MASTER OF ARTS IN PASTORAL MINISTRY (Summers Only)
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Studies for the summers-only MA in Pastoral Ministry prepare women and men to take part in the various ministerial activities of the Church, particularly at the level of the parish or diocese. Graduates of this program will be able to:

- bring academically informed theological, biblical, and pastoral resources to interpret and to enhance the life and ministry of faith-based communities and programs of service;
- embody the pastoral and spiritual formation that is needed to provide leadership and empowerment to communities of faith through various functions of ministry and service;
- develop effective programs of ministry and service that are well grounded in theological and pastoral studies and that enable persons and communities to integrate life and Christian faith in the context of their everyday lives.

The M.A. in Pastoral Ministry gives the student the opportunity to develop a general understanding of the various arts of pastoral ministry. Students interested in a particular function of ministry can use their electives to focus their studies. Graduates of the MA program have served as pastoral associates; social justice ministers; religious educators; hospital, hospice and prison chaplains; campus ministers; formation directors in religious communities; high school teachers; and youth ministers.

These guidelines are designed to deepen the quality of studies of Pastoral Ministry. They serve students by providing structure to the program. Requirements are designed to ensure that students are familiar with the foundational methods, ideas and literature of the interdisciplinary studies that constitute the ideal formation of the pastoral minister.

Without prejudice to these guidelines, a student’s program of studies is developed in consultation with an academic advisor with attention to the student’s background and aspirations. Students who need to meet certification requirements for dioceses in which they wish to work should be aware of those requirements and communicate them to their advisors as early as possible in their programs.


HISPANIC MINISTRY TRACK

Within the MA in Pastoral Ministry degree, students interested in working with Latino/a populations and communities of faith may choose the Hispanic Ministry track. Graduates of this track within the MA in Pastoral Ministry will demonstrate particular competence in leading and resourcing the pastoral life of communities of faith which serve the Latino/a population in the United States. Please see the Hispanic Ministry Track curriculum worksheet for details.
DUAL DEGREES

The MA in Pastoral Ministry degree combines with degrees in other Boston College schools to form dual degree programs: the MA/MA in Counseling Psychology; the MA/Master of Social Work (MSW); the MA/Master of Business Administration (MBA); and the MA/MS in Nursing. At the end of each dual degree program, dual degree students will demonstrate the ability to integrate their studies in pastoral ministry with their other fields of study. Please consult the appropriate dual degree handbook for details.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

The degree requires 35 credits. It may sometimes be necessary, however, to accumulate more than this number of credits to fulfill the degree requirements. Dual degree students should consult their dual degree handbooks for specific information on how credits and requirements are shared between their two degrees.

1. THEOLOGICAL AND SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATIONS

Studies in theology and scripture cover foundational issues of theological and scriptural scholarship. These include studies in Christology, ecclesiology, sacraments, ethics, Old Testament and New Testament. In order to give students an understanding of the rich traditions that inform their studies, one theological foundations or pastoral studies course must be taught from a historical perspective.

A student with no previous background in theology should take introductory courses. Students with backgrounds in theological studies may look for more advanced or specialized courses to fulfill requirements in Theological and Scriptural Foundations.

TM 644 Theological Foundations in Practical Perspective introduces the student to the study of theology for ministry on a graduate level and in the U.S. context. This is required of all MA students, unless exempted from it explicitly by one’s admission letter. Students exempt from this requirement take an elective in its place.

2. PASTORAL STUDIES FOR MINISTRY

The MA degree prepares the student as a pastoral generalist. Students take three pastoral electives of the student’s choice. Students wishing to pursue a vocation in a particular function of ministry are encouraged to consult with their faculty advisors for guidance on how to use these electives toward that end. Students in the Hispanic Ministry Track are required to the following three courses:

Hispanic Ministry Track

• TM 768 Foundations of Theology: Latina(o) Perspective
• TM 767 Ministry in a Diverse Church: Latina/o Perspectives and Beyond
• One course in Adult Faith Formation or Youth and Young Adult Faith

3. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

All students are required to take one course in religious education. In fulfilling this requirement, students will develop a fuller understanding of the dynamics of education in Christian faith and a richer appreciation for the many ways that all functions of ministry are likely to affect the ongoing religious and spiritual formation of persons and communities.
4. CONTEXTUAL EDUCATION (FIELD EDUCATION/SUPERVISED MINISTRY)

Students in the MA program are required to enroll in TM 530, Contextual Education approximately halfway through their program. The purpose of Contextual Education is to enable students to explore the work of pastoral ministry and to develop the skills for theological reflection on that experience. With the exception of dual MA/MA, MA/MSW, and MA/MS students, all MA students are required to take Contextual Education. (MA/MBA students should consult the MA/MBA prospectus for specific information about this requirement.)

Summers-only MA in Pastoral Ministry students fulfill their Contextual Education experience over two summers and the interim academic year, for which they earn two credits. They are required to do five hours per week of a supervised field experience during the academic year (total of 28 weeks) at a location convenient to their home. The field experience is designed in consultation with the Faculty Director for Contextual Education. Students are also expected to participate in the Contextual Education practicum with other students, which takes place during the summers before and after their field experience, as well as online during the academic year. Summers-only students register during the first summer and are billed for two credits at that time.

5. ELECTIVES

Students may choose, in consultation with their advisors, courses in theology, scripture, education and/or ministry in order to pursue particular interests or to round out their program of study.

6. SPIRITUAL FORMATION

MA in Pastoral Ministry students participate in the one-credit Spiritual Formation program (TM 730). This program consists of two parts: a Spiritual Formation seminar and a Spiritual Formation Plan.

During the first summer of studies, students participate in a small group seminar led by an experienced facilitator which allows them to integrate spiritual growth with their academic work in a supportive and prayerful atmosphere. During the summer, groups meet once a week for six weeks. At the end of the summer, students receive a J grade (course extension) until they have fulfilled the components of their Spiritual Formation Plan.

Students are required to create a personalized Spiritual Formation Plan (SFP) as a component of the Spiritual Formation for Ministry seminar. A student creates a Spiritual Formation Plan in consultation with one’s advisor and one’s Spiritual Formation for Ministry facilitator, each one indicating approval of the student’s plan on the Spiritual Formation Program worksheet. Students may fulfill the components of their SFP during the duration of their degree program at STM. When a student has completed the Spiritual Formation program, i.e., both the SFP and the Spiritual Formation for Ministry seminar, the student informs his or her academic advisor, who will then sign off on the Spiritual Formation Program worksheet. The student leaves a copy of the signed form in the mailbox of the Associate Director for Spiritual Formation. Upon receipt of this form, the Associate Director will change the grade from a “J” to a “P” (Pass).

The purpose of the SFP is to establish a 

*habitus* of spiritual practice, one which is discerned and consciously chosen, one that corresponds with the uniqueness of persons and establishes a solid spiritual foundation for reflective ministry. Students choose and complete ONE OPTION from TWO of THREE AREAS during the course of their studies.
AREA I
- Spiritual Direction (six month experience or more)*

AREA II
- Retreat experience (e.g., STM retreat, silent directed retreat, guided retreat, annotated Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius)
- Immersion experience (STM or equivalent)
- Intentional Christian community experience

AREA III
- Monthly volunteer experience with journal reflection (six month experience or more)
- Liturgical Preaching and Presiding workshop
- Workshops that may be offered through STM or elsewhere
- Participation in STM Faith and Justice Committee with journal reflection (one semester)
- Participation in the STM Liturgy Committee with journal reflection (one semester)
- Participation in the STM Prison Ministry Initiative with journal reflection (one semester)
- Boston College Women’s Resource Center Volunteer with journal reflection (six month experience or more)

* Please note: A regular practice of spiritual direction is strongly encouraged for one’s life in ministry. The STM provides a listing of seasoned spiritual directors in the BC vicinity and beyond. If a student feels that s/he would benefit from engagement in counseling or pastoral counseling rather than spiritual direction, this too remains an option.

7. THESIS
Upon completion of course work, MA in Pastoral Ministry students write that provides them the opportunity to: (1) creatively synthesize their studies in theology, (2) address a question about their particular interests in pastoral ministry, and (3) outline a pastoral program appropriate to their own ministerial context. Students discuss their essays with two faculty members in a subsequent oral examination.

Preparatory seminars, topic brainstorming sessions, writer’s labs, and a summer thesis consultant are available to assist students with the research, writing and oral defense of theses. For additional details on guidelines and procedures, see the MA and MEd Thesis Packet available at the STM Service Center at 9 Lake Street and consult the STM Summer Calendar for workshop dates.