

Master of Sacred Theology

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

OVERVIEW

The Master of Sacred Theology (STM) is an advanced, full-time, one-year graduate degree primarily for students already awarded an MDiv or other graduate theological degree. This academically oriented degree aims to prepare individuals to “study more deeply a theologically related discipline, often in preparation for doctoral studies” (*ATS Standard 4.12*). The STM degree includes advanced-level coursework, a language requirement, and culminating scholarly research (*ATS Standard 4.13*).

The STM program has three goals (*ATS Standards 4.12 & 4.13*):

1. To acquire advanced mastery of a focused area in a theologically related discipline;
2. To develop an ability to formulate productive research questions and to use research resources and methods in the chosen area or discipline;
3. To improve language proficiency appropriate to the field of specialization.

This degree offers an opportunity for a relatively open structure of advanced theological study for those who already have theological degrees. A previous graduate theological degree (MAR or MDiv) is a prerequisite for admission to the Master of Sacred Theology program. At Union, this degree has been particularly valuable in bringing a wide range of international students to the campus. The STM does not necessarily lead to admission to Union’s Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) program.

Union’s curricula intentionally engage disparities in society based on gender, race, class, sexuality and other marginalizing forces. This is both a strength and a challenge of studying in this environment. The goal is to provide the tools to respond with analytic rigor and ministerial compassion. The Seminary’s urban location and university affiliation also help shape study at Union.

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

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

Coursework

The Master of Sacred Theology (STM) degree is normally completed in one year and requires satisfactory completion of a minimum of twenty-four (24) credits in advanced courses (*ATS Standard 4.12*). Students are generally limited to twelve credits (four courses) each fall and spring semester. The STM includes a combination of 200-level, 300-level, and 400-level courses. An area of focus is selected as part of the degree requirements.

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), Buddhist Studies (BU), Islamic Studies (IS)

Practical Theology: Anglican Studies (AS), 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)

Language Requirement

Students must pass a translation exam in a modern language (typically German, French, or Spanish) appropriate to their field of study (*ATS Standard 4.13*) or provide evidence of passing three terms of coursework in biblical Hebrew or Greek at Union or another seminary/graduate theological program. Requests for a modern language substitution, if the native language is one other than English, are reviewed. Students should submit a **Language Substitution Request** form https://utsnyc.formstack.com/forms/lang_substitute by the end of the add/drop period of the first semester, which the faculty advisor will then approve.

Extended Paper

Students write an extended research paper (30-40 pages) related to their area of focus as an extra assignment in one of their courses. This extended paper carries no additional credit but is graded and evaluated. In the semester this is written, students must also register for UT 433 – *Extended Paper* (0 credits). Details, including submission instructions and deadlines, are available on this **Extended Paper** form:

<https://utsnyc.edu/academics/registrar/course-catalog-academic-policies/s-t-m-extended-paper-application/>.

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, STM students may take up to six graduate-level credits in courses offered at other accredited schools. Students should refer to the Academic Catalogue and website (<https://utsnyc.edu/academics/registrar/course-registration-grades/cross-registration/>) for complete information regarding the policies and procedures for cross-registration.

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

As outlined in the following table, each of the program goals has a corresponding learning outcome, which is measured using direct and indirect evidence, including an admissions or application essay, a degree planner, an official transcript, a language exam or equivalent, an extended paper, a student self-assessment survey, and a final assessment report completed by the student's advisor. (ATS Standard 2.6)

| PROGRAM GOALS | LEARNING OUTCOMES | ASSESSMENT DATA |
|--|---|--|
| To acquire advanced mastery of a focused area or discipline in the context of general theological study | Demonstrates knowledge and understanding of a focused area or discipline within the context of advanced courses and independent study in a specialized field. | Student ePortfolio contents: 1. Admissions essay 2. Transcript with advanced-level grades (qualitative) and course evaluations (narrative) 3. Extended paper with instructor comments |
| To develop an ability to formulate productive research questions and to use research resources and methods in the chosen area or discipline | Demonstrates a capacity to conduct original research on a chosen topic of interest with appropriate resources and scholarly research and writing competence. | Student ePortfolio contents: 1. Advanced-level grades and course evaluations 2. Extended paper with instructor comments |
| To improve language proficiency | Demonstrates reading proficiency in a modern language (German, French, Spanish) or biblical language | Modern language exam or seminary transcript |

AREA OF FOCUS

An area of focus, with a minimum of nine credits at the 200-level or higher, is required. Courses must be taken for full credit, not as audit or reading credit. See below for each focus area's description and requirements. All areas of focus require that students write an extended paper on a related topic in consultation with a faculty advisor in the field.

Possible ***Areas of Focus*** for the STM degree are:

- Bible: Hebrew Bible
- Bible: New Testament
- Bible: Cross-Testament
- Historical Studies
- Interreligious Engagement
- Psychology and Religion
- Religion and Black Experience
- Social Ethics
- Theological Studies

Bible

This area of focus is primarily intended for students preparing for doctoral work or teaching positions (e.g., Bible at religiously affiliated secondary schools). Students immerse themselves in at least one ancient language and refine their skills in exegesis and interpretation.

Substantial historical-critical work on the Bible is a prerequisite, including academic introductions to the critical study of the Bible. Additionally, at least one year of academic study of biblical Greek (for New Testament students) and/or biblical Hebrew (for Hebrew Bible students) is expected before enrolling in the program.

Course Requirements – minimum 9 credits

Hebrew Bible:

- Intermediate Hebrew (HB 313) for students entering with only one year of biblical Hebrew – 3 credits
- Two or more courses in Bible, at least one in Hebrew Bible – minimum 6 credits
- Recommended: Advanced course in biblical Greek

New Testament:

- Intermediate Greek (NT 315) for students entering with only one year of biblical Greek –3 credits
- Two or more courses in Bible, at least one in New Testament – minimum 6 credits
- Recommended: Advanced course in biblical Hebrew (or approved Greek substitute)

Cross Testament:

- Intermediate Greek (NT 315) or Hebrew (HB 313) for students entering with only one year of a biblical language – 3 credits
- Two or more courses in Bible (HB/NT/BX)– minimum 6 credits

Historical Studies

This area of focus is aimed at students who intend to deepen their knowledge and skills in the study of historical processes that have shaped Christian churches and other religious communities. Some students consider doctoral study in history in the context of seminary theological education, religious studies, or religious history as practiced in history departments. Students acquire skills in evaluating primary sources and in comparing and contrasting of analytical arguments and theories as applied to historical questions. While many courses foreground Christianity, students may shape their area of focus around another tradition or combination of traditions as course offerings allow.

Course Requirements – minimum 9 credits

- Advanced Historical Studies courses in a particular period

Courses not identified as Historical Studies (HS) but have substantial historical content may enrich/complement a student's focus area, and may be approved by the student's advisor.

Interreligious Engagement

This area of focus is intended for students planning to pursue advanced studies, teach, or work in applied contexts that require competency in interreligious engagement (IE). Students with an IE focus 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 – minimum 9 credits

- Advanced courses in three broad IE areas:
 - theories and methods
 - tradition-specific (e.g., IS/STX 242-*The Qur'an: Engaging a Sacred Text*, BU 240-*Socially Engaged Buddhism*)
 - 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*)

Psychology and Religion

This area of focus 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. Psychology and religion 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.

Students are expected to have completed introductory pastoral and spiritual care, pastoral listening practicum courses or equivalencies, and one unit of Clinical Pastoral Education.

Course Requirements – minimum 9 credits

- Advanced Psychology and Religion courses
- PS 415-*Readings in Psychoanalysis: From Object Relations to Relationality* is strongly recommended for students focusing on psychological theory

Some Practical Theology (PT) courses with substantial related content may count towards this concentration. Consult the faculty advisor or academic office for review/approval.

Religion and Black Experience

This area of focus 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 focus, 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., HS/SE 257-*Black Social Gospel, 1870-1940*, 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

Social Ethics

This area of focus equips students to identify multiple sources, methods, and norms for social ethics. Some Theological Studies (TS) courses with substantial ethics content may count towards a Social Ethics (SE) focus area. Consult the faculty advisor or academic office for review/approval.

Course Requirements – minimum 9 credits

- Foundational Social Ethics course
- Advanced Social Ethics courses – minimum 3 credits
- Additional advanced course(s) as approved by the faculty advisor – minimum 3 credits

Theological Studies

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

Students are expected to have taken introductory theological studies courses equivalent to TS 104.

Course Requirements – minimum 9 credits

- Advanced course in the discipline of Philosophy of Religion (PR) or Social Ethics (SE) – minimum 3 credits
- Advanced course in comparative theology, Islamic theology, or theology outside the Christian tradition – minimum 3 credits
- Advanced Theological Studies (TS) courses, preferably on a significant theologian or theological loci – minimum 3 credits

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Degree Planner

Appendix B: Extended Paper Evaluation Guidelines

Appendix C: ePortfolio Access Instructions

Appendix A

Master of Sacred Theology (STM) Degree Planner

Student Name: _____

Degree Audit Date: _____

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS:

- **Twenty-four (24) Credits** of advanced level courses at 300-level or higher; some 200-level courses are also appropriate.
 - 100-level courses are not applicable credits toward degree requirements.
- **Area of Focus** with a minimum of nine credits at the 200-level or higher and an extended paper (see below); refer to the STM Program Guide for specific requirements for each area of focus
- **Extended Paper** (30-40 pages) on an approved topic of the student's Area of Focus written as an extra or lengthened assignment in the same semester as the course.
 - Students register for the 0-credit course UT 433 the semester the paper is submitted.
- **Modern Language Exam** in French, German, or Spanish, or equivalent as approved by advisor.
 - Students with a native language other than English may submit a request to substitute this requirement (see appropriate section in program guide).
 - The equivalent of Union's biblical Hebrew or biblical Greek courses (two semesters/two parts) may also substitute for this requirement with evidence of a Seminary's official transcript.

AREA OF FOCUS

Minimum 9 credits

Area: _____

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

GENERAL ELECTIVES

0-15 credits; 200 level or above

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

MODERN LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT

3 credits

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| | <i>Language exam completed</i> |
| | or |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| | <i>Language substitution request approved</i> |

EXTENDED PAPER

3 credits

☐ UT 433: _____

Fall/Spring

Reader: _____

CREDITS BY SEMESTER

24 credits

Fall: _____ Jan: _____ Spring: _____

COMPLETED: _____ **REMAINING:** _____

APPENDIX B

Extended Paper Rubric

The below is meant to serve as a general guide for components of an extended paper.

Faculty may use their own discretion in adapting this rubric to the assignment.

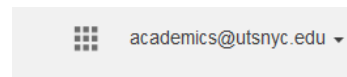
| | High Credit (CR) | Credit (CR) | Low Credit (CR) | Marginal Credit (MC) /No Credit (NC) |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| Thesis Question/Topic | Clearly stated; addresses a new question/important problem within area of study | Clearly stated; addresses a question/problem of some significance within area of 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 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 or academics@utsnyc.edu for assistance. Access to your ePortfolio is available any time.

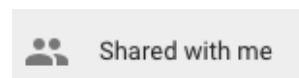
1. To access your Google Drive, log into your utsnyc.edu email inbox. In the upper right corner of the screen, there is an icon of nine small squares. Float your mouse over the icon to see "Google Apps" icon.



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 (2025) - LastName, FirstName - ab1234

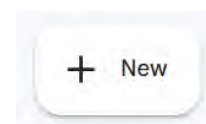
(your entrance year)

(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



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.