

Hello CTS Community,

I pray you are well and finding some sense of solace. Breathe.

I want to update you on a few academic matters. Many topics are addressed in the [Academics FAQ](#) found on the website. Allow me to note specifically **Summer 2020 and Fall 2020 registration** runs April 20-24. Below is the latest concerning other areas:

1. Pass/Fail Option

As previously communicated, all CTS courses will offer a Pass/Fail option in light of these extenuating circumstances. Work that an instructor determines to be a C or above is “Passing” while anything below that is “Failing.” Selecting the Pass/Fail option for any or all CTS courses is an effort to help students finish their courses in these challenging days. This is not an effort to shame a person or diminish anyone’s academic capacity. It is our way of saying, we realize there is much on your mind; let us journey together to complete this term.

The Pass/Fail option will not impact a student’s grade point average (gpa). It does not change the current gpa. The transcript will note “Pass” or “Fail” and credit or no credit for the course.

I cannot say how important it is for students to have timely conversations now with professors. For this reason Pass/Fail is an option, not the default. Students are encouraged to take the option as they see fit. We will walk and work with you in doing so. If in the future a student needs a letter grade or documentation about having received a Pass/Fail in a course, please know CTS is more than willing to assist in any way.

Many students will prefer a letter grade for their courses this term. This is still available. Students are encouraged to make the decision that best suits their vicissitudes. We support you in all efforts.

As the term ends May 15, 2020, students have until this time note the grade option. Grades for prospective graduates are due a week earlier so these designations need to occur sooner.

Do what you need to do. We are with you.

2. Incompletes (I)

The [Student Handbook](#) states that work from an Incomplete (I) is due August 15th. Thus, any course taken in the previous Summer, Spring, J-Term and Fall should be completed by this date.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Academic Council voted that for Incompletes (I) granted during **Spring 2020 term only**, work would be due **January 29, 2021**. The Registrar should be copied when the student sends work by email to the instructor.

If work is not turned in to the Registrar by January 29, 2021, the student will automatically receive a grade Permanent Incomplete (PI), except in cases where faculty and students have agreed on a variation to the above policy (a different due date, a different default grade, etc.), using the Incomplete Form. Students with excessive or long-standing incompletes may be prevented from registering for additional courses by the faculty.

It is strongly recommended that students contact instructors in advance of the end of the Spring 2020 term (May 15, 2020) because not all instructors allow Incompletes.

I cannot stress enough that the Pass/Fail option is in place to encourage students to finish the Spring 2020 semester to the best of their abilities. As a grade of C or above is “Passing,” this is to support students in completing their work even in this challenging global context.

3. Commencement

Due to what is projected to be the continuance of shelter in place orders, CTS is postponing Commencement on May 15, 2020. Instead, a special Fall Commencement will be held on Wednesday, September 16, 2020. Whereas the specific time of the conferring of degrees is to be determined, please plan for a day of celebration here at CTS. Graduates and their friends and family are invited to share in this occasion. We look forward to seeing you—in person!

CTS will hold a virtual celebration on Wednesday, May 13, 2020 at 12p.m.CST to honor its graduates. Members of the Commencement Committee will be in touch with graduates regarding participation.

Yet, first things first, prospective graduates need to connect with the Registrar, Tina Shelton, at tina.shelton@ctschicago.edu, about exit processes, graduation fees, other staff check-ins, and related items. Additionally prospective graduates should be in touch with the Director of Library Commons, Yasmine Abou-El-Kheir, at yasmine.abou-el-kheir@ctschicago.edu, about thesis and dissertation formatting.

Thanks to the fine work of our Registrar, Controller, and Financial Aid Coordinator, there are two options pertaining to graduation fees:

Option 1 - \$175

Degree
Cap, gown and hood
Participation in ceremony (optional)

Option 2 - \$50

Degree only

Whether a graduate chooses to “walk” or not during the Fall Commencement in September, certificates, diplomas, and caps and gowns (if selected) will be mailed directly to the student after semester close on May 15, 2020. Thus, students should specify now which option they are

selecting as it will be almost impossible to change selections. Lead time is required to order degrees, caps, gowns and hoods. Contact the Registrar, Tina Shelton, at tina.shelton@ctschicago.edu for specifics and to note your option.

What happens if we are still sheltering in place in September? Please know we are not cancelling Commencement, just deferring it. And yes, this could mean postponing it later and later... Transcripts will still note May 15, 2020 as the graduation date.

4. Student Awards

There were no submissions for the **G. Campbell Morgan Preaching Award**. I understand. There has been much, so much, on your mind. To make up for this, CTS will seek to honor two students with the award in 2021. You have time to prepare your sermon!

Join me in congratulating PhD student, Zaynab Shahar, who is the first student recipient of the **Judith Sanderson Women in Leadership Award!** This award has normally gone to a faculty member and will now rotate among students, staff, and faculty. Well done, Zaynab!

5. Faculty Update

Dr. Seung Ai Yang, Associate Professor of New Testament, has announced plans to retire the end of this academic year. We will celebrate Dr. Yang's tenure at CTS on Wednesday, May 13, 2020 during our time of honoring the Class of 2020.

Please contact the following individuals for related questions:

- **Academics:** Contact Stephanie Buckhanon Crowder, Vice President of Academic Affairs and Academic Dean, at sbcrowder@ctschicago.edu.
- **Learning Commons:** Contact Yasmine Abou-El-Kheir, Director, at yasmine.abou-el-kheir@ctschicago.edu.
- **Registration:** Contact Tina Shelton, Registrar, at tina.shelton@ctschicago.edu.
- **Community Life:** Contact Amy Aschliman, Assistant Director of Student Formation and Community Engagement, at amy.aschliman@ctschicago.edu.
- **Building Access & Events:** Contact Shauna Warren, Director of Facilities and Events, at shauna.warren@ctschicago.edu.

We see you. We hear you. We see your tears as you are trying to complete courses in a COVID-19 context. We hear your questions filled with angst and worry. We see you pushing through to the next. We hear you encouraging each other and us.

Finally, thank you. Thank you for being patient with us, and please be patient with yourself.

In gratitude,
Dean Crowder