

Online Master of Arts (M.A.) (Biblical and Theological Studies) Program

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Western Seminary offers the Online Master of Arts (M.A.) (Biblical and Theological Studies) degree for students seeking specialized, graduate, theological education. In addition to the Seminary's general educational goals, the Biblical and Theological Studies program endeavors to achieve the following objectives:

1. Cultivate skills in the efficient study and interpretation of Scripture.
2. Provide theoretical and practical skills in one area of focused specialization; and
3. Promote growth in Christian maturity demonstrated through effective interpersonal relationships.

The Online M.A. (Biblical and Theological Studies) program focuses upon graduate level education in the biblical and theological disciplines. It is ideal for students with various academic goals including individuals with a Bible school background who have been in full-time ministry for five years or more and realize the need for graduate study in theological and biblical disciplines; persons seeking a solid theological education to enhance their chosen professions and prepare them to fill a vital lay ministry role; students building a solid academic foundation for doctoral studies; and for men and women serving with parachurch organizations or other specialized ministries who desire advanced biblical/theological competency.

The program is not recommended for those preparing for a ministry where ordination is expected or required (e.g., the pastorate, chaplaincy, evangelism, and church planting) or for those who anticipate subsequent doctor of ministry studies.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

In addition to the Seminary's general educational goals, the Online M.A. (Biblical and Theological Studies) program attempts to achieve specific outcomes:

1. Applies biblical truth to life and ministry based on a thorough understanding of the biblical canon.
2. Employs mature theological thinking to evaluate competing ideas, develop a personally-integrated expression of biblical teachings, communicate theological truths clearly, and apply theological truths to life and ministry.
3. Understands a broad range of biblical and theological issues, their historical background, and the significance that they have for the life and ministry of God's people.
4. Exhibits a Christ-like character worthy of being emulated, and integrity that imparts credibility to his/her ministry.
5. Demonstrates self-awareness and a commitment to ongoing personal and spiritual formation.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

In addition to the general requirements for admission to the Seminary given on pages 20-21, applicants for the M.A. program are expected to present an accredited baccalaureate degree (or its equivalent) with a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher (on a 4.0 scale), including a breadth of liberal arts. Applicants who do not meet these general academic requirements may petition the Admissions Committee for consideration. A recommendation from the applicant's pastor and three personal recommendations regarding the applicant's Christian character and leadership potential also are required.

TRANSFER CREDIT

Upon approval by the Registrar, transfer of up to 32 credit hours is allowed toward the M.A. (Biblical and Theological Studies) program from graduate institutions accredited by the Association of Theological Schools. Students must have earned a grade of B or better for a course to be considered for transfer and coursework must have completed no more than five years prior to matriculation to Western Seminary. Alternatively, students may receive advanced standing of up to 32 credit hours of the 32 credit hours of transfer credit allowed toward their program if they are able to demonstrate current competency in required coursework based on prior study (based on parallel undergraduate work or transfer credit that is ineligible for consideration based on age). Transferability of credits earned at Western and transferred to another institution is at the discretion of the receiving institution. Consult the Registrar's Office for information on eligibility of transfer credit and advanced standing.

RESIDENCE REQUIREMENTS

Of the 64 credit hours required for the Online M.A. (Biblical and Theological Studies) program, a minimum of 32 credit hours must be completed through coursework at Western Seminary, with a minimum of 6 credit hours taken in resident study at Western Seminary's Portland campus. All work leading to the Master of Arts (Biblical and Theological Studies) must be completed within five years from the time of matriculation. Extension of this limit requires approval of the Administrative Committee. Reinstatement to the program after withdrawal requires Admissions Committee action and may subject the student to additional requirements for the degree.

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

The Master of Arts (Biblical and Theological Studies) degree is conferred upon the attainment of certain personal and academic requirements. In addition to the general seminary requirements outlined on pages 34-36, degree candidates must (1) give evidence of a genuine Christian character, orthodox belief, and conduct consistent with a God-given call to a position of leadership; (2) complete all courses in the prescribed M.A. curriculum with a minimum grade point average of 3.0.

M.A. (Biblical and Theological Studies)

36 CREDITS

Spiritual Formation [8]

Biblical Studies [16]

Theological Studies [12]

EXEGETICAL TRACK

Biblical Languages [18]

Restricted Electives [4]

Open Electives [6]

THEOLOGICAL TRACK

Theological Studies [4]

Biblical/Theological Electives [18]

Open Electives [6]

**DEGREE TOTAL
= 64 CREDITS**

“The M.A. (Biblical and Theological Studies) degree is ideal for people who have significant pastoral training and wish to enhance their academic and theological skills. The course work will challenge students to integrate their pastoral skills and training with their growing theological convictions and insights.”

Dr. Gerry Breshears, Professor of Systematic Theology
Chair, Division of Biblical and Theological Studies

ONLINE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Students in Western Seminary’s Online M.A. program enter into a community of learning. To help build supportive relationships with other students, faculty and staff, students are required to participate in two one-week sessions on the Portland campus. At program start, students enroll for two threshold courses that meet in a one-week intensive block. Students get to know each other’s stories in a way that will greatly facilitate academic interaction for the duration of the program while building profound lifelong relationships. Students also spend time with faculty mentors who help build links between what students are learning at Western and how students are living and ministering in their home community. As part of this initial time on campus, students are expected to participate in a program orientation to help prepare them for their online degree program.

Toward the end of the program, students gather again to participate in a one-week synthesis class at the Portland Campus, followed by a graduation celebration for students and their families.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

Quality online education requires that the student has at his or her immediate disposal the systems necessary to thrive in a mediated learning environment. This means that students must possess the requisite hardware, software and network resources to function effectively over the course of their program. Moreover, students must be able to demonstrate that they are sufficiently competent in the technology basics – web browsing, uploading and downloading files. For current system requirements, please visit the Online Campus website at www.westernseminary.edu/onlinecampus.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students may complete their studies in as few as four semesters with a minimum of 64 credit hours required as a minimum for graduation. The program is designed around a common core of 36 hours and specialization of 28 hours.

Specialization Options

The M.A. (Biblical and Theological Studies) degree is offered in two specializations: Exegetical and Theological. Both specializations require at least 64 semester hours of course work.

CURRICULUM PLAN

Please note: Biblical studies, theological studies, hermeneutics and church history courses may be offered in 4-credit or 2-credit (i.e., BLS 501X, BLS 501Y) formats, depending on the campus location.

Spiritual & personal formation studies: 8 credits

MFM 500	Discovering/Developing Your Ministry Potential	(2)
SFS 501	Learning to Love God and Others	(2)
SFS 502	Practicing Prayer and Other Key Disciplines	(2)
SFS 504	Growing into Ethical Maturity	(2)

Biblical interpretation studies: 16 credits

DBS 506	Learning to Interpret Scripture	(4)
BLS 501	Interpreting Genesis to Song of Solomon	(4)
BLS 502	Interpreting the Prophets to Gospels	(4)
BLS 503	Interpreting Acts to Revelation	(4)

Theological studies: 12 credits

- THS 501 Knowing the Triune God: Theology I (4)
 THS 502 Glorifying the God of our Salvation: Theology II (4)
 THS 503 Living as the Community of the Spirit: Theology III (2)
 THS 508 Integrating Ministry and Theology (2)

SPECIALIZATION OR TRACK**28 credits – Select one****EXEGETICAL TRACK****Biblical language studies: 18 credits**

- NTS 508 Introducing Foundation for Greek Exegesis (3)
 NTS 509 Greek Reading and Syntax (3)
 NTS 5xx Greek Exegesis Elective (2)
 OTS 508 Introducing Foundation for Hebrew Exegesis (3)
 OTS 509 Hebrew Reading and Syntax (3)
 OTS 5xx Hebrew Exegesis Elective (2)
 NTS 515 Principles of Exegesis (2)
 or OTS 515 Principles of Exegesis (2)

Restricted electives: 4 credits

With advisor's consent, select courses from BLS, NTS, OTS, CHS, or THS prefixes. Students are encouraged to consider using part of these electives for study in the biblical languages.

Open electives: 6 credits**THEOLOGICAL TRACK****Theological studies: 4 credits**

- CHS 505 Wisdom from Church History (4)
 or CHS 506 Insight and Inspiration from Church History (2)
 CHS 5xx Church history elective (2)

(Students complete either CHS 505 or CHS 506 + CHS elective.)

Restricted electives: 18 credits

With advisor's consent, select courses from BLS, NTS, OTS, CHS, or THS prefixes. Students are encouraged to consider using part of these electives for study in the biblical languages.

Open electives: 6 credits