

M.Div., Buddhism & Interreligious Engagement Option (M.Div. BIE)

Description

The Buddhism and Interreligious Engagement option within the Master of Divinity (M.Div. BIE) is a 78 credit, three-year professional graduate degree. This degree prepares individuals for diverse leadership roles working with and in Buddhist communities as well as bringing Buddhist practices and principles to communities that may not identify as Buddhist. These roles include religious and spiritual leadership; chaplaincy at universities, hospitals, or prisons; professional counseling; teaching; and careers in interreligious/interfaith cooperation, policy-making, social justice advocacy, journalism, non-profits, and government.

The M.Div. BIE curriculum engages students in sustained and probing study of Sacred Texts, History, Systematic Theology, Practical Theology and field education. The curriculum has three distinctive features:

1. Focus on Buddhist tradition and Buddhist practice: The M.Div. BIE provides a solid foundation in the Buddhist tradition. M.Div. BIE students take at least 27 credits (9 courses) that focus on foundational sources, disciplines, practices, diversity, and contextual realities of the Buddhist tradition and Buddhist practice. Required courses include: Buddhist Religious Thought and Practice; Introduction to Buddhist Meditation Practices; Socially Engaged Buddhism; and at least one STX course that engages Buddhist texts, such as Indian Buddhist Texts or Zen Buddhist Texts.
2. Focus on interreligious engagement: The M.Div. BIE provides sustained exposure to other religious traditions and interreligious engagement. Students are required to take at least 16 credits (5 courses) on Christianity, another religious tradition, and the theory, methods, and approaches of interreligious engagement. Required courses include: Introduction to the Bible, Systematic Theology, and Religions in the City.
3. Focus on social disparities: In keeping with Union's broader curricula, the M.Div. BIE intentionally engages social disparities based on gender, race, class, sexuality, and other marginalizing forces. Integrated into many courses, the goal is to cultivate an ability to respond to these disparities with analytic rigor, historical consciousness, sensitivity to tradition, equanimity and compassion.

The M.Div. BIE curriculum also provides opportunities for personal, professional, and spiritual development. These opportunities include Field Education and Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). CPE is of particular importance for students considering chaplaincy. M.Div. students at Union are expected to integrate theological knowledge with analysis of contemporary issues, while developing practical skills for serving the needs of the communities, institutions, and society.

Courses at Other Institutions: In addition to courses offered at Union, M.Div. BIE students are able to take up to 15 graduate-level credits at other accredited schools. These schools include Columbia University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS), Drew University School of Theology, Fordham University Department of Theology, General Theological Seminary, Hebrew Union College, New York Theological Seminary, and St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary.

Languages: There is no language requirement for completion of the M.Div. BIE degree. However, based upon the student's interests and intended vocation, study of certain languages—inclusive of, but not limited to Pali, Sanskrit and Chinese—is advised when possible.

Note about Chaplaincy Certification: Board certification as a chaplain generally requires an M.DIV., four units of CPE, and endorsement from a national organization (such as Buddhist Churches of America) or religious community. Students should check with their endorsing body for additional requirements.