

Theological Research and Writing

2PT 704

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Course Description:

This is a two hour practical theology course on theological research and writing. The course will give special attention to using the library, writing graduate level research papers, and the problem of plagiarism. This course is designed to help you communicate well. Written communication and oral communication overlap, so whether you are going on for graduate studies or studying to become a pastor, you will need to learn how to develop and deliver a thesis.

Goals:

1. Students will understand how to use library resources and services effectively.
2. Students will learn about the kinds of writing and research projects they will be completing in seminary and how best to complete this work.
3. Students will recognize what plagiarism is and how to avoid it.
4. Students will learn how to compile and manage bibliographies.
5. Students will write a graduate level research paper.

Class Meetings

TBA We will begin each class in our classroom for lecture and discussion. We will end each course with a “lab” in the library where we will work on small assignments as well as the research paper.

Assignments

1. Paper (70%). The research paper will be the major focus of this class. At the end of the semester, the successful student will have written a 12-15 page research paper on a topic of their choosing that has been cleared by the professor. I highly recommend that you write your paper in conjunction with an assignment from one of the other courses you are taking this semester. Students should choose a topic that is narrow enough so that it can be adequately explained in a 15 page paper, yet broad enough for them to find a sufficient number of resources.
 - The paper will be 15-20 pages, plus a 1-2 page “Works Cited” section. The works cited section does not count toward the page total and will include only items that have been used and referenced in the paper. The paper will be double spaced and the body will be no less than 4,000 words.

- The paper will utilize at least 15 high quality resources. 5 of these resources must be scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles. An “A” paper will utilize at least 20 resources; any paper with less than 15 resources will not receive a passing grade.
- The paper will have a thesis statement. The thesis statement will be clear and concise and will tell the reader exactly what the paper is about. The entire paper will be centered on proving this thesis statement.
- The paper will follow the guidelines set forth in: Turabian, Kate L. 2007. *A manual for writers of research papers, theses, and dissertations: Chicago style for students and researchers*. Chicago guides to writing, editing, and publishing. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. You may use either parenthetical or footnote citations, but you must be consistent and it must follow Turabian guidelines.
- This is how your paper will be evaluated:
 - An “A” paper will evidence strong research and provide a unique contribution to the field. It will contain no typos or grammar errors. To get an idea of what an “A” paper looks like, read an article in a peer-reviewed scholarly journal.
 - A “B” paper will meet the basic requirements and will be well-written paper. It may not provide a unique contribution to its topic.
 - A “C” paper will meet the basic requirements and contain a few errors such as typos or poorly constructed sentences.
 - A “D” paper will meet the basic requirements but will contain many errors and be difficult to follow.
 - You will receive an “F” on your paper if you do not meet the basic requirements, you plagiarize, you do not stick to a clearly worded and concise thesis statement, or your paper is very poorly written.

A rough draft of the paper will be due on _____. This rough draft will be evaluated by the professor and returned for corrections. The final draft will be due at the term paper deadline.

2. Reading. 10%

The textbook for this course is

Yaghjian, Lucretia. *Writing theology well: a rhetoric for theological and biblical writers*. New York: Continuum, 2006.

Students will also need to buy:

Turabian, Kate L. 2007. *A manual for writers of research papers, theses, and dissertations: Chicago style for students and researchers*. Chicago guides to writing, editing, and publishing. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Students will read the chapters 3, 5, 6, 7, 11, and 12 of the textbook. In addition, students will need to read at least 300 pages on their research paper topic. Students will indicate on the last day of class what percentage of the assigned reading they have completed.

A note about the textbooks, you should not read Yaghjian as if she tells you the only or even the best way to write papers. Rather the goal of the reading is to give you ideas about how you can write well. Everyone does research a little bit differently and everyone writes with a unique “voice.” The textbook should help you find that “voice” and ensure that you aren’t “off key.”

Another note about the textbooks. You are not required to purchase these books. I refer to Turabian frequently and think you would benefit from having your own copy. It is on the reference shelf in the library. You will probably not refer to Yaghjian later in life, so I recommend you read the required chapters from the library copy which will be on the reserve shelf.

3. Class participation. 20%

There will be small projects during the semester that the class will complete during our meeting times.

Summary of topics for discussion

1. Library tour and orientation.
2. Basic Research Skills. Library catalog, ATLA, Worldcat.
3. Basic Research Skills. Google Scholar, Google Books, Wolphram Alpha, other digital media.
4. Zotero Bibliographic Management.
5. Theological writing as a discipline.
6. Writing Methods: Developing a thesis statement and beginning your research.
7. Writing Standards: Plagiarism and the use of quotations.
8. Writing Standards: Common mistakes to avoid.
9. Different types of writing you will be tackling during seminary from sermons to book reviews.
10. Theological writing and your future.
11. Discussion of completed papers

Office Hours

I am available in my office between the hours of 10:00 am and 3:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. If this does not work with your schedule, please contact me for an appointment.

Selected Bibliography

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- Hamilton, James, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. *On the writing of book reviews : [a white paper from the CTR]*. Fort Worth Tex.: Center for Theological Research Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007.
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- Montgomery, John. *The writing of research papers in theology : an introductory lecture with a list of basic reference tools for the theological student*. 3rd ed. [S.l.: s.n.], 1977.
- Rosnow, Ralph. *Writing papers in psychology : a student guide to research reports, literature reviews, proposals, posters, and handouts*. 7th ed. Australia ;;Belmont CA: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2006.
- Turabian, Kate. *A manual for writers of research papers, theses, and dissertations : Chicago style for students and researchers*. 7th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.
- Uttal, Bro. *1000 ideas for term papers in philosophy and religion*. New York: Arco Pub. Co., 1973.
- Vyhmeister, Nancy. *Quality research papers for students of religion and theology*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids Mich.: Zondervan, 2008.
- . *Your indispensable guide to writing quality research papers : for students of religion and theology*. Grand Rapids Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House, 2001.
- Welch, Douglas. *Guide to graduate theological research and writing*. 2nd ed. Anderson Ind.: School of Theology Anderson University, 1993.
- Yaghjian, Lucretia. *Writing theology well : a rhetoric for theological and biblical writers*. New York: Continuum, 2006.