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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)

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)

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

In consultation with the faculty, 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. Details, including submission instructions and deadlines, are available on this **Extended Paper** form, which should be submitted by mid-October: <https://utsnyc.edu/academics/registrar/course-catalog-academic-policies/s-t-m-extended-paper-application/>. In the semester this is written, students must also self-register for the equivalent 0-credit course, UT 433.

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. 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.

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:

- Anglican Studies (Episcopal and Anglican Studies)
- Bible: Hebrew Bible
- Bible: New Testament
- Bible: Cross-Testament
- Buddhism and Interreligious Engagement
- Historical Studies
- Interreligious Engagement
- Psychology and Religion
- Religion and Black Experience
- Religion and Society
- Social Ethics
- Theological Studies

Anglican Studies

This area of focus is intended for students with a previous theological degree (MA or MDiv) to deepen their knowledge and skills in Anglican theology, history, and liturgy in preparation for doctoral study and/or the Episcopal Church's annual general ordination exam.

Course Requirements – minimum 9 credits

- Advanced Anglican Studies courses, examples include CH 314-*Church, State and Empire: Anglicanism in Britain and America*, ST 244-*Modern Anglican Theology*, AS 201-*Anglican Liturgy (Historical)*, AS 202-*Anglican Missions and Social Justice*, AS 203-*Anglican Liturgy (Practical)*
- AS 212-*Discernment of Call* and AS 302-*Capstone in Anglican Studies* are recommended

Bible

This area of focus is primarily intended for students preparing for further academic study (e.g., 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.

Course Requirements – minimum 9 credits

Hebrew Bible:

- HB 313A-*Intermediate Hebrew I* and HB 313B-*Intermediate Hebrew II* for students with only one year of prior academic study 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:

- NT 315A-*Intermediate Greek I* and NT 315B-*Intermediate Greek II* for students with only one year of prior academic study 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:

- NT 315A-*Intermediate Greek I* and NT 315B-*Intermediate Greek II* or HB 313A-*Intermediate Hebrew I* and HB 313B-*Intermediate Hebrew II* for students with only one year of prior academic study of either Greek or Hebrew – 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 have the opportunity to acquire skills in evaluation of primary sources, and in comparing and contrasting of 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 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 fulfill this requirement and/or enrich/complement a student’s focus area. Consult your faculty advisor or academic office for review/approval.

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., CH/SE 257-*Black Social Gospel, 1870-1940*, CH/SE 258-*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

Religion and Society

This area of focus is intended for students with further interest in the intersectionality of religion and society. The role of religion in relation to structures of oppression and struggles of liberation constitutes the main focus of this study. The impact of religion on the personal, socio-political, spiritual, and ecological dimensions of those structures and struggles is explored. The intersection of religion and the social sciences are an indispensable part of this study. The religious and denominational diversity of the students, including racial/ethnic/gender/sexual/economic class, is a resource for learning and a strength of this program. The belief that theory should respond to human experience and that academic scholarship must address contemporary issues is emphasized.

Sociological theories of religion and theological studies are also studied. Students strengthen their analytical skills with regard to sociological analyses of religion, as well as writing and research. The City of New York offers fertile ground for the study of religion, and students are uniquely positioned to make use of an abundance of available resources. Previous coursework in sociology, religious studies and/or professional experience in church/religious work is expected.

Course Requirements – minimum 9 credits

- Advanced Religion and Society courses
- RS 262-*Methods in the Study of Urban Life and Religion* is recommended
- RS 325-*Liberation Theologies and Pentecostalism* is recommended
- RS 335-*African Religions in the Americas* is recommended

Extended Paper Requirement

The extended paper should be on a topic relevant to the intersectionality of religion and society (e.g., poverty, gentrification, race/racism, gender, church growth, marginalized religions, and immigration). Students make use of sociological theories of religion acquired in their coursework in conjunction with qualitative methodology. The extended paper should deepen student's understanding of current religious beliefs and practices, generating broader awareness of the multifaceted, bidirectional impact upon the lived realities of individuals and communities.

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 103 or 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