. SE 208-*Moral Traditions and Social Ethics*, SE 322-*Social Ethics in the Making*)
- Advanced social ethics courses – 6 credits
- Additional advanced courses as approved by the faculty advisor – 6 credits

Thesis Requirement

A thesis on a social ethics topic chosen in consultation with an advisor in the field is required. The thesis is graded on the extent to which a compelling and focused argument is developed, integrates language appropriately, and demonstrates knowledge of and engagement with relevant secondary literature.

Theological Studies

This concentration is intended for students planning to pursue advanced studies, teach, or work in applied contexts enriched by critical reflection in theological studies.

Course Requirements

- TS 104-Introduction to Systematic Theology as a core requirement
- Advanced course in comparative theology, Islamic theology, or theology outside the Christian tradition (TS/IE) – 3 credits
- Advanced courses in theological studies (TS)– 12 credits

Thesis Requirement

A thesis on a theological studies topic chosen in consultation with an advisor in the field is required. The thesis is graded on the extent to which a compelling and focused argument is developed, integrates language appropriately, and demonstrates knowledge or and engagement with relevant secondary literature.

Theology and the Arts

This concentration is intended for students to relate the fields of theology, ritual theory, and performance and art. Students are expected to have prior knowledge of the arts, and be proficient in some art form (music, visual art, dance, etc.) before beginning the program.

Course Requirements

- CW 280-*Colloquium in Theology and the Arts*
- Advanced courses in worship and the arts – minimum 6 credits
- Advanced courses in ritual performance and criticism – minimum 6 credits
- Additional courses as approved by the faculty advisor

Thesis Requirement

A thesis on a topic related to theology and the arts chosen in consultation with an advisor in the field is required. The thesis is graded on the extent to which a compelling and focused argument is developed, integrates language appropriately, and demonstrates knowledge of and engagement with relevant secondary literature.

Interdisciplinary

The concentration allows students to focus their research around the history, theology, practices, and concerns of a particular group, community, or sector of society or around a particular issue or problem that affects multiple groups or is of global significance. Examples of possible interdisciplinary topics include, but are not limited to the following: black theology; feminist and womanist theology; ecological ethics; religion, society and the law; LGBTQIA; etc. The topic or combination of subdisciplines should be developed in consultation with the faculty advisor and Associate Dean. Students declaring interdisciplinary this must write a rationale and upload it to their ePortfolio including a description of the concentration, how it relates to their academic and vocational goals, and a list of courses/subject areas relevant to the concentration.

Course Requirements

- Advanced courses in an agreed-upon topic area or combination of field subdisciplines

Thesis Requirement

A thesis engaging interdisciplinary study is evaluated based on the clarity of its argument and organization of the argument's development, the ability to demonstrate a connection between theological narratives and religious practices, and a connection to the ongoing study of the work. Interdisciplinary concentrators should deploy the basic content, perspectives, and analytical tools of their topic in their research, writing, and chosen professional or advanced academic contexts.

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. 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.

Preliminary Documents – deposited one week before advisement at orientation

1. Entrance questionnaire – by Academic Office staff
2. Admissions essay – by Academic Office staff
3. Current résumé or CV as available/updated – by Academic Office or student
4. Approved degree planners – by student within one week after required advisement

Registrar's Documents – deposited the week following graduation

5. Unofficial transcript with narrative evaluations – by Academic Office

Academic Work – deposited by student by May 1 of second year

6. At least one assignment **with instructor comments** from each of the following fields, to demonstrate learning goals one through five (see above):
 - Bible/Sacred Text (BX, HB, NT, STX)
 - Historical Studies (HS)

- Theology and Ethics (PR, SE, TS)
 - Interreligious Engagement (IE, BU, IS)
 - Practical Theology (CA, CW, PS, PT, RE, RS)
 - CPE evaluation – *Psychology & Religion concentrators*
7. Thesis proposal – by student by November deadline
 8. Final thesis – by student by April deadline

The above Academic Work documents must be deposited with *this naming convention*:

Course # Instructor Name Genre/Title

(Example: NT101 Niang Exegetical Paper/Revelation Paper)

Failure to submit required materials may result in a hold on your account, which prevents receiving your diploma.

Assessment Surveys and Reports

9. Student Self-Assessment Survey (SSAS) – deposited by student by May 1 of second year
10. Final Assessment Report (FAR) prepared by advisor – deposited by Academic Office summer after graduation
11. Association of Theological Schools (ATS) Graduating Student Questionnaire – the assessment process *may* conclude with this questionnaire but Union does not participate every year

Notes on Assessment Process

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 in one of the theological disciplines.

The final assessment process again assesses the goals and learning outcomes at the end of the program. In the final semester, students deposit additional materials related to these learning outcomes into their ePortfolios, including the thesis, and complete a Self-Assessment Survey.

Union also participates in the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) Graduating Student Questionnaire (GSQ). Graduating students are notified by email if the school is participating that year. The assessment process is concluded when the student's advisor completes and submits a Final Assessment Report reviewing 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.***

APPENDICES

- Appendix A: Degree Planner (most concentrations)
- Appendix B: Degree Planner – Buddhism and Interreligious Engagement
- Appendix C: Degree Planner – Islam and Interreligious Engagement
- Appendix D: Thesis Evaluation Guidelines
- Appendix E: ePortfolio Access Instructions

Appendix A
Master of Arts in Religion (MAR) Degree Planner

Student Name: _____

Degree Audit Date: _____

BIBLE/SACRED TEXTS <i>7-8 credits</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> HB 101 – 4 cr. <input type="checkbox"/> NT 101 – 4 cr. <p style="text-align: center;">or</p> <input type="checkbox"/> HB 101 or NT 101 – 4 cr. <input type="checkbox"/> BX/HB/NT _____ – 3 cr. (upper level)
Bible Concentrators must take HB 101 and NT 101

HISTORICAL STUDIES <i>6 credits</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> HS 116 – 3 cr. or <input type="checkbox"/> HS 117 – 3 cr. or <input type="checkbox"/> Introductory alternative (w/field approval) <p style="text-align: center;">and</p> <input type="checkbox"/> HS _____ – 3 cr. (upper level)
History Concentrators must take:
<input type="checkbox"/> HS 116 – 3 cr. and <input type="checkbox"/> HS 117 – 3 cr.

THEOLOGY AND ETHICS <i>6 credits</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> TS 104 – 3 cr. <input type="checkbox"/> PR/SE/TS _____ – 3 cr. (upper level)

INTERRELIGIOUS ENGAGEMENT <i>3 credits</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> IE _____ (<i>IE 102 recommended</i>)

GENERAL <i>2 credits</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> UT 101 – 2 cr.

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY & MODERN LANGUAGE <i>0-3 credits recommended</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> CA/CW/PS/PT/RE/RS _____ – 3 cr. <input type="checkbox"/> modern language exam – 0 cr.

THESIS <i>6 credits</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> UT 150 + UT 422 – 3 cr. (fall) <input type="checkbox"/> UT 151 + UT 425 – 3 cr. (spring)

CONCENTRATION <i>15 credits</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____

ELECTIVES <i>7-8 credits</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____

CREDITS BY SEMESTER/YEAR <i>51 credits</i>			
YEAR ONE		YEAR TWO	
Fall:	<input type="checkbox"/> _____	Fall:	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
January/Spring:	<input type="checkbox"/> _____	January/Spring:	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Summer:	<input type="checkbox"/> _____		<input type="checkbox"/> _____
TOTAL: _____			

Appendix B
Master of Arts in Religion (MAR) Degree Planner
Buddhism and Interreligious Engagement

Student Name: _____

Degree Audit Date: _____

SACRED TEXTS <i>7 credits</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> STX _____ Buddhism (e.g. STX 329, STX 342, STX 261) – 3 cr. <input type="checkbox"/> BX 101 – 4 cr.

HISTORICAL STUDIES <i>6 credits</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> BU/HS 129 – 3 cr. <input type="checkbox"/> HS _____ – 3 cr.

THEOLOGY AND ETHICS <i>6 credits</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> BU 234 – 3 cr. <i>(should be taken as early as possible)</i> <input type="checkbox"/> TS 102 or TS 104 – 3 cr.

INTERRELIGIOUS ENGAGEMENT <i>3 credits</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> IE _____ <i>(IE 102 recommended)</i>

GENERAL <i>2 credits</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> UT 101 – 2 cr.

THESIS <i>6 credits</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> UT 150 + UT 422 – 3 cr. <input type="checkbox"/> UT 151 + UT 425 – 3 cr.

BUDDHIST STUDIES <i>15 credits</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> BU 221 – 3 cr. <input type="checkbox"/> BU 240 – 3 cr. <input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____

ELECTIVES <i>8 credits</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____

CREDITS BY SEMESTER/YEAR <i>51 credits</i>			
YEAR ONE		YEAR TWO	
Fall: _____	_____	Fall: <input type="checkbox"/> _____	_____
January/Spring: _____	_____	January/Spring: <input type="checkbox"/> _____	_____
Summer: _____	_____		
TOTAL COMPLETED: _____		REMAINING: _____	

Appendix C
Master of Arts in Religion (MAR) Degree Planner
Islam and Interreligious Engagement

Student Name: _____

Degree Audit Date: _____

SACRED TEXTS <i>7 credits</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> STX/IS 242 OR <input type="checkbox"/> Islam-focused STX _____ – 3 cr. <p style="text-align: center;">and</p> <input type="checkbox"/> BX 101 – 4 cr.

HISTORICAL STUDIES <i>6 credits</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> HS/IS 120 _____ - 3 cr. <input type="checkbox"/> HS _____ – 3 cr.

THEOLOGY AND ETHICS <i>6 credits</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> SE 217 OR <input type="checkbox"/> TS 230 <p style="text-align: center;">and</p> <input type="checkbox"/> TS 102 or 104 – 3 cr.

INTERRELIGIOUS ENGAGEMENT <i>3 credits</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> IE _____ - 3cr. <i>(IE 102 strongly recommended)</i>

CONCENTRATION <i>15 credits</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <p style="text-align: center;">6 cr. in theories & methods and/or comparison</p> <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ 9cr. additional Islam-focused courses

THESIS <i>6 credits</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> UT 150 + UT 422 – 3 cr. <input type="checkbox"/> UT 151 + UT 425 – 3 cr.

GENERAL <i>2 credits</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> UT 101 – 2 cr.

LANGUAGE <i>0-6 credits strongly recommended</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ (Arabic or another relevant language with affiliated institutions)

ELECTIVES <i>2-8 credits</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____

CREDITS BY SEMESTER/YEAR <i>51 credits</i>	
YEAR ONE	YEAR TWO
Fall: _____ January/Spring: _____ Summer: _____	Fall: <input type="checkbox"/> _____ January/Spring: <input type="checkbox"/> _____
TOTAL COMPLETED: _____	REMAINING: _____

APPENDIX D
Thesis Evaluation Guidelines

*This document is meant to serve as a general guide for components of a thesis.
Faculty may use their own discretion in adapting this rubric to the assignment.*

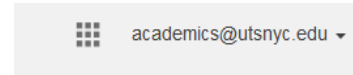
	Credit with Distinction (CD)	High Credit (CR)	Low Credit (CR)	Marginal Credit (MC) /No Credit (NC)
Thesis Question/Topic	Clearly stated; addresses a new question/important problem within area of study	Clearly stated; addresses a question/problem of some significance within area of study	Identifiable; addresses a question relevant to area of study	Missing, unclear, or irrelevant
Research	Thorough with highly relevant data from multiple sources; footnotes are informative and in proper form	Well researched with relevant data from multiple sources; footnotes are mostly in proper form	Adequate with data from most important sources; footnotes may contain errors but sufficiently identify sources	Poor; fails to include most important sources of data with inadequate citation of sources
Analysis	Demonstrates focused, logical, sharp, critical, and creative thinking	Demonstrates clear, coherent, critical, and often creative thinking	Demonstrates mostly coherent, critical thinking	Displays significant incoherence and a lack of critical thinking
Argument	Very well organized, clear, concise, flows seamlessly; persuasively supports the thesis	Well organized and persuasive; little repetition or inclusion of unnecessary material	Discernible structure generally supporting the thesis; unnecessary or repetitious material diminishes clarity and persuasiveness	Unclear; has little or no discernible structure; is unpersuasive
Writing	Extremely well written in terms of clarity, engaging style and vocabulary; perfect grammar and spelling	Well written in terms of clarity, style, and vocabulary; few errors in grammar and spelling	Adequate with some lack of clarity and style; more than a few grammatical or spelling errors	Poor due to lack of clarity and style; multiple errors in vocabulary, grammar, or spelling
Overall Mastery of Subject Matter/Topic	Very advanced, comprehensive knowledge and understanding of research topic	Advanced knowledge and understanding of research topic	Somewhat more than basic knowledge and understanding of research topic	Little knowledge or understanding of research topic
Theological/Spiritual/Ethical Integration	Appropriately substantive and sophisticated	Reasonably substantive	Some attention given	Minimal, inadequate or irrelevant
Significance	Highly original contribution to the field; raises important questions for further research	Some original ideas, or insights that raise some questions for further research	Interesting results but of limited originality and of limited value for further research	Unoriginal results and of little value

APPENDIX E

How to Access Your ePortfolio

Every Union student has an ePortfolio: a folder created by the Academic Office. That folder lives in the student's Google Drive associated with their @utsnyc.edu email address (not the Drive connected to a personal Gmail account). If you cannot access your ePortfolio after following these instructions, email Chris McFadden at cmcfadden@utsnyc.edu or academics@utsnyc.edu for assistance. Access to your ePortfolio is available any time.

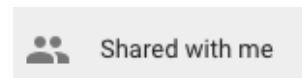
1. To access your Google Drive, log into your utsnyc.edu email inbox. In the upper right corner of the screen, there is an icon of nine small squares. Float your mouse over the icon to see "Google Apps" icon.



2. Select the "Google Apps" icon. A menu of apps appears including the **Google Drive** icon. Select the **Drive** icon to display your list of Google Drive folders.



3. On the left side of the screen, select the folder "Shared with me".



4. Look for **your ePortfolio** in the "Shared with me" folder, named like:
[Degree] ePortfolio - (2023) LastName, FirstName - ab1234

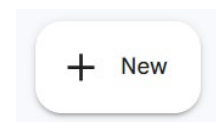
(your entrance year)

(your UNI)

5. Select the folder to open the contents of your ePortfolio.

How to Upload a Document to Your ePortfolio

1. Follow the above to access your ePortfolio
2. In the upper-left corner of the screen, select the "NEW" button
3. Select "File upload". Browse for your file on your computer and select it your file. In a few moments, an upload status box reads "1 upload complete"
4. Your uploaded file is shared automatically with your Assessment team



Follow this *Naming Convention* for Academic Work to Upload Files:

Last Name First Name Course # Instructor Name Genre/title

(example): *Mirando Nicole NT101 Niang Exegetical Paper (or Revelation Paper)*

Device Warning:

- If you are using Gmail in a web browser on a device such as a smartphone or tablet, you may not have access to Google Apps (you won't see the Google Apps square icon in your inbox).
- If you download the free Google Drive app for your device and sign in to your UNI Gmail account, you can access your Drive and ePortfolio directly.