



Master of Theological Studies

PROGRAM HANDBOOK

2026-2027



Santa Clara
Jesuit School of Theology

Welcome to the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University!

JST-SCU is a premier Jesuit theology center and the graduate school of theology of Santa Clara University that forms women and men from across the world to lead and minister in the 21st-century global synodal Church. We bridge rigorous academic contextual theology with lived realities of faith and equip lay and religious students with synodal tools of spirituality, discernment, dialogue, and collaboration to make a difference in the world. In keeping with our [strategic priorities](#), students and faculty from across the globe converge at JST-SCU to engage in its academically rigorous, socially engaged, contextually diverse, and spiritually vibrant community.

JSTSCU is also an ecclesiastical faculty accredited and approved by the Vatican Dicastery for Culture and Education to prepare Jesuits, lay men and women, religious women and men, and diocesan priests for vocation, ministry, service, and career in the Church, society, and academy. With a current student body from 40 countries, our global community benefits from the wisdom of one another's experiences in preparation for ministry leadership and service to the Church and the world.

Located in the heart of Silicon Valley, Santa Clara University's vision and mission are firmly rooted in the Jesuit, Catholic tradition to educate citizens and leaders of competence, conscience, and compassion and build a more humane, just, and sustainable world. Santa Clara (www.scu.edu) blends high-tech innovation with a social consciousness grounded in the Jesuit educational tradition and engaged with various communities to foster an entrepreneurial mindset in view of helping shape the next generation of leaders and global thinkers.

Besides institutional and academic strengths in systematic theology, biblical studies, sacraments and liturgy, moral theology, social ethics, inter-religious dialogue, and Christian spirituality, JST-SCU has recently enhanced expertise in the following areas of study:

- Ignatian spirituality, including classes, research, and practicums; four spiritual directors trained in Ignatian spirituality are available for Jesuit students.
- Biblical studies, with an emphasis on textual knowledge and contextual interpretation.
- Social ethics, with expertise in reconciliation, ecology, family systems, and post-colonial perspectives.
- Theology of synodality, with focus on the understanding, knowledge, and practice of synodality in the global Church.

JST-SCU's small size allows our world-renowned faculty to personally engage our students in the highest quality of academic excellence. The Jesuit Community at JST offers an intercultural experience of friendship in the Lord that provides a conducive environment for those in formation. We are deeply committed to preparing Jesuits and ministers for service in a global, synodal Church. A strong academic and ministerial formation is key to what the Society of Jesus can offer our Church and world in the second quarter of the 21st century.



For U.S. and international students, JST-SCU offers the Master of Divinity (MDiv); Master of Theological Studies (MTS); Master of Theology (ThM); and Ecclesiastical degrees at the Bachelor (STB), Licentiate (STL), and Doctoral (STD) levels in Sacred Theology.

- Our first cycle includes Jesuits and other students from all over the world, and the MDiv and STB are designed to prepare Jesuits for priestly ministry in a variety of contexts and lay students for dedicated church service. The Bay Area provides rich opportunities for ministerial and pastoral formation in various cultures and languages and socio economic conditions. This intercultural context counts as a distinct strength of our program
- The MTS offers students a foundation in theology and ministry, and the ThM allows students to explore a particular aspect of theology through classwork and a project or thesis.
- The STL allows Jesuits, diocesan priests and religious women and men to do serious academic research in a particular area of theology. Students work with a faculty member with expertise in their thesis topic, providing strong support across the spectrum of theological disciplines.
- Our STD program works with candidates moving directly from the licentiate as well as those who return to further studies to prepare for their assignments in universities and formation centers around the world. Here our Jesuit and lay faculty are at their best, offering strong mentoring and support—with an eye to finishing the degree on time!

For Jesuits and others who would like to come to JST-SCU for a period of academic engagement and spiritual renewal, we offer a Renewal Program for one or two semesters, led by an experienced spiritual guide. Renewal participants enhance the life of the whole community, contributing insight, wisdom, and depth in the courses they take, sharing the breadth and depth of their ministerial experience in formal and informal settings.

JST-SCU is marked by a strong diversity of its community of scholars, staff, and students. While classes require sufficient English proficiency, our professors speak French, Italian, German, Portuguese, Swahili, Vietnamese, and Spanish, among other languages, creating an environment conducive to global theological scholarship. To better serve the needs of our diverse student body, we offer tutoring and writing assistance and coaching for international students (including Jesuits) to help them develop the skills needed for academic writing and research.

We invite you to make your distinctive contribution to our academic and faith community, as together we enliven faith, promote reconciliation, labor for justice, and participate in God's mercy.

Welcome to JST-SCU!

Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, S.J.
Dean, Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University

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MTS Program Worksheet, MTS Specific Forms, and Registration Related Forms are all available on the [Office of the Registrar page](#) under “Forms.”

I. Program Guidelines

Overview

The Master of Theological Studies (MTS) is an academic degree program that offers students a broad understanding of the Catholic theological vision through foundational courses in four core areas of study: Biblical Studies; Theology and Spirituality; Theological Ethics; and Culture, History and the Arts. Students will choose to concentrate in one of these core areas. The MTS program prepares graduates to be teachers and/or administrators in primary and secondary schools, directors of religious education or of faith formation programs, parish-based leaders, or administrators of various nonprofit organizations and voluntary service programs. Students also learn a theology of ministry for service in a changing Church and world. The MTS is an ideal program for persons engaged in ministry or seeking theological enrichment and a rewarding exploration of their faith. It is “hyflex,” meaning that students may choose to combine on-campus and online courses in any combination that works for them.

Goals and Objectives

Institutional Learning Goals

1. Students will gain a broad foundation in Christian theology, with a focus on the Roman Catholic tradition.
2. Students will demonstrate a critically-informed approach to faith that promotes social justice for the common good, especially for the benefit of those in greatest need.
3. Students will recognize the interplay between faith and culture in addressing issues that emerge in diverse cultural contexts.

MTS Student Learning Outcomes

The MTS program offers students a broad understanding of the Catholic theological tradition and specialized knowledge in a chosen concentration.

MTS graduates will:

1. Demonstrate knowledge in Biblical Studies; Theology and Spirituality; Theological Ethics; and Culture, History and the Arts.
2. Integrate and apply their knowledge of the above areas within a chosen concentration.
3. Demonstrate a critical understanding of social, cultural, and global contexts, and their significance to theology.
4. Apply informed knowledge of the Catholic tradition in the assessment of theological questions and pastoral issues.

5. Articulate the connections among their coursework, individual formation as shaped by their own practices, and interactions with peers or professional colleagues.

Advanced Standing and Non-GTU Courses

Students who have taken graduate courses in theology not more than six years prior to registration may petition to transfer coursework for advanced standing in the MTS program. Such petitions may be included with the Application for Admission or may be submitted during the first semester of study at JST. No more than 12 semester units of transfer credit can be applied to the MTS program at JST.

No units will be transferred that have already been counted toward another degree. No units will be considered for transfer that are not from regionally accredited institutions of higher learning or were not attained at a graduate level.

A student who enrolls in graduate courses in theology at an institution outside of the GTU during their course of study may petition the Associate Dean for transfer credit toward the MTS program. See the [Registrar page](#) for the form to Transfer Coursework for Transfer of Credit and Advanced Standing.

Degree Requirements

The MTS program requires the completion of 48 semester units (16 three-unit courses). A full-time student may expect to complete the MTS program in two academic years, but must complete the program within five calendar years from the date of first registration in the program. 12 semester units is the normal full-time course load. Students may elect to submit a three-unit thesis (roughly 40 pages) or equivalent praxis project in their area of concentration instead of completing an advanced course in the area. Students choosing the thesis or praxis project options will register for three units of MTS-8300 in their final semester.

Students in all degree programs must maintain a 3.0 (B) Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) to graduate. A grade of B- or better is necessary in all courses used to satisfy a requirement for all JST degree programs.

Students in the MTS program may elect to take courses as Pass / No Pass for no more than 15 units while in residence at JST. A pass in any course is equivalent to B- or better work. The petition to take a course Pass / No Pass is subject to the approval of the advisor and must be submitted to the Registrar. All changes to grading basis are final following the fourth Friday of the academic term. See [Academic Policies and Procedures](#) for additional information on grades.

Students are required to take a course that teaches them the following four religion and culture competencies: conceptual, analytical, theological and pastoral. To fulfill this

requirement, students must take RS-2092 Culture, Context and Lived Religion or an equivalent course approved by the Associate Dean.

Students are required to submit a portfolio in their final semester. This portfolio has two components:

1. Either a paper (15-25 pages) written as part of an advanced course (4000- level or higher) in the area of concentration, or the MTS thesis or praxis project.
2. A reflection paper (3 pages, double-spaced) on your experience in the MTS program and whether or not your learning achieved the MTS Student Learning Outcomes.

Continuing Registration

MTS students who have completed coursework and are working on a thesis or praxis project should consult with the JST Registrar and register for MTS-3001 each continuing semester. Students are required to pay the continuing registration fee to maintain their full-time student status until their submitted thesis or praxis project is approved and they are graduated.

Students must file their thesis or praxis project by the filing deadline for their intended graduation semester in order to avoid having to pay tuition for an additional semester. See [Academic Policies and Procedures](#) for additional information on continuing registration.

Graduation

JST has two graduation dates each academic year:

- May – for students who finish during the fall semester or by the spring May deadline
- September / October – for students who finish in late May through the summer

Note regarding Commencement Ceremony: The only students permitted to “walk” in the commencement ceremony in May are those who have finished or will finish all requirements for their degree before or during the spring term.

HyFlex Format

The HyFlex format of the MTS program means that students may choose to combine on-campus and online courses in any combination that works for them. Students may come to Berkeley as full-time residential students and take all of their courses in person. Students may also choose to come to Berkeley for fall orientation and one or more semesters, including intersession or summer session, to take some courses in person, while completing the rest of their courses online. Online or hybrid courses are offered year round.

Unit Distribution for Coursework

48 semester units (16 three-unit courses) must be completed. While students may enroll in GTU or UC Berkeley courses, they are strongly encouraged to take at least half of their courses at JST.

I. Introduction to Contextual Theology (ST-2038) (3 units)

II. Foundations (24 units)

- Biblical Studies (6 units)
- Theology and Spirituality (6 units)
- Theological Ethics (6 units)
- Culture, History and the Arts (6 units)

*RS-2092 Culture, Context and Lived Religion or an approved equivalent is required as three of these 6 units.

III. Concentration (12 units in one of the following areas)

- Biblical Studies
- Theology
- Theological Ethics
- Culture, History and the Arts
- Christian Spirituality
- Synodal Leadership

For the final three of these 12 units in the area of concentration, MTS students have three options. Students may take an advanced course (4000- level or higher) that includes a 15-25 page paper, or write a thesis (roughly 40 pages), or complete an equivalent praxis project, in their area of concentration. Each of these three options counts as three out of the required 12 units within the concentration. Students choosing the thesis or praxis project options will register for three units of MTS-8300 in their final semester.

IV. Electives (9 units)

Students may take nine units of elective courses at JST, around the GTU, or at UC Berkeley.

II. MTS Thesis and Praxis Project Guidelines

Overview

Students who do not elect to take an advanced course (4000- or higher) in their area of concentration must complete a thesis (roughly 40 pages) or praxis project for the final three units in the area of concentration. This thesis or praxis project is to be done under the direction of a full-time JST faculty member approved by the Associate Dean. The student must submit a proposal for the thesis or praxis project, including the name of the director, to the Associate Dean for approval. Students choosing the thesis or praxis project options will register for three units of MTS-8300 in their final semester.

Proposal: A proposal for the thesis or praxis project is subject to the approval of the Associate Dean, who will also approve the director / academic advisor.

Grade for Thesis / Project: A copy of the grade report form should be given to the director with the final version of the thesis or praxis project.

Preparing and Filing of Thesis / Project: The MTS thesis or praxis project should be formatted in accordance with library specifications, using the most recent edition of *Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, by Kate Turabian.

One PDF copy of the final, corrected and signed version of the thesis or praxis project should be digitally filed with the JST Registrar's Office. The MTS thesis or praxis project will be kept on file at JST.

Thesis / Project Deadline: The MTS thesis or praxis project must be graded, corrected, signed and submitted to the JST Registrar by the first Monday in May for spring graduation.

See the [Registrar page](#) for MTS Proposal and Grade Report forms.

Style Guidelines for Thesis

Turabian is the writing style for GTU theses and dissertations (i.e., the most recent edition of *Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, by Kate Turabian). Approval of style is the responsibility of the candidate's director.

Spacing: Double spacing is required for the main body of the work except in those places where conventional usage calls for single spacing (e.g., footnotes, indented quotations, tables, etc.).

Font: The type size should be 12 point. Type used for charts, drawings, graphs, tables, footnotes, etc., may differ according to format and space requirements, but should be at least 10 point.

Margins: All margins should be set to 1 inch. Margin requirements apply to all pages, whether text, illustration, charts, graphs, or other content. Be sure to check the margins not only on pages with text, but also pages with charts, graphs, or images.

Page numbers: Page numbers must be at least 1/2 inch from the edge of the page.

Title Page: See the [Registrar page](#) for a sample of the required title page.

Guidelines for Praxis Project

An MTS praxis project differs from an MTS thesis in that it is immediately ready for pastoral, educational, counseling, or other practical situations. It is an application of theological expertise to a particular need or for a particular group.

Examples of MTS praxis projects include syllabi for courses, materials for retreats, educational films, blogs, etc. Criteria for grading MTS praxis projects include:

1. Does the praxis project seem to be informed by good theological understanding in the student's area of concentration, including appropriate bibliographical material?
2. Does the praxis project reflect good general theological knowledge, including relevant bibliographical material?
3. Is the material presented appropriate in topics, language and level of difficulty for its intended audience?
4. Does the Analytical Introduction (see below) clearly state the purpose, methodology and goals of the praxis project?
5. Does the praxis project seem likely to achieve the goals stated, assuming appropriate audience and presentation?

MTS praxis projects should be prefaced by an Analytical Introduction of about five to eight typed, double-spaced pages explaining the project. Material to be covered in the Analytical Introduction includes:

1. **Title**
2. **Rationale and Purpose:** Briefly state why you are doing this project. (E.g., "While teaching 10th grade, I came to realize that my students had little or no knowledge of the Gospel of John. At the same time, our school has a strong institutional commitment to social justice. In this project, I seek to bring those two dynamics into dialogue.") Next, describe the purpose of the project and its intended audience. (E.g., "This class is

intended to provide high school students with a solid introduction to the Gospel of John, especially as it speaks to questions of social justice.”)

3. **Goals:** What, specifically, will the recipients of your work gain from it? (E.g., “Retreatants will be introduced to *Lectio Divina* as a prayer practice.”) Most projects will have three to four distinct goals.
4. **Structure and Methodology:** How is the project organized, and why in this way? How will your project meet its goals? What scholarly resources and concepts are you drawing on, and why? Make sure to connect the aspects of your project clearly to your bibliography. (E.g., Not: “I am using historical-critical methodology to read the text.” Rather: “The historical-critical scholarship of X shapes this project. As X states, ‘Scripture without a sense of historical context is deracinated.’ Therefore, I will...”) This should be the main part of your analytical introduction.
5. **Materials:** A schedule, budget, advertising flier, or other appropriate materials may be included here.

6. Conclusion

General Note: Remember that the MTS praxis project is to be equivalent to a 40-page paper. Therefore, if your project includes a structural task (like designing a parish education program or a semester-long course), while you do not need to provide all the specific texts you will need to create, you should include enough specific materials to demonstrate Substantive and meaningful integration of your theological knowledge. For example, for a project that is a school class, you should include some lectures in full text, as well as the syllabus which will be significant in evaluating the project overall. Or, for a guidebook for hospital chaplains, you should include all or most of the final text, but some parts may be left in outline form. For a blog, submit the website address, but in your introduction highlight several entries, perhaps with feedback from or interaction with readers.

Be advised that if the project involves research with human subjects, SCU protocols on human subjects must be observed. See [SCU Human Subjects Policy](#) for additional information.

Filing Deadlines

- Spring graduates: The filing deadline is the first Monday in May.
- September / October graduates: The filing deadline is the final day of the fall add / drop period.
- Fall registrants completing before the spring semester: The filing deadline is the final day of the spring add / drop period. These students will receive their degree in May.

III. Technology Requirements for Online Coursework

Technical Requirements

JST uses Moodle for online classes. Moodle is a web-based learning management tool that allows professors to post readings, assignments, videos, and engage the class in dialogue. In order to use Moodle, you will need a login (provided by the school upon registration) and the following tools to ensure your success:

1. A working email address that you monitor frequently. We recommend that you use your student email address (____@scu.edu) for this purpose.
2. A working, reliable internet connection and a reliable electric power supply.
3. A computer, laptop, or tablet with an updated operating system (Windows, Mac, Linux) and an updated internet browser (Chrome, Firefox).
4. A webcam.
5. A microphone.

Recommended Browsers

Google Chrome and Mozilla Firefox are recommended for use with Moodle with a computer. Safari is not recommended. On smartphones and tablets, use a web browser to access Moodle (do not use the Moodle app).

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