



## M.T.S. Final Paper Guidelines



### **The Nature of the Project**

The goal of the M.T.S. final paper is to provide students with an opportunity to conclude their course of study by synthesizing and focusing their intellectual interest under the discipline of a substantial written paper. This paper may build upon and elaborate work done in a previous paper in the program or may probe in the direction of future academic study (e.g., a possible dissertation topic). The paper can therefore: 1) focus on a specific text, figure, or question within a field; 2) integrate two or more disciplines with respect to a particular topic; or 3) apply a certain theoretical perspective to an issue or problem in the church or society.

The paper should be well researched, clearly written, and represent a significant act of intellectual engagement. It would normally be at least 7,500 words (30 pages), although some projects will necessitate greater length. Artistic projects may be proposed in place of a traditional research paper. However, an artistic project must still include a written description of the theoretical basis for the creative work the student does in another medium. This written description will normally take the same form as the traditional M.T.S. paper and be at least 5,000 words (20 pages) in length.

The Divinity School library does not retain copies of M.T.S. papers.

### **Procedures for Writing the Final Paper**

The M.T.S. final paper may be written within the context of a course in which the student is currently enrolled, or as part of a directed study, or as an additional paper outside of current coursework. Normally, the paper is written in the student's final semester of enrollment. If the paper is written within the context of a course, it can also satisfy a regular paper requirement within that course. However, the course instructor will normally expect the paper to exceed the requirements for the course paper, both in terms of its quality of engagement and its length. If the course does not otherwise require a paper, then the paper will simply be done in addition to the existing course requirements. All other requirements for the course must still be met.

Students must secure written permission from a faculty member to serve as an advisor for the final paper. Students also may seek out a second reader, though they are not required to do so. Students must submit to the registry a one-page paper proposal (a form is available in the registry) that includes the paper title and a brief description of the topic. This proposal must be submitted no later than October 15 (for a paper to be completed in the fall) or February 15 (for a paper to be completed in the spring) and must be signed by the paper advisor, the second reader (if there is one), and the M.T.S. director.



## M.T.S. Final Paper Guidelines



It is expected that the student will work closely with the faculty paper advisor in order to shape the paper's precise topic, coordinate the necessary research, and reach agreement about the paper's exact length, format, and style (e.g., Turabian, Chicago, Society of Biblical Literature, etc.).

By a deadline reached in consultation with the paper advisor, but no later than the beginning of the final reading period of the semester, the student should turn in copies of the paper to the paper advisor and to any second reader. The paper should be accompanied by a cover page that includes space for the signatures of the paper advisor, any second reader, and the M.T.S. director.

The paper does not receive a letter grade unless it is written as part of a course or a directed study. In these contexts, the responsibility for determining a letter grade lies solely with the instructor of the course or directed study, and the grade does not, on its own, signal approval of the paper as a paper.

After receiving the paper, the faculty advisor and any second reader should communicate approval or rejection of the paper to the M.T.S. director, who will then communicate the results to the registry. If the paper is approved, the M.T.S. director will submit a copy of the signed cover page to the office of registry. Except in those cases where the M.T.S. director is also a reader, the M.T.S. director's signature does not indicate an evaluative judgment but serves only an administrative function that aids the registry in tracking the completion of the final paper.

The faculty paper advisor is responsible for providing a written evaluation of the paper to the student. Especially in light of the fact that many M.T.S. students hope to pursue further academic work, paper advisors are encouraged to supply ample comments when they review a paper. Second readers should also seek to provide student paper writers with analytical comments on their work. Copies of these written evaluations should be given to the registry for inclusion in students' academic records.