

MTS Thesis/Project Deadlines for May 2023 Graduates

2023 Spring Registration

- After securing a professor to be your first reader, enroll in DIV 7999: Master of Theological Studies Degree Thesis (3 hrs)
- Consider enrolling in DIV 7996: Master of Theological Studies Thesis Workshop (0 hrs)

Feb. 6 * Second reader should also be secured at this point.

* We suggest sections should be submitted in regular intervals to the first and second readers during the seven weeks prior to March 20 so that revisions may be made in each section.

March 20 * Full draft of thesis due to the first reader and second reader.

April 3 * Suggestions for revisions due back to the student.

April 14 * Final draft due to both readers.
* Student schedules a thesis/project conversation that includes both readers

April 17-April 28 * Thesis/project conversations occur
* One final copy signed and dated by two readers submitted to Asst. Dean Judge

By May 1 * First and second readers agree on final grade for submission to Asst. Dean Judge
* First and second readers submit two separate rubrics to Asst. Dean Judge

MTS Thesis/Project FAQs:

Q: What is the MTS Thesis/Project?

“Students may elect to complete a program project or thesis as directed by their academic adviser. The project/thesis will be a 30–50 page research project giving evidence of original investigation in the area of the program focus.” The thesis is the capstone of your MTS degree and so should represent the culmination of your academic learning and skill refinement especially related to the degree learning goals. Most of MTS theses are typical research papers but a few students also have worked with RACC and other certificates or concentrations to do innovative projects that entail performance or production of art in relation to written analyses of the process and outcome. These projects especially should be carefully designed with the first and second readers.

Q: How long should the project be?

The final project is between 30-50 pages double-spaced, not including bibliography or endnotes. You may wish to think of this as between 7500-12500 words without footnotes and bibliography.

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Q: May I look at examples of previous projects?

We do not currently keep previous projects on file. But feel free to contact Asst. Dean Judge for more information on the nature of recent successful projects.

Q: How do I choose my readers? What are their roles?

First reader: Before you register for MTS thesis/project, you should identify, contact, and confirm a first reader for your project. Ideally this is someone with whom you have worked with in a previous course. The first reader will help guide your largely independent writing project, helping you to refine your proposal, reviewing sections of your paper/project, and providing feedback on the final draft. The 1st and 2nd readers agree on the final grade to Asst. Dean Judge and each one completes the related rubric separately.

Second reader: should be identified and confirmed by the time your proposal is complete. The second reader serves as another voice in your conversation, but without primary supervisory responsibilities. The second reader will provide comments on your final draft and also be part of your MTS Thesis/Project conversation. The 1st and 2nd readers agree on the final grade to Asst. Dean Judge and each one completes the related rubric separately.

Q: What is the MTS Thesis/Project Discussion?

During this discussion, the student is asked questions of clarification, analysis, and application related to the thesis. The conversation is meant to not only assess the learning of the student in relation to the degree program goals but also to connect the thesis to further academic and/or vocational interests.

Q: How are grades determined? What is the rubric for?

The first and second readers weigh the overall quality of the specific project while keeping in mind the overall degree program goals. While the rubric provides an overall assessment mechanism related to the degree program goals, it does not numerically equate to a certain letter grade, as—for example—a student's outstanding performance in historical analysis may balance work on constructive argumentation. But inadequate performance in one category should impact a final grade.

Q: Do I need IRB (Institutional Review Board) approval if I want to do interviews, surveys, etc. for my Senior Project?

MTS theses/projects do not require IRB approval if the student will not be publishing the results of her/his/their research ***in any form, ever*** beyond the purposes of the course. Students using these methods are encouraged to work with their professors to ensure that they are trained properly and that their research topic would not be potentially dangerous to research subjects (e.g. does not require or expect disclosure of personal data, does not place either researcher or informant in a position of undue vulnerability—particularly with designated vulnerable populations such as inmates, children, persons with disabilities, etc.). Finally, students should be careful when choosing to use interviews, surveys, etc. for the MTS Thesis/Project as it is meant to develop the student's own voice in relation to the curriculum. Various research techniques should only supplement, not supplant the development of your own academic and/or theological voice.