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NEWBIGIN
HOUSE OF STUDIES

FAQs for Students Considering Joining the Newbigin Cohort at Western Theological Seminary

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[What is the Newbigin Cohort?](#)

The Newbigin Cohort is a group of students working toward an accredited distance-learning M.Div. degree jointly offered by [Western Theological Seminary](#) and the [Newbigin House of Studies](#), with distance learning courses offered through Western Theological Seminary, along with substantial coursework offered through the Newbigin House of Studies.

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[What is Western Theological Seminary?](#)

Western Theological Seminary is an [ATS](#)-accredited theological seminary in Holland, Michigan. It is a seminary in the Reformed tradition, with specific connections to the [Reformed Church in America](#). The seminary has been preparing pastors for ministry for 150 years in many Christian denominations and has been offering distance learning M.Div. courses since 2003. For more information about the seminary, see <http://www.westernsem.edu>.

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What is the Newbigin House of Studies?

The Newbigin House of Studies is a joint project between [City Church San Francisco](#) and Western Theological Seminary to prepare leaders for the church's mission to renew the city. In addition to providing courses for the Newbigin Cohort, the Newbigin House of Studies oversees internship placements, encourages church planting and revitalization in center-city areas around the country, and equips lay leaders for ministry. For more information, see <http://www.newbiginhouse.org/>
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What is a Master of Divinity degree?

A Master of Divinity degree (commonly called an M.Div. degree) prepares people for a variety of vocations in service to the church of Jesus Christ, such as pastors, church planters, counselors, chaplains, missionaries, and scholars. The degree offered through the Newbigin House of Studies and WTS takes four years to complete. It includes graduate-level academic study, personal spiritual formation, and practical ministry experience.
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What is the specific focus of the Newbigin Cohort?

The Newbigin Cohort focuses on ministry in the city. Drawing on the rich experience of [City Church San Francisco](#), the Newbigin Cohort prepares people for ministry in urban, highly secularized contexts. The program is ideal for those who want to revitalize existing urban congregations, launch new ministries, or plant new churches in the city. It includes coursework focused on ministry in the city, mentoring and spiritual formation with a focus on urban ministry, and internship placements in a variety of urban contexts.
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How is Newbigin House uniquely positioned to offer this program?

The experience of Newbigin's scholar-pastors along with the learning lab of the city provides students with insight from the ground floor of urban ministry in a secular context.

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What are the requirements for admission to the program?

The M.Div. degree is an accredited graduate degree which normally assumes that students have completed their undergraduate education. Students without a bachelor's degree, but who can demonstrate their ability to work at the graduate level, may also be admitted. An application form with accompanying letters of reference and transcripts is required. If you would like further information, you can fill out an [inquiry form](#), or you can also access the full application form online [here](#).
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What exactly do you mean by "distance learning?"

Distance learning means that a significant part of your work in this program is done in your own setting, using a computer. Students come to Western Theological Seminary for face-to-face intensive portions of classes during two weeks in both January and May, with online work in these same classes both preceding and following the intensive periods. Newbigin cohort students also take an intensive course in San Francisco during the first two summers of the program. Apart from that, all learning is done online. You will download audio or video lectures, collaborate and interact with other students online, and post assignments, papers, and tests

on an online course management system. The same accredited degree, fulfilling the same academic requirements, is received by both in-residence and distance-learning students.

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What kind of technology is required to participate in this program?

For a full discussion of the educational technology used, as well as the requirements for your computer and internet connection, please go to <http://www.westernsem.edu/resources/angel>. Tech support is available through our [educational technology specialist](#).

OK, if I have to do some classwork in face-to-face settings, exactly where do I need to go for those classes, and how often do I need to go there?

For the four years of the program, you will need to travel to Holland, Michigan for the first two weeks of January, and the third and fourth weeks of May (these dates may shift around a bit). You will also need to get to San Francisco for one or two weeks in July or August of the first two years in the program. In the third and fourth year of the Newbigin program, the May face-to-face work in Holland, Michigan involves *three* weeks for the Newbigin Cohort, to allow time for processing the internship experiences. For all these face-to-face times, the seminary and Newbigin House will assist students by providing information on affordable accommodation options. Student also participate in an intercultural immersion experience of approximately 10 days in the fourth year of the program during the January intensive period.

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What does a typical calendar look like? How are the courses spaced out over time?

The academic year begins in September, with a nine-week course that is conducted entirely online. The winter semester begins in early November, takes a week off for Thanksgiving and two weeks off for Christmas, meets face-to-face the first two weeks of January, then a week off, followed by seven more weeks online, ending in mid-March. The summer semester begins in late March online. It meets face-to-face in the third and fourth weeks of May, and then continues online after a week break until late June. A one or two week intensive course in San Francisco is held during the first two years of the program in July or August, with some online work accompanying the course, both before and after the intensive. The summer weeks that remain comprise the summer break. For specific dates for the current year's distance learning calendar, click on the "DL calendar" tab on [this link](#).

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How long will it take me to get the degree?

This is a four-year degree program, consisting of 96 credits. Classes start in September of each year, and the final year of courses runs through late June.

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Is this a full-time program? How much time each week will it take?

This program will take up to 30 hours per week in the busier weeks. While students are encouraged to work while enrolled in the program, and internships in the third and fourth years are a regular part of the program, we also encourage students not to commit to a job of more than 20 hours per week while enrolled in the program.

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Will I have opportunities to get practical ministry experience?

Yes. Internship placements in urban settings with experienced mentors are an integral part of the program. Some of these will be in San Francisco, others in various urban areas around the

country. You may need to move to access an internship, if you do not already live near one of our partner churches. Contact [Newbigin House](#) if you would like to explore what internships might be available in your area.

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How much will it cost?

Tuition for the 2012-13 academic year is not yet finalized, but it will be around \$410 per credit hour. Since the entire degree consists of 96 credits, tuition and fees will average about \$10,000 per year for the four years of the program.

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Is there financial aid available?

Students are required to complete two forms to apply for financial aid.

1. The [WTS FA application](#) assesses need based on student income, expected gifts, assets and projected expenses.
2. The U.S. Government form, FAFSA. This form can be accessed at [FAFSA.gov](#).

Loans: Students who are U.S. citizens or Permanent Residents and who are enrolled at least half time may apply to borrow up to \$20,500 on an annual basis through the [William D. Ford Direct Loan Program](#).

Grants/Scholarships: Grants and scholarships range from \$500-\$4500 per year. Scholarships are determined by need.

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For what kinds of ministry opportunities will I be prepared?

The focus in the Newbigin cohort is on ministry in urban and/or secular contexts. This may include work with center-city leaders, as well as the poor and needy. It may include planting new churches, launching new ministries, and revitalizing existing congregations. It may include working in more progressive and secular communities throughout North America and beyond. The M.Div. degree qualifies candidates in many North American denominations for ordained ministry.

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What are some of the specific courses offered in the program through Newbigin House of Studies?

Alternating intensive courses offered during the first two summers of the program in San Francisco focus one year on what it means to be *church* in an urban setting, and the other year on what it means to be a *Christian* in an urban setting. Other courses focus on church planting and revitalization, on ministry in secular contexts, spiritual formation in urban settings, and other related issues. Systematic Theology is also taught in this program with a specific view to ministry in an urban context.

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Whom can I contact for more information?

For questions about the Newbigin House elements of the degree program in particular, contact the [Newbigin House of Studies](#) (Phone: 415-602-4416). For general information about the entire degree program, or other questions, contact [Western Theological Seminary](#) (Phone: 1-800-392-8554, and ask for Dr. Mark Poppen, the Admissions Director).

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