

VDS Syllabi Requirements

In order to help us meet SACS and ATS requirements, syllabi should include the following elements, which focus on what the course intends to accomplish, what the student will be able to do as a result of taking the course, how student learning will be assessed, and what expectations the university has in terms of student academic behavior. These elements, of course, only form part of what appears on a syllabus.

1. **Purposes of the course** -- Why the course exists, what it intends to accomplish, what it will not do, how it fits into the larger purposes of the relevant degree programs (see example below)
2. **Outcomes of the course and the way these outcomes will be assessed** (see example below)
3. **Correlation of outcomes of the course to degree learning goals, *including concentration learning goals as relevant*** (see example below)
4. **Grading policy for the course** -- List of requirements, accompanied by valuations (percentages, points) for each; some indication of what constitutes “successful” work; as relevant, clear indication of varied requirements for undergraduate, master, and doctoral students.

All courses taken by ThM students must have requirements exceeding the MDiv level (e.g. additional readings, assignments, and/or length of assignments). Syllabi may specify those additional expectations (increased word count on written assignments, e.g.) **or** may state that ThM students are to meet with the instructor to work that out individually.

5. **Statement of the honor code** -- suggested language: “The Vanderbilt Honor Code applies to all work in this course. For information about the Honor System, including the Code and examples of its application to written work, please see <https://divinity.vanderbilt.edu/portal/VDS-honor-constitution.pdf>
6. You should also provide any additional details about permissible and impermissible behaviors for your particular course, e.g. rough drafts must include proper citations, students are encouraged to discuss the answers to exam questions with other students, TAs, and faculty.
7. **Mandatory Reporter statement** – suggested language: “All faculty members must report allegations of sexual misconduct and intimate partner violence to the Title IX Coordinator. Confidential and limited confidential places for reporting are listed at https://www.vanderbilt.edu/title-ix/docs/VUOnePageResourcesList_Students_2017-18.pdf
8. **Disability Accommodation statement** – suggested language: “All accommodations for students with documented physical or learning disabilities must be arranged by the student through Student Access Services at 615-322-4705.”

Example of

1. Purposes of the Course & 2. Outcomes and Assessment:

“This class begins with analysis of some contexts in which moral reasoning happens today – analysis that itself begins the work of moral reasoning. The class then introduces a series of concepts that have played significant roles in and beyond Western Christian traditions, inviting students into critical conversation around those concepts. The class concludes by opening into opportunities to deepen and revise understandings of these terms in the process of using them to think through questions around two pressing topics: sex and the environment.

The class aims to give students an opportunity to become more adept in the work of moral reasoning. It invites students to take up perspectives both within and outside of Western Christian traditions. In particular, the class is designed to cultivate these qualities:

- A reflexive sensibility that enables students to understand their commitments more clearly, locate their commitments in social and historical contexts with more precision, and revise their commitments in conversation with others who have different commitments (assignments a, b, and d are tailored especially to this goal)
Degree Learning Goals: MDIV 1, 2, 3, 6; MTS 1, 2, 3, 4
- Knowledge of a historically rooted vocabulary for moral reasoning (the mid-term and final are tailored especially to this goal)
Degree Learning Goals: MDIV 1, 3; MTS 1, 3; REJ Concentration Goal 1
- The ability to use and refine this vocabulary in reasoning about complex situations (assignment c is especially tailored to this goal)
Degree Learning Goals: MDIV 1, 3, 4, 5, 6; MTS 1, 3, 4, 5; REJ Concentration Goal 2, 3
- A sense of the limits of ethics as a discourse (the mid-term and final are especially tailored to this goal)”
Degree Learning Goals: MDIV 1, 3, 6; MTS 1, 3, 4, 5

FOR YOUR REFERENCE

MDiv Degree Learning Goals

Students are expected to demonstrate:

1. the ability to think critically, constructively, and intersectionally about the relationship between social context, history, and the Christian faith.
2. attentiveness to and insights about their personal and spiritual formation and sense of vocation.
3. critical, constructive, and interdisciplinary competence in the academic study of religion, as represented in the M. Div. curriculum.
4. competence in the ministerial arts appropriate to their vocational goals.
5. competence in putting theory and practice in conversation with each other.
6. the ability to connect these competencies to pressing contemporary concerns, especially those articulated in the School's Commitments.

MTS Degree Learning Goals

Students are expected to demonstrate:

1. the ability to think critically, constructively, and intersectionally about the relationship between social context, history, and religion.
2. thoughtful articulation of the connection between their course of study, their individual formation, and their vocational goals.
3. critical and constructive competence in the academic study of religion, as represented in the MTS curriculum.
4. the ability to connect these competencies to pressing contemporary concerns, especially those articulated in the School's Commitments.
5. in the MTS Concentration Plan of Study, competency in
 - a. putting theory and practice in conversation with each another and
 - b. in thinking across disciplines, as represented in the MTS curriculum.

ThM Degree Learning Goals

[N.B. Only 1 and 2 are relevant to syllabi]

Students are expected to:

1. Achieve advanced competency and deepened knowledge in an area of theological specialization by demonstrating advanced knowledge of the field, addressing its historical and contemporary, local and global contexts, and integrating VDS's Commitments into that understanding.
2. Produce a substantive research project (**ThM thesis**) that effectively defines its question, deploys an appropriate methodology, analyzes the data/material critically and carefully, and provides a constructive argument appropriate to the theological area.

3. Evidence the capacity to undertake critical inquiries, engage in constructive actions, and hold effective conversations in the student's future ministerial and/or academic endeavors.