

## **ACADEMIC POLICIES**

The following academic policies are relevant to all students enrolled in master's level programs. They also apply to DMin students unless stated otherwise. Although academic advisers seek to provide appropriate counsel, ultimately students are responsible for knowing degree requirements and policies and for all academic decisions that they make.

### **The Academic Year**

The academic year for PTS is comprised of two semesters and a summer term. The first semester is scheduled from late August to mid-December. The second semester begins with a Concentrated Course Week in January and ends in mid-May, at which time the annual commencement exercises are held. D.Min Fortnights are scheduled in January and June.

The summer term is divided into two modules. The first module is scheduled from late May through June, the second from July to early August. Because summer courses focus all class contact hours in a one or two-week period, faculty will normally expect students to begin reading and working on assignments at least three weeks before the first class session. Therefore, students are responsible for obtaining the syllabus and all necessary books and materials and preparing in advance. Instructors will normally expect students to complete final research and writing assignments after the last class session and by a mid-August deadline for both modules.

Orientation programs, mandatory for all master's level students, precede fall and spring registrations. The orientation program is available both on-campus and online. The purpose of the session is to acquaint the students with the faculty, curriculum, and community life of PTS. DMin Fortnights in January and June include orientation sessions for entering doctoral students.

During each fall and spring semester, two Concentrated Course Weeks are provided to facilitate independent study and research as well as additional course opportunities. Online classes and non-concentrated classes do not meet during these weeks.

A three-week registration period is scheduled each fall (for the spring semester) and each spring (for the summer term and fall semester). Students continuing in program must consult with their academic advisers and register.

### **Program Duration and Course Load**

A student may only be enrolled in a single PTS academic program at any given time.

In so far as The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) judges full-time equivalency as 12 hours per semester, PTS interprets one year to equal 24 hours.

The CGTS program may be completed within 1 academic year. It must be completed within 6 years from the time the student matriculates.

The MTS and MAMC programs may be completed within 2 academic years. They must be completed within 5 years from the time the student matriculates. In exceptional circumstances, students may complete the program after 5 years, providing that a specific degree plan has been approved by the dean.

The MDiv program may be completed within 3 academic years. It must be completed within 8 years from the time the student matriculates. In exceptional circumstances, students may complete the program after 8 years, providing that a specific degree plan has been approved by the dean.

The recommended course load for a three-year MDiv program is 12 hours per semester plus summer courses. Students on probation are limited to 9 hours.

A master's level student who projects an enrollment of more than 15 semester-hours in any semester, or more than 6 semester-hours in the summer term, must receive prior approval from his or her adviser, the director of supervised ministries, if taking a supervised ministries course, and the academic dean.

A full-time master's student is one who is enrolled for 9 semester-hours or more in a semester. A part-time student is one who is enrolled for fewer than 9 semester-hours. Three semester-hours in the summer is considered full-time enrollment. Part-time students are eligible to apply for most fellowships and grants-in-aid.

A master's level student with a pastorate or other employment requiring more than 22 hours of work and travel per week should not plan to enroll in more than 10 hours per semester.

DMin students should expect to spend approximately four years to complete the program and no more than six years.

In all cases, courses contributing to a master's or doctoral degree cannot be more than 10 years old.

### **Residency Requirements**

Students transferring to PTS must complete a minimum of 12 semester hours of on-campus courses (and up to 24 depending on how many on-campus hours the student took at a previous institution) as part of their program in order to graduate.

Students transferring into the MDiv program must complete either the last 30 hours with PTS faculty or 45 of the last 60 hours, while students transferring into either the MTS or MAMC program must complete either the last 24 hours with PTS faculty or 30 of the last 36 hours.

### **Online/On-Campus Requirements**

Students in any Master's degree program must complete a minimum of 24 semester hours of on-campus courses at Phillips Theological Seminary, or in a classroom setting elsewhere (as with a faculty-led travel course, for example) in order to satisfy the degree requirements for graduation.

### **Limited Enrollment Courses**

Some courses have limited enrollment. Students enrolled in certificate or degree programs have priority over Special Students and Auditors. In addition, certificate or degree-seeking students who will not have other opportunities to take courses that meet specific requirements before their anticipated date of graduation will be given enrollment priority if they register during the first scheduled registration period for the relevant semester.

### **Bypass of a Required Course**

An approved course bypass carries no credit, but permits a student with previous education in a particular area to fulfill a basic requirement in that area by completing a substitute course at a more advanced level. A student must obtain the approval of the instructor of the required course, his or her adviser, and the dean. Forms are available from the registrar's office.

### **Waiver of Course Prerequisite**

In exceptional cases, a student may be permitted to take a course for credit without having previously satisfied the published prerequisite. Such a waiver does not exempt the student from taking the prerequisite course either concurrently with the advanced course or in a subsequent semester. In all cases, the student must obtain the approval of the instructor, his or her adviser, and the dean. Forms are available from the registrar's office.

### **Incompletes and Extensions**

An incomplete may be granted for extenuating circumstances, but the approval is not automatic and must be justified. Approval must be requested on required forms and granted prior to the announced deadline, normally the Friday prior to the last week of classes. Incompletes may be granted for a maximum of 45 days from the last official day of classes. Only in unusual circumstances will an extension be considered. Work not submitted to the instructor by the deadline will receive the grade of "F."

### **Attendance Policy**

At PTS, class attendance and engaged participation are very important. Every member of the faculty and student community is, in fact, both teacher and learner. Therefore, a class absence means more than merely a missed delivery of educational content. It also means the irrecoverable loss of a unique dialogical "learning-through-teaching" opportunity for oneself and others.

In view of this understanding, PTS has an established Attendance Policy that states: "any student who misses 20% or more of the class contact hours for a course, for any reason, cannot pass or successfully audit that course." The intention of the policy is not to be punitive, but to recognize that students should retake courses for credit if they miss a significant number of the class contact hours.

The 20% rule, noted above, holds for online classes as well. In an online class, the instructor will set forth in the syllabus the requirements for what constitutes class attendance. The standard may change from week to week depending on the assignment. Typically, attendance is measured by posts-per-week on the discussion board or other activities. The instructor sets the minimum number of posts-per-week required for a student to be considered present. If a student fails to make that minimum number of posts-per-week, s/he will be considered absent for the week. If a student is absent for 20% or more of the semester, s/he cannot pass the course.

### **Internet Access and Email Requirement**

All students will be assigned a PTS Email account in order to facilitate seminary communication. Accordingly, students will want to check their mailboxes regularly. When on campus students are able to access the Internet on equipment in the computer lab as well as Wi-Fi throughout the building. However, it is highly recommended that students have access to computers and high speed broadband connections at home, especially if they plan to register for online courses.

### **Seminary Student Directory**

Each semester, PTS provides members of the seminary community a copy of a student directory. Students may consult the Student Handbook for details concerning FERPA regulations and directory information.

### **Adding and Dropping Classes**

Forms for adding and dropping courses are available in the registrar's office or on the PTS website: <http://www.ptstulsa.edu>.

A student may not add a course beyond the first week of a fall or spring semester, regardless of course schedule configuration (e.g., weekly, weekend, concentrated, arranged, online). In a January term, courses must be added at least three weeks prior to the beginning of the term, or in a summer term, at least three weeks prior to the beginning of the module in which the course is offered.

The policy on dropping courses is as follows:

- During the first three weeks of a fall or spring semester, or within the first 7 class contact hours in a January or summer term: courses may be dropped for any reason. No record appears on the transcript.
- In the fourth through the eighth week of a fall or spring semester, or between 7 and 14 class contact hours in a January or summer term: courses may be dropped for any reason. The dropped courses will be listed on the transcript with a "WD" indicating withdrawal.
- After the eighth week of a fall or spring semester or after 14 class contact hours in a January or summer term, courses may be dropped with a grade of "WD" only for verified extenuating circumstances of a non-academic nature. A written petition, explaining the extenuating circumstances, must be presented to the dean. If that petition is granted, a "WD" will appear on the transcript. If the petition is not granted, the dean will notify both the student and the course instructor of the decision. The course instructor will assess the student's performance up to the date of the student's withdrawal, and a grade will be issued and will appear on the transcript. Students may appeal a negative decision by the dean to the Master's Committee.

The policies for adding and dropping courses in a fall or spring semester apply equally to master's level students enrolled in all courses regardless of schedule configuration (e.g., weekly, weekend, concentrated, arranged, online).

Because seminary courses that convene on several weekends during the semester or during a concentrated course week focus all class contact hours in a limited period of time, faculty will expect students to begin reading and working on assignments prior to the first class session. Normally, they will also expect students to complete research and writing assignments after the date of the last class session. In other words, despite the concentrated schedule for class meetings, such seminary courses should be understood to require academic work throughout the entire semester. It is the responsibility of all students who register for such courses to contact the dean's office by the first day of the fall or spring semesters (or at least three weeks before the first class session of a January or summer term course) to obtain a course syllabus, which will specify assignments that must be completed prior to the first class session.

### **Withdrawing from the Seminary**

All students, including auditors, who wish to withdraw from all of the seminary courses for which they are registered must notify the registrar, in writing, explaining the reason for the withdrawal. They may also be required to have an exit interview with the director of student financial aid.

### **Grading and Credit**

The unit of credit is the semester-hour, and all semester-hours of study will be assigned a grade by the course instructor. Except for credit hours completed in courses graded on a pass/fail basis, only those hours for which a grade of D- or better is received will count for credit toward the total hours required for all degrees.

Grade point averages are computed on the following basis and according to the indicated grade points per semester-hour:

A	(Excellent; 4 grade points)
A-	(earns 3.7 grade points)
B+	(earns 3.3 grade points)
B	(Good; earns 3 grade points)
B-	(earns 2.7 grade points)
C+	(earns 2.3 grade points)
C	(Marginal; earns 2 grade points)
C-	(earns 1.7 grade points)
D+	(earns 1.3 grade points)
D	(Poor; earns 1 grade point)
D-	(earns 0.7 grade points)
F	(Failure; earns no grade points, but is computed in the grade point average)
P	(Passing work, evaluated as B- or better, that counts as credit toward a degree, but does not compute in the grade point average)
PD	(Pass with distinction)
I	(Incomplete work)
WD	(Withdrawal from a course that does not compute in the GPA)
AU	(indicates satisfactory attendance by an auditor)
U	(indicates unsatisfactory attendance by an auditor or unsatisfactory progress in a master's thesis course)
S	(indicates satisfactory progress in a master's thesis course or in a DMin project course)

To calculate a grade point average, the total grade points are divided by the total semester-hours of coursework. A final cumulative grade point average of at least 2.5 is required for a certificate in graduate theological studies or any master's degree.

If a course is retaken by a student, both grades will be recorded on the student's transcript. However, only the higher grade will be used in calculating the student's grade point average. The course hours are counted only once.

In any course designated as pass/fail, a pass (P) means a grade of B- or better.

In the DMin program, C- is the lowest passing grade a student may earn. D+, D, and D- grades are not used in doctoral courses. DMin project reports may be accepted with a P (pass) or PD (pass with distinction); if not accepted, they may receive an S (satisfactory progress) or F (failure).

## **Student Portfolio**

In order to evaluate students' learning and to improve teaching effectiveness, the PTS faculty has adopted a portfolio strategy. All MDiv, MTS, and MAMC students are required to keep a portfolio of their academic work and to reflect periodically with faculty advisers on their progress in theological education and spiritual formation.

This pedagogical strategy is specifically designed for the seminary community. It is not intended to provide materials for review by ecclesiastical bodies assessing fitness for ordination and ministerial

service. Because student expectations of church review could negatively affect its pedagogical usefulness, the seminary faculty has respectfully requested that denominational and congregational representatives not require students to submit portfolio materials.

Students who fail to meet with their advisers for required reviews may not be able to register for further coursework. Those who for any reason are unable to produce their portfolios for the scheduled review sessions with their advisers will be required to submit equivalent academic materials and follow special procedures determined by the Master's Committee and the dean. Program and graduation delays may be experienced as a result.

Students transferring in 30 hours or fewer will be expected to meet the portfolio requirements with relevant course materials from transferred courses. Students transferring in more than 30 hours may satisfy the requirements by placing in their portfolio their admissions essay and keeping appropriate items for the PTS part of their academic degree programs.

### **Academic Probation and Dismissal**

Master's level students are placed on academic probation when their cumulative grade point average falls below 2.5. Students on academic probation are limited to an enrollment of 9 semester-hours, excluding enrollment in PT 649: Worship Practicum, CD 610: Seminars in Spirituality, CD 501: Orientation to Theological Research, and approved supervised ministry courses.

Students whose cumulative grade point average remains below 2.5 for two consecutive semesters are subject to suspension from the seminary for one calendar year. Students suspended under this policy must reapply for admission at least one month prior to the semester in which they hope to resume their degree programs.

Students may remain on academic probation for a maximum of three semesters (including non-consecutive semesters but not counting summer terms). Those not eligible for removal from academic probation at the end of their third semester are subject to permanent dismissal from the seminary.

DMin students should consult the DMin Handbook for relevant regulations concerning academic probation, suspension, and dismissal.

### **Academic Misconduct**

Integrity is a fundamental principle of academic life. Those who have the privilege of being members of the Phillips Theological Seminary community have an obligation to observe the highest standards of honesty, as well as a right to expect the same standards of all others. Academic misconduct is contrary to the purposes and functions of the seminary.

Academic misconduct includes such unacceptable behavior as false representations in application materials or other reports, plagiarism, falsification of records, unauthorized possession of examinations, intimidation, bribery, submitting a paper twice, and cheating. It also includes assisting others in the acts mentioned above, as well as attempts to engage in such acts.

Plagiarism is an attempt to claim ideas or writings, which belong to another as one's own. Paraphrasing or even extensive rewriting of another's work does not eliminate the need to give appropriate credit. Any time an expression or idea is borrowed, appropriate credit must be given. In formal papers, quoted material must be documented as such and all sources must be cited. Cheating

includes using unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic examination or exercise. Submitting a paper for more than one class will not be allowed, unless special permission is secured from both professors. Any paper, or major part thereof, or other work turned in for two courses will not meet the requirements and will result in a "0" (F) for that assignment in either or both courses.

### **Penalties for Academic Misconduct**

Procedures for handling charges of academic misconduct are detailed in the Student Handbook. The penalty for those found guilty of academic misconduct, regardless of when that judgment is rendered, shall range from a grade of "F" on the examination or academic exercise in question, to a grade of "F" in the relevant course, suspension from the seminary, permanent dismissal, or degree revocation. Any second conviction of academic misconduct mandates at least a suspension from the seminary for one calendar year. Records of convictions will be maintained in the student's academic file. These records will be purged when the student graduates or has not been enrolled in the seminary for a period of ten years.

A student who is convicted of academic misconduct, including plagiarism, in the production of a major research project or thesis (i.e., an MDiv or MTS Thesis, MTS Integrative Paper, or DMin Project) will have his or her coursework terminated and will be permanently dismissed. If the degree has been granted before the misconduct is discovered, the degree will be revoked. Results of these actions become a part of the permanent record.

### **Safe Space and Professional Behavior**

All those engaged in teaching and learning in the Phillips Theological Seminary community deserve respect and safe space as they participate in critical theological reflection and ecumenical conversation on the range of issues enlivening contemporary discernment and debate within the church and the broader society. Among the critical dynamics of this collegial respect and safe space is the maintaining of confidences, which is understood as a primary ministerial skill. Personal integrity and professional behavior are expected in all of the seminary's teaching and learning functions and apply equally to both on campus and online courses.

### **Netiquette**

Participants in the online discussions do not have available the same visual and auditory clues as those in traditional classrooms for interpreting the tone and substance of contributed comments. It is, therefore, especially important that the following guidelines concerning appropriate "netiquette"—i.e., etiquette for written communication shared via the internet—should be consistently observed.

Individual professors may have procedures regarding class etiquette which are specific to course design and learning goals in addition to the following institutional standards. Students should pay attention to each course syllabus for the particular as well as the general standards. In all cases, how the standards are applied in any given course is at the discretion of the instructor.

- a) While in online discussion, statements of disagreement and alternate understandings are welcomed, and even encouraged among participants, disparaging personal *ad hominem* attacks

cannot be permitted, even if purported to be intended light-heartedly. Overt references or those by innuendo that violate the seminary's anti-discrimination policy will not be tolerated.

- b) Rude, offensive, or abusive comments are entirely inappropriate. "Flaming" (typing words in capitals) or an excessive use of exclamation marks must always be avoided because they are widely understood to signal expressions of anger, hostility, or disrespect.
- c) Attempts to use humor, and especially sarcasm, to advance one's position in online discussions are most generally confusing and ineffectual. In addition, the seeming innocence of jokes can be lost in transmission.
- d) Participants should be attentive to maintaining a professional style of communication. Posted contributions on discussion boards should be free of misspelled words and other distracting technical errors. And as with written papers, it is essential to properly cite sources.
- e) There are different modes of communication for online classes, e.g. discussion boards and chat rooms—formal and informal—where the standards may be nuanced accordingly to fit the class situation. However, when communicating online, participants should carefully review what they have written before they actually send or post it, making certain that chosen modes of expression convey what they want to say and how they want to say it.
- f) Finally, members of the seminary community are to avoid forwarding any type of junk mail (e.g. advertisements, solicitations, or sexually explicit materials) to others. Moreover, they should not violate the privacy of others by divulging email address and comments outside of the class without express permission.

### **Class Nomenclature**

Master's level students are classified according to the number of credit hours completed.

**MDiv:** Juniors are students who have completed less than 24 credit hours; Middlers, between 24 and 57 credit hours; Seniors, more than 57 credit hours.

**MTS:** Juniors are students who have completed less than 15 credit hours; Middlers, between 15 and 30 credit hours; Seniors, more than 37 credit hours.

**MAMC:** Juniors are students who have completed less than 15 credit hours; Middlers, between 15 and 30 credit hours; Seniors, more than 37 credit hours.

### **Commencement**

Students may elect to graduate under the terms of degree requirements in a given catalog adopted by the seminary after their first enrollment. Only students who have completed all requirements for graduation will be allowed to participate in the annual commencement exercises at the end of the spring semester and to have their degrees conferred at that time.

Students who complete graduation requirements at another time may elect to have their degrees conferred, without commencement exercises, on August 31 or December 31 of each year. In order to have a degree conferred on one of these dates, a student must: (a) make application for conferral of the degree, and pay the diploma fee, at least one month in advance of the requested date, and (b) complete all graduation requirements prior to that date. Students who exercise the option to have a degree conferred on August 31 or December 31 retain the option of participating in the next commencement exercise.

## **Complaints**

A student who wishes to make a formal complaint concerning a member of the faculty or staff who, in his or her judgment, has not followed a published academic policy or procedure of the seminary, should contact the vice president for academic affairs and dean. If the complaint concerns the vice president for academic affairs and dean, the student should contact the president. In all cases of major unresolved complaints, students may contact one or both of the seminary's accrediting associations. Contact information may be found on page 7 of this catalog.

## **Sexual Harassment**

It is the policy of Phillips Theological Seminary that no member of the academic community may sexually harass another. Sexual harassment is any attempt to coerce an unwilling person into a sexual relationship, to subject a person to unwanted sexual attention or to punish a refusal to comply, or to subject a person to unwanted sexual attention as a condition of employment, compensation, promotion, or grades. Sexual harassment is also creating a hostile environment through the use of offensive or demeaning language, signs, jokes, or pranks. Students should consult the Student Handbook for appropriate procedures for considering complaints.

## **Substance Abuse**

The Board of Trustees of Phillips Theological Seminary adopted the following statement on September 18, 1990.

"The unlawful possession, use or distribution of drugs or alcohol, on seminary property or as part of any seminary activity, is not allowed. Throughout this statement and related policy, a 'drug' includes all controlled substances (as defined in the Controlled Substances Act, as amended from time to time, of the United States), and includes without limitation cocaine, crack, marijuana, heroin, amphetamines, barbiturates, and all other controlled substances. 'Alcohol' means any alcoholic beverage (whether or not it contains more or less than 3.2% of alcohol by weight) which is regulated by Oklahoma law."

## **Constitution Day Policy**

On May 24, 2005, the U.S. Department of Education released a Notice of Implementation, announcing that all educational institutions receiving federal funding must provide an educational program pertaining to the United States Constitution on September 17 of each year.

As noted in Section 11(b) of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2005, "Constitution Day" must be recognized on September 17 in commemoration of the signing of the Constitution of the United States of America on September 17, 1787. Therefore, Phillips Theological Seminary in compliance with the U.S. Department of Education will participate in the designated day of September 17 as "Constitution Day." The Office of Student Financial Aid will organize this annual event.

## **Student Records and Directory Information**

In accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, Phillips Theological Seminary has a policy regarding the availability of student records and the release of personal information in the seminary student directory. A copy of this policy is printed in the Student Handbook which can be found on the seminary website at [www.ptstulsa.edu](http://www.ptstulsa.edu).

## Honors and Awards

Several honors and awards are given annually to outstanding students in recognition of their exceptional achievements. Academic honors shown on official transcripts are awarded on the completion of a master's level program on the basis of the following cumulative grade point averages:

With honors: .....3.80-3.89

With high honors: .....3.90-4.00

Other annual awards given to master's level students include:

**Chalice Press Book Award.** Each year, Chalice Press, a division of the Christian Board of Publication, provides funds for a book award to an outstanding student.

**Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)/United Church of Christ Awards.** Awards are given annually to an exceptional graduating senior and to an outstanding student in each class who are members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or United Church of Christ.

**Community Life Award.** An award is given annually by the Student Senate in recognition of a student's special contribution to the quality of community life in the seminary.

**Sojourner Award.** Sponsored by the PTS Alumni Association, this award is given annually to a graduating senior who has experienced particular difficulties in life while pursuing a seminary degree, but has maintained a deep sense of passion and commitment to theological education and ministry.

**R.G. and Della Mae Ericson Memorial Preaching Award.** Initiated in 1980 by PTS graduate, R.G. (Skip) Ericson, Jr., in memory of his parents, this award is given annually to an outstanding student preacher.

**Interpretation Awards.** Chosen by the Bible and Theology faculty and provided by the journal, *Interpretation*, these awards honor graduating seniors who have distinguished themselves in biblical and theological studies.

**Trudy and Howard Plowman Book Award.** Initiated in 2002 by Norman V. and Ann C. Wasson, this award provides financial assistance to United Methodist students to purchase books.

**Professor Book Awards.** Given annually by each member of the regular teaching faculty for exceptional achievement in coursework taken with them.

**Joe Strange Book Award.** Established in 1991 by Susen Hunt LeBlanc as a memorial to Joe Strange, a former PTS student, this award provides financial assistance for the purchase of books.

**United Methodist Alumni/ae Awards.** The United Methodist Alumni/ae Association provides awards annually to one person in each class with the highest GPA and to a graduating senior in recognition of his or her outstanding achievement in leadership and ministry.

**Charles and Jean Whitmer Evangelistic Preaching Fellowship.** This award is granted biennially to a second-year full-time Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) student who demonstrates the potential to be an outstanding evangelistic preacher. This fellowship was established in 1983 by the Central Christian Church of Pueblo, Colorado, honoring their pastor and his wife for 15 years of service and in celebration of the congregation's 100th anniversary.

**Wylie Preaching Award.** Initiated in 2004 by PTS alumnus and United Methodist Superintendent, Sandy Wylie, this award recognizes an outstanding student preacher.