



Contact: Charles Jefferson, Communications Coordinator

Phone: 773.896.2525

Email: charles.jefferson@ctschicago.edu

Chicago Theological Seminary Receives Approval to Offer Accredited Masters of Sacred Theology Degree Completely Online

CHICAGO- June 12, 2019 – Chicago Theological Seminary (CTS) received approval from **The Association of Theological Schools** to offer a Masters of Sacred Theology (STM) degree entirely online. This approval makes CTS the only seminary in the country where students can earn an ATS accredited STM 100% online and joins the institution's fully online Master of Divinity degree accredited in 2013.

CTS' STM is a one-year program of advanced study beyond the Master of Divinity designed for students who want to study a theological topic with an advanced focus. Within the program, two concentrations are offered: LGBTQ Studies and Study of Black Faith & Life. This research-focused degree prepares students in the realms of theological, ethical, and religious traditions to think critically in scholarly research and argumentation. The STM degree had already been approved for online delivery by CTS's other accrediting body, the **Higher Learning Commission**, in May 2013, along with other CTS masters level programs.

Now seminary students will be able to complete an STM program at the prestigious school without leaving their home, families, religious communities, or support networks to relocate to Chicago. This successful accreditation builds on the early groundbreaking work begun in 2011 to develop the Seminary's online learning program and a dedication to successfully translating CTS' quality educational experience and learning community to an online environment.

According to CTS President, **Rev. Dr. Stephen G. Ray Jr.**, "The CTS online MDiv has been accredited since 2013 and has attracted students from across the United States, Europe, and Asia. We applied for an exception to the residency requirement for the STM degree in March of this year to provide greater access to students seeking this degree." Ray pointed out that, "this is the first time that the Association of Theological Schools has accredited an online STM. We believe their granting of this exception is due to the proven diligence, innovation, and excellence CTS faculty and staff use to deliver a rigorous, engaged theological education in an online setting."

Director of Online Learning, **Justin Kim**, emphasized the connectedness that the CTS online environment offers, saying, "as valued members of the seminary community, students stay connected to the course content, other students, and extracurricular activities throughout their time at the seminary. We use state of the art technology to enable our students to be an active part of our lively and vibrant educational experience wherever and whenever."

Dr. Ray added, "Chicago Theological Seminary is committed to increasing access to theological education. We subscribe to the maxim, 'you don't have to come here to go here.' This is one more determined step toward the future of theological education."

Academic Dean, **Dr. Stephanie Buckhanon Crowder**, noted, "This new degree offering continues to place CTS on the cutting edge of theological education. While providing space for more persons to pursue advanced degrees without logistical displacement, this newly accredited program also points to our efforts to forge ahead of the curve."

ABOUT CHICAGO THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Based on Chicago's Southside, Chicago Theological Seminary is committed to creating leaders for the next generation at religious leadership...whatever that may be. A leader in social justice, CTS is committed to LGBTQ and gender issues, interreligious understanding, and racial justice.

CTS is an affiliated seminary of the United Church of Christ. Since its founding in 1855, CTS has pushed at the growing boundaries of the church in order to make faith more relevant and transform society towards greater justice and mercy. The student body now represents more than 40 different faith traditions, perspectives, and denominations.

