

MASTER OF ARTS (THEOLOGY) DEGREE

The M.A. (Theology) was introduced in 1993 to better serve lay persons with a two-year program of theology in the Thomistic tradition facilitating further theological studies or the faithful service of pastoral needs in the Church.

Learning Objectives

Upon the successful completion of this degree, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate a general and integrated foundational knowledge in Sacred Scripture, dogmatic theology and moral theology in harmony with the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas.
2. Undertake Church-related work for which an M.A. is required at the diocesan or parish level, e.g. religious education, or teaching at the secondary school level.
3. Begin a program of higher studies if so desired. This involves (a) knowledge of necessary topics including philosophy prerequisites, (b) an ability to engage contemporary modes of thought, and (c) rootedness in both classical and modern Catholic theology.

Degree Requirements

Admission

The following prerequisites for admission will be evaluated by the Committee on Admissions which may, in individual cases, allow the student to remedy particular deficiencies during the first year of the program:

1. A bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university.
2. Superior achievement and the ability to pursue graduate work as indicated by the transcript of previous studies (with a minimum GPA of 3.00).
3. Three letters of recommendation by persons who are in a position to judge the applicant's ability in this academic area, along with a current photo and a completed application form.
4. Results of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) indicating aptitude for graduate studies in theology if one has no previous graduate work. The PFIC is listed under Dominican House of Studies, code 2498.
5. An undergraduate foundation in philosophy, consisting of a minimum of 18 credit hours drawn from the following areas: history of philosophy, logic, philosophy of being, philosophical ethics, philosophical anthropology, natural philosophy, and philosophy of knowledge.
6. A reading knowledge of Latin.

Course Work

A minimum of 36 semester hours of graduate coursework is required according to the following distribution:

30 required: Pentateuch or Prophets (3); Synoptic Gospels (3); Principles of Christian Moral Life I and II (6); Church History (6); The Nature of Sacra Doctrina (3); Triune God (3); Christology (3); Ecclesiology (3)

6 electives: Six hours must be spent in the student's area of concentration. These concentrations may include dogmatic theology, moral theology, or biblical theology.

Language Requirements

Reading proficiency in Latin and a modern language, e.g. French, German or Spanish, may be demonstrated either by successfully completing two semesters of graduate coursework in the language or by passing a written proficiency examination, offered twice per semester. Since Latin is considered a prerequisite, this requirement must be satisfied within the first year of study.

Comprehensive Examination

To qualify for the comprehensive examination, the student must have satisfied the language requirements and have a grade point average of 3.00 or above. The student usually takes the comprehensive examination during the fourth semester of study although the Dean may allow students to take the exam at other times. The exam has a single written component, and its subject matter includes material covered in the required courses in dogmatic theology, moral theology, and Scripture as well as topics indicated in a special packet that the student will receive during his or her first year in the program. In order to pass the comprehensive exam, a student must receive an average grade of 3.00 on the exam. During the exam, the student will have three hours to write on three themes (theses), one each from the assigned areas of Sacred Scripture, dogmatic theology, and moral theology. In each area, the candidate will be able to choose from three possible questions. The student must pass the comprehensive examination before defending his or her M.A. thesis.

Thesis

Under the direction of a faculty member, the student must write a thesis between 60–75 pages in length. The purpose of the thesis is to demonstrate the student's ability to identify and investigate a theological question, to

carry out research appropriate to the topic, and to organize and present this material in a critical and coherent manner. The form to be used is that prescribed in the school's *Style Guide for Theses, Tesinae, and Dissertations*, supplemented as needed by Kate Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, 9th Edition (University of Chicago Press). The entire thesis must be approved by the director before the final draft is submitted to the Academic Dean. The requirements outlined in the Student Handbook must be followed exactly.

Capstone Policy

Students who fail the first attempt of the comprehensive exam, the thesis, or the thesis defense will be able to make a second attempt. However, they will only be able to receive the minimum required passing average grade of 3.0 on their second attempt and will be ineligible for academic honors. Candidates may not continue in the program after two failures of the comprehensive examination.

Residency

Normally the M.A. program will require a minimum of two full-time academic years or their equivalent. The program may be taken on a part-time basis but must be completed in no more than six years. The residency requirement for the M.A. degree is four semesters.

Model Curriculum for the Master of Arts (Theology)

Fall Semester

I Theology

Elementary Latin I

Synoptic Gospels

Early and Medieval Church History

Nature of Sacra Doctrina

Spring Semester

Elementary Latin II

Prophets of Israel (alternatively,
Pentateuch)

Reformation & Modern Church History

Triune God

II Theology

Basic Elements of Christology

Principles of Christian Moral Life I

Elective

Ecclesiology

Principles of Christian Moral Life II

Elective

Latin Reading Comprehension Test (1st Year of Matriculation)
Modern Language Reading Comprehension Test (1st Year of Matriculation)
Comprehensive Examination (2nd Year of Matriculation)
Thesis (2nd Year of Matriculation)
Thesis Defense (2nd Year of Matriculation)

Grade Point Average

The student must maintain a grade point average of 3.00 or above throughout the M.A. program. Students are also required to receive an average of 3.00 on both their written thesis and a 3.00 on their thesis defense in order to complete the degree program.

Summer Study

Each summer, a limited number of M.A. courses are offered. Students may enroll in these courses if the courses meet their degree requirements.

Model Timeline for M.A. Thesis and Defense

I M.A. Candidates (1st Year)

Spring: M.A. candidates should begin discussing possible areas and topics for their M.A. thesis with a chosen director.

II M.A. Candidates (2nd Year)

September 30: Deadline for II M.A. candidates' submission of a definitive proposal to the Academic Dean for approval, signed by the candidate and his or her director. The proposal should contain a brief description of the topic in one or two paragraphs and a brief bibliography.

October – March: The candidate and director should be in frequent contact regarding the thesis. The entire thesis must be approved by the director before the final draft is submitted to the Dean.

March 31: Last day for submitting three unbound copies of the M.A. thesis to the Dean, as well as a written petition, signed by the director, for a defense. One copy of the thesis will be distributed to the director, and the other two copies will be distributed to the two readers chosen by the Dean.

N.B. For students intending to complete their M.A. during the fall semester, **the deadline is November 1** for submitting to the Academic Dean three unbound copies of the M.A. thesis, as well as a written petition, signed by the director, for a defense.

Special Exam Week: The director and two readers assigned by the Academic Dean examine the student on the thesis topic for no more than 1½ hours, the first 30 minutes of which is dedicated to the candidate's exposition of the thesis. Each member of the board may then question the candidate for 20–30 minutes. After the defense, the director and two readers leave the testing area to determine the grade of the defense (the average of three scores). The candidate may field questions from the audience at this time, although this portion is not graded. When the director and readers return, the director announces the outcome of the defense (successful/unsuccessful) to the candidate and attending guests. The Academic Dean and Registrar compute the average of the thesis grade and defense grade (25%) relative to the candidate's comprehensive examination grade (15%) and coursework (60%) to determine what honors may apply. Honors will be announced at graduation.

N.B. Candidates must fulfill all of their academic requirements, including their Latin and modern language requirements, before the thesis defense.