The Master of Sacred Theology is a one-year program of study beyond the Master of Divinity, designed for students who seek to study a religious topic 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 generally for students seeking additional academic preparation prior to a Ph.D. program.
At the start of the 2021-2022 academic year, we are making the first steps toward a return to normal—whatever that means—after a year of living under the weight of a global pandemic. COVID-19 vaccines have begun to transform our lives, even though physical distancing, masks, and handwashing still order our days. We are also acutely aware of the work that remains in order to reach sufficient vaccine coverage that can protect the broader population from the disease.

In our ongoing efforts to deliver a stellar educational experience, we return to our four-fold modality for the 2021-22 Academic Year. **Courses will be delivered: face-to-face (in-person at CTS with some Canvas support); online (synchronous and asynchronous sessions employing Canvas and Zoom); hybrid (online with required face-to- face sessions); and flex (online with some optional face- to-face sessions).** See the course schedule ([https://www.ctschicago.edu/course-schedule](https://www.ctschicago.edu/course-schedule)), Campus Café or the Registrar for specifics.

On-campus coursework and meetings are designed to be low-density, with vaccination requirements and continuing attention to COVID-19 safety protocols to protect our students, staff, and faculty. If you are coming to campus, you will need to use your keycard for access; please do not hold the door open for anyone else, even if you recognize them. Please see the most recent COVID Policy ([https://www.ctschicago.edu/press/cts-covid-19-policy](https://www.ctschicago.edu/press/cts-covid-19-policy)) for details. Our COVID-19 Response Team and Leadership Team will continue to monitor the recommendations of local, state, and federal government officials—prepared to revise policies to advance public safety as necessary.

Many in our CTS community contracted COVID-19 and/or lost loved ones to this deadly virus. We have lost so much. We have also demonstrated great resilience, lifting each other up to continue our sacred work together. Please know that your well-being is important to us. We hear you. We see you. Take care of yourself. May we show compassion and take care of each other.
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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 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 Sacred Theology (STM)

Overview of the Program

The Master of Sacred Theology (STM) 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 PhD program, and pastors on sabbatical who would benefit from one year of advanced academic study in an area of theological interest.

Requirements for Admission

Applicants to the STM Program must have earned a Master of Divinity Degree (or first graduate theological degree providing equivalent theological background) and demonstrate aptitude for advanced theological study. The STM 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.
- An autobiographical statement, as guided by the questions stated within the application form.
- A current resume.
- A two-page statement of proposed focus of study, as guided by the application instructions.
- 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

- STM graduates will have acquired advanced knowledge of and capacity to interpret and communicate a specific aspect of one or more theological/ethical and religious traditions.
- STM graduates will be able to think critically about theological/ethical and religious traditions.
- STM graduates will be able to complete graduate level academic research in religious studies.

Learning Outcomes

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

STM Course of Study

The STM program is designed to be completed over one academic year, and includes 8 courses (24 credits). Students may take any or all of these courses online. As of June 2020, the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), one of the accrediting bodies of CTS, no longer provides guidelines on course statute of limitations. The four-year completion is a general CTS guideline. Students should also check with financial aid staff about loan compliance.

The STM is a flexible program. Each student designs his or her program in consultation with the STM Director, an assigned faculty advisor, and/or the instructor of the Master’s Writing seminar. Students must complete seven elective courses and the Master’s Writing seminar.
(see below). Normally, students may not transfer courses from elsewhere into the STM program.

Advising

STM students will, as much as possible, be assigned advisors by area of interest. Students pursuing a concentration (see below) will be assigned an advisor from the corresponding Center’s advisory committee or another faculty member with expertise in the area of concentration.

Students are expected to meet with their advisors (in person or virtually) at least once a term, during the registration period for the following term. At the conclusion of an advising conversation, the advisor will provide the student with an enrollment PIN. Students can then self-enroll in classes via the student portal, which can be found in the MyCTS section of the CTS website.

Students should consult with advisors about the topic and shape of the student’s thesis project and the thesis bibliography in the fall, and to provide advisors with a thesis draft to read and discuss (normally the second draft) in the spring. The faculty person advises about the thesis, but is not responsible for ensuring the success of the thesis or its oral exam. Advisors may or may not serve as part of the thesis examining team.

Concentrations

STM concentrations in the Study of Black Faith and Life, Interreligious Engagement, LGBTQ Religious Studies, Chaplaincy Studies, and Muslim Studies are available. Persons desiring a concentration in one of these areas 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 Master’s 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 throughout the 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 normally 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 30 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

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEMONSTRATES STRONG ABILITY</th>
<th>DEMONSTRATES ADEQUATE ABILITY</th>
<th>DEMONSTRATES INADEQUATE ABILITY</th>
<th>FAILS TO DEMONSTRATE ABILITY</th>
<th>Demonstrated by:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Learning Outcome 1: 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)

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.

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.

Introduction, conclusion

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.

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

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

Learning Outcome 2: Students will demonstrate in-depth scholarly knowledge in a specific area relating to religious studies.
<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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Articulates an introduction and thesis statement that identifies a central problem or question and articulates main claims (or conclusions) to be argued</td>
<td>Introduction/thesis statement clearly and concisely identifies a significant problem or question and articulates compelling main claims (or conclusions) to be argued.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses and cites significant scholarly and other resources (books, journal articles, etc.)</td>
<td>Consistently uses and accurately cites appropriate resources; always acknowledges others' work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revises thesis in light of critical comments from examiners, if necessary</td>
<td>Understands and fully responds to critical comments with appropriate and complete revisions.</td>
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Learning Outcome 4: Students will demonstrate ability to think and write critically about religious traditions.

| Develops an argument that responds to thesis's central problem or question and supports thesis's main claims (or conclusions) | Argument is fluid, fully developed, engaging, innovative; 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. |
| Demonstration of critical thought and understanding in regard to examiner inquiries | Responses draw on broad understanding of traditions; responses are informed, thoughtful, well-supported. | Responses draw on understanding of traditions; responses are clear and generally thoughtful. | Responses are confused, muddled, or shallow. | Evidence of serious misunderstanding, and/or incoherence. |

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.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Topic is integrated with another field, issue, or ministry context</th>
<th>Integration is clear, creative, and sophisticated.</th>
<th>Integration is clear and appropriate.</th>
<th>Integration is muddled or barely present.</th>
<th>No evidence of integration.</th>
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Oral exam
Master of Sacred Theology (STM)
Course of Study Worksheet

Student: ______________________  Advisor: ______________________

Entrance Date: ______________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Semester</th>
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<td>Master’s Writing Seminar</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.
Appendix B: Academic Accommodations Policy

Requests for Accommodations¹

When a verified physical, psychological, attentional, or learning disability impacts a student’s academic progress, accommodations may be available to assist the student in meeting academic goals.

If you need accommodations, please fill out the form and contact Amy Aschliman, Assistant Director of Student Formation, to schedule a conversation about the accommodation process and possible study plans.

Diagnostic paperwork or other documentation should be sent to the Registrar, Tina Shelton, along with a copy of your form. All records will be handled in confidence. Once the Dean has approved the accommodations, the Registrar will provide a letter that you should give to professors at the start of every term. This letter will last throughout your program unless your disability is temporary.

Students who believe they may have a learning difficulty that has not been identified can make an appointment to discuss their academic history in order to determine what may be hindering academic progress. Confidential advising with Amy is available.

Disability Documentation

When determining what accommodations are appropriate for students, it’s important to understand how their disabilities will likely impact their academic progress at Chicago Theological Seminary. We request a self-report from students (see below) and support documentation from external sources.

Helpful 3rd-party information includes records of past accommodations and services from college and/or other graduate programs, formal psychological or medical evaluations, and letters from past health or service providers. Students do not need to share everything—just those records that are most helpful in documenting the disability/disabilities that prompt the request for accommodations.

¹ Language adapted from Trinity Christian College.
Request for Accommodations

Student’s Name ________________________________________________

Home Address __________________________________________________

City: ______________________ State: __________ Zip: ________________

Email: ________________________________

Diagnosed disability/disabilities relevant to accommodations request:

Please share information that will be useful in thinking about appropriate accommodations to help you succeed in your learning:

• What tools or strategies facilitate your learning?
• What potential barriers can you anticipate?
• How does your disability interact with communication, classroom learning, reading and writing, technology, and the physical environment?

Accommodation(s) I am requesting from the Seminary (permanent and temporary):

I’ve had the following accommodations at other educational institutions:

Please identify the documentation attached to this request:
I authorize the Seminary to arrange for reasonable accommodation(s), to share limited information with others as necessary, and to obtain additional information from the individual(s) listed below if needed.

Student’s Signature: ____________________________ Date: _________________

Name of Diagnostician:
Address:
Phone#:

Name of Diagnostician:
Address:
Phone#:

Name of Diagnostician:
Address:
Phone#: 