

THE MASTER OF ARTS IN RELIGION

Drew University Theological School



Purpose of the Handbook

This handbook is a guide for the **Master of Arts in Religion** degree of the Drew Theological School. It provides information and structure to facilitate moving through the program. A handbook is issued annually to ensure that students have up-to-date information. If there is any contradiction between this handbook and the academic catalog of the Theological School published on the Registrar's website, the catalog dated to the student's semester of entrance takes precedence.

Whether you want to apply for doctoral programs or deepen your understanding of a field of study, the Drew Master of Arts in Religion (M.A.R.) degree provides an intensive period of training to achieve your goals. The degree features seminars in scholarly skills and communication, a focused area of study, and a capstone project experience.

This handbook provides:

- A quick view of key Master of Arts in Religion student expectations
- Requirements and timelines for the program
- Review of academic policies and processes most relevant to M.A.R. students
- A program planning checklist

In Seminary Hall and in virtual Drew learning spaces, you are invited to linger in the Forest even as you are always engaging contexts beyond Drew. The Theological School is a diverse, ecumenical, and open community that dares to pursue the love, wisdom, and justice at the heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is our hope that this handbook will clarify your pathway to graduation and free your mind, body, and spirit for the deeply transformative work of theological education.

Table of Contents

Purpose of the Handbook	2
A Quick View of Student Expectations	4
A Quick View of M.A.R. Program Requirements	5
Completing the Master of Arts in Religion Program	7
Coursework	7
The Area of Study	7
Optional Concentrations	8
Capstone Experience	9
Graduation	9
Special Programs and Opportunities	11
Caspersen School Graduate Courses	11
Partnership for Religion and Education in Prisons (PREP)	11
Chapel	11
Community Garden	11
Student-Directed Immersive Learning	12
Registration Status	14
Academic Standing	16
Standards of Academic Integrity	17
Curriculum Planning for Master of Arts in Religion	18

Revised: June 2026

A Quick View of Student Expectations

✓ Pay attention to Drew's deadlines and policies

Although you will work closely with your professors and fellow students, the responsibility for your degree progress rests with you. All students are expected to work within Drew policies and procedures. Familiarize yourself with the academic calendar and the deadlines related to withdrawals, grade extensions, and academic petitions. Information can be found on the Registrar's office [webpage](#).

✓ Be conversant in academic writing styles

The M.A.R. is a master's degree that prioritizes engagement with scholarship and academic contexts. You should be familiar with the forms and formats of writing academic essays and research papers. In order to work continuously on your writing, take advantage of the Theological School's reference librarian, and the resources of the Center for Academic Excellence and the Theological Language and Learning Center.

✓ Plan for your thesis early

The MAR has options for you to pursue individual academic and professional goals through extended academic research. If you want to do the thesis-track of the MAR, you should begin thinking about your plan in your second semester. You will need two semesters to complete the thesis project, usually in your third or fourth semester. There is also an option for a non-thesis track to complete the MAR. For this track, you can complete a MAR portfolio of your work or an extended paper in one semester.

✓ Take Time for Professional Reflection

For many students, the M.A.R. program provides an opportunity to discern next steps on their academic and/or vocational path. Some M.A.R. students prepare to apply to doctoral programs, whether a Ph.D. or Doctor of Ministry. Some want to enhance their professional competency in a particular field. Others pursue an area of study based on their curiosity or for a range of professional and personal reasons. As you go through the M.A.R. program, take advantage of opportunities to discuss options and develop skills that will move you toward your goals.

A Quick View of M.A.R. Program Requirements

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS (See Academic Catalog for more details)	Number of Credits
Required Courses	7 credits
REL 530 Studying Religion and Theology	1
REL 531 Research Methods in a Digital Age	1
REL 532 Critical Pedagogy and Religion	1
REL 533 Public Writing and Media Communication	1
One Interdisciplinary Seminar (550 level or higher course with one of the following subjects or attributes: INTD, ECO, WSTT, AFAM, ARLT)	3
Area of Study (see below)	15 credits
Electives	15-21 credits
Capstone	0-6 Credits
Thesis Track	
CRW 975 – Thesis Workshop (Fall term) AND	3 credits
CRW 975 – Thesis Workshop (Spring term)	3 credits
OR Non-Thesis Track	
CRW 692 - MAR Portfolio (0 credits)	0-3 credits
OR one semester of CRW 975 to complete an extended paper (3)	
Optional Concentration (see below)	no additional credits
TOTAL CREDITS	43 credits

Students choose one of five Areas of Study	
General Studies	15 credits
Fifteen credits distributed across at least three subject areas in the Theological School offerings	
Bible and Cultures	15 credits
Fifteen credits from BBCL and BBST offerings in consultation with advisor (3 credits can be used for biblical languages)	
Theology and Philosophy	15 credits
Fifteen credits from THEO and TPHL offerings in consultation with advisor	
Religion and Society	15 credits
Fifteen credits from CSOC, CRES, RLSC, ETH, RPSY, SJA offerings in consultation with advisor	
Self-Declared Interdisciplinary	15 credits
Fifteen credits from courses with one of the following attributes: ● Africana and African American Religion and Culture (AFAM) ● Ecology and Religion (ECO) ● Women's and Gender Studies (WSTT)	

Completing the Master of Arts in Religion Program

The Master of Arts in Religion (M.A.R.) provides advanced study in the disciplines of religion and theology and the interdisciplinary conversations they engage. The program consists of scholarly communication seminars, disciplinary and interdisciplinary study, and an integrative capstone project. Throughout the program, M.A.R. students study and practice written and oral scholarly communication and skills in multiple modes. Integrative capstone projects support individual academic and professional goals through extended academic research or a graduation portfolio.

Coursework

The M.A.R. degree is usually completed in two years. In four semesters, full-time students select courses based on their interests and goals. As the degree is relatively brief, course selections should be strategic and focused.

The required online seminars of the M.A.R. provide students with scholarly skills in critical research, writing, and pedagogy. Students register for one of the four required seminars (REL 530, 531, 532, and 533) in each of their four semesters. These courses are 100% online and only one is offered in each semester. The interdisciplinary seminar may be taken in any semester, however, these courses are offered on a rotating basis. You should plan to take the seminar you are interested in as soon as you see it offered so as not to miss it.

At least five of the courses (15 credits total) should have a subject or thematic coherence. These courses serve as an area of study in the degree (see below). The remaining credits of coursework are reserved for electives. M.A.R. students choose primarily from master's level electives (500 and 600-level) and may take appropriate doctoral seminars on a case-by-case basis.

The Area of Study

Each M.A.R. student selects one primary area of study:

General Studies: Pursue general study across several subject areas in the regular Theological School curriculum.

Bible and Cultures: Explore the Bible's rhetoric, material and political contexts, interpretation, and ethics within diverse cultures and theoretical frameworks.

Theology and Philosophy: Study philosophical, constructive, pluralist, comparative, and systematic approaches to theology and theological themes.

Religion and Society: Examine the role of religion and Christianities in relation to social processes and meaning, structures of oppression, and struggles for liberation and wholeness for individuals, communities, and the natural environment.

Self-Declared Interdisciplinary: A student-selected interdisciplinary area of study based in one of the following fields:

Africana and African American Religion and Culture: Study the histories, cultures, religions, philosophies, aspirations, and achievements of African Americans and peoples of African descent in regions of the world that share a history of specific kinds of colonialism.

Ecology and Religion: Study the historical, philosophical, socio-political, and theological influences that have shaped the current planetary context and the array of contemporary global religious ecological voices and emerging eco-theologies.

Women's and Gender Studies: Examine the diversity of women's experiences as they are informed by gender, class, race/ethnicity, sexuality, age, ability, social location, and cultural and national identity. Engage theoretical and methodological insights of feminist thought and gender and queer scholarship.

Religion and Social Justice: Examine the role of religion and Christianities in relation to structures of oppression and struggles for liberation and wholeness for individuals, communities, and the natural environment. Concentration not available for students declaring Religion and Society as an area of study.

Capstone

Students use the capstone to demonstrate capacities developed during their course of study. Whether a thesis, portfolio, or extended paper, the capstone is intended to exhibit masteries of and expertise in research, analysis, assessment, and articulation of interdisciplinary concepts and their application to identified academic and intellectual problems.

Graduation

Students may complete the degree in August, January, or May of each year. Commencement exercises are held in May of each year for all students who have completed their degrees in the August or January prior to each Commencement.

Program Timeline

Regular semester courses are offered in weekly (day and evening, Tuesday through Thursday), intensive, and online formats in Fall and Spring. Intensive, travel, and online courses are offered in January and summer terms.

This sample timeline provides an overview for completing the entire program.

To reduce the credits in any semester add intensive or online area of study/elective credits in any January or summer terms. To shorten the time to graduation, add area of study/elective credits in semester, January, and summer terms.

Year One: 22 credits			
Fall Semester** 10-13 credits	January	Spring Semester** 10-13 credits	Summer
1 credit required course 6-12 credits of Area/electives		1 credit required course 6-12 credits of Area/electives	
Year Two: 21 credits			
Fall Semester ** 10-13 credits	January	Spring Semester** 10-13 credits	Summer
1 credit required course 6-12 credits of Area/electives Thesis Track or extended paper: CRW 975		1 credit required course 6-12 credits of Area/electives Thesis Track or extended paper: CRW 975 Portfolio (Non-Thesis track): CRW 692	

**The interdisciplinary seminar may be taken in any semester

Special Programs and Opportunities

Caspersen School Graduate Courses

Courses offered in the Caspersen School of Graduate Studies by the Drew Faculty of Arts and Sciences are available to Theological School students. Courses in Education, Conflict Resolution, History, Arts, Literature, and Medical and Health Humanities may be taken for elective credit toward the M.A.R. Students may petition for a course to fulfill an area of study requirement by completing a Petition to the Graduate Academic Standing Committee on for Resources for Current Students [webpage](#).

Partnership for Religion and Education in Prisons (PREP)

In this flagship program, Drew Theological School students learn together with students who are incarcerated.

PREP courses are taken for credit and can be used to fulfill area of study and elective requirements.

For more information and to apply for current courses, see the Resources for Current Students [webpage](#).

Chapel

At the center of Drew's worshipping and learning community is the historic Craig Chapel, located on the second floor of Seminary Hall. Weekly services, vespers, lectures, special ceremonies, and many more events bring the Drew community together for worship, learning, and celebration. Regular services are offered two times per week: Tuesdays at noon and Thursdays at noon. Attendance and participation in leading worship is encouraged for all Theological School students and faculty. Students can plan and participate in chapel for up to 3 credits toward the M.A.R. degree (TMUS 800 - Seminary Choir, or VOCF 806 - Chapel Practicum).

Community Garden

At the Theological School Community garden students, professors and staffers plant, harvest and eat organic food. Harvests are shared in a CSA and also donated to local food pantries. Students can take VOCF 805 - Garden Practicum for 1 elective credit.

The Community Garden is a space for learning and thinking theologically about the interconnection of God's creation. As a founding member of the [Green Seminary Initiative](#), Drew's commitment to ecological wellbeing is demonstrated across the Theological School

community in recycling, reusing, and reviving our environment through a culture of awareness and activism.

Student-Directed Immersive Learning

Apprenticeships

Students are encouraged to do an apprenticeship in their program (VOCF 873 - Vocational Apprenticeship). An apprenticeship with a church or other community organization focuses on a specific skill set or capacity in a distinct role in a vocational setting. Contact the Office of Vocation and Formation for more information and advising.

Internship

Students are welcome to do internships in their program. An internship with an academic office, a church, or other community organization offers a general, broad introduction to the responsibilities, programs, and roles of an internship placement context. Contact the Office of Vocation and Formation at for more information and advising.

Off-Campus Learning

Students are encouraged to develop off-campus experiences that will deepen the learning in their program. These are usually in a remote location, participating in various ways in learning leadership including professional placements, chaplaincies, farms or ecological programs, conferences, community projects, etc. Drew credit can be received for these experiences by building a curriculum mentored by a faculty member with a final project, reflection paper, or public demonstration/presentation. The tutorial petition is found on the Resources for Current Students page of the Theological School [webpage](#).

Frequently Asked Questions

The Theological School Academic Policies are published annually in Drew University's Theological School catalog. This document can be accessed in its entirety from the Registrar's [webpage](#). If there is any contradiction between this catalog and the FAQs below, the catalog dated to the student's semester of entrance takes precedence.

How long do I have to complete the program?

Full-time students ordinarily complete the degree in four semesters. Full-time students register for a minimum of nine hours per academic term and a maximum of fifteen. All academic requirements for the M.A.R. must be completed within five years from the date of initial matriculation.

How best can I use the M.A.R. to prepare for submitting Ph.D. applications?

Students planning to apply for Ph.D. programs should begin preparation in their first year and apply in the fall of their second year. Students need time for the following work: identifying schools they would like to apply to, developing their personal statement, taking the G.R.E., and taking courses with professors from whom they might request recommendations. The M.A.R. thesis is usually too long to serve as a writing sample for applications. Thus, students should work with professors to develop a paper for this purpose from your second or third semester courses. Students should consult their adviser about plans and support available for M.A.R. students seeking to make December advanced degree applications.

How do I get accommodations for a disability?

Students who require accommodations should contact the Office of Accessibility Resources (OAR), in Brothers College, 973-408-3962, for a private, confidential appointment. Accommodation Request Letters are issued to students after documentation, written by a qualified professional, is reviewed and accommodations are approved by OAR. For more information, see:

<https://drew.edu/academic/student-resources/center-for-academic-excellence/office-of-accessibility-resources/>

Accommodations are implemented by faculty only after the student presents the Accommodation Request Letter issued by OAR. Letters should be presented to the faculty at least one week before the accommodation is needed. Students' requests for accommodations thus should be submitted to OAR within the first two weeks of a course. Returning students with previously approved accommodations should make letter requests for the current semester to Accessibility Resources within the first two weeks of class.

Registration Status

M.A.R. students are expected to maintain communication and connection with Drew throughout the entire program. Different registration statuses indicate your progress through the program.

Active

Students who are consistently registered for classes will maintain “active” status with Drew. This status allows students access to all academic, support, and student life services at the University. Students who fail to register in any fall or spring semester will have their status revised to “inactive.” Students not registered for two consecutive semesters (fall-spring or spring-fall) will be automatically withdrawn from the program and will have to petition for re-entry through the Registrar’s [webpage](#).

Leave of Absence

Unexpected life events or personal challenges can interrupt a student’s ability to make progress in the degree. At times like this, students might reduce the number of credits they plan to take or consider a complete leave of absence. This status stops the clock on your allowed time to completion of your degree. In addition to the 5 years allowed to complete the degree, students are allowed two semesters of official leave from the program. As a leave of absence is intended to provide time away from the work of the degree, students do not have access to academic, support, and student life services at the University.

Students may apply for a leave of absence at any time during the program. To obtain a leave of absence from the program--whether for medical, financial, or personal reasons--students must file a leave of absence application online. This form is found on TreehouseAny leave of absence that is approved becomes effective as of the date it is processed and is not applied retroactively.

Students who take the leave during a semester should be aware of the grading and refund policies of the University. A leave of absence does not exempt a student from receiving grades for courses they have been registered for nor does it guarantee a refund of tuition paid. The date a leave is requested determines the amount of tuition refund (if any). For example, a leave of absence requested and received in the middle or at the end of a semester will not be effective from the beginning of the semester. If you are considering a leave of absence, please review the leave policies and deadlines found on the [Registrar](#) and [Business Office](#) webpages.

RE-ENTRY FOLLOWING LEAVE OF ABSENCE: When a student plans to return to the program following a leave of absence, they must submit a Re-Entry form, which can be found on the Registrar’s [webpage](#). If a student does not return from a leave of absence in the semester following the leave, the student’s status will be revised to “inactive.” If the student is inactive for two semesters, they will be withdrawn from the program by the University.

Medical Withdrawal from a Semester

Students with personal emergencies that occur after the drop/add dates have passed may apply for a medical withdrawal from an entire semester. The student must provide documentation of the medical situation. Upon approval by the Associate Dean for the Theological School, the student will be put on leave of absence and receive Ws for all courses in the semester. Regular tuition refund policies apply to medical withdrawals as to leaves of absence.

Voluntary Withdrawal from the Program

If for any reason a student finds it necessary to withdraw from the program, it is important that this decision be discussed with the Associate Dean for the Theological School beforehand and that an appropriate and timely written notice is given to the Associate Dean and the University. In order to withdraw from the program, a student completes a Withdrawal form on Treehouse. Any notice of withdrawal from the program becomes official as of the date it is received. A student who has withdrawn from the program has no access to academic, support, and student life services at the University. A student wishing to re-enter a program after withdrawing must apply again to the program through the Graduate Admissions office.

All withdrawals are subject to the Drew University refund and grading policies and deadlines. Students are encouraged to review these policies with the Coordinator of Graduate Academic Services, the Registrar, and the Business Office before submitting an application for withdrawal.

Academic Standing

In addition to regular course grading and assessments, students are evaluated each semester according to the standards of academic achievement and progress. The Graduate Academic Standing Committee reviews each student's academic performance after each semester and may revise student standing based on this review.

Good Standing

M.A.R. degree students must maintain a minimum 3.00 G.P.A.

Warning or Probation

Students who do not achieve a 3.0 GPA in any semester will be placed on warning or probation based on the criteria outlined in the Theological School Academic Catalog posted on the Registrar's [webpage](#). Students placed on academic probation are returned to Good Standing if they achieve an overall 3.0 GPA average or better at the next time of review.

Required Withdrawal

A student may be withdrawn from the program by the University for any of the following:

- Receiving all "F" grades in any one semester
- Being on Probation and not returning to Good Standing at the end of the probationary semester
- Having two or more non-consecutive semesters on Warning or Probation
- A violation of the University's Academic Integrity or Human Rights policies.

Under exceptional circumstances only, a student on Required Withdrawal may appeal to the Academic Standing Committee to be re-admitted in the next term. If the appeal is approved, the student will be reinstated and placed on Probation. Such re-admissions are granted only in unusual cases, and in no cases may a student be re-admitted twice.

Standards of Academic Integrity

Drew University Standards

Drew University has established standards of academic integrity and procedures. These basic standards apply to all work done at Drew. Students are expected to study and comply with these principles. You can find the Academic Integrity policy for the Theological School in the academic catalog on the Registrar's [webpage](#).

The standards of academic integrity apply to information that is presented orally, in writing, or via the computer, in any format ranging from the most informal comment to a formal research paper or the writing of the final paper in reference to the project. These standards apply to source material gathered from other people, from written texts, from computer programs, from the Internet, or from any other location.

The following are examples of academic dishonesty, as defined in this policy:

Duplicate Submission - Submitting one's work in identical or similar form to fulfill more than one requirement without prior approval of the relevant faculty members is a breach of academic integrity. This includes using a paper for more than one course or submitting material previously used to meet another requirement.

False Citation - Listing an author, title, or page reference as the source for obtained material, when the material actually came from another source or from another location within that source, is a breach of academic integrity. See the *Turabian Manual of Style* (latest edition and/or online quick guide) for how to cite quotations within the body of another author.

Plagiarism - Plagiarism is the act of appropriating or imitating the language, ideas, or thoughts of another and presenting them as one's own or without proper acknowledgment. This includes submitting as one's own a thesis, a paper, or part of a paper written by another person, whether that material was stolen, purchased, or shared freely. It also includes submitting a paper containing insufficient citation or misuse of source material. When in doubt, err on the side of referencing material. Note that each syllabus will outline clearly the Drew University policy.

Sanctions - Sanctions are imposed for demonstrated breaches of academic honesty or scholarly integrity. See the section of the catalog on procedures for dealing with allegations of academic dishonesty. If dishonesty is determined, the sanctions may range from requiring that an assignment be redone to automatic failure of a course to dismissal from the Theological School.