

Graduate Theological Union

Common Master of Arts Program Application Instruction

Fall Deadlines: Priority February 1; Final June 1

Spring Deadlines: Priority October 1; Final December 1

The Common M.A. program is designed to provide you with a foundational knowledge of both classical and modern methods of understanding theology and the study of religion. Through the resources of the member schools and Centers, the GTU offers a full range of areas of concentration that allow you to develop skills for conducting analytical research at the graduate level. We encourage you to apply online at <https://www.applyweb.com/gtu/menu.html> where you can also download the application form.

Select a School of Affiliation and Area of Concentration

Select a school of affiliation, based primarily upon an intention to focus on an area of study concentration where you can pursue your primary academic interests. Note: *Not all Areas of study are available at all member schools.* Indicate your first choice of a school of affiliation by writing a "1" in the line next to the school initials, a "2" next to your second choice, and a "3" next to your third choice. If your application is judged favorably and the first-choice school does not have the resources to meet your needs, your application will be sent to the school of your second or third choice.

Member Schools, Centers, and Institutes offering MA concentrations

ABSW	American Baptist Seminary of the West
CDSP	Church Divinity School of the Pacific
CIS	Center for Islamic Studies (Islamic Studies only)
CJS	Center for Jewish Studies (Jewish Studies only)
DSPT	Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology
GTU	Graduate Theological Union
IBS	Institute of Buddhist Studies (Buddhist Studies only)
JST	Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University
PAOI	Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute (Orthodox Christian Studies only)
PLTS	Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary
PSR	Pacific School of Religion
SFTS	San Francisco Theological Seminary

Departments & Concentrations

Sacred Texts & Their Interpretation

Hebrew Bible/Old Testament	Hindu Sacred Texts	Islamic Sacred Texts
New Testament	Rabbinic Literature	

Historical & Cultural Studies of Religion

Anthropology of Religion	Art and Religion	Buddhist Studies
Christian Spirituality	Comparative Religion	Hindu Studies
History of Christianity	Islamic Studies	Jewish Studies
New Religious Movements	Religion and Literature	Sociology of Religion

Theology & Ethics

Aesthetics	Christian Theology	Comparative Ethics
Comparative Theology	Ethics	Hindu Theology
Islamic Philosophy and Theology	Philosophical Theology	Theology & Science

Religion & Practice

Homiletics	Liturgical Studies	Missiology
Practical Theology	Religious Education	Yoga Studies

Application Deadlines

M.A. Applicants are encouraged to submit their applications by the priority deadlines listed below in order to receive consideration for institutional grants. Though applications received after the priority deadline will be considered for admission, financial aid offerings may be limited after the priority deadline.

Fall Priority Deadline	February 1st
Fall Final Deadline	July 1st
Spring Priority Deadline	October 1st
Spring Final Deadline	December 1 st

Your application will not be processed without the application fee.

Academic and Professional Background

Transcripts: Applicants must submit two (2) official transcripts of all post-secondary school work. Official transcripts are documents issued by the institution that bear the actual signature of the registrar and the seal of the institution. List all post-secondary schools you have attended, with the most recent first. If further space is needed, include an additional sheet. If you have not completed your bachelor's degree, submit an in progress transcript showing work to date. If you have previously attended either the GTU or one of its member schools, you must request transcripts from them; we cannot request them for you.

Applicants intending to transfer credit should download the petition form on the web site. The maximum number of units that may be transferred toward the M.A. are: 12 units (four 3-unit courses) from an outside institution; 24 units (eight 3-unit courses) from a degree program at a GTU member school; 12 units (four 3-unit courses) from non-degree student status at the GTU or a member school. Transferring units into the M.A. program does not necessarily lessen the requirement of two years of residence and tuition.

Language Study: During the course of the M.A. program students are required to demonstrate proficiency in one modern foreign language. Please indicate your background in any languages in which you are proficient.

Professional Experience: Provide information about your research and work experience that will be useful in considering your application, and also list honors, fellowships or other commendations of note.

Statement of Academic Purpose

This is your opportunity to explain your academic interests clearly, and to show how they fit with the GTU M.A. program and the school of affiliation you have selected. You are also encouraged to indicate abilities or aspects of your academic background that will contribute to your proposed further study. Part of the challenge of this statement is that it should be succinct (300-500 words). This is a critical part of the application process, and should be typewritten and signed.

Letters of Recommendation

Three letters of recommendation are required. Note that these are academic recommendations, not character references. Letters are requested by the applicant and submitted by the recommender via the online application system. Online applicants provide the email addresses of their recommenders, and once the application is submitted an email is automatically sent to the recommender with instructions for completing the letter online. Recommendation forms are available for downloading at <http://gtu.edu/admissions>.

If you do not use the online system, we suggest that your recommenders either mail the letter to us directly, or seal the letter in an envelope, sign across the seal and return it to you to send with your application. Make sure to inform recommenders of the application deadline, and provide them with a stamped envelope addressed to the Admissions Office, Graduate Theological Union, 2400 Ridge Road, Berkeley, CA 94709.

Scores from the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) or TOEFL

All applicants whose native language is English are required to submit GRE scores from an exam taken within the last five years. Scores should be sent from the Educational Testing Service (ETS) to the GTU Admissions Office (institution code 4336). International applicants from countries where English is not the official language and who have not completed a degree in the United States, are required to take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) in place of the GRE. Scores must be from an exam taken within the last two years. To schedule to take the exam, go to one of the following web sites: www.gre.org or www.toefl.org

Information for International Applicants

International applicants to the M.A. program must:

- Submit official records from each academic institution attended after secondary school. Official records bear the actual signature of the registrar and the seal of the issuing institution. Photocopies are acceptable only if (1) each copy is signed by an academic official who certifies that it is an exact copy of the original document; and (2) it bears the seal and title of the authorizing official. Photocopies of the official's signature, stamp, or seal are not acceptable.
- Submit official academic records in the original language, accompanied by English translations. Specially prepared English versions are not acceptable in place of documents issued in the original language. Academic records must show the dates of your enrollment, all subjects or courses, units, credits or hours, and grades in each subject. All records must include a complete description of institutional grading scales or other standards of evaluation with maximum grades and minimum marks indicated. Submit official evidence of the conferral of all degrees, diplomas, or professional titles and the date (month and year) of the formal conferral. These certificates should indicate the exact name of the degree, diploma, or title as it is known in the country of origin and not in North American terms.
- International students will need to demonstrate adequate financial support after admission.

Submitting the Application for Review

Submit transcripts and letters of recommendation to the GTU Admissions Office. If you are submitting a paper application we recommend that you have all transcripts and recommendations sent to you so that you can mail your materials all together, if possible. This will give you the assurance that all materials will arrive on time. We will notify you by email to update you about the items we have received. Completed applications will be evaluated by the Member School and GTU M.A. Admissions Committees.

Application Fee – \$40

If you apply online you will pay by credit card. If you submit a paper application the fee should be paid by check. Your name must be imprinted or written legibly on the front of the check. Fees must be in U.S. dollars for all international money orders or checks drawn on a U.S. bank. DO NOT SEND CASH.

The Graduate Theological Union supports equality of educational opportunity. No student shall be denied admission nor discriminated against in any way because of race, gender, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, national origin, age, or disability. The GTU is proud of its diversity and welcomes applications from all who are qualified academically to pursue graduate studies.

Application Checklist

- ☐ Apply online at <https://www.applyweb.com/gtu/menu.html>
- ☐ Three academic letters of recommendation, submitted by faculty online, or by mail
- ☐ Official GRE or TOEFL scores sent to the GTU (inst. 4336) from Educational Testing Service
- ☐ Sealed envelopes containing official Academic Transcripts (*two from each post-secondary school attended*)

If you are using a paper application, also send:

- ☐ Two copies of the GTU Application Form (*signed*)
- ☐ Two copies of Statement of Purpose (*signed*)
- ☐ Application Fee

All materials submitted as part of the application are the property of the Graduate Theological Union and are not returnable to the applicant. Materials submitted for admission become the basis for the successful applicant's permanent file at the GTU, with the exception of letters of recommendation. Letters of recommendation serve to aid the Admissions Committee in assessing skills and the student's match with the GTU program, and are destroyed once admission decisions are made.

Send all application materials to:

Graduate Theological Union
Admissions Office
2400 Ridge Rd., Berkeley, CA 94709

Andrea Sheaffer, Ph.D.
Director of Admissions
Phone: 800/826-4488, or 510/649-2460
Fax: 510/649-1730
Email: gtuadm@gtu.edu



GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION

Where religion meets the world

Writing the Academic Statement of Purpose

Notes from prior workshops with faculty panelists

The Statement of Purpose is a critical component of the application process. It provides faculty readers with a sense of the way an applicant thinks; how she or he conceptualizes a program of study. It also offers a sense of the applicant's preparation for the course of study proposed. This is the opportunity for the applicant to craft something in his or her own voice; a chance to bring it all together.

TIPS FOR APPLICANTS:

The Statement of Purpose should put forward the project or topic you wish to study, what resources you plan to use, and the reason(s) a particular school is a good “match” for your work. It is a personal statement of disciplined creativity that is an intellectual statement at its heart.

Figure out what you want to do with a masters degree; where do you see yourself after graduate school? Your answers will help determine which program/s might be the best stepping stone to your goal. Make sure you are applying to the institutions and programs that are best for you.

Your writing should be concrete, and interesting to read. It is better to err on the side of stating concrete goals for a topic of study than to give in to generality and vagueness.

If the Statement is daunting, ask yourself conceptual questions, such as:

- What problems or questions do I find of keen interest?
- What methods might I want to explore?

Readers will be looking for passion, intellectual spark, and curiosity.

The spark of creativity, however, must be built on a solid foundation. The statement ought to reflect that one has an academic background that positions one for the research proposal. Make your statement brief, but highlight your strengths and relevant history or experience.

A strong proposal is one that demonstrates that your academic background fits with the course of study you propose. Be mindful, however, that faculty are not quite as interested in your past as they are in your future and what a doctoral program looks like to you.

It is often helpful to share drafts of your Statement of Purpose with a few respected and trusted colleagues and mentors as you move through the process of composition. Give a copy of your statement to the faculty you ask to write letters of recommendation.

When mentioning faculty with whom you wish to work, identify the common interest that connects your own work to the work of each particular professor. (It may be helpful to review books and articles of those in whom one has an interest in order to better articulate why one is drawn to study with a particular scholar.)

Think of the faculty reading the application: What will you bring to the conversation that interests her/him? Frame your interest in a way that someone might be intrigued to work with you.

A good statement shows clarity; conceptualizes a program of study; and evidences an awareness of the resources available at the GTU that are suitable for the particular course of study defined in your statement.

A statement that is not well designed tends to show a vague enthusiasm. It does not articulate well a proposed course of study, nor explain the "fit" between the applicant and the resources of the school. An applicant wants to show that strong preparation for moving into doctoral research and an awareness of scholarly trends and methods.

GTU doctoral students give shape and definition to their studies. A doctoral student's program will be largely defined by the student, in conversation with faculty members. The Statement of Purpose provides the opportunity for you to demonstrate a coherence in framing and thinking through a possible program.

Every word counts; you want to come up with "something that sings." Read the instructions carefully for each distinct application. Take care to think and reread every sentence. Not everyone can be admitted, so you want to communicate in a way that faculty can see you excel beyond really qualified people.

Graduate Theological Union, 2400 Ridge Rd., Berkeley CA 94709
Kathleen Kook, Ph.D., Dean of Students, 510-649-2460 (gtuadm@gtu.edu)

www.gtu.edu