The Master of Arts in Religious Studies focuses on religious traditions, theology and ethics. In preparation for continued study and teaching, this program allows each student to focus theological study in an area of personal interest.

The Master of Sacred Theology (STM) is a one-year program beyond the Master of Divinity. It’s designed for students who wish to focus on an advanced topic in biblical, ethical, and theological studies.
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Statement of Mission and Commitments

Chicago Theological Seminary, a seminary affiliated with the United Church of Christ, serves God, Christ’s Church, multiple faith communities, and the larger world by educating persons theologically and cultivating the intellectual, pastoral, and spiritual capacities of lay and ordained religious leaders, scholars, and activists who contribute to the increase of justice and mercy.

Inspired by the ministry of Jesus, guided by the Spirit of the Divine, and nurtured by faith and culture, we strive to create a sacred learning community that educates for public ministry, based upon the following interwoven commitments:

- We are committed to a life of mutual teaching and learning, to academic excellence, to open inquiry, and to critical engagement of texts, contexts, and practices in all of our educational programs;
- We are committed, in a world suffering from spiritual impoverishment, which is characterized by meaninglessness, lovelessness, and hopelessness, to proclaim a message of divine purpose, compassion, and promise;
- We are committed, in a society structured by white supremacy and racism, to challenge white privilege, to combat the forces of racial division and domination, and to equip leaders who embrace and celebrate racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity;
- We are committed, in a global context of religious conflicts and a society structured by Christian privilege, to joyous embrace of religious diversity, expanding our ground-breaking work in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Studies to advance understanding and collaboration among the rich multiplicity of spiritual traditions and lifestances;
- We are committed, in a world governed by sex and gender binaries, to advocate gender justice, to nurture movements for women’s equality, and to liberate humanity from restrictive gender norms;
- We are committed, in a world governed by the presumption of heterosexual expression, to challenge homophobia, to celebrate lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other individuals within the spectrum of human sex and sexuality, and to develop leadership to encourage faith communities to become more open and affirming;
- We are committed, in a world stratified by economic and social class, to challenge the structures that sustain poverty and economic disenfranchisement, and to join the struggle, as companions with the poor, for liberation of all from want, homelessness, hunger, and disease;
- We are committed, on a fragile planet threatened by pollution and exploitation, to interrogate ecological policies, theologies, and practices, and to challenge materialism and the devaluation of creation; and,
- We are committed, in recognition that social divisions are local, national, and global, to international collaboration among individuals and institutions with similar commitments to our own.

In all these ways, we embrace not only the rhetoric but the reality of diversity, and recognize the vital intersectionality of our commitments, working together to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God. We invite others to join us.
Master of Arts in Religious Studies (MA)

Overview of the Program

The Master of Arts in Religious Studies (MA) is a two-year program that allows the student to focus theological study in a particular area of interest. The MA 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.

Requirements for Admission

Applicants must have successfully completed a bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university. Though a variety of college programs provide adequate preparation, it is to the applicant’s advantage to have well developed written and oral communication skills, strong academic references, good critical thinking skills, and coursework in the area of humanities. GRE scores are not required. The MA application process includes:

- Official transcripts from all academic institutions attended.
- Four letters of reference – at least two must be academic, one may come from a pastor or other ministry professional, and one may come from a supervisor or friend.
- Written materials, including an autobiographical statement, as directed for each degree program.
- TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) scores are required of applicants for whom English is not a first language. The exam must be completed no more than two years prior to application. The TOEFL may only be waived if the applicant has completed another degree, in English, in the US.

Chicago Theological Seminary is committed to fostering the full humanity of all its members. All forms of discrimination and harassment impugn the full humanity of any human being and for this reason are not tolerated in this Seminary. Chicago Theological Seminary does not discriminate, or tolerate discrimination or harassment, against any member of its community on the basis of race, color, national origin, ancestry, sex/gender, age, religion, disability, pregnancy, veteran status, marital status, sexual orientation, or any other status protected by applicable federal, state, or local law in matters of employment or admissions or in any aspect of the educational programs or activities it offers.
Program Goals and Learning Outcomes

Program Goals

• MA graduates will have acquired foundational knowledge of and the capacity to interpret and communicate religious traditions.
• MA graduates will be able to think critically about religious traditions.
• MA graduates will be able to complete graduate level academic research in religious studies.

Learning Outcomes

• Students will apply foundational knowledge of religious traditions appropriately in scholarly research.
• Students will demonstrate ability to construct and develop a substantial scholarly argument in religious studies.
• Students will demonstrate ability to think and write critically about religious traditions.
• Students will demonstrate in-depth scholarly knowledge in a specific area relating to religious studies.

MA Course of Study

The MA 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). MA coursework may be completed entirely online. Students already possessing a first theological degree may petition the MA 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)
6 free electives
2 electives in Bible
2 electives in Theology, Ethics, and Culture
### Sample course of study

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FALL</th>
<th>SPRING</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1st YEAR</strong></td>
<td>Interpreting the Hebrew Bible</td>
<td>Elective</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>History of Christian Thought</td>
<td>Elective</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Elective</td>
<td>Elective</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Elective</td>
<td>Elective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2nd YEAR</strong></td>
<td>Interpreting the Gospels</td>
<td>Systematic Theology (P) (may be taken either 1st or 2nd year of study)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Global Sensitivity in Ministry</td>
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<td></td>
<td>OR Christian Ethics (P)</td>
<td>Master’s Writing Seminar (P) (for Credit)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(Ethics = Spring semester)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Master’s Writing Seminar (P)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(1st half = Non-Credit)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elective</td>
<td>Elective</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Elective</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

A “P” following a course listed on this Suggested Course of Study indicates a prerequisite.

**NOTE:** Of the 10 electives listed,
- 2 must be in Bible (RH)
- 2 in Theology, Ethics & Culture (TEC)
**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 MA students and during the final or only year of study for STM students. The course normally meets six times during the fall semester and six times during the spring semester. However, this schedule may be adjusted by individual instructors. The seminar is available in both a face-to-face section and an online section.

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 MA and STM 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; and 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**

Student Name: ____________________________________________    Degree Program: _________________________

The result of this thesis exam was *(please circle)*:         a. Pass with Distinction;   b. Pass;   c. Pass with Stipulations;   d. No Pass

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demonstrate STRONG ABILITY</th>
<th>DEMONSTRATES ADEQUATE ABILITY</th>
<th>DEMONSTRATES INADEQUATE ABILITY</th>
<th>FAILS TO DEMONSTRATE ABILITY</th>
<th>Demonstrate d by:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning Outcome 1:</strong> Students will apply foundational knowledge of religious traditions appropriately in scholarly research. (MA) Students will apply advanced knowledge of religious traditions appropriately in scholarly research. (STM)</td>
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| Paper address central problem or question of relevance to religious traditions | Central problem or question is of clear and compelling relevance to religious traditions. | Central problem or question is of relevance to religious traditions. | Central problem or question is tangentially relevant to these traditions. | Central problem or question is not relevant to these traditions. | Introduction, conclusion |
| Use of religious traditions in discussion of relevant background | Discussion of background shows a broad understanding of traditions. | Discussion of background shows a general understanding of traditions. | Discussion of background shows gaps in understanding of traditions. | Discussion of background shows a lack of understanding of traditions. | Content of thesis |

| Learning Outcome 2: Students will demonstrate in-depth scholarly knowledge in a specific area relating to religious studies. |

| Use of religious traditions in discussion of relevant background | Discussion of background shows a deep understanding of the specific topic area. | Discussion of background shows understanding of the specific topic area. | Discussion of background shows gaps in understanding of the specific topic area. | Discussion of background shows a lack of understanding. | Content of thesis |

| Use of religious traditions in development of argument. | Development of argument shows a deep and incisive understanding of the specific topic area. | Development of argument shows an understanding of the specific topic area. | Development of argument shows gaps in understanding of the specific topic area. | Development of argument shows little or no understanding of topic area. | Introduction, conclusion and content of thesis |

<p>| Demonstration of knowledge and understanding in regard to examiner inquiries | Responses draw a deep understanding of specific topic area; responses are informed, thoughtful, and well-supported. | Responses draw on understanding of topic area; responses are clear and generally thoughtful. | Responses show gaps in understanding of topic area, and/or are confused, muddled, or shallow. | Responses show serious misunderstanding, and/or are incoherent. | Oral exam |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Outcome 3: Students will demonstrate ability to construct and develop a substantial scholarly argument in religious studies. (MA)</th>
<th>Students will demonstrate ability to construct and develop a substantial and sophisticated scholarly argument in religious studies. (STM)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Articulates an introduction and thesis statement that identifies a central problem or question and articulates main claims (or conclusions) to be argued</strong></td>
<td><strong>Introduction/thesis statement clearly and concisely identifies a significant problem or question and articulates compelling main claims (or conclusions) to be argued.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Uses and cites significant scholarly and other resources (books, journal articles, etc.)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Consistently uses and accurately cites appropriate resources; always acknowledges others’ work.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Revises thesis in light of critical comments from examiners, if necessary</strong></td>
<td><strong>Understands and fully responds to critical comments with appropriate and complete revisions.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<th>Learning Outcome 4: Students will demonstrate ability to think and write critically about religious traditions.</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Develops an argument that responds to thesis’s central problem or question and supports thesis’s main claims (or conclusions)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Argument is fluid, fully developed, engaging, innovative; responds fully to central problem/question and compellingly supports main claims (or conclusions).</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demonstration of critical thought and understanding in regard to examiner inquiries</strong></td>
<td><strong>Responses draw on broad understanding of traditions; responses are informed, thoughtful, well-supported.</strong></td>
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</table>

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<tr>
<th>Learning Outcome 5 (STM only): 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.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topic is integrated with another field, issue, or ministry context</strong></td>
<td><strong>Integration is clear, creative, and sophisticated.</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Introduction</strong></th>
<th><strong>Thesis content, footnotes and bibliography</strong></th>
<th><strong>Revision process</strong></th>
<th><strong>Introduction, conclusion and content of thesis</strong></th>
<th><strong>Oral exam</strong></th>
<th><strong>Content of thesis</strong></th>
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PROGRAM WORKSHEET
Master of Arts in Religious Studies
(16 academic credits)

NAME

Academic Requirements (8)
Interpreting the Hebrew Bible
History of Christian Thought
Interpreting the Gospels
RH Elective (Bible)
RH Elective (Bible)
Christian Ethics
OR Global Sensitivity in Ministry
Systematic Theology
Master's Writing Seminar (2 Semesters/1 credit)

Electives (8)

1. (TEC)
2. (TEC)
3. 
4. 
5. 
6. 
7. 
8. 
## Course Prerequisites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Prerequisite</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TEC 307 Systematic Theology</td>
<td>RH 344 History of Christian Thought</td>
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<tr>
<td>RH 302 Interpreting the Hebrew Bible II (or upper level Hebrew Bible elective)</td>
<td>RH 301 Interpreting the Hebrew Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RH 325 Interpreting the Epistles (or upper level New Testament elective)</td>
<td>RH 321 Interpreting the Gospels</td>
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<tr>
<td>LM 400 Leadership &amp; Ministry in Context/ Field Ed Placement</td>
<td>TEC 307 Systematic Theology <strong>TEC 355 Living Into Our Commitments or TEC 351 Theories of Change</strong> (strongly recommended)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FE 470 Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)</td>
<td>LM 331 Intro to Pastoral Care or LM 332 Intro to Pastoral Theology</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEC 321 Intro to Christian Ethics</td>
<td>RH 344 History of Christian Thought</td>
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<td></td>
<td>TEC 307 Systematic Theology <strong>(strongly recommended)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>RH 485 Religion in America</td>
<td>RH 344 History of Christian Thought</td>
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<td>TEC 400 Constructive Theology</td>
<td>RH 301 Interpreting the Hebrew Bible</td>
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<td>RH 321 Interpreting the Gospels</td>
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<td>RH 344 History of Christian Thought</td>
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<td></td>
<td>TEC 307 Systematic Theology</td>
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<td></td>
<td>LM 331 Intro to Pastoral Care or LM 332 Intro to Pastoral Theology</td>
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<td></td>
<td>LM 400 Leadership &amp; Ministry in Context/ FE 471 Field Placement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>LM 400 Leadership &amp; Ministry in Context/ FE 471 Field Placement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>TEC 321 Intro to Christian Ethics</td>
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<td></td>
<td>LM 365 Global Sensitivity in Ministry <strong>(strongly recommended)</strong></td>
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Appendix A: Human Subjects Protocol

All students intending to use human subjects in CTS PhD dissertations, STM, MARL, MDiv, and MA theses, or DMin projects must follow these guidelines, which will be reviewed by CTS’s Institutional Review Board. The purpose is to ensure an adequate review of the research regarding two central ethical concerns:

- Human subjects are treated in a manner consistent with their dignity and autonomy – specifically that they consent freely and in an informed manner to participation in the research;
- Human subjects are protected from any risks or harms posed by the research.

There are two major documents to be completed: 1) Research Overview, and 2) Consent Form. The research review is NOT intended to assess either the value of the thesis/dissertation topic or of the research design.

I. Research Overview (Be as specific as possible)

A. Describe the nature and purpose of the research, the number of human subjects that will be involved and the research instrument(s) to be used. (interviews, focus group, surveys, etc.)
B. The Research Procedures: How will research be conducted? What will it entail? e.g. (“I will interview the subjects in their homes or a place of their own choosing. I intend only one interview per subject; the interview should last about one hour. I will take notes during the interview, I will only tape record the interview with the subject’s permission.”)
C. Subject recruitment and selection: How will you recruit, select and generate a pool of subjects?
D. Relationship to these subjects
   1. Pastor
   2. Teacher
   3. Relative
   4. Associate
   5. Other
E. Risk and Benefits: State what benefits and what risks you perceive the research posing to the subjects.
F. Confidentiality and/or Anonymity: State how the confidentiality and anonymity of data/subject will be preserved. Consider the following questions in your overview:
   1. How will data be stored? (The suggested standard is to: 1) store data in a secured/locked manner, and 2) store any key which links the data to the names or identifiers of subjects in a secured/locked manner away from the data)
   2. How long will the data be kept? How will data be destroyed?
   3. What will happen to the data if something happens to you, preventing you from taking the provisions outlined here?
   4. If appropriate, how will you collect and analyze the data to insure anonymity?
   5. If appropriate, how will you officially report that data to insure anonymity?
II. Consent Form

The researcher should keep the original signed document and give a copy to the subject. The subject should also receive a copy of the survey instrument or schedule of questions used in the research. If the instrument is not yet completed or the interview is to be open-ended, include some sample questions, indicating the nature of the information/data sought from the subject. Also, if the consent form provided does not meet the needs of a specific project, the researcher can create an adapted version in cooperation with the advisor to be approved by the Institutional Re.
Sample Consent Form

Title of the Project

Name of Researcher

I ___________________________ (print) have been asked to participate in a research study as a part of the (PhD / DMin. / STM / MA program at CTS). I understand that this research will focus on ________________________________

and will involve (interview / survey / focus group discussion, etc.) that will take place __________ __________________________ and will last until _________________. I understand that the risks involved in this project include [or none] ____________________________, my anonymity will be protected and the records and information will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to them and they will be discarded after the study is completed. I also understand that I am free to refuse to answer any specific questions and to terminate or withdraw completely from the research at any time. While the researcher has copyright protection and retains all intellectual and commercial rights to the materials, I can have access to cite or quote the work for my own purposes. By signing this document I consent to participate in this study.

Signature of Subject __________________________ Date ________________

Signature of Researcher __________________________ Date ________________

For information contact Researcher at:
Email __________________________ Phone number __________________________

Adapted for use from the Doctoral Council, GTU, 2014.