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Vision, Mission and Values of United Theological Seminary

Vision: Spirit-led leaders, Christ-like Church, transformed world

Mission: United prepares faithful and fruitful Christian leaders to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

Core Values:

Historic Faith

We believe that the faith in Jesus Christ passed down to us through the centuries by the fathers and mothers of the Church is crucial for the life and witness of the Church today. The Bible is our centerpiece for theological formation and reflection. Through sacraments, creeds, the writings of great teachers and other resources, we grow in the knowledge and love of the Triune God.

Scriptural Holiness

We believe in the life-changing power of the Holy Spirit, who helps us to become Christlike individuals and communities. Holiness is not simply about personal transformation. It is about transforming the world through faithful discipleship and just action.

Church Renewal

We believe that renewal, whether of individuals, congregations, the Church universal or all creation, is the work of the Holy Spirit, who is always ready to lead the faithful in this redemptive activity.

Purpose of the ThD Program in relation to the Vision, Mission and Values

The Th.D. program is an advanced research degree program designed to support the leading teachers, pastors, pastor-scholars, and thinkers associated with various denominations, houses of study and international partners, while expanding knowledge in the fields of Historical Theology, Biblical Studies, or Practical Theology.

ThD Program Outcomes

In seeking to fulfill its mission to “prepare faithful and fruitful Christian leaders to make disciples of Jesus Christ,” United Theological Seminary’s Doctor of Theology program trains its graduates to:

1. Demonstrate an ability to do original research within a specialized field of theology.
2. Demonstrate broad knowledge of the history, methods, and major figures of a field of study.
3. Demonstrate proficiency in teaching a theological discipline in the church and academy.
4. Demonstrate an advanced understanding of the role of academic research, writing, and teaching in the renewal of the church.

ThD Faculty

The ThD Faculty will consist of all tenured and tenure-track members of the faculty holding a PhD or ThD. Other qualified faculty may become members of the ThD faculty upon the recommendation of the Director of the ThD program and approval by United’s Faculty Development Committee.

The ThD faculty as a body exercises academic oversight of the program; individual members of that faculty participate in instructional activity as their interests and competences and the needs of the program may determine. A member of the faculty is expected to serve on the Steering Committee if appointed and to participate, as appropriate, in the work of one or more fields.

The ThD faculty shall establish, review, and revise policies governing admission, curriculum, fields of study, and degree requirements. It shall make use of United's faculty governance structures, in line with United's faculty handbook, to assist in the development of said policies.

The ThD faculty shall delegate certain responsibilities to a Steering Committee.

ThD Steering Committee

A ThD Steering Committee will consist of the Director of the ThD Program, one member of the ThD Faculty from each field (Biblical Studies, History and Theology, Practical Theology) elected by their colleagues each Spring. The Steering Committee will be chaired by the Director. The other faculty members of the Committee shall serve two-year terms. The Program Coordinator shall serve as secretary to the Steering Committee and shall keep the minutes of its meetings.

Application Information

Prospective students seeking admission to United's ThD program may apply using the MyUnited Online Portal located on United's website at www.united.edu. There is no application fee to start the application. Choose "How to Apply" from the main menu to learn more about the application process, and then click the "Apply" button on the How to Apply webpage and select the ThD program to start your application. Applications are evaluated for admission when all required documentation and fees are received. The Office of Admissions responds to each applicant by email or phone regarding their admittance or denial of admittance. Qualifying applicants are asked to indicate their response to the offer of admission by submitting their Letter of Intent within the applicant portal. All application materials become the property of the seminary and cannot be returned. The seminary reserves the right to refuse admission to any student.

Standards for Admission

Applicants seeking admission to the ThD program at United must meet the general criteria for admission to the school as well as the requirements listed below.

1. Applicants must hold a master's degree in theology or related field totaling to at least 48 hours;
2. Applicants must have a 3.5 grade point average or above on a 4.0 scale for all graduate level studies.

International Students

United maintains standards for admission governing all F-1 and J-1 International Students. For full policy, see United's Academic Catalog.

Application Process

To be considered for admission, prospective students must complete the following tasks on or

before the appropriate deadline:

- **Application:** Provide a completed application including a statement of purpose and writing sample.
- **Transcripts:** Request official transcripts from every college, university or graduate school you have attended. Transcripts should be sent directly to the Admissions Office at United Theological Seminary. If transcripts are sent to you, please submit an official unopened copy to the Admissions Office. Transcripts must show evidence of a cumulative grade point average of 3.5 (based on 4.0 GPA scale) or its equivalent.
- **Two Letters of Academic Recommendation:** Submit a request through the applicant portal for two letters of recommendation from someone qualified to comment upon the candidate's ability to pursue advanced academic research.
- **One Letter of Ministry Recommendation:** Submit a request through the applicant portal for one letter of recommendation from someone qualified to comment upon the candidate's commitment to ministry.
- **GRE:** The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) is highly recommended, but not required.
- **Background Checks:** United Theological Seminary requires criminal background checks through Verified Credentials on all degree-seeking applicants.
- **Application materials** are valid for one year from the time of submittal. After that period, a new application will be required to be considered for admission.

Application Timeline for Doctor of Theology Students

Deadlines can be found at <https://united.edu/how-to-apply/>.

Admissions Decisions

The ThD Steering Committee will be tasked with admitting, from the full slate of applicants, a cohort of students, ensuring every student admitted will have a willing and able member of the faculty whose research profile is suited to the students' research interests.

Tuition and Financial Aid

Current tuition prices and financial aid information can be viewed at <https://united.edu/tuition-fees-and-payment/>.

Orientation requirement

Student Orientation Completion of the online orientation provides the best foundation for student success at United. The orientation fee is assessed upon registration for the online orientation course. ALL new ThD students are required to complete a United online orientation course:

- New students are required to register for the online orientation course and complete it before registering for a second term.
- Registration for a second term will be prevented until this course is completed.

Coursework

Coursework in the ThD requires successful completion of 42 credits, including 12 core credits, 24 elective credits, and 6 dissertation credits. They are divided as follows:

Core Credits (12)

Core courses are only offered in an intensive format during the two intensive weeks of the Summer term, usually the middle weeks of July. Each course will meet for one week, the first coincident with the Masters on-campus meeting dates for hybrid sessions A and B, and the second coincident with the Masters on-campus meeting dates for hybrid sessions C and D (dates can be found in the Academic Catalog, available at <http://united.edu>). Each course will require substantive pre-work, so students should manage their time carefully. Syllabi will be made available two weeks prior to the Summer term through Canvas.

- **Advanced Theological Research and Methodology (3 credits)**
Develops students' research skills for theological inquiry, exposes students to research methods and resources, and as a final project has students develop a literature review on a topic in their relevant field of study.
- **Scholarship for Church Renewal (3 credits)**
Examines the biblical, historical, theological, socio-cultural, and practical foundations for church renewal that leads to mission. It enables students to think creatively about the state of the church in the modern West, the growth of the church in the Global South, and mission in a global context. Considers the place of scholarship in the work of church renewal and mission.
- **Research Colloquy (3 credits)**
Develops students' research skills for theological inquiry, exposes students to research methods and resources, with a goal of equipping students to prepare the dissertation proposal. Students prepare and present a preliminary literature review, and prepare a plan of research in light of their research interests.
- **Comprehensive Examination Seminar (3 credits)**
Develops students' research skills for theological inquiry, exposes students to research methods and resources, with a goal of equipping students to defend their literature review and proposal in the Comprehensive Examination. Students prepare and present a literature review and dissertation proposal to classmates.

Electives (24 credits)

Electives are determined by field and research interest. They may be taken as either 800 level seminars, directed studies, or independent readings (a maximum of 6 credits can be taken as independent readings).

800 level seminars

Students may enroll in one of United's many 800 level seminars. These may or may not include Masters students enrolled in advanced (600 level) masters electives. Seminars will be offered synchronously. ThD students may attend in person or virtually through the LIVE classroom. LIVE students must abide the policies set by the distance learning office.

For students with a United Masters degree: In the event that a 800 level elective shares a title with a 600 level elective at United, and the student has, in a prior degree program, taken the same-titled course at the 600 level, the student will not be eligible to take the 800 level elective.

Directed Studies

Students may negotiate with a member of the ThD Faculty to take a Directed Study. A Directed Study will not be approved for Core coursework and will not ordinarily be provided for courses listed in the catalog that are already scheduled. No more than one Directed Study may be taken in a term. The Directed Study must satisfy the credit hour policy of United, which pertains to both Masters and Doctoral students, that all courses require a minimum of 3.5 hours per week of student work per credit hour (3 credit hours, therefore, should require at least 10.5 hours per week). ThD students should expect to spend more time reading each week for a Directed Study. Approval must be secured from the student's advisor, the professor conducting the Directed Study, the Director of the ThD Program, and the Academic Dean. The Directed Study form is available in the Student Hub.

Independent Readings

Students will arrange with a member of the ThD Faculty for two Independent Readings courses (described below). The student and faculty member will agree on a bibliography for study that the student will pursue independently and which do not require either the submission of written work or the assignment of letter grades; rather, these courses are pass/fail and require one meeting near the end of the semester to determine completion of the assigned reading. The Independent Readings course must satisfy the credit hour policy of United, which sets for all courses a minimum of 3.5 hours per week of student work per credit hour (3 credit hours, therefore, should require at least 10.5 hours per week). As this policy is uniform for all graduate programs at United, Masters and Doctoral, ThD students should expect to spend considerably more time reading each week for the Independent Readings courses. An Independent Study form will be made available in the Student Hub.

- Independent Readings I
Students will register for Independent Readings I in either the Fall One or Spring One semester of the program. The purpose of Independent Readings I is to prepare the student for the literature review to be developed in the Summer Two Research Colloquy.
- Independent Readings II
Students will register for Independent Readings II in either the Fall Two or Spring Two semester of the program. The purpose of Independent Readings II is to prepare the student for Comprehensive Examinations, and therefore should be comprised of titles on the Bibliography for Comprehensive Examinations (see Plan of Research below) but not covered in ThD coursework.

Dissertation (6 credits)

Upon approval of the dissertation proposal, students will enroll in 3 credit Dissertation course during the two subsequent terms in the ThD Program. Any time beyond that required to complete the dissertation will be in continuation for no credit.

Sample Schedule – 3 Year Plan

Summer One	Advanced Theological Research and Methodology (3)
	Scholarship for Church Renewal (3)

Fall One	Elective (3) or Independent Readings I
	Elective (3)
Spring One	Elective (3) or Independent Readings I
	Elective (3)
Summer Two	Research Colloquy (3)
	Proposed Plan of Research Due
Fall Two	Elective (3) or Independent Readings II
	Elective (3)
Spring Two	Elective (3) or Independent Readings II
	Elective (3)
Summer Three	Comprehensive Examination Seminar (3)
	Dissertation Proposal Developed
Fall Three	Comprehensive Examinations
Spring Three	Dissertation (3)
Summer Four	Dissertation (3)
	Defense

Grading and Student Records

United maintains a uniform grading policy:

Quality/Explanation of Performance	Grade	Numerical Value	Grade Point	ThD Pass-Fail
Excellent	A	95-100	4.00	Pass
	A-	90-94	3.67	
Good	B+	88-89	3.33	
	B	84-87	3.0	
	B-	80-83	2.67	
Satisfactory	C+	75-79	2.33	
	C	70-74	2.0	
Failure	F	0-69	0.00	

This grading policy will be used for all Core classes, 800 level seminars, or directed studies. Independent Readings will be graded Pass/Fail.

To pass any seminar or directed study, the student must receive at least a B- for that course. Any grade lower than a B- will be seen as equivalent to failure. Students given less than a B- for a course will be placed on academic probation for the remainder of coursework. Students receiving less than a B- for a course while on academic probation will be discontinued from the program, unless the Academic Dean permits an exception due to extenuating circumstances. General details regarding the academic probation process, including the appeal process, is available in the Academic Catalog on the website (<http://united.edu>).

Teaching Competency

In order to “demonstrate proficiency in teaching a theological discipline in the church and

academy” (SLO 3), every 800 level elective or directed study will require a teaching component, ordered to SLO 3, as a course requirement. Moreover, two Core courses – Research Colloquy and Comprehensive Examination Seminar – will require a teaching demonstration.

Advising

During the first year of coursework, the Director of the ThD Program will serve as academic advisor for all ThD students. Students are encouraged to consult with faculty concerning their interests and prospects for dissertation research, in particular during their first Fall semester, as faculty plan for future electives.

During the Summer Two term, students will prepare and submit a Proposed Plan of Research, which will include a Plan of Study for the remainder of coursework, and select both a First and Second Advisor from among the ThD Faculty for subsequent work. Upon approval of the Proposed Plan of Research by both the First and Second Advisors and the ThD Steering Committee, the First Advisor will serve as the academic advisor to the student, unless the First Advisor is on leave, in which case the Second Advisor will serve as the academic advisor to the student until the First Advisor returns.

Plan of Research

The Plan of Research should be a comprehensive proposal, including a research topic or question to be pursued, a bibliography for comprehensive examinations, and plan of study for the remaining coursework requirements of the ThD, and an explanation of how proficiency in research languages or methods will be developed in order to pursue the research question. The plan of research must identify and receive approval from both a First and Second Advisor.

- Research Question
 - o Identify a clear, preliminary research topic or question for the Dissertation. While students should refine the question in subsequent study, the question must be sufficiently clear to direct a plan of study and clarify necessary proficiency in research languages or methods.
- Bibliography for Comprehensive Examinations
 - o A bibliography for comprehensive examinations should be developed in consultation with a First and Second Advisor. It should consist of both (1) items related to the preliminary research topic or question as well as (2) items deemed necessary by the First and Second Advisor in order to “demonstrate broad knowledge of the history, methods, and major figures of a field of study” (SLO 2).
- Plan of Study
 - o A complete plan of study for all electives to be taken during the Fall and Spring of the Second year need to be submitted, consisting of 800 level electives scheduled, directed studies, and an independent readings courses.
- Language and Method Proficiency
 - o A statement indicating the language and/or research methods requisite in order to make an original contribution to the research topic or question for the Dissertation, together with either concrete evidence that the student possesses proficiency in the requisite language(s) or method(s) or else a clear plan to acquire the requisite proficiency prior to Candidacy.

The Plan of Research must be submitted to the Program Coordinator, with approval from both Advisors using the Plan of Research Form (in the student hub), no later than July 15 of Summer Two. It will then be reviewed by the ThD Steering Committee for final approval.

Proposal

Beginning in Summer Three, students will prepare a dissertation proposal of approximately 7500 words, consisting of the following:

- Summary Statement (~1 page)
 - o A statement of the research question addressed in the dissertation, the primary argument or thesis, and the proposed contribution to the field of study.
- Statement and justification of the research question (~10 pages)
 - o Demonstrate that you have identified a research question unanswered in the current literature.
- Description and justification of the methods to be used (~4 pages)
 - o Explain how your methods will permit you to make an original contribution toward the research question you have identified
- Outline of dissertation (~2 pages)
 - o Include a list of chapters with a brief paragraph description of contents for each chapter
- Preliminary Bibliography (~5 pages)
- Timetable (~1 page)
 - o Provide an overview plan and timetable that outlines the research, writing, completion of chapters, and targeted completion of dissertation.

Students should develop their proposal in conversation with their First and Second Advisor. A complete proposal, approved by both Advisors using the Dissertation Proposal Form (in the student hub) must be submitted to the Program Coordinator in order to schedule Comprehensive Examinations.

Comprehensive Examinations

Once students have submitted a complete, approved proposal to the Program Coordinator, they will be eligible to schedule comprehensive examinations. In order to schedule comprehensive examinations, students must finalize and pursue their bibliography for comprehensive examinations (see the Plan of Research above), then gain approval to sit for the exam from both the First and Second Advisor by submitting a signed copy of the Comprehensive Examination Form (made available in the Student Hub).

Once both the approved Dissertation Proposal and Comprehensive Examination Forms are received by the Program Coordinator, the Coordinator will schedule the comprehensive examinations in dialogue with the student and both Advisors. Comprehensive Examinations of United consist of three components.

The Dissertation Proposal

The first phase of comprehensive examinations is completed by approved submission of a

dissertation proposal. This material will require oral defense in the oral examination, together with the contents of the written examination.

The Written Examination

The written examination is a 48 hour open book examination in which students will be asked to “demonstrate broad knowledge of the history, methods, and major figures of a field of study” (SLO 2). The written examination will be developed on the basis of the Bibliography for Comprehensive Examinations included in the Comprehensive Examination Form. The written examination will be submitted to the First and Second Advisor for their evaluation. Within two weeks of receipt, the First and Second Advisors must communicate a decision of either High Pass, Pass, or Fail to the student and Director of the ThD Program. If an advisor assigns the student a grade of High Pass, no further work or conditions will be made upon the student’s admission to candidacy (aside from successful completion of the oral examination). If an advisor assigns the student a grade of Pass, their decision may include specific advice for further work or conditions that must be met in order to proceed to candidacy. If an advisor assigns the student a grade of Fail, it is assumed the student will retake the examination in part or in whole, as appropriate, unless both Advisors agree to some other procedure. No part of the written examination may be attempted more than twice.

The Oral Examination

Once a student has received a Pass from both Advisors, the Program Coordinator will schedule the oral examination. The First Advisor will chair the oral examination. The Comprehensive Examination Committee will consist of three members of United’s ThD faculty: the First and Second Advisor, and one other member appointed by the Director of the ThD program. The oral examination will be two hours, with a brief break at the interim. The first hour will cover material submitted in the written examination. The second hour will cover the Dissertation Proposal.

Each member of the Committee will submit an evaluation form, in which they will render a decision of High Pass, Pass, or Fail. If the Committee assigns the student a grade of High Pass, no further work or conditions will be made upon the student’s admission to candidacy. If an examiner assigns the student a grade of Pass, their decision may include specific advice for further work or conditions that must be met in order to proceed to candidacy. If two examiners assign the student a grade of Fail, it is assumed the student will retake the examination in part or in whole, as appropriate, unless examiners agree to some other procedure. No part of the oral examination may be attempted more than twice.

Candidacy

Students will be admitted to Candidacy upon successful completion of all coursework and comprehensive examinations. Only once admitted to Candidacy will students be able to register for the two (3 credit) Dissertation courses.

Dissertation

Students will “demonstrate an ability to do original research within a specialized field of theology” (SLO 1) by successful completion and defense of a dissertation related to a specific area within their field of study. This dissertation and defense must demonstrate the student’s

ability to conduct original research that makes a substantial and distinctive contribution to theoretical knowledge.

Once granted candidacy, the student will pursue the Dissertation Proposal as submitted and defended during comprehensive examinations, under the direction of their First Advisor, unless their First Advisor is on leave, in which case the Second Advisor will direct for the leave period.

While United does not stipulate particular procedures for preparing the dissertation, the First Advisor and student are expected to establish and follow clear procedures for preparing the dissertation. For instance, the First Advisor may propose procedures and, in dialogue with the student, reach an agreement that the student will then write up and submit to the First Advisor.

Any student conducting research with Human Subjects must follow procedures of United's Institutional Review Board, available at <https://united.edu/institutional-review-board/>

The Dissertation Committee will consist of the First and Second Advisor, the Director of the ThD program, one member of the ThD faculty, and one outside examiner. It is the responsibility of the First Advisor, in consultation with the student, to propose an outside examiner to the Director early enough to ensure timely processing in preparation for the evaluation of the dissertation.

Students will submit chapters to the First and Second Advisors as they are written. When the student has completed the dissertation and received the tentative approval of both the First and Second Advisor, the First Advisor will then distribute the dissertation to all members the Dissertation Committee, and schedule the defense, in consultation with the Program Coordinator. The defense will be scheduled four to eight weeks after the dissertation has been distributed to all members of the committee.

Defense

The Director of the ThD Program will chair a two-hour oral defense of the dissertation. The purpose of the defense is to evaluate the merits of the dissertation and to require students to defend the dissertation in the face of the kind of criticism that may fairly be expected by his or her scholarly peers. Following a two-hour oral defense of the dissertation, the committee will consult and reach a final decision with respect to both the dissertation and defense.

For the dissertation and defense, the Committee may decide to award the student a grade of High Pass, Pass, or Fail. If the Committee assigns the defense a grade of High Pass or Pass, no further work will be required in order to receive the ThD. If the Committee assigns the defense a grade of Fail, it is assumed the student will retake the Defense in part or in whole, as appropriate, unless the committee stipulates some other procedure. No part of the defense may be attempted more than twice. The Director of the ThD Program will communicate to the student the final decision of the Committee.