

UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK
UPDATED 8/26/16 BB

*Directions for Preparing the Written Thesis for Master of Divinity or Master of Arts
(including the written portion of a Senior Project)*

Schedule of Due Dates:

- November 18** The Thesis Topic Approval form, with the first advisor/reader's signature, is to be given to the Registrar's Office by the student. Second readers are assigned in the Academic Office. Insofar as possible, student requests for second reader preferences will be honored. If you have a preference for second reader, ask that professor to sign the Thesis Topic Approval form.
- January 11** Two copies of an outline and preliminary bibliography for your thesis or for the written portion of your senior project are due **in the Registrar's Office**. These will be forwarded to your faculty readers.
- April 7** Email a digital copy of your thesis to readers and the Registrar's Office by April 7th. Please remember that no extension of the deadline is permissible for a student who plans to graduate.

NOTE: Please remember to follow the guidelines below if your reader(s) require a physical copy of your thesis

While the M.A. thesis must be a written work, the M.Div. thesis option may be different from the traditional academic essay. It may be a senior project or presentation of another kind, or it may be choosing two additional elective courses. The written project must show academic rigor, good research, plus the development and understanding of the material covered, and relevant technical competency.

The written thesis should represent your original work and, except for direct quotations, it must be in your own words. You should plan, research, and write your thesis in regular consultation with the faculty readers of your thesis project, particularly the first reader.

If you are writing an academic thesis, it is highly recommended that you take the year-long, graduate thesis-writing seminar (UT150 and UT151). If you take the seminar, register as follows: UT150=2 credits in the fall, UT151=2 credits in the spring, and UT420 or UT422=2 credits in spring. If you are not taking the seminar, sign up for UT420 or UT422 for 6 credits during the semester in which you will be writing.

The exact length of the thesis is not specified. For an academic essay, fifty pages, i.e., approximately 12,000 words, is normally a satisfactory length. The length should of course be determined by achieving an adequate treatment of the subject. If the topic cannot be covered adequately in about fifty pages, you need to sharpen the issue or the question that is to be treated in your work. Discuss this with your first reader.

For an M.Div. candidate who opts to do a **senior project** rather than an academic essay, the presentation or project must be supported by a documentation of your purpose, sources, and methodology (*to be submitted to the registrar on the January 11 due date*). In some instances, an evaluation of the project might be requested from the faculty advisor after the project has

been completed. You may also write an essay, of approximately the same length as the traditional academic essay, espousing and developing a theological position and documenting its sources. The senior project of a M.Div. candidate may focus on one or integrate two or more fields of study. *In all cases, the project will include a written academic paper of approximately 12-20 pages.*

In the text, indicate short quotations (no more than two sentences) by quotation marks; indicate long quotations (three or more sentences) by indentation and single-spacing. You must give the source of **every quotation, item of evidence or citation of opinion** you use, according to standard reference forms. Obtaining permission to use specific material, when that is necessary, is of course your responsibility. Documentation and attribution of all sources used in a thesis are standard academic requirements.

The thesis must be double-spaced (except for long quotations) on 8.5 x 11 inch white paper. Use a good quality, opaque paper. Obviously, you are to observe the highest standard in using correct spelling, punctuation and grammar. You should follow a consistent format and typography found in a generally recognized style manual. Footnotes and references, for example, should appear at the bottom of the appropriate pages, or at the end of each chapter, or just before the bibliography at the end of the thesis. (The author/date or internal citation method of reference is acceptable for the master's thesis but not for a doctoral dissertation.) Whatever format you choose, follow it consistently. Recommended manuals include Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations* and the *Chicago Manual of Style*. There are many editions of these and other suitable manuals. Anyone engaged in writing will find Strunk and White's popular *The Elements of Style* a useful book, but it is not a style book. Many of these manuals are available in the Burke Library and local bookstores.

Each thesis must have a table of contents that gives an outline of the treatment and also supplies a list of charts, graphs, or illustrations if appropriate. The bibliography at the end of the thesis must list all the books and articles used during preparation of the thesis. The bibliography may be arranged alphabetically, chronologically, or topically. In each entry give the author's name, exact title of the book, and the place and date of publication. In the case of articles in periodicals, or single chapters in books, etc., give the volume number, inclusive pages of the portion to which you referred, and the date of the periodical.

The title page (see Turabian for samples) should contain the title of the thesis, the author's name, the date, and the degree for which it is being submitted, for example:

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of [your degree] at Union Theological Seminary
April 7, 2017**

In order that your readers may receive the results of your work in a clear and effective form, the draft of your thesis should be revised and carefully corrected before it is presented to the Registrar's Office. If your native language is not English, you will want to ask someone who is competent to correct errors in English usage, to read your paper.

If submitting a paper copy, double-sided printing is acceptable. **If you are required to submit a paper copy by your reader, it should be bound in a cover.** Spiral binding or the velo cover, available from most copy centers, is satisfactory.