

Master of Theology (Th.M.) Program

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The Master of Theology (Th.M.) at Western provides advanced training in biblical and theological studies to people with a variety of interests: pastors seeking to deepen their ministerial foundation, graduate students wanting to prepare for further postgraduate study, or other graduate students simply desiring to devote some time to developing a specialized interest in a particular field of study.

The Th.M. program at Western places a high value on...

- **MINISTERIAL VITALITY:** Recognizing that biblical and theological research should take place primarily in the service of the church and its ministry in the world, the program continually challenges students to address the ministerial significance of their academic pursuits.
- **ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE:** At every phase of the program, Th.M. students will develop all the skills necessary to achieve a high level of academic success. To that end, our Th.M. program provides ample opportunities for the students to sharpen their critical thinking, researching, and writing skills through both coursework and research.
- **FLEXIBILITY:** A highly flexible degree program, our Master of Theology encourages you to customize the program to meet your needs and interests as you prepare for leadership in the church, further study, a career in teaching, or whatever task God has laid before you.
- **INTERDISCIPLINARY INTERACTION:** We understand the value of each of the various biblical and theological disciplines and, consequently, we encourage students to draw on the resources that each provides in their research and coursework. Th.M. theses are expected to reflect this commitment to interdisciplinary interaction.

The Th.M. program is designed to allow significant flexibility at nearly every phase. The core of the program revolves around Th.M. seminars offered in various biblical and theological disciplines, a research project that can consist of a Th.M. thesis or two research papers and a number of elective courses selected from Western's various course offerings.

All Th.M. students will select a particular biblical/theological discipline in which they will develop a specialization. Students will select Th.M. seminars and electives in consultation with the Th.M. program director as they develop their specialization in this area. All thesis track students will select the specialization that best corresponds to the area in which they would like to conduct their thesis research.

The areas of concentration are:

- Systematic theology
- Historical theology
- Pastoral theology
- New Testament
- Old Testament

Many other components go into making Western's Th.M. program one of the finest in the nation:

- Participation at national and regional meetings of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) is encouraged. Our Th.M. students regularly read papers at regional ETS meetings, and some have done so at national ETS meetings.
- Graduate fellowships are available at Western, linking Th.M. students and professors in close relationships and providing opportunities for students to teach, grade papers and exams, and carry out research.
- The writing of the Th.M. thesis joins a student with two faculty readers who advise and mentor throughout this research phase of the program.

The director of the Th.M. program is available to help students clarify academic goals, select courses, and complete the registration procedure. A copy of the Th.M. Handbook is available by writing to the director of the Th.M. program at the Seminary.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

In addition to the Seminary's general educational goals, the Master of Theology program attempts to achieve specific outcomes. For each student, these outcomes are:

1. Demonstrates mastery of the core content and basic methodologies in the area(s) of specialization.
2. Applies information and insight from all of the theological disciplines to particular problems and research projects.
3. Articulates a clear understanding of and commitment to evangelical theology, in open dialog with a broad range of cultural, theological, and historical perspectives.
4. Engages coursework and develops research with an awareness of the implications for spiritual formation and ministry practice.
5. Exhibits mature, independent thinking by developing arguments that are well organized, well supported, coherent and compelling.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

A prospective Master of Theology student must hold either a three-year Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degree or, in some instances, an academic Master of Arts (M.A.) degree. The specific requirements for each are the following:

The Master of Divinity Degree (M.Div.)

A prospective Master of Theology student may hold a three-year Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degree or a comparable graduate theological degree from a graduate-level institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) in the United States and Canada.

A cumulative grade point average of 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale) is required. In addition, the successful applicant must be able to demonstrate an ability to work in any language considered necessary for the chosen field of study. Proficiency in English composition is also required. This latter requirement shall be determined by submitting, along with the application, a research paper written during previous studies which reflects grammatical and compositional competency.

The M.Div. degree should include at least the equivalent of the following academic courses:

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|-----------------------|------------|
| • Biblical studies | 10 credits |
| • Hermeneutics | 2 credits |
| • Church History | 4 credits |
| • Greek | 6 credits |
| • Hebrew | 6 credits |
| • Systematic Theology | 12 credits |

* Those students wishing to specialize in New Testament will be required to have an additional 2 credits of Greek including exegesis; those specializing in Old Testament need an additional 2 credits of Hebrew including exegesis.

[For Western Seminary M.Div. students: In addition to the normal core requirements, those wishing to specialize in New Testament are required to take NTS 515; those specializing in Old Testament must take OTS 515.]

The Master of Arts degree (M.A.)

A prospective Master of Theology student may hold a two-year Master of Arts (M.A.) degree or a comparable graduate theological degree. Such a degree must provide equivalent theological background with evidence of aptitude for advanced theological study from a graduate-level institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) in the United States and Canada.

The academic M.A. degree should be at least 60 semester credit hours and should include the equivalent of the following academic courses:

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------|
| • Biblical studies | 10 credits |
| • Hermeneutics | 2 credits |
| • Church History | 4 credits |
| • Greek | 6 credits |
| • Hebrew | 6 credits |
| • Systematic Theology | 12 credits |

* Those students wishing to specialize in New Testament will be required to have an additional 2 credits of Greek including exegesis; those specializing in Old Testament need an additional 2 credits of Hebrew including exegesis.

[For Western Seminary M.A. (Biblical and Theological Studies) students: In addition to the normal core requirements, students are required to take CHS 505 or CHS 506 and a CHS elective. Those wishing to specialize in New Testament are required to take NTS 515; those specializing in Old Testament must take OTS 515.]

A student seeking entrance into the Th.M. program with an academic M.A. degree must also demonstrate competency in the areas of communication, interpersonal relationships, intercultural awareness, and practical ministry. In accordance with this, the Th.M. director will work with the prospective student to give him/her opportunity to demonstrate competency in these areas. Although this is not an exhaustive listing and is not intended to be a checklist, some of the areas that will be investigated include:

- Significant ministry experience
- Pastoral/ministerial/communication preparation
- Intercultural awareness
- Demonstrated ability to develop significant interpersonal relationships
- Teaching/counseling/leading experience indicating competency in communication

Should the Th.M. director consider the prospective student to be deficient in these areas and yet sense potential for growth, provisional acceptance into the program will be granted and further preparation assigned. Thus, the student will be admitted with a pre-Th.M. status. In some cases, a course or courses may be taken to remove the deficiency. In other cases, a practicum could be devised which would provide supervision and accountability so as to gain the necessary competency. In either case, these prerequisites must be completed before full acceptance into the program is granted.

A cumulative grade point average of 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale) is required. In addition, the successful applicant must be able to demonstrate an ability to work in any language considered necessary for the chosen field of study. Proficiency in English composition is also required. This latter requirement shall be determined by submitting, along with the application, a research paper written during previous studies which reflects grammatical and compositional competency.

TRANSFER CREDIT

Upon approval by the Registrar, transfer of up to 6 credit hours coursework is allowed toward the Th.M. program from Th.M. programs 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. Any proposed transfer credit must fit the nature of the program. No advanced standing is allowed toward the program. 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.

Students may complete up to 6 hours through the Jerusalem University College (formerly the Institute of Holy Land Studies) in Jerusalem, Israel. These hours may be selected from among approved master's level courses at the Institute. The selection of such courses should be under the guidance of the director of the Th.M. program.

RESIDENCE REQUIREMENTS

Of the 25 credit hours required for the Th.M. program, a minimum of 13 credit hours must be completed through coursework in resident study at Western Seminary's Portland Campus. All work leading to the Master of Theology must be completed within four 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 Theology degree is conferred upon the attainment of certain personal and academic requirements. In addition to the general seminary requirements outlined on pages 32-34 and the specific Th.M. competencies listed below, 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, and (2) complete all courses in the prescribed Th.M. curriculum with a minimum grade point average of 3.0. At least 50% of the credits for the degree (13 credits) must be completed in classes on the Portland Campus.

The Th.M. degree can be completed in one year of full-time study. Students may take up to an additional year to write a thesis and pass comprehensive

exams. All full-time students, however, are expected to finish the degree within four years of initial registration. For part-time students, flexibility is built into the program that allows for a longer period of time for degree completion. All Th.M. students are expected to maintain active progress toward their degree with at least an annual registration. All credits applied toward degree requirements must be earned within ten years of the awarding of the Th.M. degree. A 3.0 grade point average must be maintained throughout the program.

The successful completion of an acceptable thesis or two guided research projects, as well as a comprehensive examination are integral parts of the program. The examination includes both an oral defense of a student's Th.M. thesis and an oral investigation of a student's competency in his/her concentration courses.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

In the Th.M. degree, students will choose between two distinct tracks. In the *thesis track* students will develop the research, writing, and critical thinking skills necessary for the production of a full Th.M. thesis with faculty supervision. This track will be most beneficial for students whose career objectives or personal interests require them to reflect deeply on some particular topic. In the *non-thesis track*, students focus on developing a broader base of knowledge across a range of biblical and theological disciplines, culminating in the production of two smaller research projects.

The Master of Theology, consequently, is a highly personalized degree program. Students may design their program to fit particular academic and/or vocational goals. All programs, however, will be designed around these two basic tracks:

CURRICULUM PLAN

TRACK

25 credits — Select one

THESIS TRACK

• Th.M. Seminars	6 credits
• Other Electives	12 credits
• Graduate Research and Writing	1 credit
• Thesis	6 credits

NON-THESIS TRACK

• Th.M. Seminars	9 credits
• Other Electives	13 credits
• Graduate Research and Writing	1 credit
• Research Projects	2 credits

“The Master of Theology program is designed for students who are committed to serving the church of Jesus Christ by bringing to bear that unique integration of rigorous biblical exegesis, the wisdom of church history and a question-answering systematic theology that is characteristic of good and faithful Christian scholarship.”

Dr. Todd Miles, Associate Professor of Theology
Master of Theology Program Director