

MA/STM Program Handbook

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Master of Arts (Religious Studies)

I. Overview of the Program

The Master of Arts in Religious Studies (M.A.) is a two-year program that allows the student to focus theological study in a particular area of interest. The M.A. culminates in the Master's Thesis and is an appropriate theological degree for those preparing for further study at the doctoral level; anyone desiring advanced theological study as a foundation for service in another field; active church members and lay leaders working in a non-ordained capacity; or others who wish to study theology and religion without the aim of entering professional ministry.

II. Learning Goals

- A. Demonstrate foundational knowledge of and the capacity to interpret and communicate theological/ethical and religious traditions.
- B. Demonstrate the capacity to critically integrate the study of religion, theology and ethics with at least one of the following:
 - 1. the study of the humanities or social sciences, or
- C. Demonstrate the capacity to complete graduate level academic research in religious studies.

III. Course of Study

The M.A. program is designed to be completed over two academic years, and normally must be completed within five years. The program includes 16 courses (48 credits). Students in the M.A. program may take up to half of their coursework via CTS online offerings. Students already possessing a first theological degree may petition the M.A. committee to approve a program of study that includes appropriate waivers of introductory-level courses.

Required Courses:

- Interpreting the Hebrew Bible
- History of Christian Thought
- Interpreting the Gospels
- Christian Ethics **OR** Global Sensitivity in Ministry
- Systematic Theology
- Master's Writing Seminar (see below)
- 10 electives

Master of Sacred Theology

I. Overview of the Program

The Master of Sacred Theology (S.T.M.) is a one-year program of advanced study beyond the Master of Divinity (or its equivalent) designed for students who seek the opportunity to study a topic in theology with an advanced focus. Emphasis is placed on cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural approaches to biblical, ethical, and theological studies. The Master of Sacred Theology program is ideal for: international students desiring additional year of theological study; students seeking additional academic preparation prior to pursuing a Ph.D. program; and pastors on sabbatical who would benefit from one year of advanced academic study in an area of theological interest.

II. Learning Goals

- A. Demonstrate advanced knowledge of and capacity to interpret and communicate a specific aspect of one or more theological/ethical and religious traditions.
- B. Demonstrate the capacity to critically integrate the study of religion, theology and ethics with at least one of the following:
 - 1. the study of the humanities or social sciences or
 - 2. significant contemporary social or political issues or
 - 3. practical engagement with a local congregation or community organization.
- C. Demonstrate the capacity to complete graduate level academic research in religious studies.

III. Course of Study

The S.T.M. program is designed to be completed over one academic year, and normally must be completed within four years. The program includes 8 courses (24 credits).

The S.T.M. is a flexible program. Each student designs his or her program in consultation with the S.T.M. Director. Students must complete seven elective courses and the Master's Writing seminar (see below).

IV. Concentrations.

S.T.M. concentrations in LGBTQ Studies and in the Study of Black Faith and Life are available. Persons desiring a Concentration in either LGBTQ Studies or the Study of Black Faith and Life will take a minimum of four of their total of eight courses from courses identified by the Faculty as satisfying the Concentration requirement and will write a thesis on a topic in the Concentration. The Writing Seminar may count towards one of the

required four courses. For more information on these concentrations, contact the Program Director.

Master's Writing Seminar and Thesis

The Master's Writing Seminar is a two-semester course taken during the second or final year of study for M.A. students and during the final or only year of study for S.T.M. students. The course normally meets six times during the fall semester and six times during the spring semester.

Through selected readings, class presentations, three (or more) required stages of drafting as well as through peer and instructor reviews, the Master's Writing Seminar is designed to assist M.A. and S.T.M. students in a) writing a critically informed and academically superior Master's level thesis on a topic that contributes to the study of theology and religion and, when appropriate, the interface of these with other disciplines and contemporary culture; b) successfully defending the thesis in an oral exam conducted by members of the CTS faculty. For some students the course and thesis writing will also serve as c) an important initial stage of training for further, especially doctoral level work in theological and religious studies and/or the humanities and contemporary culture.

Because of the short time available to produce a credible thesis, students in the Master's Writing Seminar are encouraged (and will essentially be required) to discern and "settle on" a research topic as early in the course as possible. For most students it will be necessary to "build on" work begun, and topics initially explored, in other classes. However, despite this fact, the thesis must be a substantially new piece of work. It ought not to be simply a seminar paper "expanded," but rather a document that is significantly more substantive than a seminar paper. Normally a successful thesis will be approximately 40-60 pages (normal font, double spaced) in length.

Thesis Oral Exam

Theses will be examined by a faculty committee, but *only with the permission of the Master's Writing Seminar instructor*. Examiners will be determined near the middle of the spring semester based on the topic of individual theses and faculty expertise, interest and availability. Normally, no exam will be scheduled after April 30th in any given year. Possible outcomes of exams include: Pass with Distinction, Pass, Pass with Stipulations (possibly re-examined), No Pass.

As part of CTS's assessment of its students and program, faculty examiners will use the following rubric as a guideline when evaluating the thesis and the oral exam.

MA/STM Thesis and Oral Exam Rubric

The result of this thesis exam was (*please circle*):

- a. Pass with Distinction
- b. Pass
- c. Pass with Stipulations
- d. No Pass

Summative Rubric	<u>DEMONSTRATES STRONG ABILITY</u>	<u>DEMONSTRATES ADEQUATE ABILITY</u>	<u>DEMONSTRATES INADEQUATE ABILITY</u>	<u>FAILS TO DEMONSTRATE ABILITY</u>	<i>Demonstrated by:</i>
In thesis paper and oral exam, student engages a topic in religion, theology and/or ethics which (if appropriate) is integrated with another field, social/political issue, or ministry context (B)	Student clearly and creatively engages a topic in the study of religion, theology, and/or ethics, which (if appropriate) is integrated with another field, social/political issue or ministry context in a sophisticated way.	Student engages a topic in the study of religion, theology, and/or ethics with adequate clarity and substance/creativity, which (if appropriate) is integrated with another field, social/political issue or ministry context.	Student marginally, inadequately and/or without clarity engages a topic in the study of religion, theology, and/or ethics, which may or may not be integrated with another field, social/political issue or ministry context.	Student does not engage a topic in the study of religion, theology, and/or ethics.	<i>Content of thesis and exam</i>

Comments:

RUBRIC FOR MASTERS THESIS ORAL EXAM	<u>DEMONSTRATES STRONG ABILITY</u>	<u>DEMONSTRATES ADEQUATE ABILITY</u>	<u>DEMONSTRATES INADEQUATE ABILITY</u>	<u>FAILS TO DEMONSTRATE ABILITY</u>	<i>Demonstrated by:</i>
Articulates an introduction and thesis statement that identifies a central problem or question and articulates main claims (or conclusions) to be argued (A, C)	Introduction/thesis statement clearly and concisely identifies a significant problem or question and articulates compelling main claims (or conclusions) to be argued	Introduction/thesis statement is mostly clear and identifies a coherent problem or question and articulates reasonable main claims (or conclusions) to be argued.	Introduction/thesis statement is not clear or concise, central problem or question and/or main claims (or conclusions) to be argued are only obliquely articulated.	No introduction/thesis statement is presented; no problem or question is identified; no main claims (or conclusions) are articulated	<i>Introduction</i>
Discusses relevant background of central problem or question (A, C)	Cogently, fully and accurately discusses relevant background of problem/question	Discusses some (and mostly accurately) relevant aspects of background of problem/question	Incoherently, incompletely and/or inaccurately discusses relevant background of problem/question	No discussion of relevant background of problem/question	<i>Content of thesis</i>
Develops an argument that responds to thesis's central problem or question and supports thesis's main claims (or conclusions) (A, C)	Argument is fluid, fully developed, engaging, innovative and responds fully to central problem/question and compellingly supports main claims (or conclusions)	Argument is coherent and mostly developed; generally or broadly addresses central problem/question and mostly supports main claims (or conclusions)	Argument is disjointed and/or unclear; often fails to address central problem/question and/or to support main claims (or conclusions)	Argument does not exist; central problem/question is not addressed; main claims (or conclusions) are not supported.	<i>Introduction, conclusion and content of thesis</i>
Uses and cites significant scholarly and other resources (books, journal articles, etc.) (C)	Consistently uses and accurately cites appropriate resources; always acknowledges others' work	Usually uses and accurately cites appropriate resources; usually acknowledges others' work	Rarely uses or cites appropriate resources; rarely acknowledges others' work	Does not use or cite appropriate resources; does not acknowledge others' work	<i>Thesis content, footnotes and bibliography</i>
Articulates orally the problem and main claims (or conclusions) of thesis and responds to examiners' inquiries, e.g., regarding content, argument, and implications of thesis (A)	Completely and cogently articulates problem and main claims (or conclusions) of thesis; responds fully, thoughtfully, and clearly to inquiries	Usually articulates problem and main claims (or conclusions) of thesis with basic clarity; responds to most inquiries fully and clearly and usually thoughtfully	Often is unable to articulate problem and main claims (or conclusions) of thesis; often responds to inquiries incompletely and/or unclearly	Fails to articulate problem and main claims (or conclusions) of thesis; is not able to respond to inquiries	<i>Oral exam</i>
Revises thesis in light of critical comments from examiners, if necessary (A, C)	Understands and fully responds to critical comments with appropriate and complete revisions	Understands and responds to most critical comments with appropriate revisions	Does not respond to most critical comments with limited revisions	Does not respond to critical comments and does not revise	<i>Revision process</i>

Note: A, B, and C refer to MA and STM program goals, described in full elsewhere. See pp. 2 and 3.