

MASTER OF ARTS IN RELIGION  
DEGREE PROGRAM

**POLICY MANUAL**

LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
AT  
GETTYSBURG

61 SEMINARY RIDGE  
GETTYSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17325



## **A Message from the Dean**

The Master of Arts in Religion degree (MAR) is a key component in the life-long learning programs of Gettysburg Lutheran Seminary. Our MAR program is designed with several purposes in mind. It is:

- an ecumenical theological setting for students from all denominational backgrounds.
- an opportunity to concentrate in a specific theological area but in a flexible format.
- related to other institutions through cross-registration and credit transfer arrangements.
- a traditional seminary setting which continues to utilize, develop and incorporate the features of learning technology.

As you work through the MAR program, you may use this Manual to guide your work. Periodic updates of policies will be made available on paper and on our seminary website.

Gettysburg Lutheran Seminary welcomes you to this program with the hope that it will provide nurture, new perspectives and responsiveness to the realities of ministry in the twenty-first century!

**Cordially,**

**Robin J. Steinke  
Dean**

## **THE MAR DEGREE PROGRAM**

### **I. Rationale**

This degree program is designed to provide an introduction to the crossroads nature of theology. Studies provide a broad foundation for further graduate study or for general educational use, while pursuing concentration in an area of interest.

### **II. Objectives**

This degree program prepares students to:

- Grasp the nature of an interdisciplinary approach to theology
- Appreciate the breadth of theological traditions
- Achieve mastery and appreciation of a selected area of theological study

### **III. Strategies**

The degree is requires a total of 51 credits:

37.5 credits of course work, including 18 credits in an area of concentration, 9 credits in a secondary area, and 10.5 credits as free electives

1.5 credits Practicum in Theological Research Independent Study

12 credits Thesis research and writing, with successful oral examination. Credits may be taken in one semester or spread out over more than one semester (see below).

Concentrations are offered in: Biblical Studies, Old Testament, New Testament, Church History, Systematic Theology and Christian Ethics, Church in Society, Pastoral Theology, Christian Education, Liturgics, Preaching and Communication. Students are expected to gain competence in the tools appropriate to their area of concentration. Students are expected to declare the area of concentration no later than following successful completion of 24 credits.

### **IV. Evaluation**

Together with successful completion of the required courses, and subsequent to the submission of the thesis, an oral examination on the thesis is completed.

Grading: See the current LTSG *Catalog* for extensions and grade requirements for the degree.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE MAR DEGREE PROGRAM**

### **Duration**

It is possible to complete this degree in two years of full-time academic work; normally, the degree should be completed within three academic years.

### **Advising**

Upon admission, a student is assigned an academic advisor responsible for guiding the student in his/her educational program at the Seminary. The academic advisor may or may not also serve as the student's thesis advisor.

### **Coursework**

Students in the MAR degree program have no stipulated field education requirements, but field education may become a component of a concentration.

Students may take courses offered or create independent studies.

Students are expected to gain competence in the tools appropriate to their area of concentration. For example, biblical or historical studies may require language competencies; certain studies may require statistical or other methodological competencies.

### **A. Independent Study Courses**

The MAR degree program provides opportunity for the student to negotiate up to twelve credits of independent studies in the course of his/her program (excluding the required Practicum in Theological Research Independent Study). The student's academic advisor, the course instructor, and the Dean must approve such studies in advance.

Several rubrics are important:

- The student shall consult with his/her academic advisor prior to negotiating an independent study.
- Similarly, prior to registration the student shall consult with the faculty member whom he/she hopes will be the instructor of the study.
- The student will then complete and sign an independent study proposal that includes a statement of rationale, objectives, strategies, and means of evaluation, together with a sample bibliography. The proposal shall be submitted to the faculty member and Dean for written approval, and accompanies the registration form.
- All independent studies require the same registration procedures as other courses, and all rules and deadlines concerning registration, fees, withdrawals, and extensions shall pertain.

### **B. Online Course Policies – see Student Handbook**

### **C. Transferring Credits into the MAR Degree Program – see Student Handbook**

# **THE MAR THESIS**

## **I. NATURE, PURPOSE, and SCOPE**

The MAR thesis is a research paper that demonstrates the student's ability to engage in significant scholarship. It should embody the results of original research and substantiate a specific view.

A typical MAR thesis is fifty (50) to seventy-five (75) pages in length, but needs to be long enough to provide the depth appropriate to the study, and short enough to maintain the requisite focus.

## **II. MAR THESIS PROCEDURE**

1. Students are expected to declare the area of concentration before successful completion of 24 credits. This decision, made in consultation with the academic advisor and a possible thesis advisor, should be communicated using "Selection of Concentration" form available from the Registrar.
2. "Selection of Concentration" form includes the signature of a thesis advisor; this designation of a thesis advisor must have the approval of the Dean.
3. If an advisor is on leave, on sabbatical, or leaves the faculty of the school, the need for replacement should be discussed by the candidate with the Dean who will appoint a substitute in consultation with the appropriate faculty member.
4. The student and thesis advisor will craft a proposal (see below) for the thesis, which must be approved by the faculty members of the MAMS/MAR Committee. When it is approved, the Dean will appoint a faculty member who, together with the advisor, will form the panel before which the student will defend the thesis. The thesis advisor will chair the panel. The Dean serves ex officio but may also serve as the thesis advisor or second member of the panel.
5. Part-time students may register for the twelve thesis credits over more than one semester in increments of three credits. In this case, they should complete the Practicum in Thesis Preparation by the time they have completed six credits of the thesis.
6. Students registering for twelve thesis credits in one semester should take the Practicum in Thesis Preparation in the same semester.
7. During thesis preparation, the student is to take the initiative in arranging conferences with the thesis advisor. Normally, these conferences should take place at least monthly.
8. The student must submit the final draft of the thesis to each panel member by April 15 before the anticipated graduation date.

9. The thesis advisor and reader meet with the student for the defense of the thesis. This meeting must take place in time for the thesis advisor to submit an approval form by the day before graduation.
10. At the close of the defense, the panel may:
  - a. Approve the thesis as submitted
  - b. Approve with minor typographical corrections, reviewed by the thesis advisor
  - c. Approve with specific, substantive changes, reviewed only by the thesis advisor
  - d. Require significant revision before a second review by the full panel.

The panel may also choose to approve the thesis “with distinction” as a means of acknowledging exceptional work.

11. If the panel requires significant revision before a second review, and there is not time before the end of the semester to complete such a process, the student must apply for an extension using the “Request for Extension” form. See the Student Handbook for details. The student may apply to graduate “pending completion of requirements.”
12. In order to graduate, the student must have submitted two archival copies of the thesis (see below) and paid all outstanding balances.

### **III. MAR THESIS SPECIFICS**

#### **A. Thesis Proposal**

Once the student and thesis advisor have agreed concerning the subject, the student prepares a thesis proposal of approximately 1200-1500 words.

1. State a provisional title of the thesis
2. Give a general statement of the thesis. Define the area and scope of the study, and indicate the basic proposition or question which the thesis will examine. State clearly the desired goal or outcome of the thesis.
3. Describe the rationale for the thesis. This involves setting forth the origin and background of the study, its implications, the reason for interest in it, and the need for it.
4. Indicate previous studies relating to the thesis. The student shall present a brief description of earlier studies, which have bearing on the proposed investigation. This description should contain a statement of what earlier studies have revealed and should carry reference to areas of the general problem which remain unexplored or inadequately explored.
5. Identify sources and prepare a preliminary bibliography of approximately 20 sources.

6. State the investigative methodology and procedures. This should include a clear explanation of the steps one expects to follow in carrying out the investigation.
7. Include a tentative outline of the document. This should show at least the larger sections, such as chapters and major subdivisions.

The thesis proposal cover page (sample at Appendix A), signed by the thesis advisor, should accompany the thesis proposal when the student submits it to the MAMS/MAR Committee for approval. Upon approval by the faculty members of the MAMS/MAR Committee, the chair will notify the student and thesis advisor, sign the proposal cover page, and forward it to the Registrar.

#### **B. Thesis Drafts**

The number and nature of preliminary drafts will depend upon the desires of the student and thesis advisor. The thesis advisor may require submission of material chapter by chapter. The thesis advisor approves the student's progression to the final draft.

#### **C. The Final Draft of the Thesis**

Two copies of the final draft, prepared according to the appropriate style and formatting requirements, are submitted to the panel members, normally by April 15.

#### **D. Final Submission of the Thesis (Archival Copies)**

1. Acid-free, archival quality paper is required. Print quality needs to be clear and dark.
2. Two copies of the thesis, including the approval page, should be prepared and submitted to the Registrar by the day preceding graduation. Do not punch holes in the pages or bind them in any way. The library will bind both copies, one for the library archives and one for library circulation.
3. With each copy of the thesis, provide an abstract (same margins, but single-spaced). This is a summary document of not more than one thousand words. It should enable one to take in at a glance the specific issue to be studied, the method, the principal facts and the solution or findings.
4. All students are encouraged to make their work available to a wider audience by allowing access to an electronic full text pdf file of the thesis via a link to its record on the library's online catalog.

#### **E. Thesis Format and Style**

##### **1. General Layout, Format and Style**

- a. Leave a one and one-half inch margin at the left on each page and at least three-quarters of an inch on the other three sides. The same margins apply to charts, graphs, tables, and maps. Use a five-space indentation for paragraphing.
- b. Double space the body of the manuscript. Single space long quotations, footnotes, and similar special material.

- c. The project document should otherwise follow the stylistic recommendations of *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, by Kate L. Turabian, latest edition.

**2. The Title Page** format is provided at Appendix B.

**3. The Approval Page**

The Approval page follows the Title page, and includes the dated signature of each member of the faculty panel. See Appendix C.

# APPENDIX A [Sample Thesis Proposal Cover Page]

## THESIS PROPOSAL COVER PAGE

for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Religion (MAR)

STUDENT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

THESIS ADVISOR: \_\_\_\_\_

PROVISIONAL THESIS TITLE:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### APPROVAL:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Thesis Advisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
MAMS/MAR Committee Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**APPENDIX B [Sample Thesis Title Page]**

**(TITLE HERE IN CAPS)**

A THESIS SUBMITTED BY

(Student Name)

TO THE FACULTY OF

THE LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY AT GETTYSBURG

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN RELIGION

(date using month and year only [May 2008])  
The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg

## APPENDIX C [Sample Thesis Approval Page]

APPROVED

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Type name of thesis advisor underneath line)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Type name of faculty panel member underneath line)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby affirm that all work done for this thesis is my own, and that this work has not been previously presented for credit towards any other academic degree or for any other academic course.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(type name of student underneath line)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX D

### TIMELINE FOR COMPLETION IN TWO YEARS

<b>YEAR A</b>	
Fall and J-term	Courses taken chosen in consultation with academic advisor to fulfill possible areas of concentration (continued through J-term of Year B).
Spring	Possible thesis advisor approached and enlisted Area of concentration declared Thesis topic chosen and refined
<b>YEAR B</b>	
Fall	Thesis Proposal written in consultation with thesis advisor. Thesis Proposal submitted to and approved by faculty members of MAMS/MAR Committee.
Spring	Complete Thesis semester and Practicum in Thesis Preparation
By April 15	Final draft of thesis to panel members
April/May	Defense of thesis
Early April	Faculty approves names for graduation (pending completion of requirements)
Late April	Board of Directors approves awarding of degrees (pending completion of requirements)
Before Graduation Day	Student delivers two archival copies to Registrar Readers sign approval page for inclusion in archival copies of thesis Student pays all outstanding balances