

# **Master of Arts in Social Justice**

## **Program Guide**

# **UNION**

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

**2025 - 2026**

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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 thirty-six credit, online, professionally-oriented degree that equips graduate students to think critically, intersectionally, and creatively about human and planetary flourishing in a variety of global contexts. It emphasizes the deep philosophical, ethical, practical, and historical foundations that undergird the work of social justice and provides diverse curricular opportunities to explore racial and ethnic justice, ecojustice, gender and sexuality justice, interreligious engagement, and social movements – longtime areas of institutional commitment and expertise – on a deeper level.

## 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 thirty-six credits, which are typically completed in 33 months (Standard Plan) and can be completed in 24 months (Accelerated Plan). The degree begins with an introductory colloquium course (UT 103), and concludes with a final project and colloquium course (UT 105).

The program requires courses in five distribution areas: ecojustice, racial and ethnic justice, gender and sexuality justice, interreligious engagement, and social movements. 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) | 3                |
| SOCIAL JUSTICE AREAS – (DISTRIBUTION)   | 18               |
| • General Social Justice                | 3                |
| • Ecojustice                            | 3                |
| • Gender/Sexuality Justice              | 3                |
| • Interreligious Engagement             | 3                |
| • Racial/Ethnic Justice                 | 3                |
| • Social Movements                      | 3                |
| GENERAL ELECTIVES                       | 12               |
| FINAL COLLOQUIUM COURSE (UT 105)        | 3                |
| 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),

**Interreligious Engagement:** Interreligious Engagement (IE), Buddhism-focused courses (BU), Islam-focused courses (IS)

**Practical Theology:** Communication Arts (CA), Worship, Preaching, & Arts (CW), Integrative & Field-Based Education (FE), Psychology & Religion (PS), Practical Theology (PT), Religion & Education (RE), Religion & 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. Students generally take six credits each fall and spring semester and, depending on the pacing of their program, three to six credits over the summer. No more than six credits can be taken in one fall, spring, or summer term.

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. 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 spring semester.

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: <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 three-credit course taken during the first semester of the degree program in which students deeply engage with foundational approaches to social justice and one additional social justice distribution area (eco-justice, gender/sexuality justice, interreligious engagement, racial/ethnic justice, and social movements). Students in UT 103 also develop goals for the program of study.

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

### **Distribution Requirements**

A total of eighteen credits is taken across the following areas: general social justice; ecojustice; racial and ethnic justice; gender and sexuality justice; interreligious engagement; and social movements. Each area has courses designed to fulfill that requirement offered on a rotating basis every year. Students may also, with the approval of the faculty advisor and the Academic Office, substitute an alternative course to fulfill a distribution requirement. Students can take additional courses in any of the distribution areas as elective credits.

### **General Electives**

All courses, exclusive of language courses, available to master's degree-seeking students at Union may potentially count towards the general electives required for the degree, with advisor approval.

### **Culminating Project**

For the culminating project, students identify a social justice issue within/facing a particular community. Incorporating, integrating, and applying ideas, themes, or concepts from the MASJ coursework, students will then offer a constructive response, develop a helpful approach, or articulate an insightful framing/re-framing of the issue. Students may write a 15-20 page essay or create a project accompanied by a 7-10 page written component. Planning begins well in advance of the semester that a student enrolls in UT 105, and a project overview form is due in October for all both fall and spring projects. Students recruit a faculty member to serve as their project supervisor, and with the UT 105 instructor serving as the secondary supervisor.

### **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. To register, students submit the online *Guided Reading* form: <https://utsnyc.edu/academics/registrar/course-registration-grades/>. Guided reading credits generally fulfill elective requirements, though they may occasionally be approved to fulfill a distribution requirement. The full guided reading policy is available in the academic catalogue.

## General/Supplemental Co-Curricular Courses

A variety of *Supplemental Co-Curricular* (SU) courses provide opportunities for personal and spiritual enrichment. A maximum of one SU course is permitted as a zero-credit **audit** each semester at no additional charge during enrollment of the program. Consult the academic catalogue for a full list of Supplemental Co-Curricular courses.

## Audit Policy

Students in the MASJ program may audit up to two courses, with advisor permission, after completing their first year. The Supplemental Co-Curricular courses mentioned above are an exception, and may be audited during the first year and do not count toward the two audited courses.

## Cross-Registration

With approval of the faculty advisor and Academic Dean, MASJ students may take up to six graduate-level credits at partner institutions. Cross-registration is not allowed in a student's first semester, and is generally limited to one course per semester. In the absence of exceptional circumstances, courses available at Union must be taken at Union, and students may not fulfill distribution requirements through cross-registration. 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.

## ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT

Faculty advisors are assigned by the Academic Office. Academic advisement may take place at any time and students are strongly encouraged to seek advisement as needed beyond the times specified below.

## Course Registration

Incoming students are **required** to meet with the faculty advisor for curricular advisement prior to registering each semester. All students have a registration hold on their accounts that the advisor removes after meeting with a student. The course registration periods are normally as follows:

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

Each semester, the Registrar sends self-registration instructions to students' @utsnyc.edu email accounts. Questions should be directed to their faculty advisor or [registrar@utsnyc.edu](mailto: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). All faculty members, the Academic Dean, Assistant 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 an 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. See appendix for instructions.

The following documents must be deposited into the ePortfolios at specified times (by specified persons) throughout the student's degree program. **Failure to submit required materials may result in a diploma hold.**

### Preliminary Documents (uploaded prior to Orientation)

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 after final grades are submitted

### Academic Work

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

Distribution Area\_Course #\_Instructor Name\_Paper Title

(Example: General Social Justice\_SE 322\_Dorrien\_Interrogating Ethics)

### Assessment Surveys and Reports

8. Student Self-Assessment Survey (SAS) – deposited by Academic Office prior to graduation
9. Final Advisor Report (FAR) – deposited by Academic Office summer after graduation

### 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. Students deposit course materials related to these learning outcomes into their ePortfolios throughout their program, and complete a Self-Assessment Survey at the end of their program. Faculty advisors complete and submit a Final Assessment Report reviewing progression of the student's learning and skills as evidenced by ePortfolio contents. Union sometimes participates in the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) Graduating Student Questionnaire (GSQ), and notifies graduates by email if the school is participating.

Assessment is not a credit-bearing process. The Seminary is required by its accreditation agencies to assess all of its programs. **Failure to submit the required materials may result in a hold on your diploma.**

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix A: Degree Planner

Appendix B: Culminating Project Instructions

Appendix C: ePortfolio Access Instructions

# APPENDIX A

## Master of Arts in Social Justice (MASJ) Degree Planner

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Degree Audit Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### SOCIAL JUSTICE AREAS

18 credits

- ☐ General Social Justice – 3 cr.
  - SE 322 – Social Ethics in the Making, **or**
  - \_\_\_\_\_  
*approved alternative*
- ☐ Ecojustice – 3 cr.
  - IE 263 – Indigenous Voices, **or**
  - PT 237 – Intro to Earth Ethics, **or**
  - \_\_\_\_\_  
*approved alternative*
- ☐ Gender/Sexuality Justice – 3 cr.
  - TS 215 – Queer Theology, **or**
  - HS 121 – Early Christian Genders & Sexualities, **or**
  - \_\_\_\_\_  
*approved alternative*
- ☐ Interreligious Engagement – 3 cr.
  - IE 102 – Religions in the City: Intro to IE, **or**
  - HS/IE 233 – Religion, History, & Turtle Island, **or**
  - \_\_\_\_\_  
*approved alternative*
- ☐ Racial/Ethnic Justice – 3 cr.
  - RS/IE 335 – Culture, Race, Gender & Religion, **or**
  - \_\_\_\_\_  
*approved alternative*
- ☐ Social Movements – 3 cr.
  - PT 220 – Peacemaking & Social Movements, **or**
  - PT 215 – Moral Leadership in Times of Crisis, **or**
  - \_\_\_\_\_  
*approved alternative*

### GENERAL ELECTIVES

12 credits

- |                          |             |                     |                |
|--------------------------|-------------|---------------------|----------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | _____       | _____               | _____          |
|                          | <i>code</i> | <i>course title</i> | <i>credits</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | _____       | _____               | _____          |
|                          | <i>code</i> | <i>course title</i> | <i>credits</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | _____       | _____               | _____          |
|                          | <i>code</i> | <i>course title</i> | <i>credits</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | _____       | _____               | _____          |
|                          | <i>code</i> | <i>course title</i> | <i>credits</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | _____       | _____               | _____          |
|                          | <i>code</i> | <i>course title</i> | <i>credits</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | _____       | _____               | _____          |
|                          | <i>code</i> | <i>course title</i> | <i>credits</i> |

### CULMINATING PROJECT

0 credits

- ☐ Project Overview Submission
- Primary Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_
- Secondary Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Project Submission

### INTRODUCTORY COLLOQUIUM

3 credits

- ☐ UT 103 – Social Justice Introductory Colloquium  
*First semester*

### FINAL PROJECT COLLOQUIUM

3 credits

- ☐ UT 105 – Social Justice Final Project Colloquium  
*Final semester*

### CREDITS BY SEMESTER/YEAR

36 credits

| YEAR ONE               |       | YEAR TWO                 |       | YEAR THREE      |       |
|------------------------|-------|--------------------------|-------|-----------------|-------|
| Fall:                  | _____ | Fall:                    | _____ | Fall:           | _____ |
| January/Spring:        | _____ | January/Spring:          | _____ | January/Spring: | _____ |
| Summer:                | _____ | Summer:                  | _____ | Summer:         | _____ |
| TOTAL COMPLETED: _____ |       | CREDITS REMAINING: _____ |       |                 |       |

## APPENDIX B

### Culminating Project Instructions

#### OVERVIEW

The culminating project is a requirement of the Master of Arts in Social Justice (MASJ) degree. It is completed during a student's last semester, while they are enrolled in UT 105.

The goal of the MASJ program is to help students see how a broad understanding of various fields of theological study can contribute to a more robust understanding of social issues and a deeper capacity to advance social justice causes. In UT 105-Social Justice Colloquium II, students will complete a culminating project representing an integrative, applied work. For the culminating project, students will identify one social justice issue of concern within/facing a particular community. Incorporating, integrating, and applying ideas, themes, or concepts from the MASJ coursework, students will then offer a constructive response, develop a helpful approach, or articulate an insightful framing/re-framing of the issue at hand. Although the culminating project may take various forms, it must include at least a 7-10 page written component. Students may also choose to write a longer essay (15-20 pages) for their project.

Each student will work with a faculty member who will serve as the primary supervisor of the culminating project. Students will meet with the faculty supervisor at least twice during the semester to ensure that the project planning is organized and coherent, that any necessary research is thorough and sufficient, and that adequate regular progress is being made. They will also meet with their secondary supervisor (the UT 105 instructor) at least once.

#### DEADLINES/MILESTONES

##### Fall 2025 Projects

##### **Spring/Summer 2025**

- Begin thinking about the culminating project and which faculty member might make a good project supervisor. Approach that faculty member to discuss your culminating project idea and ask if they will be your project supervisor.
- (If ready) submit the [Project Overview Form](#)
- Register for UT 105 for the fall semester.

##### **September 2025**

- Complete your project proposal and circulate to your supervisors for review

##### **October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

- Last date to submit the [Project Overview Form](#)

##### **December 2025**

- Project due December 5<sup>th</sup> by 5pm
- UT 105 meets December 6<sup>th</sup> for project presentations and celebrations

## **Spring 2026 Projects**

### **Spring/Summer 2025**

- Begin thinking about the culminating project and which faculty member might make a good project supervisor. Approach that faculty member to discuss your culminating project idea and ask if they will be your project supervisor.
- (If ready) submit the [Project Overview Form](#)

### **Fall 2025**

- October 10<sup>th</sup> the [Project Overview Form](#) is due
- Register for UT 105 for the spring semester.

### **February 2026**

- Complete your project proposal and circulate to your supervisors for review

### **May 2026**

- Project due May 1<sup>st</sup> by 5pm
- UT 105 meets May 2<sup>nd</sup> for project presentations and celebrations

## **GENERAL GUIDELINES**

The integrative paper should be written in a standard, double-spaced, twelve-point font with one-inch margins. Footnotes should be formatted in ten-point font.

Observe the highest standard with correct spelling, punctuation, grammar, and citations. Follow consistent format and typography found in a generally recognized style manual. Footnotes and references should appear at the bottom of the appropriate pages, or at the end of each chapter, or just before the bibliography.

Whichever style/format you choose, follow it consistently. Recommended manuals include Turabian's A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations and the Chicago Manual of Style.

The **title page** should contain the title of the paper, author's name, date, and degree. Example:

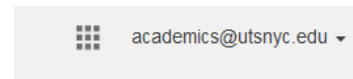
**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Arts in Social Justice  
at Union Theological Seminary [date]**

## APPENDIX C

### 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 Tim Halvorsen at [thalvorsen@uts.columbia.edu](mailto:thalvorsen@uts.columbia.edu) or [academics@utsnyc.edu](mailto:academics@utsnyc.edu) for assistance. Access to your ePortfolio is available any time.

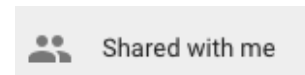
1. To access your Google Drive, log into your utsnyc.edu email inbox. In the upper right corner of the screen, there is an icon of nine small squares. Float your mouse over the icon to see "Google Apps" icon.



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

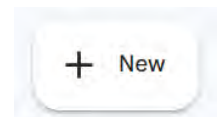
(your entrance year)

(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
4. your file. In a few moments, an upload status box reads "1 upload complete"
5. Your uploaded file is shared automatically with your Assessment team



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

Distribution Area\_Course #\_Instructor Name\_Paper Title  
(Example: General Social Justice\_SE 322\_Dorrien\_Interrogating Ethics)

### 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.