



100% Online | 24 Months | 36 Credits



Franciscan School of Theology
at the UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO

MASTER OF THEOLOGICAL STUDIES - FRANCISCAN THEOLOGY

Program Overview

Grounded in the Catholic Franciscan tradition, the Master of Theological Studies – Franciscan Theology (MTS-FT) is a two-year academic program offered by the Franciscan School of Theology in partnership with the University of San Diego. In which deep Catholic theological study meets compassionate action.

Designed for working professionals and recent undergraduates alike, this unique online program is ideal for those seeking to immerse themselves in the teachings of the Catholic faith no matter their background or location.

Program Goals

- Graduates will be able to conduct research and construct a theological argument through a Franciscan lens and will exhibit a focused knowledge in a Franciscan approach within a theological discipline(s) culminating in a capstone project:
- Interpret and Apply Theological Knowledge. This program provides students a bedrock on which to build their own interpretations and proposed applications of this service-based faith tradition, whatever their life and career goals may be.
- Identify Areas of Service and Need. The Franciscan focus on the joy of creation and service to others will help students identify places in their own communities that could be better served with compassion and understanding.
- Construct a Coherent, In-Depth Theological Capstone

Foundational Courses

Semester 1

- MTS 501: Orientation
- MTS 510: Following Francis
- MTS 515: Intro to Franciscan Theology

Core Courses

Semester 2 - Semester 4

- MTS 520: An Introduction to the Old Testament
- MTS 525: History: Unity, Diversity, Change Over Time

- MTS 550: Intercultural Theology: Theology in an Intercultural Context
- MTS 555: Spirituality: Spirituality for the Digital Age

- MTS 530: An Introduction to the New Testament
- MTS 535: Ecclesiology: Being the 21st-Century Church

- MTS 540: Moral Theology: Conscience and the Common Good
- MTS 545: Christology: Who Do You Say That I Am?

Capstone Courses

Semester 5

- MTS 599: Capstone: Finding Your Voice in the Franciscan Tradition

Foundational Courses

MTS 510: Following Francis: An Introduction to the Franciscan Tradition

What does the tradition of Francis of Assisi, Clare of Assisi, and those who continue to follow in their footsteps offer our world today? The Franciscan way cultivates peace-making, cares for creation, and forges solidarity with the poor and marginalized in a Christ-centered way of life that responds to the challenges of our world. This interdisciplinary course introduces major Franciscan figures, sources of the Franciscan tradition, and significant interpreters of this tradition to establish the foundation that is developed throughout the MTS program.

MTS 515: Introduction to Franciscan Theology

What is the “new paradigm” that Franciscan Theology contributes to the Catholic tradition? The significant authors of the Franciscan tradition shaped this new approach in the Middle Ages. This course will guide students through an introductory-level study of the themes of the Trinity, Creation, Incarnation, and the human person in major works of these writers. Their relevance today, as expressed in documents of the Papal Magisterium, will be highlighted.

Core Courses

MTS 520: Old Testament: Our Jewish Roots: An Introduction to the Old Testament

If Jesus only had access to the Old Testament, should we not give it the importance that he gave it? Are stories about Adam and Eve relevant in today’s world? Is the God of the Old Testament different than the God of the New Testament? We will learn about the Old Testament through reading the writings that the peoples of the Old Testament left as their heritage. We will also study the material culture of these people that archaeologists have been able to unearth. We will do this in a manner consistent with various documents on the study of Sacred Scripture that the Roman Catholic Church has issued in the last century. Students will be challenged to recognize the different types of literature present in the OT: wisdom, prophetic, historical and apocalyptic.

MTS 525: History: Unity, Diversity, Change Over Time

How do we make sense of a faith that develops over time? This course examines key moments of change in the history of the Church, its struggle to maintain unity while respecting the diversities of culture, language, geography, and societies. Special attention will be given to the movement of the early church from the Jewish to the Hellenistic world; the missionary developments and the cultural impact of the Germanic world; the 13th century social changes associated with the Franciscan movement; the mission to the “new world” and China; “Beloved Amazonia” and the challenges of the 21st century.

MTS 530: New Testament: The Cradle, The Cross, and The Community: An Introduction to the New Testament

Why are the infancy narratives in some gospels and not others? Why do some writings focus on the cross and others do not? Why do Catholics say that we are saved by the life, death, and resurrection of Christ? We will learn about the New Testament through reading the writings that the peoples of the New Testament left as their heritage. We will also study the material culture of these people that archaeologists have been able to unearth. We will do this in a manner consistent with a sound historical-critical methodology.

MTS 535: Ecclesiology: Being the 21st-Century Church

The Catholic Church continues to grow as a global community of faith. Trace its new directions from Vatican II to 2021. How does the church respond to changes in society? What is the role of dialogue with other religions? How is decision-making changing? What are the emerging roles of lay leaders, women and men? This course will introduce the thinkers and documents shaping the Church in the 21st Century.

MTS 540: Moral Theology: Conscience and the Common Good

This course explores moral theology as a dynamic, living tradition that guides faithful discipleship while evolving to address contemporary challenges. Through a distinctly Franciscan lens, students examine key theological concepts including natural law, virtue ethics, conscience formation, and synodality. The course emphasizes moral theology's nature as a wisdom tradition that balances enduring principles with adaptive responses to new contexts. Special attention is given to Pope Francis's moral vision and the role of communal discernment in ethical decision-making. The course culminates in an exploration of how Catholic social thought and moral theology have become increasingly integrated in the modern global church, particularly through networks like Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church (CTEWC). Through discussions, reflective assignments, and practical applications, students develop their capacity for moral reasoning while engaging with diverse perspectives in an environment of respectful dialogue.

MTS 555: Spirituality: Spirituality for the Digital Age

Franciscan Spirituality addresses today's ethical challenge by contributing to an "integral ecology," (cf. *Laudato Si*), that is a new understanding of economics, peace-making, intercultural communication and inter-religious dialogue. The Franciscan spiritual perspective helps to build a new relational paradigm for the Church. The course will underline that the new forms of media are gifts of God that can strengthen bonds of fraternal communication and build a more responsible lifestyle. However, they also present ethical challenges that must be addressed.

MTS 545: Christology: Who Do You Say That I Am?

At a critical point in his ministry, Jesus asked his followers: Who do you say that I am? How has Christian tradition grown in its understanding and affirmation of full divinity and humanity in Jesus Christ? How does the Franciscan tradition shed renewed light on the importance of the Incarnation and God's universal salvific desire? In today's global reality, how do we best give witness to our faith in Jesus Christ in dialogue with other world religions? These questions frame our study in this course in Christology as we focus on the development of early Church doctrine, the particular contribution of Franciscan thinkers, the importance of intercultural dialogue today, and the significance of Franciscan Christology for the third millennium.

MTS 550: Intercultural Theology: Theology in an Intercultural Context

How do we make sense of a faith that is diverse and at the same time unified? This course explores the complex issues of Catholic theologies, missions and indigenous cultures.

MTS 599: Finding Your Voice in the Franciscan Tradition

The Capstone for MTS-Franciscan Theology is completed during the 14-week course MTS 599 Finding Your Voice in the Franciscan Tradition, which is the final course of the degree. Students are encouraged to think about possible projects or themes during the course of their degree work. Throughout all the courses, students are reminded and encouraged to retain copies of their most engaging coursework that could feed into their Capstone so that when the student enters MTS 599, they will already have at least nascent thoughts about the subject matter or themes to address.

An MTS capstone demonstrates each student's ability to develop a coherent theological argument on a topic about which they feel passionately. The capstone may contain an experiential component integrating personal, professional, and pastoral concerns and will demonstrate skill in developing a theological framework to situate the topic within the commitment of faith. The student works with peers and the instructor of MTS 599 (Finding Your Voice in the Franciscan Tradition) in the creation and implementation of their project. In addition, each student will select a faculty mentor whose subject matter expertise aligns with the student's project to offer specialized guidance. A list of faculty mentors with their subject matter expertise and contact information is provided.

Students may choose between these options:

- a.) A traditional thesis of c. 50-60 pages developing an argument grounded in a traditional theological discipline (or interdisciplinary approach) across three chapters with Introduction, Conclusion, footnotes, and bibliography.
- b.) Series of short articles amounting to 30 pages of text prepared for identified publications (such as, *America*, *St. Anthony Messenger*, *Franciscan Connections*, *The Way*) with analytical introduction of 15-20 pages explaining purpose of the collection, research method, sources used to prepare the articles.
- c.) Creation of a ministerial event such as a Retreat, Adult Education Lecture Series, or Workshop with detailed presentations scripted or outlined in detail; audio/visual components including Power Point slides; schedule of presentations, experiential exercises; "learning outcomes;" logistical and practical elements including location, budget, environment set up, materials needed; identification of target audience; promotion plan, etc. amounting to 30 pages of text. Analytical Introduction of 15-20 pages explaining purpose of the event, research method used to prepare materials, sources used to prepare the presentations for the event.