

# Graduate Theological Union

## Doctoral Application Instructions

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### Deadline for Fall Admission:

Applications must be submitted online or postmarked by December 15.

Applications may be submitted online at <https://www.applyweb.com/gtu/menu.html>

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### Doctor of Philosophy – Ph.D.

The Ph.D. program places theological or religious studies in the context of university research disciplines. Prior to matriculation the applicant must have completed a Masters degree in religion, theology or a closely related field from an accredited theological school, college or university. The applicant must also have a Bachelor's degree from an accredited institution. Ph.D. applicants are reviewed by the Graduate Division of the University of California, Berkeley for admission to coursework. The course requirements for the Bachelor's degree must be comparable in content and breadth to the requirements for a Bachelor's degree recognized by the Graduate Division of the University of California. Some international degrees in theology will not meet this requirement, but may meet the requirements for admission to the Th.D. program.

### Doctor of Theology – Th.D.

The Th.D. program has a specific theological focus. To be eligible for the Th.D. degree the applicant must have a Bachelor's degree (or the equivalent) from an accredited institution, and must also, prior to matriculation, have completed a Master of Arts or Master of Divinity in Theology, Religion, or a closely related field from an accredited institution. The Th.D. degree is offered in Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, New Testament, History of Christianity, Christian Theology, Homiletic and Liturgical Studies.

## Departments & Concentrations

### Sacred Texts & Their Interpretation

Hebrew Bible/Old Testament	Hindu Sacred Texts	Islamic Sacred Texts
New Testament	Rabbinic Literature	

### Historical & Cultural Studies of Religion

Anthropology of Religion	Art and Religion	Buddhist Studies
Christian Spirituality	Comparative Religion	Hindu Studies
History of Christianity	Islamic Studies	Jewish Studies
New Religious Movements	Religion and Literature	Sociology of Religion

### Theology & Ethics

Aesthetics	Christian Theology	Comparative Ethics
Comparative Theology	Ethics	Hindu Theology
Islamic Philosophy and Theology	Philosophical Theology	Theology & Science

### Religion & Practice

Homiletics	Liturgical Studies	Missiology
Practical Theology	Religious Education	

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*The Graduate Theological Union supports equality of educational opportunity. No student shall be denied admission nor discriminated against in any way because of race, gender, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, national origin, age, or disability. The GTU is proud of its diversity and welcomes applications from all who are qualified academically to pursue graduate studies.*

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## Completing the Application

Please complete the application online at <https://www.applyweb.com/gtu/menu.html> and follow the specific instructions provided on the web site. You can also download an application on the website and fill it out and send it back to us if you prefer. We highly encourage applicants to submit an online application, as it is the fastest means of our receiving it. When you apply online you will pay the GTU fee via credit card.

- Ph.D. and Th.D. application submission fee is \$130, and \$150 for international applicants

**NOTE:** Should you choose to apply in hard copy, your payment must be in U.S. dollars for all international money orders or checks drawn on a U.S. bank. **DO NOT SEND CASH.**

## Degree Sought and Field of Study

GTU Doctoral programs are administered through 4 interdisciplinary departments. Departments are composed of concentrations. The applicant must select *one* department and one concentration within that department to be considered for admission.

## Academic and Professional Background

**Transcripts:** GTU Ph.D. applicants must submit official transcripts of all college and graduate level work. Official transcripts are unopened documents issued by the institution that bear the actual signature of the registrar and the seal of the institution. If you are currently enrolled in a program, submit an in-progress transcript showing work to date. Please list all post-secondary schools where you have earned a degree from, with the most recent listed first. If further space is needed, include an additional sheet.

If you have previously attended either the GTU or one of its member schools, you must request transcripts from them as well; **we cannot request them for you.**

**Language Study:** Most of the areas and topics of study in theological scholarship require research in modern languages and ancient texts. Please indicate your background in the languages in which you are proficient.

**Professional Experience:** Provide information about your research and work experience useful in considering your application, and also list honors, fellowships or other commendations of note. You may also provide a C.V. or résumé.

## Statement of Academic Purpose

This **300-500 word statement** should succinctly but specifically outline your goals and plans for doctoral level study, as well as your academic interests. A strong statement is one that articulates research objectives and envisions the main components of studies required in anticipation of the dissertation. A well-crafted statement should also clearly show how the resources of the GTU and your chosen department and concentration would assist you in attaining the goals you have outlined. Finally, it should touch on your academic background (including language preparation), indicating how this foundation will contribute to your proposed further study.

## Letters of Recommendation

Three academic letters of recommendation are required. A form for your name and waiver information can be downloaded at <http://www.gtu.edu/admissions/applications/PhD>. We suggest that after your recommenders seal the letter and the recommendation form in an envelope and sign across the seal, they return it to you to send with your application and/or supporting documents. They may mail the letter to us directly if they prefer. Make sure to inform recommenders of the application deadline, and provide them with the form and a stamped envelope addressed to: Admissions Office, Graduate Theological Union, 2400 Ridge Road, Berkeley, CA 94709.

## Academic Writing Sample

This should be about 20 pages, without exceeding that limit. The writing sample may be an essay written for the application, a paper submitted during coursework, or an excerpt from a paper or thesis. Whenever possible, the paper should relate to the proposed field of study. Please do not submit an entire thesis. The writing sample can be uploaded with the online application or mailed to us.

## Scores from the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) or TOEFL

All applicants whose native language is English are required to submit GRE scores from an exam taken within the last five years. Official scores should be sent directly from the Educational Testing Service (ETS) to the GTU Admissions Office (institution code 4336).

International applicants from countries where English is not the official language and who have not completed a degree in the United States are required to take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) in place of the GRE. This requirement applies to applicants from Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Pakistan, Latin America, the Middle East, Israel, the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia, most European countries, and non-English speaking countries in Africa. Scores must be from an exam taken within the last two years. Official scores must be sent directly from ETS to the GTU.

To schedule to take these exams, go to the web sites: [www.gre.org](http://www.gre.org) or [www.toefl.org](http://www.toefl.org)

## Information for International Applicants

Submit official records from each academic institution attended after secondary school. Official records bear the actual signature of the registrar, the seal of the issuing institution, and are unopened. Photocopies are acceptable only if (1) each copy is signed by an academic official who certifies that it is an exact copy of the original document; and (2) it bears the seal and title of the authorizing official.

Submit official academic records in the original language, accompanied by English translations. Specially prepared English versions are not acceptable in place of documents issued in the original language. Academic records must show the dates of your enrollment, all subjects or courses, units, credits or hours, and grades in each subject. All records must include a complete description of institutional grading scales or other standards of evaluation with maximum grades and minimum marks indicated. Submit official evidence of the conferral of all degrees, diplomas, or professional titles and the date (month and year) of the formal conferral. These certificates should indicate the exact name of the degree, diploma, or title as it is known in the country of origin and not in North American terms.

International students will need to demonstrate adequate financial support after admission.

## Review of the Application

Completed applications will be evaluated by the GTU Doctoral Admissions Committee after the deadline of December 15. Ph.D. applications approved by the GTU are then reviewed by the Graduate Division at UC Berkeley. All applicants are notified of their initial acceptance in early February. Ph.D. applicants are notified of final acceptance after review at UCB, usually by mid- March. Scholarships and financial aid awards will also be announced within this time-frame.

### Application Checklist

- Apply online at <https://www.applyweb.com/gtu/menu.html>
- Academic Writing Sample, submitted via online application or sent by mail
- Official GRE or TOEFL scores sent to the GTU (Inst. 4336) by Educational Testing Service
- Three Academic Letters of Recommendation submitted online, or sent in sealed, signed envelopes
- Official Academic Transcripts in sealed envelopes  
*(For Ph.D. applicants, two from each previous post-secondary school attended. For Th.D., one from each previous post-secondary school attended)*

### If using a paper application, also send by mail:

- Two copies of the GTU Application Form *(signed)*
- Academic Statement of Purpose *(signed)*
- GTU Application Fee (\$130/ \$150 for international students)

All materials submitted as part of the application are the property of the Graduate Theological Union and are not returnable to the applicant. Materials submitted for admission become the basis for the successful applicant's permanent file at the GTU, with the exception of letters of recommendation. Letters of recommendation serve to aid the Admissions Committee in assessing skills and the student's match with the GTU program, and are destroyed once admission decisions are made.

Send all application materials to:

**Graduate Theological Union  
Admissions Office  
2400 Ridge Rd., Berkeley, CA 94709**

**Andrea Sheaffer,  
Ph.D. Director of Admissions  
Phone: 800/826-4488, or 510/649-2460  
Fax: 510/649-1730 email: [admissions@gtu.edu](mailto:admissions@gtu.edu)**



**GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION**

*Where religion meets the world*

# Writing the Academic Statement of Purpose

*Notes from prior workshops with faculty panelists*

The Statement of Purpose is a critical component of the application process. It provides faculty readers with a sense of the way an applicant thinks; how she or he conceptualizes a program of study. It also offers a sense of the applicant's preparation for the course of study proposed. This is the opportunity for the applicant to craft something in his or her own voice; a chance to bring it all together.

## TIPS FOR APPLICANTS:

The Statement of Purpose should put forward the project or topic you wish to study, what resources you plan to use, and the reason(s) a particular school is a good "match" for your work. It is a personal statement of disciplined creativity that is an intellectual statement at its heart.

Figure out what you want to do with a doctoral degree; where do you see yourself after graduate school? Your answers will help determine which program/s might be the best stepping stone to your goal. Make sure you are applying to the institutions and programs that are best for you.

Your writing should be concrete, and interesting to read. It is better to err on the side of stating concrete goals for a topic of study than to give in to generality and vagueness.

If the Statement is daunting, ask yourself conceptual questions, such as:

- What problems or questions do I find of keen interest?
- What methods might I want to explore?

Readers will be looking for passion, intellectual spark, and curiosity.

The spark of creativity, however, must be built on a solid foundation. The statement ought to reflect that one has an academic background that positions one for the research proposal. Make your statement brief, but highlight your strengths and relevant history or experience.

A strong proposal is one that demonstrates that your academic background fits with the course of study you propose. Be mindful, however, that faculty are not quite as interested in your past as they are in your future and what a doctoral program looks like to you.

It is often helpful to share drafts of your Statement of Purpose with a few respected and trusted colleagues and mentors as you move through the process of composition. Give a copy of your statement to the faculty you ask to write letters of recommendation.

When mentioning faculty with whom you wish to work, identify the common interest that connects your own work to the work of each particular professor. (It may be helpful to review books and articles of those in whom one has an interest in order to better articulate why one is drawn to study with a particular scholar.)

Think of the faculty reading the application: What will you bring to the conversation that interests her/him? Frame your interest in a way that someone might be intrigued to work with you.

A good statement shows clarity; conceptualizes a program of study; and evidences an awareness of the resources available at the GTU that are suitable for the particular course of study defined in your statement.

A statement that is not well designed tends to show a vague enthusiasm. It does not articulate well a proposed course of study, nor explain the "fit" between the applicant and the resources of the school. An applicant wants to show that strong preparation for moving into doctoral research and an awareness of scholarly trends and methods.

GTU doctoral students give shape and definition to their studies. A doctoral student's program will be largely defined by the student, in conversation with faculty members. The Statement of Purpose provides the opportunity for you to demonstrate a coherence in framing and thinking through a possible program.

Every word counts; you want to come up with "something that sings." Read the instructions carefully for each distinct application (the GTU application limits the Statement of Purpose to 300-500 words). Take care to think and reread every sentence. Not everyone can be admitted, so you want to communicate in a way that faculty can see you excel beyond really qualified people.

**Graduate Theological Union, 2400 Ridge Rd., Berkeley CA 94709**

Kathleen Kook, Ph.D., Dean of Students, 510-649-2460 (gtuadm@gtu.edu)

[www.gtu.edu](http://www.gtu.edu)



# GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION

*The crossroads where religion meets the world*

We are delighted that you are considering doctoral studies at the Graduate Theological Union. To help you in your discernment process, we offer the following list of questions to guide you through various parts of the application process and help you decide whether doctoral studies and the GTU are right for you.

1. What are your specific goals for pursuing a doctorate?

- Do you hope to teach? If so, at what sort of institution? In what department or field (i.e., what "general course" would a school hire you to teach)?
- Do you hope to write? If so, in what journals? For which presses? Who would your audiences be?
- Do you have other goals? What are they?

Most applicants come with broad backgrounds and interests, and many will go out to pursue broad interests and goals. However, a doctoral program entails 3-4 years (at most) of course work and a highly specialized research project (It is helpful to think of the image of an hour glass, with the doctoral program being the narrow passage between your broad background and your broad future.). You do not want to waste the limited time or the rather considerable energy and financial resources it will require.

2. What specifically do you intend to do during your Ph.D. program?

- Given that you have some background to build upon (which you need not repeat) and some specific goals (designated above), what do you hope to do with the brief time you will have in the program?
- What specific skills will you need to develop?
- What specific theories/disciplines/subjects will you need to address?

The doctoral program should lay a basic foundation for about a decade of your work – not everything you would like to read or learn – but the most important skills, methods, and issues which will enable you to “go to work” after you complete your degree.

3. How does the program you specified in number 2 above, build upon your prior education, reading and experience? What is the background preparation you have for this course of study?
4. What sort of dissertation do you envision yourself doing (not the specific topic, but the type of topics and the type of research and writing you envision)? How does that help you to locate yourself in the appropriate GTU Concentration?

The following exercises can help you discern the appropriate department and concentration of study:

- After you have narrowed your concentration of interest to two (or at most three), request or pick up the detailed department protocols, which specify specific course requirements, details regarding comprehensive examinations and required bibliographies. Determine whether the program/training envisioned fits your needs as a scholar.
- Identify the key faculty in the concentration of study you are considering, review their current research and teaching interests, and read some of their major publications (these are often listed on the faculty pages of the GTU website: <http://gtu.edu/academics/faculty-directory>). Does this sort of scholarship match or complement the kind of work you want to do as a scholar?

About 80 % of applicants to the GTU doctoral program are basically qualified to do doctoral work, but we cannot admit all of those students to our program. Thus an extremely important factor in admissions is the statement of purpose, demonstrating the applicant's clarity, focus, ability to build on prior background, and overall expression of being a good fit with the GTU program.

5. How does your background and proposed scholarship fit with the GTU program, resources and the concentration of study to which you are applying?

- "Fit" is not merely a general matter of the GTU's ethos, ecumenism, location or relationship with UCB. It has to do with whether the specific program of study you have described fits well with our programs and our faculty resources-whether this is the best place for you to pursue the program of study you envision. The more research you do about the fit between the GTU's resources and your program of study, the stronger and more convincing your statement will be.

Studying and working through these questions will make visits and interactions with faculty easier and more profitable for all parties.

*If you have any questions or concerns, please do not  
hesitate to contact the GTU Admissions Office.  
800/826-4488 [admissions@gtu.edu](mailto:admissions@gtu.edu)*

*These questions were prepared by Dr. Judith Berling, former GTU Dean, Professor of Chinese and Comparative Religions.*