

Master of Arts in Social Justice

Program Guide

UNION

**WHERE FAITH AND SCHOLARSHIP MEET
TO REIMAGINE THE WORK OF JUSTICE**

2023-2024

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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 Master of Arts in Social Justice (MASJ) is a primarily online, thirty-six credit, professionally-oriented degree. This degree equips graduate students to think critically, intersectionally, and creatively about the pursuit of human and planetary flourishing in a variety of global contexts. In addition to emphasizing the deep philosophical, ethical, practical, and historical foundations that undergird the work of social justice, students are provided with diverse curricular opportunities to explore racial and ethnic justice, ecojustice, gender and sexuality justice, and interreligious engagement – longtime areas of institutional commitment and expertise – on a deeper level.

This program is designed to meet the needs of part-time students looking to pursue advanced study. Courses are offered online, generally on weekday evenings and/or weekends. Students may take multiple courses on a single weeknight, or multiple courses across weeknights. Certain daytime, on-campus courses are applicable toward the MASJ program, as well as certain weekend intensive courses. A colloquium course is required in both the beginning and end of the program, but all other distributional requirements are offered on a rotating basis which varies from year to year.

Students in the MASJ program are given the opportunity to study the spiritual and historical underpinnings of social justice work. The curriculum requires students to take at least one course (from a variety of options across various fields, sub-fields, and disciplines) that includes content on the specific areas of “general” social justice, ecojustice, racial and ethnic justice, gender and sexuality justice, and interreligious engagement. Additionally, students have the ability to explore any of these social justice areas in greater depth.

PROGRAM GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

In keeping with the vision of Union’s founders that 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 Master of Arts in Social Justice (MASJ) has clearly articulated student learning outcomes appropriate to a graduate theological degree and is 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 should be well equipped to apply their learning in their professional settings.

Goal One: To understand fundamental theological and ethical principles and perspectives to inform social justice work in practice.

Learning Outcomes: Successful completion of a foundational social justice course; appropriate incorporation in culminating assignment in final UT 105 (*Social Justice Final Colloquium*) course.

Goal Two: To more deeply explore specific arenas of injustice and violence in society, including racism and racial/ethnic injustice; justice issues around gender and LGBTQIA+ equity; and ecojustice, especially regarding the disproportionate impact of climate crisis on communities of color and the poor; and underlying philosophy and strategies for ethical interreligious engagement.

Learning Outcomes: Successful completion of one or more courses in ecojustice, gender and sexuality justice, racial and ethnic justice, and interreligious engagement; appropriate incorporation in culminating assignment in final UT 105 (*Social Justice Final Colloquium*) course.

Goal Three: To gain and integrate 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.

Learning Outcomes: Successful completion of one or more courses in ecojustice, gender and sexuality justice, racial and ethnic justice, and interreligious engagement; appropriate incorporation in culminating assignment in final UT 105 (*Social Justice Final Colloquium*) course.

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

The Master of Arts in Social Justice (MASJ) degree requires completion of a minimum of thirty-six credits, which can be completed in as little as twenty-one months. Students may also choose to progress at a slower pace, taking up to thirty-six months to complete the program. The MASJ begins with an introductory colloquium course (UT 103), and concludes with a final colloquium course (UT 105) and project.

The program is comprised of a required course on the foundations of social justice in addition to courses in four specific areas of distributional requirements. The four distributional areas are ecojustice, racial and ethnic justice, gender and sexuality justice, and interreligious engagement. Students are required to take a minimum of three credits in each of these areas. Additional courses related to social justice goals are taken as general electives.

Credit Distribution Requirements

The following chart outlines the requirements for the degree:

CREDIT DISTRIBUTION REQUIREMENTS	
	Credits Required
INTRODUCTORY COLLOQUIUM COURSE (UT 103)	1
SOCIAL JUSTICE AREAS – (DISTRIBUTIONAL)	18
• General Social Justice	3
• Ecojustice	3
• Gender/Sexuality Justice	3
• Interreligious Engagement	3
• Racial/Ethnic Justice	3
• Additional course in any of the above areas	3
GENERAL ELECTIVES	15
FINAL COLLOQUIUM COURSE (UT 105)	2
TOTAL CREDITS	36

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)

Course Load and Planning

This program is designed to be completed on a part-time basis. First-semester students generally take seven credits (two three-credit courses plus one-credit introductory colloquium). In subsequent semesters, students are required to take a minimum of three credits each fall and spring term, with a maximum of eight credits. For students intending to complete the program in twenty-one months, the plan of study includes seven credits in the first fall or spring semester (depending on entry term), followed by six credits each subsequent fall and spring, and three credits each January and summer semester.

Note that credit loads have financial aid implications; be sure to consult with the financial aid office prior to dropping below six credits in fall or spring, or dropping below three credits in January or summer. The maximum time to completion for MASJ students is three years.

Incoming MASJ students are required to take UT 103 (*Social Justice Introductory Colloquium*) in their first semester of the program. Graduating MASJ students are required to take UT 105 (*Social Justice Final Colloquium*) in their final semester (if final semester is January or summer, UT 105 should be taken in the preceding fall or spring).

Some legitimate reasons may exist for not being able to complete the degree in three years, including financial circumstances, family obligations, or special educational needs. 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 in the academic catalogue on this webpage: <https://utsnyc.edu/academics/registrar/course-catalog-academic-policies/>.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The following provides a general overview of course requirements. Students are expected to carefully **read and review the academic catalogue** for institutional policies/procedures as well as course descriptions.

Colloquium Requirement

Students in the Master of Arts in Social Justice (MASJ) must complete two colloquium courses. UT 103 – *Social Justice Introductory Colloquium* – is a one-credit course taken during the first semester of the degree program in which students deeply engage with foundational approaches to general social justice in general, and with one additional social justice distributional area (eco-justice, gender/sexuality justice, interreligious engagement, racial/ethnic justice). Students in UT 103 also develop goals for the program of study. UT 103 can be taken only once for credit, but MASJ students are encouraged to repeat UT 103 for audit as subsequent semesters focus on additional distributional areas on a rotating basis. Students **must** register each and every time they participate in UT 103 while enrolled in the program.

UT 105 – *Social Justice Final Colloquium* – is a two-credit course taken in the final semester of the degree program in which students complete a culminating project that demonstrates successful integration of their coursework and application to social justice practice.

Distributional Requirements

A total of eighteen credits is taken across the following areas: general social justice; ecojustice; racial and ethnic justice; gender and sexuality justice; and interreligious engagement. A minimum of three credits in each of the above areas is required, with six credits taken in one of the five distributional areas. While many courses apply toward multiple of these areas, each course may fulfill only one area at a time. Students are able (and encouraged) to take additional courses in any of the distributional areas to fulfill elective credit requirements.

All courses, exclusive of language courses, available to master's degree-seeking students at Union may potentially count toward distributional area credits required for the degree. Determination of applicability of any course outside of online offerings designed specifically to fulfill MASJ distributional requirements is up to the discretion of the field and faculty advisor.

General Electives

All courses, exclusive of language courses, available to master's degree-seeking students at Union may potentially be counted towards the general electives required for the degree. Guided readings (see below) may only fulfill general elective requirements.

Guided Reading

Students may propose a guided reading for up to three credits with approval and under the direction of a member of the faculty. The specific *Guided Reading* form found on this webpage, is required to be completed and submitted, serving as course registration permission: <https://utsnyc.edu/academics/registrar/course-registration-grades/>. Any guided reading credits may only fulfill general elective requirements. View the full policy, including an established limit and deadlines, in the academic catalogue.

General/Supplemental Co-Curricular Courses

A variety of *General* (UT) and *Supplemental Co-Curricular* (SU) courses provide opportunities for personal and spiritual enrichment. A maximum of one SU course and one UT course is permitted as a zero-credit **audit** each semester at no additional charge during enrollment of the program; standard two- or three-credit courses are not permitted for audit. Students may take up to **three credits of the following courses toward general elective requirements: SU 101 (Graduate Writing Seminar), SU 150 (Community Engagement), SU 190 (Topics in Ministry)**. Complete and submit the appropriate form found on this *Course Registration* webpage to register for the course: <https://utsnyc.edu/academics/registrar/course-registration-grades/>. Consult the academic catalogue for the one-credit General and Supplemental Co-Curricular courses.

Cross-Registration

With approval of the faculty advisor and Academic Dean, MASJ students may take up to six graduate-level credits in courses offered at other accredited schools. Courses listed in the Union catalog may *not* be taken at other schools. Registration for outside courses is normally limited to one course per semester. Partner schools are those with which Union has a cross-registration or other recognition agreement, *only* the following:

- *New York Theological School Consortium* signatories: Fordham University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Fordham University Graduate School of Religion and Religious Education, General Theological Seminary, Hebrew Union College, Jewish Theological Seminary, New York Theological Seminary, and St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary
- *Columbia University*: Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, School of the Arts, and School of International and Public Affairs
- *Drew University* Theological School

Note: *Columbia University Teacher's College* is not a partner school

Approved graduate courses within the *New York Theological Consortium* may be taken at no additional cost. Approved courses taken at *Columbia University* are subject to semesterly course fees. The cost of taking courses at non-partner schools is the student's sole responsibility, although students may appeal to the Academic Dean. It is within the discretion of the Academic Dean to grant or deny, in whole or in part, a tuition subsidy for courses taken in non-partner schools. Students who wish to take courses in *any* outside partner and non-partner school must submit a request first approved by the faculty advisor, then submitted to the Registrar, then approved by the Academic Dean. A minimum grade of B (or equivalent) must be earned for credit to be awarded. Students are expected to frequent this webpage: <https://utsnyc.edu/academics/registrar/course-registration-grades/cross-registration/> for **complete information including approval and registration process**.

ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT

Consultation with the faculty advisor takes place for a variety of purposes within a variety of contexts. Academic advisement may take place at any time and students are strongly encouraged to seek advisement as needed. However, the Seminary has established specific requirements for each degree program with regard to academic advisement that must occur prior to course registration.

Course Registration

Incoming students are **required** to meet with the faculty advisor for curricular advisement prior to registering for the first and second semesters of study (first fall and first spring). During that first academic year, course registration remains blocked by a hold until the faculty advisor confirms with Registrar that a meaningful academic advisement occurred. Students are strongly encouraged to meet with their faculty advisor prior to course registration in all subsequent terms. The course registration periods are normally as follows:

- Summer: February- April
- Fall: April-September
- January: November-December
- Spring: November-January

Students 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 their faculty advisor or registrar@utsnyc.edu as appropriate.

A pre-graduation degree audit is completed during the penultimate term in the program (fall or spring preceding the semester of graduation). Beyond the required advisement sessions with faculty advisors, *all* faculty members, the Academic Dean, Associate Dean, and senior administrative staff are ready and willing to offer advisement in their areas of expertise and competency.

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING AND CURRICULAR EFFECTIVENESS

Assessment of student learning at Union is a comprehensive and continuous process that takes place 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

All students at Union have been provided with a personal ePortfolio where evidence of their fulfillment of degree requirements and their learning achievement is collected and periodically reviewed. The ePortfolio is accessed through Google Drive affiliated with the @utsnyc.edu email (not accessible in personal Gmail accounts). See appendix for more information and instructions.

The current assessment plan requires that the following documents be deposited into the ePortfolios at specified times (by specified persons) over the course of the student's progression through the program. **Failure to submit required materials may result in a hold on your account, which prevents course registration, transcript requests, and receiving your diploma.**

Preliminary Documents

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

Registrar's Documents

4. Unofficial transcript with narrative evaluations – by Academic Office

Academic Work

5. UT 103 (*Social Justice Introductory Colloquium*) initial paper – by student prior to start of second term
6. At least one assignment **with instructor comments** from each of the distributional areas to demonstrate learning goals (see above) – by student prior to start of UT 105
 - Foundations/General Social Justice
 - Ecojustice
 - Racial and Ethnic Justice
 - Gender and Sexuality Justice
 - Interreligious Engagement
7. UT 105 (*Social Justice Final Colloquium*) integrative paper – by student prior to graduation

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

Last Name First Name Course # Instructor Name Genre/Title

(Example: McFadden Chris NT101 Niang Exegetical Paper/Revelation Paper)

Assessment Surveys and Reports

8. Student Self-Assessment Survey (SAS) – deposited by student one month prior to graduation
9. Final Assessment Report (FAR) prepared by advisor – deposited by Academic Office summer after graduation
10. 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 program's learning goals. The final assessment process again assesses the goals and learning outcomes at graduation time. In the final semester, students deposit additional materials related to these learning outcomes into their ePortfolios, including the final project, and complete a Self-Assessment Survey. Faculty advisors, during the final assessment period, complete and submit a Final Assessment Report reviewing progression of the student's learning and skills as evidenced by ePortfolio contents. 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.

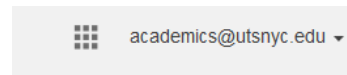
Assessment is not a credit-bearing process. The Seminary is required by its accreditation agencies to assess all of its programs. Therefore, ***timely participation in and completion of the assessment process is a requirement for advancement through the program and conferral of the degree.***

APPENDIX

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.

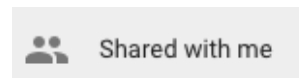
1. To access your Google Drive, log into your utsnyc.edu email inbox. In the upper right corner of the screen, there is an icon of nine small squares. Float your mouse over the icon to see "Google Apps" icon.



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

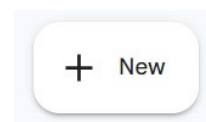
(your entrance year)

(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.